

**Female Headed Households and Their Livelihood in Bati Wäräda,  
South Wollo: Practices and Resistance**



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## **Dedication**

This thesis is dedicated to my beloved father, Mulugeta Yimam Hassen who has been always encouraging me to pursue my education but unfortunate to see my progress.

## *Acronyms*

Derg:	The military rule that governed Ethiopia from 1974 to 1991
GOE:	Government of Ethiopia
CIA:	Central Intelligence Agency
CSA:	Central Statistical Authority
EASE:	The Ethiopian Agricultural Sample Enumeration
EPRDF:	Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front
ESDPRP:	The Ethiopian Sustainable Development and Poverty Reduction Program
Ha:	Hectare
ORDA:	Organization for Rehabilitation and Development of Amhara
PA:	Peasant Association
SNNPR:	Southern Nations Nationalities and Peoples' Region
WAO:	Women Affairs Office
WOA:	Wäräda Office Administration

## **Glossary of Local Terms and Concepts**

<i>Belg:</i>	Short or little rainy season (late February to end of May/early June)
<i>Birr:</i>	Ethiopian Currency
<i>Chat:</i>	A plant whose leaves are chewed as a stimulant
<i>Debo:</i>	An institution which is organized for ploughing/sowing, weeding or harvesting. When a peasant is unable to work on his own on his land (due to illness, old age, lack of oxen, or for being a woman) he/she prepares a feast and receives assistance in the form of human labour and/or oxen power from friends, relatives or, neighbours.
<i>Dega:</i>	Local term denoting the altitude of an area which is 2,200 metres above sea level
<i>Enset:</i>	A fruit similar to banana or plantain

*Ekul:* 1/2, a crop-sharing agreement in which all inputs are paid for by the renting peasant, and the final harvest is equally divided between the renter and the land-holder.

*Gott:* Locally used administrative entity below the sub-qäbälé (not part of the formal government administrative structure).

*Iqub:* Rotating credit and savings groups typically localized around one or two neighbouring villages.

*Kirre or Iddir:* A social/cultural institution of both men and women responsible for arranging funeral ceremonies

*Qäbälé:* The smallest unit of local government in rural and urban communities

*Kola:* Low land area

*Wäräda:* The second smallest unit of local government in rural and urban communities

## **Transliteration**

The transliteration of Amharic names and words in this publication is based on the system developed at the Institute of Ethiopian Studies, with the following modifications:

1) Only those diacritical marks available on a standard computer in all programs have been used. Therefore, plosives are marked with an apostrophe (': t'ä); some consonants are rendered by a combination of two letters (': gnä); and the vowels are rendered as ä, u, i, a, é, e, o.

2) Gemination has not been rendered, as this is not part of the Amharic script, and its pronunciation varies.

### **Plural of transliterated nouns**

I have used the standard English plural added to the singular of the transliterated form, since this is easier for the reader, although it is of course incorrect. Thus *qäbälés* and *wärädas*.





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# Chapter One: Introduction

## 1.1. Background

Households are not the same everywhere, because their structure is dependent upon social context, and they are a sub-system of wider social relations and realities (Pratt, 2006). Understanding households necessitates the need to study the varied contexts in which households are situated and the social relations of household members within their community.

Households headed by females have become an important phenomenon worldwide. It seems that female headed households are more common in situations of poverty, in societies with a high level of male labour migration, and in situations where general insecurity and vulnerability prevail (Addis, et. al., 2001; Youssef and Hetler, 1983; Merrick and Schmink, 1983). The reasons for the emergence and increase in female headship vary from economic and social transformation to conflict and displacement (Buvinic, et.al., 1978; Youssef and Hetler, 1983; Buvinic and Gupta, 1997; Chant, 1997). Ethiopia is no exception, it experienced a steady increase in female headed households as a share of total household (Lemlem, et. al., 2010). For instance, in 2002 one fourth of all rural households in Ethiopia were headed by females (Stone, 2003). The study conducted by Little, et. al., (2006) also shows that in 2006 female-headed households make up about 24 percent of households in South Wälo, a place that the present study *wäräda* is located. While debates continue over the definition of female headed households and processes of their formation, little is known about its implications for female headed households' livelihood. The fact remains that addressing the question of household at this level and the next requires understanding the socio economic behaviour of female headed households.

Over the last decade a wide range of studies have wrestled with the question of whether female-headed households (FHHs) are disproportionately represented among the poor, and subsequently, whether the category of "female headship" is an appropriate tool for targeting policy interventions (Chant, 1998). While these studies have yielded inconsistent conclusions, pointing to the debatable and highly contextual nature of the relationship between female headship and poverty, headship nevertheless remains a useful tool for understanding how gender identity might condition the capabilities, entitlements and subsequent opportunities of households. Households headed by women, for example, are typically endowed with varying amounts and types of resources and capabilities that equip them to respond to change and

opportunities differently (Little, et. al.:2006). As a result, headship can provide a useful analytical device to identify how households undertake their day to day livelihood activities (Verma, 2001).

From a gender perspective, the fact that households are differentiated by headship with varying degrees of agency, entitlement and mobility needs to be central to any analysis of livelihood. Poverty and economic change not only impose unequal costs and burdens on household members but gender identities of household heads also visibly shape the options and rights households and household members possess (Beneria and Feldman, 1992). For example, livelihood choices can be compromised by gender differences in reproductive responsibilities and access to productive resources (land, capital, labor), as well as gender biases in social systems and infrastructure (Baden, 1998). Female household heads, in particular, face different constraints based on their unique position in the household including their often sole responsibility for income generation and reproductive work, and higher dependency burden than their male-headed counterparts (Rosenhouse, 1989). For instance the study conducted by Holden, Shiferaw, and Pender (2001) found that female-headed households in Ethiopia have lower land productivity, owing to resource poverty (insufficient male labor and oxen) and low substitutability among factors of production. Empirical works in Ethiopia (Bezabih and Holden, 2006; Holden and Bezabih, 2007) found that female headed households also tend to rent out their land to tenants with much lower productivity.

In this case, the gender of the household head not only shapes access to particular livelihood opportunities but also the way in which social norms are expressed materially (Verma, 2001; Pratt, 2006). For example, local conceptions of gender rights and roles will structure the possibilities for engaging in any number of economic undertakings. As a result, the potential to exploit a particular asset or capitalize on a livelihood option is as much governed by the social meanings attached to particular tasks (men plough, women plant) and modes of income generation (men's tradable crops, women's domestic crops) as to the individual bearer of gender. Hence, identifying the nature of gender relations not only provides a clearer picture of household head obligations and exchanges, but also shows us how livelihood activities of a given households are negotiated, structured and legitimated through broader social processes (Verma, 2001;Kumar and Quisumbing, 2010).

Female headed households have to embark on various relations. However, negotiation at any level is related to the amount of capital they possess and the position they have in the society, gender is a key factor in the distribution of rural resources (Torkelsson, 2004). The analysis of and non-economic forms of

capital has been integrated with sociological research on inter alia “social capital” (Bourdieu, 1986; Fukuyama, 1995; Portes, 1998; Portes and Landolt, 1996). At the basis of this concept is the idea that people’s life opportunities depend to a large extent on their social connections and other social network ties. Along this line of thinking, many researchers assume that communities endowed with dense social networks will be in a stronger position to confront vulnerability, resolve disputes, and take advantage of new opportunities (Bourdieu, 1986; Torkelsson, 2004). Therefore, studies on community and development increasingly concentrate on identifying the existing local institutions and people’s participation and its impact on further connection and socialization. Some studies on gender also specifically try to analyze the role of gender in forming relation and membership in a group (Westermann, Ashby, and Pretty, 2005). However, results from research on the correlation of social capital to livelihood and development in developing countries are conflicting and to some extent gender blind (Molyneux, 2002). Indeed, it becomes important to look into the different kinds of social interaction and relation female headed households have and the position they are given in the society to understand their livelihood activities.

Land is a very important resource in the livelihood of rural communalities (Verma, 2006). Ethiopia is no exception (Atakilte, et. al., 2001; Desalegn, 1994). First and foremost, land is critical for farming. Obviously, there can be no farming without land. Land is also a critical factor underlying relations of production between people. When farmers lack secure rights to land, they are less likely to invest in farming practices. Therefore, to understand the dynamic between livelihood activities of female headed households and the social dimension of land, it is important to investigate female household head’s status as well as the security of land tenure. But as Verma (2007) and Leach (1991) argues, arrangements for land tenure and access always implicate gender relations. Hence, at the heart of gendered property relations, as well as the sustainability of farming, is the issue of security in tenure. To better understand the complex and dynamic relationship between land and rural households in terms of everyday lived experience, it is important to broaden the scope to include farmers’ diverse struggles over land; how these struggles are contextualized within broader social, political-economic, and historical processes; and what these mean indigenously to local women and men (Moore, 1993: 383). The first step could be to consider land as a material resource. Land is a key resource for sustaining livelihoods in rural area (Garedew, 2010; De Haan et. al., 2005). As such, it is the focus of intense struggles between and among women and men. However, struggles over land are experienced differently by women and men, depending upon the complex interactions of gender, age, marital status, and life-cycle positioning (Verma, 2001; Agrawal, 1997).

Women and men negotiate, access, and maintain control over land as a productive and material resource differently and inequitably within local relations of power. (Verma, 2001; Hopkins, Levin and Haddad; 1994).

Struggles over land underline the importance of women's ability as farmers to secure long-term rights to and control over the land. However, lack or access to insufficient land, lack of male labour and other competing priorities influence the extent to which women as farmers and head of households are willing to invest in labor-intensive activities to sustain their household livelihood. Put another way, women's ability to sustain their livelihood and their farms is compromised by lack of access to economic or other resources that affect their security in tenure (Mackenzie, 1995; Leach, 1991). There is also considerable diversity in gender norms related to property ownership, inheritance, and the division of assets after divorce, with men favored in the majority of cases (Fafchamps and Quisumbing, 2005). The co-existence of customary and statutory laws — a situation of legal plurality — provides an overlapping set of legal institutions, each characterized by its own sets of rules, principles, and accepted procedures. For instance in Ethiopia, Tigray regional state follows gender progressive land proclamation, and progressive implementation. Customarily, both husbands and wives have equal rights to land. Land is registered under both their names, and upon separation and dissolution of marriage, they take away equal shares of the land. While, Southern and Oromia regional states are undergoing ongoing processes of land registration and women and men are treated equally under the regional land proclamation, in most cases, women have inequitable access and control over land (Holden, et. al., 2008). According to the customary rule in Oromiya, women gain access to land through marriage. Upon dissolution of marriage, they are expected to leave their marital homes and return to their natal homes. If land is not allocated to them by their fathers or brothers, they are forced to leave the area in order to survive (Verma, 2007; Hadera, 2002). This plurality of legal structures results in a complex web of options, opportunities, and political spaces for women and men to maneuver, negotiate rights to land, and contest threats to security in tenure, but within real limits set by gender ideology. Land is also an important symbolic resource. A focus on women's and men's struggles over land must also consider the symbolic and discursive contestations that constitute those struggles (Moore, 1993; Schroeder, 1996).

As a symbolic resource, land holds important meanings within many cultural discourse, defining gender relations and women's and men's rights to access and use land (Little, et. al., 2006). These multiple



meanings are constantly being challenged and transformed within a situation of legal plurality. These, in addition to the multiple meanings and the dual importance of land as both a material and symbolic resource, illustrate the diverse ways in which women and men struggle over long-term access to and security of land, as rights to land are gendered (Little, et. al., 2006; Verma, 2001).

Relations regarding land are complex issues that are influenced by the circumstances of household heads, including their positioning, identity, and reputation. For instance, in Ethiopia Quisumbing (2010) shows that Female headed households are also worse off compared to their male counterparts in terms of land and asset ownership. Male-headed households own 2.2 hectares of land, on average, compared to 1.7 hectares for female-headed households. The study of Little, et. al., (2006, 206) also shows that female – headed households in South Wälo control on average less than 50 and 70 percent of the total livestock and land, respectively, than males do.

Before I start working on the present research, I was also part of a research project that focuses on gender and urbanization in five cities of Ethiopia and I had an assignment to write a chapter on descriptive analysis of female headed households in Bahir Dar, Mekele and Nazareth. The result I obtained from this research calls my attention that further research is necessary to deepen our understanding of these heterogeneous groups known as female headed households. Perhaps I also notice that changing the focus into rural area could also benefit livelihood and gender programmes and possibly, make a contribution to further studies on the matter.

Throughout this thesis, personal interview and voices female headed households provide a critical medium for exploring household heads experiences and realities. For example, the study of Mebrat (2005) about the situation of women and land right in Ethiopia demonstrates that gender division of labor is central to livelihood of households, and continuously negotiated. Gender mediates not only women's and men's differential access to and control of important resources for sustaining their household livelihood, but also cultural constructions pertaining to other relations of production that are inseparable from those struggles (Moore, 1996).

It should be pointed out at the beginning that, majority of the participants in this study are female household heads. This focus on female heads is deliberate, for several reasons. First, it reflects the fact that

in most cases there are very few studies pertaining to female headed households in rural Ethiopia particularly that tries to see their livelihood from gender perspective. Second, the interest of the researcher to examine the approach of the community towards the different type of female headed households calls attention to see rationales that exists in the socially constructed relations. Third, as in most other parts of Africa, women in rural Ethiopia are predominantly participating in farming and increasingly, the providers of income for their families (Frank, 1999). Rather than making up a unified, homogenous, and powerless, they are diverse and dynamic agents with knowledge of their environments and skill in managing their household. They shape the material and symbolic worlds around them. But their power, expertise, and knowledge are often hidden from view (Fiona, 2004, Frank, 1999). We often read that men are by default breadwinners and providers, whereas women are dependants or the farmers' wives and assistants.

## **1.2. Research Objectives**

In general this thesis tries to do two major things. One of the main emphases would be to understand and analyse how socially constructed gender relation and capital possession affect the livelihood of female headed household. The second objective is to explore how female headed households use socially given platforms to further negotiate on their household livelihood.

This research project specifically examines three major research questions:

1. How do women negotiate their position as head of household?
2. How do local perceptions of gender have significance for the livelihood activities of female headed households?
3. How do gender relation and capital possession influence female headed household's opportunity to mobilise social relation and social capital?

To answer the above questions this project is framed by Pierre Bourdieu's structural constructionist approach. In his work of the Kabyla society, Bourdieu shows how male domination functions as an everyday structure and activity that enabled him to argue that a gendered view of the world is stored in our habitus. For him a gendered view of the world is stored in our habitus; the habitus is deeply shaped by a pattern of classification that constructs male and female as polar opposites, and at the same time it shapes our action through constant use of that classification. What I have found useful in Bourdieu's structural

constructionist approach is that this approach always recognizes the complexity of the individual position, at least to the extent that individual actions can only be understood by grasping individuals' different structural positions in and historical trajectories across social space (Bourdieu, 1999: 5- 7). As many of Bourdieu's works bring out, individuals must live with the consequences of the power that others' point of view have over them. Thus the investigation of the livelihood of female headed households that are situated at household level and working in a gendered socio economic context calls for looking at their livelihood activity by critically examining their position in a given society.

Bourdieu stresses on the importance of struggle for social recognition as a critical aspect of social life. According to him struggle for social recognition gives rise to institutions, processes and cultural resources to structure groups into self perpetuating hierarchies of domination. Such cultural symbols and practices according to Bourdieu encompass interests and functions to enhance social distinction. Bourdieu pointed out that there is a constant struggle and negotiation to attain a range of interests within field of conflict, and in so doing these agents reproduce the social stratification order (Bourdieu, 1997). Bourdieu calls for the importance of analyzing the social construction of contexts. Contexts affected by “ the system of social relations of production and consumption in which these relations are set up and in which the social functions that they objectively fulfil at any given moment are defined” (Bourdieu, 1977: 231).

The investigation of livelihood activities of female headed households requires the analysis of each form of livelihood capabilities (capitals). Even though sustainable livelihood framework discusses variables from their practical perspective, it failed to explicitly identify power relation which has tremendous impact on gender relation. (See appendix 2) Thus, for the sake of lifting up the work to a higher level and deal with gender relation, the theoretical chapter of the thesis tries to discuss points about different forms of capital. Such discussion will give clue to the reader that capitals are distributed differentially among different households (according to the research) and gender and such differences of distribution are also causes of distinction and reproduction of inequality. The theoretical framework is expected to show the relationship of different influential variables with livelihood activities of female headed households and how such relationship is further modified by gender relation (embodied in habitus). It also examines the relationship of habitus and field and try to show how habitus is not exclusively defined as deterministic concept but it also carries the notion of change within it. The purpose of such theoretical explanation is to show that the thesis is aimed at showing some change of practices among female headed households' livelihood activities.

In the second chapter the thesis will show the general picture of the country, including social and economic situations. Since the research deals with rural livelihood, the different forms of government structures and institutionalized provisions that have close relations with the subjects' livelihood, i.e., peasant associations and saving and credit schemes will be presented. This chapter will also look at what the general picture of gender and rural livelihood in Ethiopia is like. By showing this, the thesis will give an analytical description about gender based variations and similarities of rural households' livelihood in Ethiopia. The overview of female headed households in Ethiopia is also expected to give a glimpse of the number, trends and variation among female headed households in rural Ethiopia. This chapter therefore gives general descriptive information by using previously done research regarding the various governmental provisions for rural households and will show the variations among rural households in Ethiopia in terms of livelihood and headship status.

The fourth chapter is a methodology chapter. This chapter gives a brief introduction about the study wäräda and states the main reason for choosing Bati as a study site. The methods used to collect finding materials and the analysis techniques will also be clearly shown in this chapter. Challenges which are related to collection of finding materials and measures taken to handle the problem without compromising the quality of the data will be presented in this chapter.

Chapter five will look into how female headship is conceptualized in this research. The study reveals that the cause of the formation of female headed households is one of the factors that influences their livelihood activity. Thus, this chapter look into the different reasons for the formation of female headed households and how each factor plays a role in influencing livelihood of female headed households. The main aim of this chapter is, therefore, to show the relationship between formation of female headed households and livelihood.

Chapter five will look at and discuss the different livelihood activities of female headed households and tires to investigate how female headed households' livelihood activities are diversified. Diversification of livelihood calls for livelihood activity beyond coping strategy. By looking at access to different agricultural technologies and provisions, the chapter will try to see how gender relation really influences the extent of female headed households' livelihood activities and limits their diversification. The main aim of this chapter is to show the different livelihood activities of female headed households and investigate the role of gender relation in affecting livelihood diversification of female headed households.

Chapter six will look at social capital and its impact on the livelihood of female headed households. As discussed in Bourdieu's forms of capital, social capital is one of the important factors used to mobilize social relation and networks, which is influenced by possession of economic and cultural capital. After conceptualizing economic capital from the perspective of this study area, the chapter will look into the relation and impact of economic capital upon social capital. By so doing, it will show the role of economic and symbolic capital of female headed households and how they affect social capital.

Chapter seven will look into the emergent form of female headship in terms of defending and diversifying their livelihood. The chapter will identify and discuss the different strategies used among female headed households (e.g., migration) to promote their power of negotiation. By discussing subjects as causes of social change this chapter tries to see the new form of femininity and the changing nature of habitus.

Finally, chapter eight highlights the relation between the work done, the objective of the research and previous work with the same focus. This part attempts to show the contribution the research has made to literature on gender and livelihood and the livelihood activities of female headed households, and it also points out further research areas in relation to this work.

## **Chapter Two: Livelihood and Rural Women of Ethiopia**

### **2.1. Introduction**

In most developing countries land is the basic means of livelihood activities for a large proportion of the population. It also remains an essential basis for life. Lack of well defined boundary division and land use right, and the desire for more land have often led to serious conflicts or even to armed conflicts between individuals, households, groups or states ( Manji, 2008).

A well defined equitable distribution of land is one of the biggest challenges of governing bodies. Equitable distribution refers to the division between state and private property and the consideration of the entire population of a country regardless of gender or origin (Gopal, 1999). Land rights are important aspects to the production and the preservation of this balance. The different land rights include rules on regulation on land use (e.g. cultivation), the development of land (e.g. buildings) and the requirements regarding the disposal of land e.g. sell (Agarwal, 1994; Cornhiel, 1995).

The legal frame that defines relation between land and persons or groups is also an important factor for the sustainable use of land, which is an important livelihood source (Whitehead, 2003). Land law systems differ greatly from region to region because of historical development, political systems or social structures and continuous process of change. In Ethiopia there are both formal administrative and customary laws (Yigremew, 2006; Gopal, 1999). The rules may overlap or contradict each other. In most of rural areas of Ethiopia, access to land is usually regulated by customary law. In the same way the customary rules are seen regulating the rights of women to access and use land. The means by which women can obtain and defend their right are manifested differently depending on their social status, the presence of family network, marital status and so on.

Many literatures pointed out that in Ethiopia women have problems with land ownership and female headed households also encounter difficulty in regard to access to land and labour compared to men headed households (Zenebework, 2000; Sara, 2007; Frank, 1999). There are different reasons for the presence of gap in regard to access and ownership. By taking the 1995 Ethiopian Constitution into

consideration this chapter tries to show what looks like the constitutional provisions for women in terms of access and ownership of land. The chapter attempts to explore the role of Ethiopian women especially female headed households in securing the livelihood of their household. The different policies and actual implementation of different programmes like land proclamation, role of peasant associations and productive safety net programme are also pointed out in the chapter as explanatory points for the status of female headed households in the country.

## **2.2. Contextual Background**

### **2.2.1. Socio economic overview of Ethiopia**

Ethiopia is the second most populous country in Sub-Saharan Africa. According to the latest population projection figure based on the result of the May 2007 National Population and Housing Census of Ethiopia, the projected population figure for the year 2011 is 82, 401, 998 of which 50.9 are males and 49.1, are females (CSA, 2011). Ethiopia is located in the north-eastern part of the Horn of Africa and shares boundaries with Djibouti, Eritrea, Kenya, Somalia, and Sudan. It has a tropical monsoon climate characterized by wide topographic-induced variations. The country has highly irregular rainfall and is usually at a high risk of annual droughts (FAO, 2005; World Bank, 2007).

The dominant means of livelihood in Ethiopia is sedentary agriculture in the form of mixed farming in highland Ethiopia, and agro-pastoral and pastoral systems in the lowland areas of the country. The mixed agriculture of the highlands represents the traditional (peasant) agriculture, where both crops and livestock productions are integrated in a horticulture-livestock (hoe-agriculture) or in a mixed crop-livestock (plough-agriculture) sub systems (Ewnetu, 2009). Being the dominant sector, agriculture contributes about 50% to the overall GDP, generates 90% of export earnings and supplies about 70% of the country's raw material to the secondary activities (CSA, 2009). The main agricultural products include cereals, pulses, oilseeds, coffee, potatoes, sugarcane, flower, fish, and livestock. Coffee is the main export commodity, with total exports of about US\$350 million in 2006 (Gabre-Madhin and Mezgebou, 2006; World Bank, 2007).

Agriculture is based on extensive plough cultivation with the exception of some areas in which hoe cultivation takes place (Mottram and James, 2005). The Ethiopian Agricultural Sample Enumeration conducted by the CSA in 2001 (EASE, 2003) identified the presence of 10.3 million land holders

producing crops each year; 8.32 million land holders exclusively or predominantly use animal traction and of these 99.8% use oxen, confirming the overwhelming importance of oxen to the Ethiopian agricultural economy.

Ox-plough technology, providing the backbone of farming, has existed remarkably unchanged for thousands of years (Astake and Gebresenbet, 1998). Except for areas where perennial crops such as *enset*, coffee and chat dominate or where cultivation is conducted on slopes that are too steep to plough, oxen, working in pairs, are used to provide the draught power for some nine million single chisel-tines (Mottram and James, 2005). Report of the Government of Ethiopia (1987) and the study of Mottram and James (2005) also shows that in Ethiopia more than 90% of the land prepared annually by small land holder farmers<sup>1</sup> for crop production is ploughed with *Maresha*. *Maresha* is a traditional ox plough pulled by a pair of local oxen. It is light implement ranging from 17 to 26 kg which makes it possible to be transported to and from the field over different terrains by one person (GOE, 1987).

Most of moist deficit low land areas of the country are affected by food insecurity. Environmental degradation that resulted in recurrent drought and hunger forced most of the inhabitants of moist deficit low land including the study area to remain in short of resources - land, livestock and labour. Such constraints greatly affected the ability of households in such area to construct viable livelihood and led them to experience problems that could push them to disadvantaged position (Askale, 2005).

Ethiopia's fast population growth combined with dependency on traditional agriculture production has led to limited access to the country's land resources. Getachew (2008) stated that Ethiopia's agricultural productivity is severely affected by rapid population growth. His study further indicated that the increasing size of small holder farmers in the country is not supported by adequate and modern agricultural services and this has negatively influenced farmer's capacity to be food self sufficient. Thus, despite the different measures taken by government, the agricultural sector is still characterized by low labour productivity and small land holding, subsistence farming, soil degradation, inadequate and variable rainfall, tenure insecurity, lack of financial services, imperfect agricultural markets and poor infrastructure (Fafchamp and Quisumbing, 2000). Consequently, most of rural population have been forced to use marginal lands or commute to other areas. Furthermore, Yigremew (2006) shows that women in general

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<sup>1</sup> 51.6% of rural households have access to one and less than one hectare of land (DFID, 2003).



and female headed households in particular are victims of access to marginal lands. According to his study this happens because of the existing gender based division of labour.

Although agriculture remains the main source of livelihood in most rural areas of Ethiopia, there is an increasing awareness that livelihood diversification plays a strategic role in rural systems (Garedew, 2010). Farming has increasingly been unable to provide sufficient means of survival for poor households and this has created serious problems in the livelihood of such household in the country. For this reason, many rural people, especially rural women, have started adopting other strategies to enable them to cope up with livelihood problems. For instance, in Tigray Region, farm households diversify their livelihood sources into non-farm activities derived by both low farm income and availability of surplus family labour (Woldenhanna and Oskam, 2001). The study of Sharp, Deverux and Yared (2003) also shows that in the north-western highlands of Ethiopia, destitute households and female-headed households have more diversified livelihoods than non destitute households to off-set agricultural deficits.

### **2.3. Land Tenure System and Women's Tenure Security**

Prior to the 1975 agrarian reform, the land tenure systems were heterogeneous. In most parts of the country, peasants gained access to land through inheritance or through corporate groups consisting of individuals tracing their descent from a certain ancestor. The most common and significant social relationship in most of rural Ethiopia was that of landlord-tenant. In most of northern Ethiopia, women had the right of inheritance and receiving land as gifts. Ruling class women had also the right of purchasing land (Hoben, 1973; Crummey, 1981).

The land reform launched in 1975 by the military regime known as the Derg promised to end old-fashioned land system of the imperial regime. 'Land to the Tiller' was the inspiring appeal the Derg used to get the confidence of students and landless peasants hoped to promote their economic situation (Pausewang, 2004).

The Derg Proclamation stated that 'without differentiation of the sexes, any person who is willing to personally cultivate land shall be allocated land.' Land was distributed by family size and registered under male heads of households. By using the household as the unit of allocation, the Proclamation assumed that households were consistent and thus failed to take intra-household resource allocation and utilization into consideration (Dessalegn, 1994; Ege, 1990; Pausewang, 1988; Tekie, 1999; Zenebework, 2000).

According to Hadera, the Proclamation assumed that gender-based divisions of labour in agriculture were unchangeable and classified women with persons who, due to age or illness, could not personally cultivate their holding. In other words, the Proclamation failed to challenge the cultural taboo against women ploughing and sowing. This effectively reaffirmed the beliefs and practices governing the relations between women and men. Consequently, most women failed to obtain rights to possess land (Hadera, 2002).

However, with the formulation of the 1995 Ethiopian Constitution and the federal land laws, efforts are made to ensure a more equal access to land for both women and men. The 1995 constitution underlined the state ownership of both rural and urban land. Land is defined as the property of the people, but is administered on their behalf by the state. In practice land is state property, and the people are only entitled on the land when it is in their possession; land cannot be sold, exchanged or mortgaged (FDRE, 1995). To maintain better justice for women, the constitution provides equal rights to women for the use, transfer, administration, and control of land. Those who wish to earn their living by farming have the right to use land freely. Every Ethiopian has full rights to the immovable property that they build and to the permanent improvements brought on the land by his or her labour or capital. This right includes the right to alienate, to donate, and, where the right of land use expires, to remove such property, transfer title, or claim compensation for it (FDRE, 1995). The implementation procedures are to be determined by law.

The federal government has the power to enact laws for the use and protection of land and other natural resources, whereas the responsibility for administering land rests with regional states, the federal government issued a proclamation on rural land administration on July 1997 pursuant to the constitution, which vests the power “to enact laws for utilization and protection of land and other natural resources, historical sites, and objects” (NEWA and EWLA: 2003). The law is brief and provides directions for the administration of rural land, two of the 12 sub articles of article 4 are related to women. Article 4(4) of the Proclamation states that: *“The land administration law of the regions shall confirm the equal rights of women in respect of the use, administration and control of land as well as in respect of transferring and bequeathing holding rights.”* It also requires the councils to ensure the distribution of land without distinction on the basis of sex and provide security against eviction and displacement from holdings except for the purpose of land redistribution. Besides, Article (4) Sub-Article (3) of the proclamation allows women to use hired labour on their holdings or to, otherwise, make agreements thereto. The

proclamation, hence, in addition to ensuring the equal access to land for women, provides them with assurance against eviction that might happen to women following divorce or marriage.

Indeed, the proclamations have been followed by regional land laws (Yigremew, 2006; Hadera, 2002; Zenebework, 2000). These laws have strengthened inheritance rights within the family, giving equal rights to inheritance for sons and daughters. Further, the new law implies that land should be shared equally between the husband and wife upon divorce and the wife and children should take over the land if the husband/father dies. However despite its important provisions, the proclamation is criticized for leading to high inter regional diversity of key legal provisions. The law provides directions for administration of rural land by regional governments but failed to provide detailed norms for land allocation and eligibility (Yigremew, 2006; Yigremew, 2005).

Following the development of the 1997 proclamation, new land redistribution was also carried out in the Amhara Region in 1997. More recent interventions at regional levels have also involved redistribution of communal lands to individual households. In March 1997, the Rural Land Redistribution Proclamation of the Amhara National State was promulgated. Article nine of this Proclamation openly states the need of equal distribution of land to both men and women. However, a study by Askale (2005) has found that the distribution targets only single women who are in charge of their own livelihood security and has thus far omitted other categories of women such as divorcees, widow and single adult women who are still dependent on their parents and other family members. As she pointed out, the land policy in Amhara Region provides for women's rights through joint titling, which incorporates names and photographs of both husband and wife on the title certificate. However, it is unclear what impact joint titling will have on divorce (Askale, 2005). Such arrangement can be explained by the form of land reform in Ethiopia which followed the trend of using the household as a unit of allocation, which does not give much attention to power relations within the household and the wider social and political environment which mediates women and men's effective access to resources.

The implementation of land proclamation is criticized for having high interregional diversity of key legal provisions in the country (Yigremew, 2006; Zenebework, 2000). Taking such gap into consideration, it is very difficult to give a clear picture of Ethiopian women on land right issues both in terms of access to and control over land. In fact, the constitutions govern the laws of all regions, but regions don't follow the same legalized form of land rights. For instance, in Tigray Region at the time of the fight (1987), Tigray

People Liberation Front (TPLF) redistributed land to individuals in a household and not to the household as a unit<sup>2</sup>. As the study by Zenebework (2000) and Hammond (1999) shows, this created an opportunity to benefit from the law. According to these studies the 1987 regional land law granted land for both females and males who had reached the minimum ages of 15 and 22 respectively, despite their marital status and their parents' assets. Hadera (2002) also noted the role of the progressive land redistribution process. As Hadera stated, the basis of land redistribution in Tigray helped women of the region to exercise their constitutional right to access resources and to improve their living conditions significantly. She also noted that because of their right to enjoy their property, at the time of divorce most women are not discriminated against their right (Hadera, 2002). A study by Meberat (2005) also indicates that in Tigray the constitutional law is implemented on ground to a higher degree than other regions. In other regions of the country, for example in Oromia, studies show that the statutory law is highly affected by religious and customary rules. Unlike Tigray women, with the exceptions of female headed households, women in Oromia Region have lesser right to own land; married women have only access to land through their husbands (Mebrat, 2005). In the south too women hardly have inheritance right. In very few cases they do inherit land, but hold it nominally for sons (World Bank, 1998).

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<sup>2</sup> The TPLF Was implementing land reforms in Tigray, the area they were occupying during the liberation war.

## **2.4. Rural Women in Ethiopia**

In rural Ethiopia, women encompass half of the population (31,321,214 out of 61,888,111) (CSA, 2011). They are highly involved in all socio-economic and cultural aspects of the society. They engage in a variety of farm and off farm activities. According to a study by Thomas and Laverne (2004) rural women in Ethiopia are integrated into the rural economy, which is basically labour intensive and which demands a heavy physical duty. In most communities of Ethiopia the word farming denotes the activity of ploughing and sowing (Frank, 1999). In all areas of plough cultivation in Ethiopia, there is a cultural taboo against women ploughing and sowing (Eva, 2008). With the exception of these two tasks, women in rural Ethiopia participate in every aspect of production work, such as weeding, harvesting and post-harvest activities (Mebrat, 2005; Yigremew, 1999).

Similar to the widely documented experience of other African countries, in Ethiopia hoe-based cultivation depends on extensive female labour in all aspects of cultivation. Ethiopian women also play a significant role in animal husbandry. In livestock production women are often responsible for herding, tending sick animals, watering, barn cleaning, milking and milk processing (Frank, 1999).

Besides farming, women in rural areas are supposed to be engaged in operations such as threshing, milling, cooking, collecting of wood and water and carrying out domestic chores. As indicated by Mebrat (2005) women are heavily burdened due to their triple gender roles: reproduction, production and social roles. For instance, a study by Gemechu and others (2009), on gender role in crop production and management in three rural communities of Ethiopia, indicates that females play a more significant role than males in manual weeding, threshing and transportation of farm produce. However, both males and females play equal roles in planting, soil conservation and management, application of fertilizers and herbicides, storage, and marketing of farm produce. In most rural communities, female children are also expected to undertake the task of fetching water and collecting fuel wood. However, a study by Frank (1999) illustrates that despite women's active participation in agricultural production and processing and marketing of food products, their identity as farmers is highly challenged within the agricultural development framework in Ethiopia.

... in terms of semantics, throughout Ethiopia, both within government bureaus and communities, the term 'farmer' is used synonymously with the word for 'man'. It is clear that whether rural women contribute to the process of agricultural production to a greater or lesser extent, they are generally perceived as marginal players, particularly by those individuals with significant influence on development activities such as bureau heads, development agents and peasant associations (CISP, 1997 in Frank 1999, 2).

Other studies on rural households in Ethiopia show that rural households can no longer sustain their livelihoods through agricultural activities alone; men, women, and children in rural households should participate in different forms of off farm activities throughout the year (Jenny, 1999; Zenebework, Eshetu and Konjit, 2002). However, despite the existing reality, there is a prevailing conception of the 'male bread winner' (Lewis, 2001). The conception considers the male as the sole responsible organ for winning the family's daily bread. Such perception considers males as main providers of rural household incomes. Or the conception fails to give proper recognition to women's contributions to household finances and expose them to disadvantage position in the household and in the community compared to men (Lewis, 2001). As a study by Sara (2007) also shows, household responsibilities provide women in Ethiopia little flexibility and fewer economic opportunities. Typically, their income levels are below the national average. In addition, they have very little access to job opportunities and resources to help them improve their livelihood status.

The disadvantaged position of women in agriculture is reported in many studies. For instance, Yigremew (2001) explains that in terms of average farmland women have smaller share than men have. His study also shows that they are in short of labour, have access to inadequate agricultural services, fewer or no oxen and less access to other livelihood assets. As Yared (1995) and Yigremew (2001) also illustrate, in Amhara Region where the average size of land for a household is 0.5 hectare or less, women have very small plot of land holdings compared to men. Another study also shows that rural women of the country have very small farmland compared to men. Among a total of 13, 439,174 land holders in the year 2011, 19.3 % (2, 599, 024) are females, whereas 80.7% (10,840,150) are males. Among these the number of women who are engaged in crop production is 398, 771 compared to 912,929 men who are engaged in crop production (CSA, 2011). The main problems identified with respect to the work of rural women included limited access to basic farm tools like land, grinding mill services, minimal participation in

community decision making, limited access to credit, and transportation (especially for domestic transport tasks). Some of the causes identified by Ali (2000) and Yigremew (2006) to such difference include the gender division of labour, the prevailing patriarchal system, inadequate membership in peasant associations, smaller family size of female-headed households, gender biases of local officials, and lack of important livelihood resources.

According to Askale (2005) those women who have equal size of land with men in Amhara Region could not benefit equally from the land as a result of lack of male family members to plough their land and, lack of access to a pair of oxen. Another study also shows that rural women are really facing a problem of access to different agricultural services, including credit services (Mebrat, 2005; Frank, 1999). According to Yigremew (2001), women in Amhara Region lack adequate access to agricultural credit services which are linked to agricultural inputs, such as fertilizer, improved seeds, and pesticides, thus leaving out the majority of the women heading their households. A similar study shows that women living in male-headed households are better off since the households usually have assets such as land and oxen (Yigremew, 2001).

The study by Askale (2005) on women land right also shows that the EPRDF land reform had brought little impact on the lives of rural women. Similarly Emebet (2006) shows that despite the significant attention given by the government to the agricultural sector, rural women's access to resources including land and extension services is limited. In addition, the study by Girma and others (2010) supports the practice that the existing traditional division of labour and lack of recognition of women's agricultural activity is highly affecting women in terms of access to agricultural inputs and services.

#### **2.4.1. Female Headed Households in Ethiopia: Research Review**

The overall proportion of rural female-headed households in Ethiopia is increasing (Yigremew, 2001; Howard and Smith, 2006). A study by Addis (2000) indicates that the possession of land by de jure and de facto female household head was 20% and 10-15% respectively across Ethiopia in 2000. According to a Wäräda level research in South Wälo, there are more de jure female-headed households in Bati (14%), Legambo (33%), Chachato (16%), Kama (12.5%) and Gerado (23%) (Stone and Mengestu, 2002). In her

study of land right of women in Ethiopia, Mebrat (2005) indicated that female headed households in Tigray comprise 45% of the total female headed households of the Region. This is mainly due to the long lasting civil war in Tigray Region. Studies on the growth of female-headed households in Ethiopia also found that one-fourth of all rural households in the country are headed by women (Stone and Mengestu, 2002).

There are several explanations for the proliferation of female-headed households in rural Ethiopia. High rate of male out migration, divorce, military conscription and overall gender bias treatments are among the commonly mentioned factors (Stone, 2001). Other studies also consider the current government policy environment, basically land redistribution, as a contributing factor on the creation of female-headed households (Yigremew, 2006). Stone (2001) also mentioned that the definition and boundaries of female headed households in Ethiopia is considerably more fluid, thus likelihood of remarriage may play significant role for the proliferation of female headed households in the country.

Some studies regarding female-headed household in Ethiopia show that this group of households are highly disadvantaged group in the country. For instance, a study carried out by Fiona in 2004 in southern Tigray asserted that female-headed households that constitute a great percentage of this region's population are among the most destitute. A similar study in Tigray Region also revealed that the chance of being impoverished for female-headed households is 35% whereas it is only 8% for male-headed households. The study by National Coalition for Food Security (2003) also pointed out that women, specifically female headed households, comprise the bigger proportion of the 5 million most chronically food insecure people in the country. The Coalition further noted that a destitution study in northern part of the country has found that 35% of destitute households were female headed. According to the study, this explains overrepresentation of female headed households among people who live in severe poverty situations. Another household study by Fafchamps and Quisumbing (2000) in different regions regarding female headed households' possession of land with full use rights also found that female-headed households possessed nearly half of the holdings of male-headed households. The household survey that was undertaken by the BASIS research program in Ethiopia, in South Wälo and Oromiya zones also pointed out that the sample female-headed households (429 households) do have lower average income than male-headed households (386 birr vs. 507 birr) (Stone, 2002). A similar study also identified that female-headed households own fewer livestock compared to male-headed households. According to this



study, at the end of 2001, male-headed households owned 4.37 livestock while female-headed households owned 2.67. A study by Deverux and others (2006) also pointed out that female-headed households are more prone to food shortage than male-headed households.

Cases related to cultural practices and gender bias institutional treatments are also mentioned as causes of the disadvantaged position of female-headed households. The assessment study by Devereux et al. (2006) in four regions of Ethiopia concluded that female-headed households make significantly lower income compared with male-headed households with a 69% margin. The study also identified that there is regional variation in terms of amount of income through headship. For instance, the average male headed household in Amhara gets four times as much as a female headed household in SNNPR (Devereux et al., 2006).

Diversifying household income sources was observed as one of the coping strategies for most of female-headed households in the country. Female-headed households follow a number of livelihood strategies depending on their dependency ratio, age, the likelihood of remarriage, as well as the overall economic health of their living area. Their economic diversification branching out from farming to trading, food selling, and migrations (Stone, 2002). According to a study by Sara (2007), female headed households are involved in casual, informal and unregulated labour in income generating activities such as processing local beverages, selling fire wood, and handicraft, due to lack of resources (land, labour and oxen) and services (credit). Stone (2002) pointed out that livelihood diversification of female headed households may help them to create more flexibility to move in and out of a solitary head status than might agriculture or herding does.

In general, researches done on the proliferation of female headed households and participation of female headed households in different agricultural based institutions and provisions tell us the challenges faced by this group of society. The challenges may range from lack of recognition to having minimal participation at different level of rural based institutions. This study therefore tries to see the role of socially constructed gender relation in the livelihood activity of female headed households. It also tries to see factors that give rise to the presence of different forms of female headed households and the mechanisms that these groups of society develop to be beneficiaries of different rural based institutions and agricultural programmes.

## **2.5. Peasant Associations**

The most important rural institution in pre 1991 Ethiopia was the Peasant Association (PA). Peasant Associations were formed under the military regime that governed Ethiopia from 1974-1991. The PA is an administrative unit usually consisting of one or a few village (*qäbälé*) still relevant today. As put by Teka (2000: 34) “PA is a grassroots institution, which almost every government or non governmental activity that is meant to reach the peasant masses in Ethiopia has to go through”. He also puts that “the PA is a membership organization that has most direct contact with the peasantry. It is a membership organization, yet it is the de-facto local government” (Teka, 2000:35). PA was created after the 1975 land proclamation which nationalized all land, making it “the property of the Ethiopian people”. The PA was created in each village as autonomous representation of peasant interests and self administration (Pausewang, 2004).

The peasant association was given an important role to play in the administration of the land proclamation that took place in 1975. The 1975 land Proclamation completely eradicated the different tenure systems that were in the country (Dessalegne, 1984). Smallholder farm households were organized into peasant associations (PAs) each on a nominal 800 hectare of land and typically made up of 300 to 400 farm households. Any person who personally cultivates the land is to be allotted up to 10 hectares for himself and his family (Cohen et al., 1976; Stahl, 1989). As explained well by Dejene (1989) the PAs were created to assume the functions of local governments. There were many economic and political restructuring that have come with the new provision of land reform. The power and authoritative gap that was created during the land reform was meant to be filled by the PA. The PA was given the responsibility of redistributing land and oversees the right of all rural residents to have access to farm land, on the basis of equal shares (Stahl, 1989, Pausewang, 2004). It was given the power of registration. It registers the names of all members entitled to land use rights, the registry was used for taxation purposes and during land redistribution (Teka, 2000; Abebe, 2006).

The executive body of a peasant association in principle was elected “democratically” by the broad peasant members, but this was not the practice in most cases (Teka, 2000; Pausewang, 2004). The military government established a strict regime of control over the peasant, by proclaiming a new requirement for the executive body of a peasant association. The new requirement considered ability to read and write as essential criteria to secure a chairperson position (Pausewang, 2004). Old peasants who had the

confidence of their peers were replaced by the young who had gone to school but have little knowledge about agriculture. The newly elected or assigned young chairpersons lack confidence among the peasant. They usually rely on the officials and orders they get from them to keep their authority (Pausewang, 2004). Thus PAs which were meant to stand for peasants' interests were converted by the Derg regime into tools of state control over peasant (Stahl, 1989, Teka, 2000; Pausewang, 2004).

The Derg government through its party and administrative organs controlled and used the association for its own objectives (Teka, 2000). Some of the important functions assigned to the PA were the management and implementation of the land reform. The associations were initially established with wide judicial and administrative powers at the village level (Stahl, 1989). According to Stahl (1989) the association had a tribunal which functions as a local court (*Shengo*) to adjudicate minor legal matters. The association used to control the life of the community through the institution of judicial tribunals. These courts had jurisdiction to adjudicate cases involving land disputes and other legal cases. In addition to the management and implementation of the land reform the PA also serves as a means of disseminating national directives, like collectivisation of agriculture, villagisation and resettlement. Mobilizing labour for different community based works such as tree planting, soil conservation as well as distributing food aid were implemented by and through the PAs. In addition, the Derg regime used these institutions as a recruitment ground for militia to the war front against Somalia in the South and the civil war in the northern part of the county in Eritrea and Tigray (Teka, 2000).

In today's Ethiopia a peasant association is not autonomous self administration group as the name might suggest, but the lowest tier of civil administration, equivalent to a village. The current government calls them *qäbälé* in urban areas and peasant association (*qäbälé*) in rural areas and placates them as organs of self administration (Pankrust, 2003; Pausewang, 2004; World Bank, 1998). Under the current government (EPRDF), *qäbälé* administrations were set up, bringing together two or three of the former peasant associations with similar judicial powers to the latter (Pankrust, 2003). Under the current government peasant association in rural areas are small village level bodies that help to deliver services to rural households. They are sometimes the only association in a remote area, and government departments like the ministry of agriculture deliver services through them (Pankrust, 2003).

Pausewang (2004) also shows that under the EPRDF government peasant associations serve as organization unit for the farmers of the community and provide the formal structure to access resources like extension services, fertiliser and land. It provides a link between the state and the peasants and is responsible for enforcing the directives from government ministries. With the exception of female headed households, most women were excluded from membership in the PAs as only heads of households were registered as members. According to Dessalegn (1994) by 1990, it was estimated that women comprised only twelve percent of the PA membership, mostly female heads of households or those engaged in small businesses. In 1994 female membership in PAs was estimated to be between twenty and twenty five percent. This growth is most likely due to the death and destabilisation caused by the civil war, resettlement and other calamities (Dessalegn, 1994). Moreover, there is no recent study that shows this increase in female membership is translated into active participation in the PA's.

A study by Frank (1999) noted that female headed households have better potential to be members of PAs than women in male headed households; however, their participation in the different activities of the association that need their decision making role is very minimal. She also noted that lack of access to power in the association exposes them to have minimal access to extension and related services provided through the association (Frank, 1999). Access to different agricultural inputs and technologies by female members of peasant associations is mentioned to be low. According to Frank (1999) most PA leaders perceive that women don't have the important capabilities to utilize different agricultural technologies and inputs as male farmers. This fact is therefore seen as impeding female members of peasant associations from accessing important agricultural inputs. Even though there is no current study done on membership of female headed households in PA, the practice that all households that are paying land tax are considered as PA members put all land owner female headed households as members of PAs. However the active participation of female headed households in the PAs still depends on many factors of which gender relation in the specific locality plays a big role.

## **2.6. Productive Safety Net Programme**

The Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP) was launched by the Government of Ethiopia, with donor support, in January 2005, with an agreed plan to support 4.5 million chronically food insecure people in SNNP, Amhara, Tigay, Oromiya, Dire Dawa and Harari Regions (Ministry Of Agriculture And Rural Development, 2008). The PSNP is the largest social transfer programme in Africa,

reaching approximately 11% of the national population in 2006 (8.3 million out of 71 million people) (Sabates and Devereux, 2010). In 2006, the Programme planned to provide support to 6.7 million in these six regions, as well as a further 472,229 in Afar Region<sup>3</sup>. In 2008 a pilot pastoral Safety Net Programme was launched in selected *wärädas* of Afar, Somali, Oromiya and SNNP regions<sup>4</sup>. The Programme is run in cooperation between the Government of Ethiopia and a consortium of donor organizations. The implementation of the Programme represents a significant transformation of the Government's strategy for meeting the Poverty and Hunger Millennium Development Goal in Ethiopia (Devereux et al., 2008). The major objective of the plan is to provide households with enough income (cash/food) to meet their food gap and thereby protect their household assets from depletion. It also focuses on building community assets to contribute to addressing the root causes of food insecurity. In general, the overall principle of the Productive Safety Net Programme (PSNP) is to facilitate a gradual shift away from a system dominated by emergency humanitarian aid to productive safety net system resources via multi-year framework (Government of Ethiopia, 2004).

The Programme covers more than 8.3 million people and operates with an annual budget of nearly 500 million USD (Sabates and Devereux, 2010; Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, 2009). The New Safety Net Programme targets poor households in two ways, through direct support (DC) and through public works (PW). Direct support is mainly provided to labour scarce households where the breadwinner is either elderly or disabled and cannot participate in any kind of public work. Payment to PSNP public work participant is given both in cash and food. Households targeted for public works employment were planned to receive up to five days work per month (at a wage of 6 birr per day or its equivalent in food) for each household member, which is less than the market wage rate. When the delivery is in kind, the payment is three kg of grain per day plus cooking oil. Both direct support beneficiary individuals and individuals participating in the public work get the same amount of transfer (Workneh, 2008). All household members of a targeted household qualify for public work, but it is only the adults that are participating in the work. Adult members of the targeted household are also allowed to work on behalf of children, elders and the disabled. Households who qualify for either the public work or

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<sup>3</sup>The Programme in Afar Region only provides direct support, acknowledging the need to identify appropriate mechanisms for intervention in pastoral areas (Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, 2008).

<sup>4</sup>Actual beneficiary numbers in each year were often higher with regions using the contingency budget to support additional households (Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, 2008).

for free should receive cash or food transfer on a regular predictable basis for a period of five years (RHVP, 2007).

Public work has been designed as an asset protection mechanism for the household level and to create productive community assets (Workneh, 2008; RHVP, 2007). Participants in public work programme typically work in community development activities such as roads, dams, terraces, and local infrastructure construction. The Safety Net Programme is further supported by a series of food security activities, jointly referred to as the Other Food Security Programme (OFSP). This includes access to credit, agricultural extension, technology transfer (such as advice on food crop production, cash cropping, livestock production and soil and water conservation), and irrigation and water harvesting schemes. Such additional food security activities are fundamental to the objectives of the PSNP. The main objective of the programme is:

... to provide transfers to the food insecure population in chronically food insecure *wärädas* in a way that prevents asset depletion at the household level and creates assets at the community level. The Programme will thus address immediate human needs while simultaneously (i) supporting the rural transformation process, (ii) preventing long-term consequences of short-term consumption shortages, (iii) encouraging households to engage in production and investment, and (iv) promoting market development by increasing household purchasing power (Government of Ethiopia, 2004).

Vulnerable *wärädas* are identified using an Early Warning System that has evolved fairly efficiently over time. Within each *wäräda*, households qualified for different programs are identified using both administrative and community targeting methods (Gilligan, et. al., 2008; Sabates and Devereux, 2010). The study by Devereux and others (2006), on trends in PSNP transfers within targeted households, also suggests that female headed and older-headed households are generally more vulnerable and more likely to need Direct Support than male headed households and those with younger heads.

Studies indicate that the safety net programs have managed to bring changes in terms of nutrition, attitudes, food consumption, asset protection and asset building (Slater et al., 2006). An assessment made by the Institute of Development Studies of Sussex on the impact of PSNP also shows that from the total sample

households, three quarter of the beneficiaries improved their food security, 62% protected their assets and 46% have had access to services (Sharp, Brown and Amdissa, 2006). However, some labour poor households are identified as less beneficiary of the system (Workneh, 2008). Such households include female-headed households and people affected by HIV/ AIDS. Female heads who are overburdened with both the productive and reproductive activities of their households face difficulty in compromising their time and labour for the Productive Safety Net Programme. According to the study by Regional Hunger and Vulnerability Programme (2007) such vulnerable group of households found to have shortage of labour to work the five days per household member needed to earn the full monthly transfer entitlement for their family.

The study conducted by Regional Hunger and Vulnerability Programme (2007) also indicated that female-headed households are commonly more labour constrained and thus less able or willing to participate in public work projects, especially those requiring a high minimum level of effort. There are also pressures to minimise the number of Direct Support (DS) beneficiaries and pre-set quotas are being applied in many areas, which do not match the community needs assessments. In addition to being labour poor household the heavy workload and working hours on public works are also reported as additional burden for women (RHVP, 2007). According to a study conducted by Evan (2008) Such problem is pushing women especially female-headed households towards failing to combine participation in the programme with their domestic and other community and productive work. In terms of unequal gender treatment in the Safety Net Programme the study by Pankhrust (2009) suggests that targeted female headed households (“off truck households”) face constraints, and the PSNP equation, at least in its current format, may not be the appropriate option for these types of households.

In general despite its achievements in the creation of household asset, the Safety Net Programme is criticised for the eligibility criteria it is using. Adjustments on how to balance the labour of some households should be considered (Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, 2009).

## Chapter Three: Theoretical Framework

### 3.1. Introduction

The present study is located within a structural constructionist framework. In relation to practice, structural constructivist framework transcends the dichotomies of structuralism and subjectivism. A structural constructionist perspective moves the focus of concern from the practice of specific action under objective structure to the social context in which subjectivity occurs. A structural constructionist framework has been selected for the present study because of its emphasis on the complex relation between subject and object. The framework is considered suitable for reconciling two opposing notions: that social structures mechanically determine people's practices; and that people are free agents acting consciously and rationally (Bourdieu, 1977:83, 1989:14, 2000:8). For the purpose of the study of livelihood of female headed households, I will use Pierre Bourdieu's theories of practice. What I found very useful from Bourdieu's theory is its capacity to cut through the dichotomous notion of individuals as either passive subjects of social conditioning, or as rational, autonomous, conscious and free. Instead he developed a holistic view that sees people's habitus as having "an infinite capacity for generating" thoughts and actions (Bourdieu, 1990b:55). The concept further opens the way for viewing female headed households as not just comfortably accepting their positions, but as potentially wanting to change, as potentially having the ability to change, as well as the ability to influence objective structures.

I personally position myself as a social constructionist who emphasizes on gender as constructed by our positioning within social institutions and structures on one side and also our subjection to discourse. I believe that the place of gender within Bourdieu's theoretical framework remains understated. Gender was not Bourdieu's primary project and his theory of gender has been criticised for failing to take into account the "detraditionalising of gender" (Adkins, 2003:32) and patriarchy (Fowler, 2003:470), along with men's and women's increased reflexivity towards gendered practices (Adkins, 2003:33) in western societies, by instead focusing on the "structural constants of masculine domination" (Bourdieu, 2001:81; Fowler, 2003:479; Silva, 2005:98). However despite Bourdieu's relative disregard of gender in much of his work, I have taken up his theories and adapted them for the purpose of this thesis. Among all, his identification of multiple forms of capital may provide 'a powerfully elaborate conceptual framework for understanding the role of gender in the social relations.



His concepts of cultural capital and habitus have indeed been integrating aspects of everyday lived experience to explain the ways in which disadvantage and privilege are structured within a larger social system. Reay (1998), for example, utilize cultural capital and habitus as ‘conceptual tools’ to undertake empirical research on the involvement of working and middle class mothers’ in their children’s primary schooling, concluding that cultural capital plays a key role in understanding the ways in which access to resources influences the support women are able to provide for their children’s schooling, whilst habitus is used ‘as a way of looking at what women are doing; a way that conceptualizes the present in terms of the influences of the past’ (Reay 1998: 32). Whereas, I believe that, adopting the cultural capital model as a theoretical framework shows how social structure hinder the ability to trade and capitalize upon the scarce forms of capital, but at the same time it acknowledge the way in which how power and agency may play a role in attempts to break out restricted social roles.

Pierre Bourdieu (1930 - 2004) was one of the prominent French sociologists who took both men and women into consideration as social agents in his discussion of theory of practice. He had achieved respected status in cultural anthropology as a result of his studies of the Kabyle in northern Algeria (Fowler, 2003; Kraus, 2000; Weiniger, 2005). Even though his study subjects were mainly Algerian and French societies, his approach of social reality is useful in analyzing gender relation and social practice in different societies (Moi, 2004; Skeggs, 2004; Kraus, 2006). As an alternative to his discussion on the role of human agents, social order and their relation, Bourdieu also focuses on understanding practices through his key concepts like field, habitus and capital, which constitute bundles of social ties in different states and work most powerfully in relation to each other’s combined effect of objective conditions, internal interpretations and social action (Wacquant, 2001: 182).

Bourdieu's practical theory points toward a social ontology which obviates the dualism of structure and agency (Bourdieu, 1990b: 52).It highlights the mutual negotiation of social relations between individuals. Indeed, the approach transcends the classic dualism (the relationship between individual and society) by stressing the dual character of social life, and insisting that social reality exists both inside and outside individuals, both in our minds and in things. In doing so, it focuses on the idea that social interaction is always shaped by people’s dispositions and these dispositions are implicit to a large extent. It also makes clear that interactions are bounded by resources that define their effective possibilities to act. This brings us to the “formula” used to define practice: [(habitus) (capital)] + field = practice (Bourdieu, 1984: 101).

Bourdieu uses the concept of field to show objective relations which exist "independently of individual consciousness and will" (Wacquant, 1989: 40). He defines it as "a network or a configuration of objective relations between positions" (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 97). In a clearer manner he uses the concept to refer to the space where a given game takes place. He maintains that in the field there is objective relation that takes place between individuals and institutions who are competing for building up capital, to insure their respective position. The different fields according to Bourdieu are not completely autonomous from one another and that power relations within one field may affect an actor's position in another.

Bourdieu conceptualizes social practice as continually re-legitimized through relationship of agency and structure (Bourdieu, 1990b: 58-59). For the purpose of such continuous relationship he identifies the term habitus which represents means through which the person is socialized and develops abilities and structured propensities to think, feel and act. He identified it as an individually operationalised set of expectations and understandings based on the collection of experiences a given individual encounters (1990b: 54). For Bourdieu habitus serves as an intuitive guide to action and hence shape how individuals act. It is what regulates interactions within a field in an observable and 'objective' manner, affecting not only the individual but also all those who interact with the individual (Wacquant, 1989: 43).

While 'field' and 'habitus' describe respectively the environment and rules within which different struggles take place in the society, capital represents what is recognized as a resource in a specific field. Bourdieu extends the concept of capital and categorizes into different forms, i.e., economic, social, cultural and symbolic. For him each individual occupies a position in a multidimensional social space by the amount and type of capital he or she possesses. As such, symbolic capital for Bourdieu consists of the prestige and renown attached to a family and a name (Bourdieu, 1977: 179). He maintains that symbolic capital is "A credit: it is the power granted to those who have obtained sufficient recognition to be in a position to impose recognition" (1989: 23). Symbolic investment- in ritual, in aid to the needy, and so on- provides the possessor with claims on the labour and resource of others in the future.

Economic capital refers to monetary income as well as other financial resources and assets and finds its institutional expression in property rights. On the other hand, cultural capital consists of what the person knows and is capable of doing: it can be used to generate privilege, income, or wealth (Bourdieu, 1986: 243-248); social capital refers to the sum of the actual and potential resources that can be mobilized through membership in social networks of actors and organizations. It includes obligations, the advantages

of connections or social position and trust (1986: 249). Explaining the level of recognition of symbolic, cultural and social capital, Bourdieu (1994) argues that non-material dimensions of capital are recognized and valued by people who are familiar with their field and habitus.

Bourdieu has also identified the organizing, underlying and relatively systematic relations and structures that govern particular lives. By doing so he tries to explain the complexity of interactions between field, capital and habitus. Bourdieu's discussion of such important concepts as habitus, fields and capital imply that subjects are neither free agents nor determined 'automations'. In general Bourdieu's theory of practice is an attempt to produce an objective account of both practice and structure by modifying structuralism according to a generative stance, which made him to be considered as a generative structuralist capable of producing and sustaining institutional action.

### **3.2. Content of the Chapter**

This chapter contains an over view of the general theory of practice. It discusses the main concepts of theory of practice, including habitus, field, and capital. The concept of habitus in this chapter is discussed as having both structural and generative nature. An attempt has been made to show what factors give rise to embodied nature of habitus. The generative and creative role of habitus in the production of social practice is also discussed in this chapter. By doing this, it tries to show the capacity of habitus as defining once place and also others. By emphasizing the role of actors, the chapter explains how habitus serves as a means through which social inequalities are made to exist. Even though theory of practice is accused of being actor blind, in this chapter an effort is made to show the role of actors in resisting or challenging the field of the game. Accordingly, the discussion focuses on the idea that there is a room for manoeuvring every practice as far as it is within the limit of structure of the field. In general, the relationship between habitus and field is discussed by taking habitus as a marker of the structure of the field and the field as mediator between habitus and practice. In addition, the interrelation of different forms of capital and their role in terms of influencing position of actors and practice is discussed in this chapter. The second part of this chapter discusses how gender is treated in the work of Bourdieu and its relation with theory of practice. Even though Bourdieu's work considers gender as a secondary form of capital, an attempt has also been made to show how his work has certain characteristics of gender form of capital. It also tries to complement Bourdieu's discussion of gender with West and Zimmerman's (1987) discussion of gender relation from 'doing gender' perspective. The third part tries to point out how the general framework of

Pierre Bourdieu is highly influenced by history as a maker of social reality. The fourth part will show how Bourdieu's work relates to this research. The last part provides selected criticism on Bourdieu. As much as possible the criticism will focus on important concepts that encompass theory of practice like habitus and field.

### **3.3. Theory of Practice**

#### **3.3.1. Habitus: As a Means of Understanding Social Practice**

As pointed out in the introduction, Bourdieu's concept of habitus signifies his attempt to theorize the ways in which the social is actually incorporated. Habitus is a 'socialized subjectivity' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 2002: 126). Here the self is theorized from the point of product of the social. This is how Bourdieu analyzes social relations within the self and also how the self is made up of the social relation. According to Bourdieu (1990b:54), the action an individual performs is mainly the manifestation of past history; it is an imitation of past learned actions. The acts are performed below the level of consciousness. Here 'the body is considered as enacting the past history. 'What is learned by the body is not something one has, like knowledge that can be brandished, but something that one is' (Bourdieu, 1990b:73). In this regard, habitus is an embodied history. It generates thoughts, perceptions, expressions and actions with a freedom that is limited by the historical and social conditions of its production (Bourdieu, 1990b:55). Such characteristics made habitus to be considered as a long lasting system of dispositions, 'structured structures' as well as 'structuring structures' (1990b:54). It is understood as:

A system of lasting, transposable dispositions which, integrating all past experiences, functions at every moment as a matrix of perceptions, appreciations, and actions and makes possible the achievement of infinitely diversified tasks, thanks to analogical transfers of schemes permitting the solution of similarly shaped problems... (Bourdieu, 1977: 82-83).

Bourdieu has also tried to show the habitus as a social aspect that varies across time. Such traits of habitus made it to be characterized as a generative structure, in the sense that within certain objective limits (the field), it promotes a potentially infinite number of patterns of behaviour, thought and expression that are both 'relatively unpredictable' but also limited in their diversity' (1990b:55). It is not a commonly applied and fixed way of being but a 'generative structure' formed in a dynamic relation with specific social field. The dynamic nature of the world signifies that there will be no straight forward reproduction. For example, according to Bourdieu, more or less identical habitus may produce different effect. Here the issue of practical sense should be focused, rather than determined (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992).

In his discussion of the characteristics of habitus Bourdieu maintains that habitus may vary depending on the nature of the social environment (Bourdieu, 1977: 78). For instance unstable social space may give rise to unstable systemic dispositions that produce irregular patterns of action, thus it does strengthen cohesion and also inspire a sense of change and novelty, especially when it doesn't fit the surrounding social world where it evolves. This shows that there is open space for a practice as far as it is within the limit of the structure of the field. It gives subjects autonomy to act, decide and choose. It helps the subject to establish an active and creative relation with the world. The generative nature of the habitus is clarified by what Bourdieu calls a 'double and obscure' relation between individual habitus and the social circumstance or 'field' from which it emerges (Bourdieu, 1977: 78; 1990b: 55). On the one hand, the condition of the field influences the structure of the habitus; on the other hand, there is a relation of 'cognitive construction' whereby habitus is constitutive of the field in that it endows the latter with meaning with 'sense and value' in which it is worth investing one's energy (Wacquant, 1989: 44).

Bourdieu has also described habitus as, 'a pre reflexive level of practical mastery' (1990b: 52). According to him it is a form of knowledge that does not necessarily have knowledge of its own principles and is constitutive of reasonable but not rational behaviour. For instance, he maintains that the possession of gender identity does not develop through consciousness or it is not memorized but performed at a pre reflexive level. At the same time, bodily characters are not simply reflexive actions but lived in the form of practical imitations (1990b:73). On a pre reflexive level, the individual is subjected to behave in a certain way because of the 'active presence' of the whole past embedded in the strong structures of the habitus. In the pre reflexive nature of gender relation, even though there are attempts and some successes in de-traditionalization of the deep rooted disposition regarding masculinity and femininity, it became difficult to totally extricate the firmly established mode of thinking and behaving. Individuals are seen unconsciously investing on the unconventional images of masculinity and femininity. This tells us that even though the de-traditionalizing forces may have thrown certain aspects of gender relation, the habitus continues to act long after the mere reason of its presence have been removed (Bourdieu, 2001:95-96).

It is also useful to discuss some relational aspects of habitus in this study. Basically habitus can be taken as a social phenomenon which is created and grown within social dynamics. It may also be differentially formed according to each actor's position in social space; as such, it is empirically variable and class-specific. It exists following the conventional way of distinction and division of the social world, i.e., class, gender, race, etc. (Bourdieu, 1994: 194-5). According to Bourdieu each location in social space

(each combination of volume and composition of capital) corresponds to a particular set of life conditions, which he terms the class condition (1990b:54). As such each class condition is intended to specify the particular conditions within which the habitus was formed, and in particular, the experience of material necessity; each class condition may have an experience that characterizes a given location in social space and imposes a particular set of dispositions upon the individual (Bourdieu, 1977: 80; Bourdieu, 1990: 54, 60). Such social phenomena are marked in a habitus but arranged in a hierarchical system. Such hierarchical system is a factor of social differences which is also a factor of inequality (Fisk, 1992). Habitus is thus an important means through which large scale social inequalities such as class and gender are made relational, and are also made to exist within the person so that it is persons themselves who can be judged and found wanting, and persons themselves who can be made to bear the hidden injuries of inequality (Lawler, 2004: 113).

### **3.3.2. Relationship between Field, Habitus and Capital**

The different social practices are organized and structured based on the system of classification. Bourdieu pointed out that mechanisms of social domination and reproduction primarily focused on bodily know-how and competent practices in the social world. Social agents do not, according to Bourdieu, continuously apply rational choice and economic criteria. Rather, they act according to their "feel for the game" (the "feel" being, roughly, habitus, and the "game" being the field - Bourdieu, 1990b, 66-67).

Bourdieu sees the involvement of question of study of existence (ontological complicity) in describing the relationship between habitus and field (Wacquant, 1989: 44). It is a conceptualization, he maintains, that contrasts with the persistent dualism of objectivism/ subjectivism and structure/ agency. Ontological complicity tries to challenge such dualistic thinking (the field as 'external object' acting upon 'the subject'). It implies the existence of overlapping nature among them (Webb et al., 2002: 21-22). Bourdieu underlines the productive and dynamic relation between social and intuitional practices (social fields and process of self formation). In an interview with Wacquant, Bourdieu argues:

Social reality exists, so to speak, twice, in things and minds, in fields and in habitus, outside and inside agents. And when habitus encounters a social world of which it is the product, it finds itself 'as a fish in water', it doesn't feel the weight of the water and takes the world about itself for granted (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 127).

Social reality therefore calls upon the importance of embodiment. According to Bourdieu, habitus doesn't simply reflect mental representation; rather it shows bodily being in the world. It is a manner which reflects one's position and movement in space and across and within fields.

Thus the relation between habitus and field can be seen in two ways. On the one hand, it is a relation of conditioning: the field is responsible for shaping the nature of habitus or it structures the habitus. The habitus (like "capital") is produced in specific fields. It reflects the inter-subjectively, shared, taken for granted, values and discourses of a field. On the other hand, it is a relation of knowledge: "Habitus being the social incorporated, it is "at home" in the field it inhabits, it perceives it immediately as endowed with meaning and interest" (Wacquant, 1989: 45). "If Habitus brings into focus the subjective end of the equation, and field focuses on the objective (and where there is) ontological complicity between the habitus and the field" (Grenfell and James, 1998: 15). This implies that within the field, there are structuring practices that govern practices; what is seen as legitimate and what is not and these in turn position subjects within such practices so as to come to constitute a habitus that will predispose them to think and act in particular ways.

The above analysis therefore leads us to the point that habitus takes its shape from the field in which it operated. It encompasses certain characteristics that fit the given field. As Bourdieu's sport analogy shows, habitus equates with the "feel or sense of the game" that enables players to perform. A player plays on the field according to his/her perceptions and general feel for the game more than according to conscious, rational decision making processes. Thus, we see the need for the compatibility of a habitus and field for the healthy operation of practice in a given field. The habitus shapes "strategies" for accumulating capital and for reshaping fields, but also taste, life-styles, marriage strategies..... (Wacquant, 2005: 141). Actors are also required to fulfil the needed capital to enhance their position in a given field. In the same manner what capital is and how it is valued is itself defined by the field. A capital does not exist and function but in relation to a field: it confers a power over the field, over the materialized or embodied instruments of production or reproduction whose distribution constitutes the very structure of the field, and over the regularities and the rules which define the functioning of the field, and thereby over the profits engendered in this field (Wacquant, 1989: 39). People have resources (capital) which grant them possibilities to act. Their ability to influence the field depends on the amount and type of capital they are endowed with (Wacquant, 2005: 141). As mentioned in the introduction part, the capitals may take different form, i.e., economic, social, symbolic and cultural forms. Struggle over positions based on the

endowed capital, within a field impacts its structure and corresponding habitus. Actors struggle to improve their own position (i.e. capital endowment) and/or to alter the general definition of the stakes at stake, possibly by altering the boundaries of the field. Their possibility for doing this is linked to what kind of resources they have. Thus, the amount and type of capital one has in a given field impacts the position it occupies.

In a methodological style that follows that of Durkheim (1964 [1895], 1966 [1897]), Bourdieu argues that so-called "objective" structures of the social universe lead a dual life. He claims that there is an "objectivist physics of material structures," and "a constructivist phenomenology of cognitive forms" which mediate between material structures and human observers. Specified further, the objectivist component includes structures for distributing material resources and appropriating socially scarce goods and values, what Bourdieu calls species of capital, the constructivist aspect, habitus, consists of "symbolic templates for the practical activities- conduct, thoughts, feelings, and judgments- of social agents." (Wacquant, 1992: 7). These subjective (cognitive) and objective (material) structures, Bourdieu argues, are integrally linked (Flora, 1998: 487).

### **3.3.3. Capital: As a Cause of Different Volumes and Hierarchies of Power**

Capital is a form of accumulated labour by agents or group of agents that enable them to possess social energy in the form of refined labour (Bourdieu, 1986: 241). It is also the fundamental cause of existing regularities of the social world. For Bourdieu the concept of capital encompasses all forms of valued resources (and, as a consequence, objects of conflictive dispute and the foundation of power hierarchies), whether they are economic, cultural, social, or symbolic (Bourdieu, 1986). According to him all actions in any sphere of human interaction are mainly interest motivated and are oriented towards the maximisation of material or symbolic interests. Such interests are objective forms that give rise to different forms of capital.

Capital for Bourdieu is beyond the common understanding of monetary notion of capital in economics; it includes both monetary and non monetary as well as tangible and intangible forms. Bourdieu (1986: 243-244) differentiates between four general types of capital, which may assume field specific contents.



## **Economic capital**

Economic capital indicates both monetary and financial resources and assets and finds its institutional expression in property right (Bourdieu, 1986: 246). For example, female headed households differ in the extent to which they earn income from possession of land, ox or other related activities. It also decides which financial investment on the economic market are good ones and which are not. Bourdieu felt that economic capital is the dominant principle of domination in capitalist society, but he maintains the efficacy of economic capital as a principle of domination which is basically under challenge by fractions of the dominant class (e.g., artists, professionals, academics, etc.). This assertion shows that those actors who are relatively poor in economic capital, but with influential social role, rich in cultural or other forms of capital, maintain the status quo by striving to enhance their own specific form of capital as an adversary principle of domination. In Bourdieu's discussion of capital, primacy is given for economic capital 'at the root of all other types of capital.... in the last analysis' (1997: 54) and as the home to which all accumulation eventually returns.

## **Cultural capital**

Beyond economic capital, into which the other capitals can be capitalized, cultural capital is understood as cultural products which are embedded in the human mind and body, as well as in objects. It endows actors with a capacity to play the cultural game, to recognize all those manners that perfectly identify someone to others as a person of culture, accepted or legitimate (Bourdieu, 1986: 243). It is a capital that endows someone with a likelihood of having access to certain circle or not and with more or less right to have an opinion on political matters or whatever. The discussion of cultural capital by Bourdieu shows the role of economy in producing specific class of people that recognize and maintain the given culture through different means. Cultural capital thus appears in three states: objectified, embodied and institutionalised (Bourdieu, 1986: 247). In its objectified state, cultural capital consists of humanly created objects such as pictures, books, instruments, machines, etc. In its institutionalized state, cultural capital consists of educational qualifications such as academic degrees. Finally, in its embodied state cultural capital consists of permanent dispositions in the individual person, i.e., a habitus (Bourdieu, 1986: 243).

## **Social capital**

Bourdieu is often credited with being one among the social scientists for bringing the concept of social capital into mainstream theory. In his sustained attempt to theorize the reproduction of class relations through cultural mechanisms Bourdieu repeatedly places social capital close to the heart of his analysis as one of the three fundamental species of capital. He defines social capital from the point of representing the totality of actual potential resources that influence networks in the form of institutionalized relationship or group membership (Bourdieu, 1986: 252). This capital provides subjects an acknowledgment in the various senses of the world. The relationships that are drawn from social capital may exist either in material and or symbolic exchange or socially instituted in the name of family, class, and tribe (Bourdieu, 1986: 252). Here, social capital is defined from the point of creating favourable condition to mobilize social relations and networks for personal benefits and support. Thus, according to Bourdieu we can describe social capital as the sum of actual or potential resources embedded within, accessible through, and derived from the social structures that facilitate exchange and social interaction. Being the result of durable social relation, social capital therefore can be obtained directly or indirectly. Social capital thus comes out as the intended, instrumental, or accidental result of social interaction or exchange.

Bourdieu's definition of social capital has attracted considerable attention partly because of its resemblance with already existing sociological concepts and theories, such as social resources and social networks that explain the structure and dynamics of differentiated societies (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 119). Differential access to capital, not individual utility maximizing behaviour, shapes both economic and social worlds in Bourdieu's sociology.

The works of Bourdieu mark out three conceptual dimensions of social capital. First the quantity of an individual social dimension, second the quality of those relationships which include the dimension of interaction, shared activities and affect, and third, the value of the resources that partners in the relationship make available to an individual. Bourdieu emphasizes, however, that simply having a larger number of relationships is insufficient. A measure of an individual's social capital must include some indicator of the resource available through those relationships. The volume of social capital possessed by an agent at a given point depends on the amount of networks maintained and the capital (economic, cultural and symbolic) possessed by agents who are at his own disposal. The basis of group membership, therefore, has an automatic effect on the production of profit for subjects who are part of the group

solidarity. Once the solidarity and homogeneity is formed among the holders of different capitals, the relationship will have multiplier effect (Bourdieu, 1986: 252). Bourdieu (1997:53) captures the multiplier effect of social capital in synthetic form: “you are known to more people than you know.”

The fundamental structures that produce and reproduce access to social capital are not, for Bourdieu, self-regulating markets but networks of connections, which themselves are 'the product of an endless effort at institution.' Bourdieu's emphasizes on 'institution rites,' 'the alchemy of consecration' and 'gift giving at the heart of the transformation of contingent relations' (Bourdieu, 1986: 249-50). The system of interconnection established among a group is the product of conscious and unconscious investment strategies. It helps them to establish a social relationship that can be usable in the short and long term. ‘The relationship can be formed among neighbours, friends in work place and kinships..., such network of relationship helps to transform the established relationship into elective and durable obligation expressed in the form of gratitude, respect, friendship or institutionally guaranteed rights’ (Bourdieu, 1986: 253).

## **Symbolic capital**

Bourdieu dwells heavily, in his empirical and theoretical work, on symbolic capital. Symbolic capital is a form of power that is not perceived as power but as legitimate demands for recognition, difference, obedience, or the services of others (Bourdieu, 1977: 179-180). Symbolic capital, in contrast, is a more hidden or disguised form of capital which is defined as “Economic or political capital that is disavowed, misrecognised and thereby recognized, hence legitimate, a ‘credit’ which, under certain conditions, and always in the long run, guarantees ‘economic’ profits” (Bourdieu, 1980:262). Possessors of symbolic capital are not only able to justify their possession of other forms of capital but are able to change the structure and rules by which the field operates. In this connection, Wacquant in Mahar et al., (1990: 14) maintains that the “hidden processes whereby different species of capital are converted so that economically-based relations of dependency and domination may be dissimulated and bolstered by the mask of moral ties, of charisma, or of meritocratic symbolism”

The prestige and renown gained through symbolic capital is ultimately convertible back to economic capital (Bourdieu, 1977: 179). In some societies, like Bati , it is the most valuable form of capital to accumulate other capital because, for instance, it enables the ‘male headed households' to call upon additional labour at busy times of a year, in exchange for certain services such as the loan of grains and labour. Such conduct is made without explicit deal. It takes place the form of voluntary support.

According to Bourdieu, symbolic capital is acquired only as a result of considerable symbolic labour, making investments, especially of time. But it express political power as well as economic potential, and the great families spend much time in noticeable displays, including giving gifts (Bourdieu, 1977: 180).

We have to take symbolic capital into account in order to understand the whole picture of economic activity which can appear to be irrational otherwise. For instance, as it has been shown in Bourdieu's Kabyle society, additional oxen may be purchased to increase symbolic capital, even if they have to be rapidly sold off as they are too costly to maintain. The experience of Bati also tells us that symbolic capital creates favourable condition for valuable marriages, and guarantees the honour of families - thus the need to guard it against the slightest challenge. Land can be acquired for its symbolic value. Blood vengeance and marriage also become perfectly understandable economic activities (Bourdieu, 1977: 179-181).

Bourdieu's sociology has always underlined how individuals are differently constrained by the unequal distribution of symbolic power. As he puts it in the *Pascalian Meditations*, "one of the most unequal of all distributions, and probably, in any case, the most cruel, is the distribution of symbolic capital, that is, of social importance and reasons for living" (Bourdieu, 2000: 241).

### **3.3.4. The Exchangeable Nature of Capitals**

The forms of capital vary in liquidity and exchangeability. According to Bourdieu none of the different forms of capital is a priori dominant, but they are exchangeable (Bourdieu, 1986: 257). The exchangeable nature of capital for Bourdieu presumes the existence of different forms. The different forms of capital originate in various fields and structures, a concrete social order and, in consequence, it is possible to locate them empirically and to infer that accumulation of different forms of capital gives rise to fundamentally different volumes and hierarchies of power. The variation of forms of capital in terms of their liquidity, convertibility, and loss potential brings about diverse scenarios for actors in social fields. Some positions occupied by actors are characterized by high volume of economic capital, yet lower volume of social and cultural capital, whereas others may have high cultural capital but lower economic and social capital. For instance, people in rural areas may be endowed with high symbolic and social capital but low cultural capital.

Bourdieu pointed out that the abstract operation of exchange nature of capital varies depending on the power relation between the holder of the different forms of capital. Thus “the exchange rate is a stake in the struggle over the dominant principle of domination (economic capital, cultural capital or social capital, which goes on at all times between the different fractions of the dominant class” (Bourdieu, 1984: 125).

For Bourdieu, all forms of capital can always be converted into economic capital. But, he notes the paradox that while an economic calculation lies behind every action, every action cannot be reduced to economic calculation (Bourdieu, 1986: 253; 1989: 224). This implies that, for the actors, it is a value in itself to participate and invest time, energy and money in “the economic game” which here by- precisely as a culturally embedded game with written and unwritten rules- obtains a legitimacy in itself (Bourdieu, 1990: 89).

### **3.4. Gender as Discussed In Theory of Practice**

In his ethnographic study of Kabyle society (which forms the basis of Masculine domination) Bourdieu, conceptualized gender primarily as sexual differences, and understanding of the objective structures and cognitive structures which are often hidden (Bourdieu, 2001: viii). He tried to understand the basis of sexual division by locating ‘gender’ as a particular kind of habitus that has force because it is part of the natural order of things (Bourdieu, 2001: 23). In this work he tried to denaturalize gender division and make a naturalized social construction. For him the arbitrary division that underlines both reality and the representation of reality take their grounding nature from gender. Gender is explained in terms of sexually characterized habitus (Bourdieu, 2001: 3). In the understating of gender, Bourdieu used the concept *habitus* to describe the gendered dispositions that come out natural as a result of practices of sexual division:

The social order functions as an immense symbolic machine tending to ratify the masculine domination on which it is founded. It is the sexual division of labour, a very strict distribution of the activities assigned to each sex, of their place, time and instruments; it is the structure of space, with the opposition between the places of assembly or the market, reserved for men and house, reserved for women (Bourdieu, 2001: 9).

Bourdieu's explanation of gender habitus has been questioned by many writers. Hage (1998) and Dolby (2000), for instance, questioned the possibility of using habitus to look at the practices of gender identity or other dimensions of identity such as sexuality, race or ethnicity. On the other hand, some writings on

Bourdieu's work explain that gender plays a vital role in understanding social field and the differential relation of power and identity position and unequal distribution of capital in each social field (Skeggs, 1997). Skeggs' assertion also goes to the extent that the relationship between gender and habitus is expressed in the form of subjective dispositions that can be gendered. According to Reay (1995), gender norms are secured through the internalization and embodiment of particular structures and dispositions. On the other hand, habitus can be understood as a complex internalized concept that the day to day experiences have come from. Here Reay's work helps to show the inseparability of gender and class and to locate gender identities across time and place. This leads to the situation where the conception and practice of 'Gender habitus' can be considered as a complete and actually seamless project and an inevitable reproduction of structured fields of difference. Adkin (2004: 6) also pointed out that gender doesn't constitute a specific social field as it sometimes assumed, but enters into the game of the different social fields in ways specific to each field. Such work on habitus and field helps us to state that both habitus and field are important concepts to examine patterns on continuity (socialization reproduction) and gender. Therefore, Bourdieu has overemphasized the relationship that habitus forms between subjective dispositions and the objective structure of the field with regard to gender identity (McNay, 1999: 107).

Even though habitus draws attention to the embodied nature of gender identity, as has been pointed out earlier, it failed to understand the process of change and examine in what way patterns of difference and inequality might appear differently in different historical periods (McLeod, 2005: 20). For the most part Bourdieu sees compatibility between habitus and field. However, the transposable character of habitus – a mobility that may disrupt the routine adjustment of subjective and objective structures - does not allow inevitability with regard to the unity of habitus and field. But when there is a break up of routine adjustment between habitus and field, there will be a tendency of the development of critical reflection on previously habituated forms of action. For Bourdieu when shifts in objective conditions precipitate there will be lack of fit between objective and subjective structure. This increases possibilities for both critical reflexivity and social change. Thus, lack of fit between the feel for the game and the game itself must itself be understood as transforming practices. Gender habitus should be, therefore, understood within such transforming practices that call for conscious uncovering of thoughts (Adkins, 2004: 196-197).

Bourdieu argues that although contemporary feminist movements have thrown gender difference to a total disruption, "some of the mechanisms which underlie his domination continue to function" (Bourdieu, 2001: 56). In discussing these mechanisms, we find Bourdieu pointing out that

whatever their position in social space, women have in common the fact that they are separated from men by a negative symbolic coefficient which, like skin colour for blacks, or any other sign of membership in a stigmatized group, negatively affects everything that they are and do, and which is the source of a systematic set of homologous difference: despite the vast distance between them, there is something in common between a woman managing director... and the woman production line worker...(Bourdieu, 2001: 93).

Such discussion clearly indicates that, in keeping with the “autonomy” ascribed to sexual structures across history, Bourdieu considers gender division as an independent force structuring practices (Weininger, 2005: 158). Gender and class location for Bourdieu therefore are considered as the moderators of the effect that the other exercises on practice. However, contrary to Bourdieu’s assumption of permanence nature of gender division, McNay (1999: 103) points out that women are seen experiencing both autonomy and subordination as they move across social fields, such as the labour market, domestic life, etc. Kraus (2006:124) has also pointed out that modern society has to be described as a social world with complex structures and divergent life worlds, employing heterogeneous criteria of social differentiation and undergoing simultaneous resources of stagnation and of social change. According to her a central characteristic of the modern gender order is that it constitutes a field of open political struggle. In this struggle, women exist not only as subjects but also as social subjects, agents who act in their own rights and in defence of their own interest. McNay (1999: 103), on the other hand, discusses the ways in which, despite own entry into the labour force, certain conventional arrangements of gender have not necessarily been dismantled and indeed may have become more entrenched. She points out that such transformations have not totally freed women from the burden of emotional responsibility (McNay, 1999: 103). Instead they have made the process of individualization for women more complex since the ideal of performing an individualized biography- living one’s own life- is in sharp conflict with the conventional expectation of being there for others. This suggests that such unevenness in the transformation of gender is again indicative of how Bourdieu’s general social theory is of relevance for theorizing gender.

West and Zimmerman (1987) hold that any activity can be assessed for its consistency with gender norms; individuals’ gender is always vulnerable to assessment in any situation as they are “doing gender” demonstrations continuously. Doing gender according to West and Zimmerman is unavoidable, especially because of the social consequences of sex category membership that leads to the unequal distribution of power and resources. The differences created by doing gender continue to be concrete and natural. Therefore, “If, in doing gender, men are doing dominance and women are also doing difference,”

(West and Zimmerman, 1987: 146.) then doing gender also produces and reproduces the social structure as a whole. This shares idea with the concept of habitus which brings into focus the elements of process and interaction, as well as the omnipresence of gender in all social situations. It is through the habitus that what West and Zimmeraman (1987) described as 'doing gender' takes place. 'Doing gender' does not mean the same thing to everyone everywhere; it does not even mean the same thing to every individual in a single society, rather, the gender order consists of 'variation on a theme', (Krais, 2005: 128). So this research tries to see gender from doing gender perspective that explains female headed households' practice of gender.

### **3.4.1 Gender and Capital**

For Bourdieu, capital was originally neutral and was merely shaped by gender in the reservation process. However he did not consider gender to be a form of capital. This is because for Bourdieu gender is a secondary form of social stratification. Thus, he tried to use the concept of capital to explore practices of class distinction and to show how class divisions are produced through the absence or presence of social competition (McCall, 1992: 841). Even though Bourdieu's approach to capital failed to focus on gender capital, McCall, who dealt with the relationship between gender and capital, suggested that "...forms of capital have gendered meanings because they are given form by gendered disposition" (McCall, 1992: 842). She pointed out that there are possible indicators of the availability of gender capital in Bourdieu's formulation of embodied cultural capital, since certain types of dispositions are themselves forms of capital. For example, Bourdieu took beauty and charm as physical characters of capital that are classified as embodied cultural capital and are the most hidden and symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1984). However, in *Masculine Domination* (2001), Bourdieu remarked that "Bodily properties are apprehended through schemes of perception whose use in acts of evaluation depends on the position occupied in social space" (Bourdieu, 2001: 64). Yet, in describing the analytic transition from the study of a pre modern society to a modern one, Bourdieu recognizes the dramatic continuity of gender structures across historical time.

It is indeed astonishing to observe the extraordinary autonomy of sexual structures relative to economic structures, of modes of reproduction relative to modes of production, the same system of classificatory schemes is found, in its essential features, through the centuries and across economic and social differences (Bourdieu, 2001: 81; Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 174).



Even though Bourdieu discussed gender as secondary, on the basis of its significance in stratification and because of its hidden form, these remarks enable him to break sharply from his earlier assumption of gender (that is, from its specification as a “secondary” factor). As such, gender is to be interpreted as a primary, yet mysterious social force which appears as natural and universal (permanent over change) with a potential to be considered as an important form of capital (Bourdieu, 2001: 83).

With regard to the relationship between women and forms of capital, Lovell (2000: 21) holds that Bourdieu considered women as capital bearing objects rather than capital accumulating subjects. He recognizes women’s status as capital bearing objects whose value accrues to the primary groups to which they belong rather than as capital accumulating subjects in social space (Lovell, 2000: 20). According to him women accumulate men’s capital but they don’t have their own strategy of building up capital. Thus, for Bourdieu, women are repositories of capital (McNay, 2000). For instance, Bourdieu argues, in kinship systems women function as objects of exchange rather than subjects, and hence their worth rested on their ability to conform to the andocentric ideal of femininity (Bourdieu, 2001: 42-49, Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 173-174). Even though Bourdieu insisted on showing women as repositories of capital, he also pointed out women’s potential on capital accumulation by stating how much petit bourgeoisie women are aware of the market value of beauty and are particularly investing in beauty capital. He also mentioned the value of beauty on the labour market to draw better jobs and occupation. This shows that women have the potential to accumulate capital and use it for their purpose. Some feminists like Skeggs (2004) when stating about the relationship between women and form of capital, also assert that unlike Bourdieusian conception of gender and capital women acquire their own feminine forms of capital. For instance, when discussing about femininity as cultural capital Skeggs (1997:10) pointed out that ‘...is the discursive position available through gender relations that women are encouraged to inhabit and use, its use will be informed by the network of social positions of class, gender, sexuality, region, age and race which ensure that it will be taken up (and resisted) in different ways.’

Skeggs has also proposed that there is a possibility of modifying the concept of capital so that we may see the importance of different femininity other than upper middle class femininity. However such reworking would work when we think of culture more generally as a resource, rather than just high culture. Considering capital in such manner would extend capital beyond ‘high cultural practice and classifications’. It could also be separated ‘from the fields and means by which it is exchanged’ (Skeggs, 2004: 24). Lovell (2000) also mentioned that ‘femininity as cultural capital is beginning to have broader

currency in unexpected ways' (2000: 25). This study also believes that femininity and femaleness might be used as cultural capital by women of various backgrounds rather than simply as object of high culture.

### **3.5. The Place of History in Bourdieu's Work**

Bourdieu, in one way or another, takes history as a base for explanation of the social world. He holds that "The social world is accumulated history" (Bourdieu, 1986: 241). In his interview with Wacquant (1989: 37) Bourdieu also pointed out that "the separation of sociology and history is a disastrous division and one totally devoid of epistemological justification: all sociology should be historical and all history is sociological". As such he uses history to explain the social world from the perspective of different concepts like habitus, relationship of habitus and field and development of different kind of capital. For instance in discussing habitus, Bourdieu holds that habitus is "the product of history, produces individual and collective practices, and hence history, in accordance with the schemes engendered by history" (Bourdieu, 1977: 82). Past history in this sense is taken as the different dispositions and embodied knowledge. He stresses that such embodied knowledge would make their bases from past learned actions. As such, a person acts, walks, talks and performs taking what he has acquired from his field of interaction. Similarly, in his discussion of the dynamics of a field he pointed out that "We cannot grasp this structure without a historical, or genetic, analysis of its constitution, and of the tensions that exist between positions, as well as between this field and other fields, and especially what I call the field of power. What is already acquired is in one way another manifestation of history" (Wacquant, 1989: 37). Similarly in the discussion of the relationship between field and habitus Bourdieu stressed the importance of rule of field as a way of influencing the nature of habitus. According to him the habitus in one way or another should perform according to the rule of the game. The rule of the game represents long lasting disposition that characterizes specific fields. Each field has its own rule of operation. As such, the rules of operation are past learned acts that give specific character to the field. He also tries to show the importance of history in his discussion of the encounter between the habitus and a field. He puts the relation of habitus and field as the mix of incorporated history and an objectified history (Bourdieu, 1990: 66). For him the objective structures (objectified history) within which the habitus is played out, the feel for the game, is what gives the game a subjective sense- a meaning and a direction (Bourdieu, 1990:66).

Bourdieu also stated the notion of history in his discussion of capital. According to him a given field is determined by the type of capital it encompasses. Depending on the field in which it functions, capital

represents itself in different fundamental guises (Bourdieu, 1986: 243). But if we ask how the holder of capital manages to be in a position of having such type of capital, Bourdieu's discussion of capital answers that the structure of the distribution of the different types of subtypes of capital at a given moment in time represents the immanent structure of the social world, i.e., "the set of constraints, inscribed in the very reality of that world, which govern its functioning in a durable way, determining the chances of success for practices" (Bourdieu, 1986: 242). For instance, the children of the working class group will mainly fall in the working class group. Or the children of the bourgeoisie have better chance of joining the bourgeoisie group. If we ask how such generative stance of field appear in such manner the answer can be derived from Bourdieu's explanation of cultural capital. As he puts it:

"...the unequal scholastic achievement of children originating from the different social classes by relating academic success, i.e., the specific profits which children from the different classes and class fractions can obtain in the academic market, to the distribution of cultural capital between the classes and class fractions" (Bourdieu, 1986: 244).

Explaining how past learned action of the family is an important resource for the acquisition of such cultural capital for their off spring, Bourdieu states that "the process of appropriating objectified cultural capital and the time necessary for it to take place mainly depend on the cultural capital embodied in the whole family through (among other things) the generalized arrow effect and all forms of implicit transmission" (Bourdieu, 1986: 248). This explanation therefore helps us to understand how much embodied dispositions acquired through family interaction and from experience in a given field affect the level and type of capital one has. In addition, it explains how the work of Bourdieu puts more emphasis on the role of past learned action in affecting social reality.

### **3.6. Relevance of Theory of Practice to the Current Study**

According to my understanding, habitus is the core aspect for the discussion of Pierre Bourdieu's important concepts. The classification of the world into social order based on dualistic vision like weak/ strong, intelligent/ lazy, masculine/ feminine according to Bourdieu get their basic explanation from the concept of habitus. A habitus as being the world operator and producer and reproducer of different dispositions, calls for the need to search for specific place for the different groups of the society with different disposition. Even though I have some reservations on Bourdieu's overemphasis on the role of habitus, I agree that people in a similar social group may share similar thoughts and expectations on certain points. This assumption in one way or another will help me to analyze gender relation in the

livelihood activities of female headed households taking their decision (objective structuring) and the reproduction of their habitus (constructivism) as a base.

The location in the social world (social space) according to Bourdieu is responsible for producing and reproducing different kinds of capital. Thus, each social space is responsible for the abundance and shortage of different kinds of capital. The existence of different kinds of societal structure and classification within a social space is in one way or another influenced by the type and volume of capital. Thus, capital and habitus are the fundamental pillars of Bourdieu's explanation of the social situation. Bourdieu's major concepts like economic, social, symbolic and cultural capital are also important inputs of bargaining power of actors under a given study. Thus identifying and discussing the type and availability of different kinds of capital, which are basic elements of livelihood of female headed households, will help this study to identify how capital plays a role in influencing the bargaining power of female headed households.

In his discussion of gender, Bourdieu focuses on the sexual differences between men and women as the fundamental source of explanation of gender difference. His conceptualization of gender focuses on sexual differentiation or, in his own words, "sexually characterized habitus" (Bourdieu, 2001: 3). Of course, in his book *Masculine Domination*, Bourdieu, tries to integrate the concept of sexual differentiation with inequality of gender power. The situation in Bati where females are considered as weak, dependent, and mainly qualified for domestic activity can be taken as one example.

Bourdieu tried to show that change within the social world, specifically the symbolic power struggle and its effect, is characterized by slow motion and subtle results. According to him the structuring of the structure or the reproduction of the habitus, in addition to the relative autonomy of the economy of symbolic goods (including the institution of marriage), shows the perpetuation of masculine domination 'unaffected by the transformation of the economic modes of production (Bourdieu, 2001: 95). This assumption, of the existence of "permanence over change in gender order," has led me to question and discuss the changes in the bargaining power of female headed households in the study area.

### 3.7. Some Critics on Pierre Bourdieu's Work

The concept of habitus is what Bourdieu has mainly been criticized for (e.g., Garnham and Williams, 1980: 222; Gorder, 1980: 344; Swartz, 1977: 554; Wacquant, 1987: 81; Brubaker, 1985: 759). The different critics on habitus argue that it is impossible to witness social change. Brubaker (1985: 759) and Gorder (1980: 344) argue that if we take Bourdieu's definition of habitus and compare it with his assertion that habitus enables "agents to cope with unforeseen and ever-changing situation" (Bourdieu, 1977: 22), then these new situations could never arise nor could the habitus allow any transformation in practice. They insist that the concept of habitus leads us to understand social practice as determined by a priori disposition, embodied unknowingly by social agents, and consequently their flexibility and creativity in the face of changing situations would be curtailed. Since the habitus may be imposed upon haphazardly, social agents can never construct new strategies for new situation because they are not aware of their habitus and therefore cannot begin to reinterpret them.

The other main criticism focuses on the role of agency. According to Di Maggio (1979: 1461), agency is not directly observable in practice, nor in the habitus, but only in the experience of subjectivity. Hence, the critics assert that Bourdieu's theory has objective bias. The role of habitus has also been criticized for limiting human agency. Alexander (1995) for instance point out that habitus is given much focus to the extent that it governs so much of an individual's social make up. Indeed, Alexander's critiques argue that Bourdieu, by privileging social reproduction, was blind to individuals' values and ideas (Alexander, 1995: 137). Other critics like Calhoun (1995) argue that Bourdieu gives excessive emphasis to the individual's general strategies of capital acquisition, compared with other forms of individual agency (e.g., individual practices of creativity).

On the other hand, Couldry (2005: 359) argues that it would be a mistake to see Bourdieu's work as a retreat from the ambitions of his earlier structural theory. But he criticized Bourdieu's sociology as always emphasizing how individuals are differently constrained by the uneven distribution of symbolic power (Couldry, 2005: 359). He showed this by quoting one of Bourdieu's writing: "one of the most unequal of all distributions, and probably, in any case, the most cruel, is the distribution of symbolic capital, i.e., of social importance and reasons for living" (Bourdieu, 2000: 241).

The other criticism focuses on the concept of field. According to Warde (2004), the mechanism to identify the activity which provides the content for the existence of a field is not totally transparent. Of course,

mutual recognition of participants, conventional strategic manoeuvres, and common history of activity are some of the indicators mentioned in Bourdieu's *The Rule of Art* (1996a: 183). However, according to Warde (2004:14), the distinctive characteristics of relevant activists are not well analyzed. This has created difficulties when it comes to identifying which key purposes and objectives of agents are engaged in a field.

DiMaggio (1979) also criticized Bourdieu's idea of "relative autonomy" of institutions or fields. According to DiMaggio (1979:1468), the fact that institutions or fields are structured by their own histories, internal logic, and patterns of recruitment and reward as well as by external demand is an important idea, although the analyses of the determinants of the degree of relative autonomy of a field and the limits to that autonomy need to be extended to other realms.

Despite his strong contribution to the discussion of gender, Bourdieu is also criticized for exaggerating the sexual division of work and masculine domination and lack of clear approach regarding the types of relationships women have with all forms of capital. For instance, Lovell's (2000: 22) critics assert that on the one hand Bourdieu represent women as repository of capital and on the other hand they are considered as having personal strategies of being capital accumulator. Lovell pointed out that despite Bourdieu's assertion that women are mainly capital repository, he also focuses on beauty as cultural capital that women use to modify their access to different types of resources.

On the other hand, McNay (1999) criticizes Bourdieu for not conceptualizing gender norms in an improved way. She argues that, in some contemporary social theories, there is inadequate differentiation on accounts of gender norms. Bourdieu's insistence on embodiment (through habitus) and structurally differentiated social fields, she suggests, offers potentially improved ways of conceptualizing gender, identity and change. However she maintains that Bourdieu did not fully realize such aspects in his work (McNay, 1999: 109). He 'significantly underestimates the ambiguities and dissonances that exist in the way that men and women occupy masculine and feminine positions' (McNay, 1999: 107). This is because he has not adequately linked his notion of habitus with that of field. That is to say, Bourdieu fails 'to bring the conceptual implication of the idea of the field, most notably that of societal differentiation, to bear on the idea of habitus'. Consequently, there is an 'over-emphasis on the association that the habitus establishes between subjective dispositions and the objective structure of the field with regard to gender identities' (McNay, 1999: 107). Bourdieu is, she argues, inattentive to both the 'internally complex nature

of subjectivity' (McNay, 2000: 72) and the impact of particular social/historical changes on how women inhabit, experience, move across, change and are changed by new and emerging social fields, as well as by gender relations within existing fields.

In response to some of the criticisms that consider Bourdieu's work as being static and "closed", leaving little room for resistance, change, and the eruption of history, Bourdieu argues that he found many of these criticisms strikingly shallow. He said that the criticism give more attention to the title of his book especially on reproduction. But he mentions that none of the critics focused on the actual analysis of his work (Wacquant, 1989: 36). He argues that he has repeatedly denounced both what we call the "functionalism of the worst case" and the dehistoricizing that follows from a strictly structuralist standpoint (e.g., Bourdieu, 1968; and 1987: 56.). Likewise, he pointed out that he cannot begin to comprehend how relations of domination, whether material or symbolic, could possibly operate without implying or activating resistance. According to him, his work gives some space for change and he believes that "the dominated, in any social universe, can always exert a certain force, in as much as to belong to a field means by definition that one is capable of producing effects in it (if only to elicit reactions of exclusion on the part of those who occupy the dominant positions), thus of putting certain forces into motion" (Wacquant, 1989: 36).

Taking the different critics on gender issue into consideration, Wacquant (1993) also argues that any assessment of Bourdieu's ideas on gender needs to take into consideration both their place in his general theoretical framework (all the more so since that framework is mostly left implicit in *Masculine Domination*) and the specific intellectual and political background against which they have been formulated. However despite these and similar criticisms on his work, Bourdieu's work is still severing as an important input to different social science disciplines.

## **Chapter Four: Methodological Framework**

### **4.1. Introduction**

Members in a household make decisions about how various assets are used; for instance, to fulfil daily needs, kinship obligations and responsibilities and to develop mutual support networks. The strategies open to the various types of household depend both on the range of assets possessed and on the respective capabilities of households and household members. The household capability in turn, depends in part on the household's composition (Chambers and Conway, 1992). A household consists of the head of the household and other members of the household. Gender plays an important role in shaping household members' activities and inter-household relations. The household is considered as an institution in which gender is constantly created and reproduced; it is a place where social contacts determine the extent to which basic means of survival and assets are under the control of the household head. Such characteristics of household thus facilitate the prevalence of unbalanced power distribution among members of a household (Chant, 1998). This explains the role of gender in influencing the nature of household and household members' assigned tasks.

Taking this fact into consideration female headed households, which are characterized by their heterogeneity and different compositions, are taken as main focus of this study. Bearing this in mind, this chapter tries to show how the concept of household and female headship is operationalised for this specific study. In addition, by considering the livelihood concept as a realistic recognition of the multiple capabilities, assets (including both material and social resources) and activities required for a means of living (Carney, 1998), the chapter will try to explain what kind of research methodology and analyses are used to explore the livelihood trajectories of female headed households.

This chapter has seven sections. The first section shows the relation of livelihood framework to Pierre Bourdieu's understanding of capital and how the livelihood framework is used as a methodological tool to develop the interview guide and analysis of the result. The second part presents the study site followed by rationale for the selected research methodology. After introducing the rationale of the methodology, the operational definition of household and female headed households and the process of identification of such household is presented in the fourth part. The fifth part then presents the process of material



collection. By taking the focus group discussion as a separate finding material collection method, the sixth part presents the whole process of the group discussion followed by the process of analysis of the whole data. The final part then discusses the challenges faced during material collection.

## **4.2. Livelihood Approach as a Methodological Tool**

Rural livelihoods are shaped by the social relations that an individual, household, groups, and communities have among themselves and with others (Ellis, 2000). Livelihood outcomes are influenced by a person's ability to acquire resources and control the values created by labour and capital. The livelihood approach states that the process of social activity towards successful livelihood is affected by the specific kind of negotiation and relation an individual or household pursues (Ellis, 2000). Such negotiations and relations are affected by the amount of asset an individual has and the position he or she possesses in the society. This indicates that a livelihood opportunity of a person is modified by the level or type of capital that he or she has. For instance, even though a person has access to resources, access is not only an issue affecting the use or acquisition of capital; it is also an issue associated with the beneficial exploitation of livelihood opportunities (Bibbington, 1999: 70). Exploitation of livelihood opportunities thus depends on, for instance, the type and amount of social relation which is one of the outcomes of livelihood strategies.

The livelihood approach considers that assets possessed by a person such as land are not only means with which he or she makes a living, but also a reflection of the person's world in general. Assets are not merely resources that people employ to accumulate their livelihood; they are also indicative of the ability to be and to act (De Haan and Annelies, 2005). In other words, in addition to being means of survival, assets possessed by individuals serve as a means of their power to act and to reproduce, comfort or modify the system that governs the control, use and transformation of resources. Such explanation of asset beyond its literal meaning of making a living is in line with Pierre Bourdieu's discussion of capital as a means of difference, difference that goes to the extent of determining who has better capability to act and reproduce the rule of resource utilization.

The acceptability and legitimacy of an individual or a household within a community depends on the social position they occupy in the social space (Bourdieu, 1984). As such, access to all kind of livelihood assets are influenced by the social position an individual has. Different kinds of institutions and social organizations like rules and customs, land tenure systems, associations and local administrations also play their roles in recognizing and modifying access to resources depending on the type of capital possessed by each individual and household (Ellis, 2000). The kind of strategy developed by individuals and households also depends on the type and volume of resources and control they have over it. The effect of

livelihood strategy may vary as a result of the position of the individual and household type that embodied the process of negotiation and the nature of social relation.

As the study on household livelihood indicates, households are more than explanations of micro economy but a place of marker of ideology and social relation. Guyer and Peters (1987: 209) claim that household is “located in structures of cultural meaning and differential power”. This means that the difference between various types of households is attributable to the type and amount of assets. Such differences locate households at different social space with its own cultural meaning and power (Guyer and Peters, 1987: 209). As such, every type of household, be it female headed, male headed or child headed, pursues its own strategy depending on the type and amount of capital it possesses. The available capital by households gives them power and social position which in effect further influences their livelihood activity.

As it was discussed in chapter two, the concept of capital equates to power (Bourdieu, 1986: 244). Capital is expressed in different forms: economic, social, cultural and symbolic. Such capitals according to Bourdieu are valued resources that motivate individuals to enact practices (1986: 241). In a similar manner the livelihood framework focuses on the importance of different capabilities so as to bring actions necessary for a means of living. Such capabilities include assets (both material and social resources) that are derived from the possession of different kinds of capital: human, physical, natural, social and financial which contribute to the amount of power actors hold (DFID, 1999). The assets people possess, the livelihood they desire and the strategies they adopt are all influenced by the context in which they live. This context has two dimensions. The first dimension is the structural context, including organisations and institutions such as rules, norms policies and legislations. The second dimension refers to vulnerability, including insecurity of people’s well being in face of a changing ecological, social, political or economic environment (Ellis, 2000). As such, access to important livelihood capabilities of people are more often influenced by structural factors: however, according to Bourdieu in each field the location of actors depends on their position in the field (see chapter two for details) or the possession and distribution of specific capital (Wacquant, 1989: 49). For Bourdieu capital confers power over the field, over the materialized or embodied instruments of production or reproduction. Distribution constitutes the very structure of the field, and over the regularities and the rules which define the ordinary function of the field and thereby over the profits engendered in this field (Wacquant, 1989: 39-40). Similarly modification of access to livelihood approach is represented as the reflection of access to different resources. Hence the relationship between modification of access to livelihood capitals and Bourdieu's discussion of the role of

capital in influencing individuals' position (power) in specific field inspired me to use livelihood framework as a methodological tool to this study. Consequently I managed to use the livelihood framework to develop the interview guide and to see how structural factors affect the position of study subjects in their endeavour toward undertaking livelihood activities in connection with Pierre Bourdieu's generative structural approach.

The application of livelihood framework and Bourdieu's theory of practice to guide the interview would create an analytical bridge between the gap created by the structural approach of the livelihood framework on the one hand and the emphasis on the power of individuals (habitus) towards modifying their means of living on the other hand. The emphasis of the livelihood approach on inequalities in the distribution of assets and power and its recognition of people as makers of their own histories, I believe help this study to dig out the power (expressed in different ways) of study subjects in specific stage of their (livelihood) activities.

### **4.3. The Study Site**

#### **4.3.1. Bati, the Study Site**

Bati wäräda located in the Amhara region, Oromia administrative zone, is the study site for the present research. I choose Bati as my research site because Bati is one of the highly food insecure wäräda in the region. South Wälo was very hard hit by a series of droughts including the 1984-85 drought, and indeed Bati was a food distribution area during the 1984-85 drought.

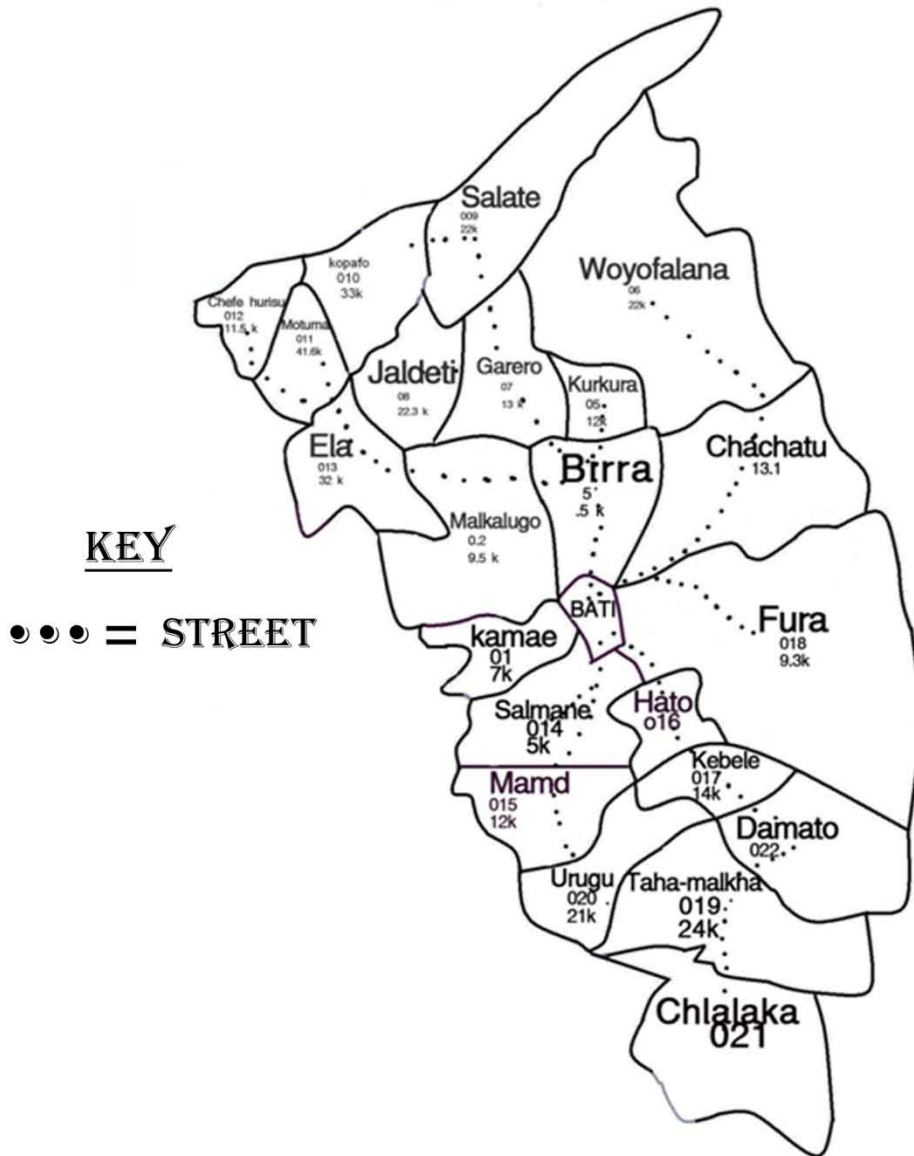
1. Unlike other neighborhood wärädas Bati exhibit more diversified economic strategies including dependence on remittances from long distance migration to places like Djibouti and Saudi Arabia, as well as more investment in livestock and livestock relationships with the Afar with whom they share a border
2. Among needy population, female-headed households in Bati are recognized as especially vulnerable, given social, cultural, and legal constraints in their access to, and use of, productive resources (Yigremew, 2001; Stone, 2001).

In addition to the above mentioned factors, I already had profound understanding and affiliation with the region.

Livelihood requires access to natural and physical resources including—forests, grazing lands and water sources. It also requires knowledge and networks, both social and cultural. Beyond all this, it depends on rights— legal and social. Thus I argue, Bati is unique for the study of female headed households than other parts of Ethiopia because it encompasses many variables that are helpful to investigate special feature of female headed households livelihood. Such variables include the Oromo culture and predominantly Muslim religion, food insecurity, high level of migration and income from remittance and growing number of female headed households. This variables, I recognized will facilitate my endeavor to investigate the position of female headed households and their livelihood activities.

When I choose Bati I recognized that the existence of variables like i.e., food insecurity, growing number of female headed households and labor migration will help me to enrich my findings from the perspective of female headed households livelihood diversification. And, studying the livelihood of such households would also bring more finding on how female headed households' who are emerged as a result of migration and other factors diversify their livelihood. Located in Amhara region but being an Oromo that has its own cultural value on femaleness and headship is also recognized by the researcher that it would bring an interesting finding on the study of female headship. Thus having such variables into consideration I choose Bati to be the focus of my study.

# BATI WĀRĀDA MAP



Bati is one of the 105 wäräda's in Amhara Region, Oromia Zone. Bati Wäräda consists of 23 rural and 5 urban qäbälés with an estimated total population of 115, 957 of whom 57,945 are men and 58,012 are women (CSA, 2011).

Bati is chronically affected by shortage of rain, shortage of food owing to soil degradation, and other natural problems (Mesfin, 2004). Based on interview with head of agricultural office in Bati Wäräda, among the 28 qäbälés, 5-8 are on high risk of poverty in 2005 Ethiopian calendar<sup>5</sup>. Even though the majority of the population is dependent on agricultural activities, its topography which is characterised by low land (85%) is not suitable for agriculture. The total size of the Wärädais 124,696 hectare and has altitude within the range of 1001-2500masl. Ethnically the area is a mix of Oromo (88%) and Amhara (9%) and others (3%). The population is a large mixture of Oromo migrating into the area during the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. The major languages spoken in the area include Oromiffa, Afarigna and Amharic. The population is almost entirely Muslim and there are a small number of followers of other religions.

Agriculture in the wärädais basically dependent on rain and is mainly *meher* (long-rain) dependent with only one harvest in a year. It also gets *belg* (short-rain) rains that are important for planting long cycle crops such as sorghum and maize and for regenerating pasture for livestock. Commonly grown crops in the area are sorghum, t'éf<sup>6</sup>, maize, millets, chickpea, peas and sesame. In general, agricultural production and productivity in the study area is low. Lower practice of irrigation, prevalence of pests like beetle and stalk borer, low soil fertility, shortage of land and oxen, backward agricultural practices, livestock disease and shortage of fodder are responsible factors for the low agricultural productivity of the Wäräda (WOA, 2001). Even in years of adequate rainfall and good harvest many people remain in need of food assistance. According to information from ORDA (2003) it is only for 6-8 months in a year that a household with good production can cover its food requirement from own production; sometimes this may fall to 4-6 months and it may go down to 0-4 months in worst years. This clearly reflects the deeply entrenched poverty and food insecurity situation in the Wäräda irrespective of adequate rainfall.

Lack of adequate and efficient extension services and shortage of proven agricultural packages for dry-land farmers have also been identified as critical gaps in the area (ORDA, 2003). Regarding social services, there are one health centre, three clinics, seven health posts, five static and 32 temporary vaccination centres. These health institutions face shortage of manpower and inadequate supply of

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<sup>5</sup>Ethiopian calendar is 7 years lag behind from Gregorian calendar.

<sup>6</sup>A food grain used to make the fermented pancake, *injera*

medicine. High dropout rate of students particularly of girls is the major challenge in the education sector. The major reasons for dropouts are marriage, seasonal migration and family problem such as shortage of food and education materials (ORDA, 2003).

Located between the Ethiopian highlands and the Great Rift Valley, Bati is known for its market. According to information from Bati Wäräda Office, this market forms an important cultural crossroads for the Amhara, Oromo and semi-nomadic, desert-dwelling Afar people. Bati has hosted Ethiopia's largest cattle and camel market, attracting up to 20,000 people every Monday.

Among all the areas located in northern part of Ethiopia both male and female inhabitants' of Bati Wäräda are known for migrating to nearby Arab countries. As put by Workeneh (2003) labour migration to different areas in need of domestic works (for instance, in Djibouti, Jidda) or nearby urban areas (Kombolcha, Dessie) to search for casual labour, including begging is one of the alternative income-generating activities of the Wäräda population. Thus the Wäräda is known for seasonal migration. Migration contributes to the proliferation of de jure female headed households in Bati Wäräda (Ellis and Woldehanna, 2005). Female heads occupy a significant proportion of households in Bati. Review of wäräda records shows that female heads comprise over 19 % of the households in the Wäräda, of which 13% are in rural areas (WOA, 2001).

Even though female headed households are growing due to various factors including labour migration, Stone (2002) claims that they have limited livelihood activities due to natural calamities and social discrimination. On the other hand, other studies show that they have better potential to diversify their livelihood activities as a result of proximity to Arabian Peninsula and some urban areas.

Since the sample size of this study is very small I would have concentrated only in one qäbälé, but in order to get multiple variation data I decided to choose at least two qäbälés, one which is very close to Bati wäräda and one which is a little bit far and very low land area. According to official report of the wäräda the different qäbälés in the wäräda exhibit similar features in many dimensions. In regard to multiple variation sampling method, various but small samples can give us information which are unique and the samples might share significant common patterns within the variation. Similarly, the current research which consists of various informants, including widow, separated and divorce female heads, male heads, wives in male headed households and different key informants took place in two qäbälés in order to get



high quality, but also distinctive information. Regarding the use of multiple variation, Patton (2002, 172) puts that by using multiple variation, we get ‘High quality, detailed description of each case, which are useful for documenting uniqueness, and important shared patterns that cut across cases and derives their significance from having emerged out of heterogeneity’. In addition to that I choose two qäbälés for the sake of ethical consideration. By selecting informants from different areas, it would be easier to protect their anonymity.

Among the total qäbälés Furra and Birra Keble are selected for this specific study. Birra is one of the qäbälés that is considered as having better agricultural productivity in the wäräda and it is located 5 km away from the wäräda town. Furra is one of the three qäbälé’s that are considered as having low productivity in Bati Wäräda. It is located 9.3 km away from the wäräda town.

#### **4.4. Research Methodology and Identification of Main Informants**

As the main aim of this thesis is to deeply investigate how socially constructed gender relation affects the livelihood of female headed household in the selected area, I preferred to use qualitative research methodology to enable me produce knowledge of social reality (Blaikie, 2006; King et. al., 1994). Using qualitative research methodology would enable me to investigate a socially constructed world 'from within' and investigate contradictions and denaturalize what appears to be natural. In order to explore gender relation within and about female headed households, I have tried to look important issues including the division of work in the society, decision making role and mechanisms and relations of female headed households with sharecroppers, neighbourhood and relatives. Such issues directly or indirectly helped me to understand the livelihood situation of a given household which can be expressed in terms of power-a basic concept that calls for personal observation and contacts so as to be clearly identified. The other reason for using qualitative methods arises from the nature of the issue to be studied. Many researchers argue that livelihood studies encompass the issue of “people centeredness” (Chamber and Conway, 1991). According to Alkire and Deneulin (2000), livelihood cannot be easily studied without taking people as “whole”. People’s perception and ideas, their hopes and fears, their norms and values, etc. should be considered. Taking this notion into consideration, I employed qualitative methods to understand the multi dimensional nature of livelihood activity of the study subjects.

Though it is very difficult to get deep into the nature of the problem using limited data collection method, I felt that the application of qualitative method will give me at least a chance to have brief personal contact with subjects and understand some issues at surface value. Different subjects may have different way of approaching social reality. Similarly they may react differently towards livelihood situations they are facing. In order to understand such variation, the study tried to consider personal explanation of livelihood strategies of female and male heads as well as wives in male-headed households.

#### **4.4.1. Definition of Household**

According to Andrew (1991), household can serve as one means to organize human relations. The discussion of household does not assume homogeneity as there are different social categories like class, status, gender, ethnic origin and age that characterize a household. Similarly, Clay and Harry (1991) defines household as one of the basic units of human social organization. In many studies of the organization of rural life in developing countries, ‘the household’ is also mostly considered as a unit in which production and consumption (as well as reproduction and residence) take place. On the other hand, studies that are undertaken in the developing world like Bangladesh, Ghana, Kenya, the Philippines and Brazil show that ‘inputs to household reproduction may be greater from people who live beyond the physical boundaries of the household than those who reside within it’ (Chant, 1998: 2). This means those people who are outside the given residence may better support different activities of the household than those who are within it. The study by Chant (1998) also shows that those members who have a role in the household but outside the given residence should not have necessary blood relation. Gardner (1995) also argues that even though most households are formed on the base of blood ties or marriage, there are households that comprise friends, co-workers, apprentices and others. In the Ethiopian context the definition of household also varies from region to region and from rural to urban areas, but commonly it may include individuals who live in the same house but are not necessarily having blood relation (Anya and others, 2001). For this specific research, a household is defined as a group of people living together in the same house who regularly cook and eat from the same pot.

#### **4.4.2. Source of Material**

This research use several information sources including female headed households, male household heads, females in male headed households’ and key informants. Female headed households’ are the main source of information. In both qābālés I undertook interview with 20 female heads in female headed

households (10 FHH in each qäbälé) and 10 male heads in male headed households (5 MHH in each qäbälé). In addition to that I undertook seven focus group discussions. Three with female headed households ( two in Birra and one in Furra qäbälé), two with male headed households ( one in Birra and one in Furra qäbälé) and two with female's in male headed households ( one in Fura and one in Birra qäbälé).

In addition, I undertook 14 key informant interviews with important personalities in the study area including: Head of the Wäräda Administration Office, Head of agriculture Office, Officer of land administration office, Head of Agriculture Input Provider and Supply Office, Head of Food Security Office, Coordinator of Cooperative Office, Head of Women's Affairs Office, Head of the Wäräda Sheria Court. Elders with different social position also served as key informants. A person was assigned by head of the wäräda to introduce me to the different officials in the agriculture department that served as key informants. The object for analysis for this specific study is female headed households.

#### **4.4.3. Operational Definition of Female Headed Households in Bati**

Female headed households encompass both de-jure and de-facto female headed households. The de-jure female headed households differ from de facto in that de-jure FHHs are households where there is no permanent male partner, meaning they may receive no economic support. For the legal norms of society the label de-jure is applied (Chant 1997; Youssef and Hetler, 1983). Defacto households, meanwhile, may receive remittances; however it cannot be assumed that these are regular. When I first went to Birra and Furra qäbälé my impression was that I would get both kind of female headed households and it would help me to select my informant. In addition to that I was looking for getting a general idea about male headed households and wives in male headed households. However the qäbälés have only list of the inhabitants registered under the "head of the house." But, when I was asking them to identify a list of female headed households, their list included only de-jure female headed households, i.e., those households headed by a woman whose husband is no more living with them, and either he passed away or divorced. But this list was not exhaustive to give me the kind of female headed households that I was looking for. After I was informed that the agricultural office has the latest information on the matter I visited the office to show me the list of female headed households. However, the list of the agriculture office defined headship based on land tax payers, i.e., those who pay land tax and the land is registered by their name are considered as head of the household.

But I was also told by both the qäbälé and agricultural office workers that, in addition to the de-jure female headed households, some of the reported male-headed households are also actually maintained by women. There are also female heads who are not in the list of land tax payers but are responsible for livelihood security of the household. Some female-headed households are also characterized by the absence of a regular adult male, but with access to remittances and forced to run their source of livelihood or farms individually, whereas others are without economic support from others.

However, for the sake of this specific research a female headed household is characterized by:

1. Absence of any kind of male partner and the female is forced to run her source of livelihood or farms individually, and
2. A household that passed the ownership of natural asset and decision making role to a son, but the senior female is regarded as head by the family and the community.

After the operational definition of female headed household was clarified, I discussed my operational definition with representatives of the qäbälé women's organization and they assigned women representatives to help me identify the required number of female headed households using strategic sampling techniques with some criteria. The sampling technique was applied by undertaking door to door visit and each household was selected right away in the first visit. The selection criteria included a household where:

1. There is no presence of male partner and a female is responsible for the day today activity of the household.
2. A senior female member is recognized as head despite her passive involvement in livelihood activity.

Since the houses in the villages are located far away from each other and the roads are very difficult to drive, the representatives were supposed to tell the message at least a day before my arrival to each of the strategically selected households.

#### **4.4.4. Male Headed Households and Wives in Male Headed Households.**

For the purpose of identifying male headed household I use the definition, a male person whose house is registered in his name and he is responsible for securing the daily bread of the household. Throughout the in-depth interview processes there was a problem of getting male heads in their houses during the day

time. Absence of electricity and problem of security created difficulty to hold the in-depth interview in the evening. Inadequate transportation facilities also posed a major hindrance to my efforts to undertake interview in appropriate time with my respondents. This problem should be seen in the context of the country's poor road networks. Nearly 75 percent of farms in the country are more than half a day's walk from the main roads and most of the roads in Ethiopia are gravel and muddy making many remote sites inaccessible during the rainy season (June–September) (Israel and Mohamed, 2009; MOFED, 2002). Similarly farms in Bati Wäräda are long hours walk from the centre of the town, which made the material collection process more challenging. Thus for the sake of redressing transportation and accessibility problems I had to choose the busy months of the farmers to collect the materials. Of course it would have been good for me to undertake the interview during the months when they are not busy. However these months are on the rainy season which would create accessibility problem. Thus, I decided to make the interview with the male heads after work time. Chat<sup>7</sup> Market (a place where chat is sold and sometimes gets chewed) is the common place males visit every day and spend their spare time. This place was good for the interview in one sense that people don't worry about their time, and also it created favourable environment to get and select the needed number of informants.

The identification of wives in male headed households was also made by considering wives whose house is registered under their husband and the husband is mainly responsible for securing the livelihood of the household. For the sake of getting different information that can supplement other information, as much as possible wives in male headed households are taken from the different households that male informants are interviewed from. Unlike the male heads it was very easy to get women in male headed households in their house for the interview session. As such an appropriate time was selected to interview the women in male headed households, particularly during the absence of males. From different experiences the researcher understands that the women can talk freely on some matters when their husbands are not present: “women tend to discuss their feelings about their lives, their roles, and their marriages more freely when men are not present” (Rubin, 1976: 11).

#### **4.5. Description of Female Household Heads**

Female headed households can be categorized into various groups. They differ in household composition, age of heads, source of income, decision making roles, livelihood diversification system and so on. These

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<sup>7</sup>Plant whose leaves are chewed as a stimulant

particular descriptions of the 20 female headed households show various ways women may become head of household. Although all had been married, with their marriages ended by divorce or death of their spouse, or separation, some had remarried one or more times, some had returned to a natal household with a father or mother to get shelter and the male agricultural labor, while others managed on their own until their sons could fill that role.

These women have pursued a number of different economic and social strategies through time. In cases of early divorce or lack of house, they typically return to their father or mother's house (Interviewees 10, 9, 8, 4,) and resume dependence on their natal households. Eventually, some decide to diversify into such activities as selling fire wood, charcoal and beverages (Interviewees 9, 10,14, 15 and 17, 20), sending children other town or Arab countries or off wage employment (Interviewees 5, 6,7. 12, 13, 15, 16, ). Most of them involved in some agriculture, whether they cultivate land they may have received at divorce or from the death of their husband or from own family.

In the following description important points like how they become female household heads, way of their living, farm size, livestock, social capital and their perception about their status are presented to allow the reader retain direct access to the word of main informants. As much as possible the female household heads are presented in a systematic manner with the category of land, income, diversitification, saving and credit and iddir. Eventhough these catagories are belived to help to show the situation of the different female household heads, there are cases that some of the catagories are missing. In cases where the researcher believe that some catagories are not releveant each female head is made to be described with selected catagories.

### **1.Aziza**

Aziza is 40 years old. She remarried just after a year of her widowhood. She stayed only three years with the second husband and got divorced. Her ex-husband wanted her to give birth to a baby but she refused and it became the cause of their divorce. She herself initiates the divorce. She has four daughters from her first marriage. They are 23, 19, 18 and 16 years of age. The eldest and youngest daughters are married. Whereas, two of them i.e., 18 and 19 years of age are divorced and they are living with her with their two children.

*Land* - She got the land from her first marriage. The size of her land is 1.25 hectare and it is ploughed by a share cropper.

*Diversification*- The amount of production she got from the farm is very small, and she and her daughters are forced to collect and sell fire wood and charcoal to cover the household needs.

*Livestock* -She doesn't have any ox. Lack of adult son doesn't motivate her to have oxen. She has four goats and it is her relative's male children that look after the cattle with payment.

*Saving and credit*- She has information regarding credit services, but doesn't want to borrow money because she is not sure how to pay back the money.

*Iddir*<sup>8</sup> - She is member of the female's *iddir*.

Her favourite saying is “*Set Mechem Eger Enji Ket Yelatem*” literally it means female has no place to sit but a leg to move everywhere. She uses this saying to stress the unstable life of females in the society by taking herself and her daughters' marriage life into consideration.

## **2. Selam**

Selam is 42 years old. When her first husband died she was inherited by the brother of her late husband but she ended up being a female head after the death of her second husband. She has eight children, three from her first husband and five from the second. Now, five of her children are with her. They are 11, 12, 13, 17, and 18 years of age. She has no contact with relatives of her husband; they even don't want her to live in their village because they think that she is the reason for the death of her son.

*Land*- She got land from the first marriage and she used it as a source of income to raise her children. When she was transferred to the second husband her share of land was registered under her elder son and still it is under his name. The size of the land is .75 hectare. The two eldest are ploughing the land. Sometimes she organised *jige*<sup>9</sup>. She has grazing land near her farm but she no more uses it since she doesn't have any cattle to raise.

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<sup>8</sup> Funeral association that pays out to the family of the deceased in cash or in kind when a member or relative of a member dies

<sup>9</sup>An arrangement whereby a needy peasant prepares a feast and acquires human and/or oxen power from friends, relatives and neighbours to plough/sow his land, and weed or harvest his crops.

*Livestock-* She has one ox, and her son plough the land by joining up with another ox from another household.

*Diversification-* She has got some chicken and when she runs short of money she sells chicken to earn some money.

*Saving and credit -* She heard about the provision of credit services but she is not a beneficiary of the service till now. She is afraid of misusing the money for covering daily purposes and she might fail to repay it.

*Iddir-* She is member of the female's *iddir*

According to her, a respected woman is one who has a husband, and who always stays at home (a woman whose husband doesn't want her to be outside or work on the farm). But a female head is considered as talkative and *kelal* literally meaning easy going.

### **3. Ayelech**

Ayelech is 39 years old. She became a widow female head since the last four years. She is raising five male children<sup>10</sup>, two of them are hers and the rest three are her late husband's.

*Land-* She earns her income from the land registered under her step son. Before she got married, her late husband transferred his land to one of his sons from previous marriage. Its size is 1.5 hectare. The grown up son is working on the farm. She has grazing land but it is very small and it is located far away from her village.

*Livestock-* She has got two oxen, two cows, two goats and six hens.

*Credit and saving-* She has not heard about the provision of credit and saving services before January. But now she is beneficiary of the service.

*Diversification-* She prepares and sells different kind of pots. She takes them to the market twice a week

*Iddir-* She is a member of the female's *iddir*. She doesn't think that there is strong social life in the village.

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<sup>10</sup>She doesn't want to tell the age of her children. Even for some female heads who donot exactly know their exact ages the researcher take her own personal guess.



She wants her sons to be successful in their school and she doesn't push them to engage more in home activities. For her female headed households are considered in the society as having lower position.

#### **4. Sara**

Sara is 50 years old. She divorced twice. She stayed seven years with her first husband and ten years with the second. It has been eight years since she became a divorcee female head. The reason of her divorce from the two marriages was her inability to give birth to a baby. In the second case since it was she that initiated the divorce, the elderly<sup>11</sup> decided that she should repay the *Nika* (jewellery and money given during marriage) and get divorced without any claim.

*Land-* She did not get land from her marriages. Now she is living with her mother on land inherited from her parents, all her sisters and brothers have died and she inherited her parent's property including land. The land is .75 hectare. She has a share cropper

*Livestock-* She has some cattle, but no ox.

*Credit and saving-* She was the beneficiary of previous credit provision and finished repaying her lone on time.

*Iddir -* She is member of the female's *iddir*.

According to her most female headed households are equal and have similar kind of income; their life is almost hand to mouth so it is very difficult to mention who is respected and who is not. She doesn't bother about being a female head.

#### **5. Berhane**

Berhane is 61 years old widow. She has a daughter and a son. Both of them are married. She lives alone but her three grand children come every day to spend the night with her after they eat their meal at their home.

*Land-* She has already transferred the ownership of her land and the animals to her son. The size of the land is .75 hectare. Her son works on the land and brings her provisions from the farm.

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<sup>11</sup> In the woreda elders refer to those respected personalities including religious leaders. When there are minor conflicts between or within the household they serve as a mediating agent.

*Diversification*- She gets help from her daughter, who is living in Dessie. She sends her some provisions, goods and clothes. She gets food aid from the qäbälé and she is also a beneficiary of the safety net programme.

*Iddir* - She is member of the female's *iddir*.

## **6. Zebiba**

Zebiba is 58 years old widow. Two of her daughters and one of her two sons are married. One of her sons, her divorced daughter and her three children are living with her.

*Land* - Her source of income is land. It is .5 hectare. One of her son is ploughing. The land ownership is under her name but her son is the ultimate decision maker because it is he who is undertaking the main agricultural activity and feed the family.

*Livestock*- She has one ox, one cow and some chickens.

*Diversification*- She is thankful to the support she gets from her children. She has a son who lives abroad and sends her money regularly. Remittance from abroad helped her to open a mini market and supplement her income. She said she is also saving money for her son who is living abroad. Now she is supporting her household from the income she gets from the mini market and vegetable growing. She is also a beneficiary of food aid and safety net. Her grand children and daughter work on her behalf in the public work

*Iddir*- She is member of a female's *iddir*.

## **7. Debitu**

Debitu is 63 years old. She has been a widow for fifteen years. She has seven children, two daughters and five sons. It is only the sons that are living in Birra Qäbälé and all of them except one are married. She is living with one of her unmarried son.

*Land*- the land is under the name of one of her married son and she takes her share from his production. He consults her on different matters. The land is .75 hectare.

*Livestock* –She has only chickens

*Diversification*- Her two daughters left for Jeddah six years ago. Her daughters also support her economically. They send her clothes and money when necessary. She is beneficiary of safety net programme.

*Iddir* - She is member of the female's *iddir*.

## **8. Mekedes**

Mekedes is 36 years old. She has been a widow for the last five years. She has two daughters and a son (10, 12, and 16). During the death of her late husband, the late husband's family destroyed her house with fire and forced her to leave the area. Since her house was destroyed she was homeless for some time and temporarily sheltered in her father's home. Now she constructed and moved into her own house.

*Land*- She owns land from her marriage and it is the main source of her livelihood. The size of the land is 1 hectare. She managed to get back her land through *qäbälé* decision. It is her father who is ploughing the land for her. She is the decision maker on her life but she sometimes consults her father. She wants her son to learn ploughing and help her father. Sometimes, he accompanies and spends some time in the field with her father.

*Livestock*- She doesn't have ox but she raise cattle for sale.

*Saving and credit*- She is not a beneficiary of saving and credit scheme.

She doesn't want to mention any thing about the community and neighbours. She thinks that she is "unwanted" by the society. According to her, if her father had not been around she couldn't have got a place to get shelter when she was let off from her house by the relatives of her husband. She got no help from the community during that bad time. She thinks that it is very hard to be a female head. For her being a female head is a sanction from Allah (God).

## **9. Bekelu**

Bekelu is 30 years old. It has been three years since she has divorced. Both she and her ex-husband were living in Djibouti before their marriage. They came to Bati to establish their own family life but got divorced after ten years of marriage. She has got two sons and one daughter (five, seven and nine years old). After their divorce he went back to Djibouti but she decided to stay in Bati in her parents house to take care of her children.

*Income* - When she was with her husband they did not own land. Her ex husband used to sell charcoal in Bati and sometimes he went to Djibouti and brought money to cover their expenses. Now she is supporting her household by selling charcoal. She got very little because the market is too far and she cannot carry much on her back, but before her divorce they used to hire a camel to transport the charcoal.

*Saving and credit*- She is not member of credit and saving scheme.

*Diversification*- She is thinking of going back to Djibouti to support her children, but she doesn't know what to do with the children. Even though she wanted to get married, she did not get a man interested to marry her. She thinks that it is because she has no land. Sometimes she gets some support from her parents.

*Iddir* -She is not member of iddir

## **10. Azeb**

Azeb is 23 years old. She got divorced eight months ago. She was one month pregnant when she got divorced. During their marriage her ex-husband was dependent on his family. When they were in marriage he was ploughing for his parents and given his share of production. After they divorced he went to Djibouti leaving nothing behind to her. He also took her *Nika* gifts back. His families told her that when they got married he did not ask his parents to build him a house and share him land (*Gojo mewetat*). She was also told that she does not have the right to claim land because she didn't give birth to a baby. Now she has returned to her parents place and living in a house found in her parent's compound.

*Income*- She lives on income she gets from selling fire wood and charcoal.

*Diversification*- She wishes to go to Djibouti or to other urban area after giving birth to the baby but she is not sure who will be taking care of her baby. Otherwise, she is certain that she will fall in the marriage trap again.

## **11. Fetele**

Fetele is 47 years old. She has been a widow for ten years. Four of her children, one son and three daughters are married. Two of the daughters are living in Jeddah. But one of her widowed daughter and her children are living with her. The married son is also living in the same compound.

*Land-* Both Fetele and her married son own land. She has .75 hectare of land. Her son is helping her in ploughing and she constructed him the house in return. She is the decision maker in her own life. She regularly consults him regarding production and marketing otherwise she runs her own life by herself.

*Diversification-* She is working on vegetable farm and cattle raising. She also gets support from the society. Whenever she calls for *jige* the people are cooperative. It is because she said she acts according to the norms of the society.

*Iddir-* Both of them have independent *Iddir*

She remembers no problem with the villagers because she is working both like a man and a woman and keeps herself away from males too. But she says that if a female head starts affair with a married man or gets inherited all the village people will hate her.

## **12. Zahara**

Zahara is 48 years old. She had been in marriage for twenty years and has given birth to six children. It has been four years since she divorced. Her health problem is the cause of the divorce. Her ex-husband has other children from his previous marriage. He also has had a second wife while they were living together and spent most of the time with the other wife, but visited her once a fortnight or a month. In 2005 she became sick and failed to actively participate in different activities as she used to do before. Then her ex-husband decided to divorce her. He wanted her to leave the house. But she took the case to the court and they got divorced legally.

*Land -* She got her share of land through court decision. But the ex-husband was not happy of the decision and started to follow and attack her. Now she has .5 hectare of land and a share cropper works on it. Her ex-husband refused to transfer the share to the children and she cannot plough her land properly as a result of her ex-husband's repeated attempt to chase her out from the place. They always tell her that she is a

wife and the land belongs to their father not to her. Sometimes his children from the other marriage would come and destroy the farm.

*Diversification-* Her sons look after the neighbours' cattle and support the household from the income.

*Iddir-* She remembers a time when the ex-husband told to the villagers loudly (in a funeral gathering) that she divorced him through court not through Sheria and she is against the rule of the religion. From then on she has been alienated from the society and no one wants to cooperate with her. Now she is afraid of meeting people in different occasions, even in *kire (Iddir)*. No one is interested to drink coffee with her.

The fact that the man is very influential in the village has made her to lose all her social connections. Everybody points out to her as if she has done wrong. But she is still struggling to end the case and live a stable life.

### **13. Lubaba**

Lubaba is 37 years old. She has been separated but not divorced from her husband for the last ten years. She has two daughters and two sons (the sons are 13 and 15 years of age and her daughters are 17 and 19). Her husband became sick and he went to his relatives living in Djibouti. In previous years they used to up-date each other and he managed to send money that enabled her to start cattle raising, but after a while she didn't hear from him. She doesn't have any more contact with him.

*Land-* Before they married both of them were living in Djibouti and did not get a chance of benefiting from land redistribution. But she inherited land from her father, for whom she is the only child. The size of the land is 1 hectare. Now she has a share cropper. She has also grazing land close to her field area.

*Livestock-* She has two oxen, six cows, five sheep and five goats. The money she got from credit helped her to increase the number of cattle.

*Iddir-* She is also member of the female's *iddir*. She has good contact with her neighbours but has no contact with her husband's relatives. She said they are not happy to be visited.

*Diversification-* She raises cattle. She mentions selling of cattle as her coping mechanism during shortage of food. The eldest daughter works in Dessie town and supports her.

#### **14. Enat**

Enat is 29 years old. She has been a widow for the last three years. She has three sons (11, 5, 9) and two daughters (7 and 4 years old). When her husband was alive they did not have land but he was working as a daily labourer.

*Income* - After the death of her husband she started to work in different places. Now she is working as a cook and she also collects and sells fire wood and charcoal. She is still requesting the qäbälé to get land but they told her that there is no land to be redistributed now.

She came to this place following her husband, so she doesn't have relatives to support her. Her children are too young to help her. As far as her life is concerned she is the sole responsible body to the family. Even the relatives of her late husband don't want to take care of the children. She would like to marry again, but it is difficult to get marriage proposal having five children but don't have land to support the household.

*Iddir*- She is member of the female's *iddir*. But she doesn't know anything about what is going on in the village because she is always running to search for something to feed her household.

#### **15. Ziad**

Ziad is 34 years old. It has been eleven months since she got divorced. Her ex-husband got married to another woman and left her without a supporter. She has no relative in the area; she just came here following her ex-husband. It was without her willingness that her husband divorced her. She gets nothing from the marriage but all the children are with her. She has got one son (17 years old) and three daughters (11, 13 and 15 years old). She first took the case to religious leaders but she couldn't get any help from them. Now she is applying the case to the qäbälé. She got a response that she has to wait some time for the decision. She is still waiting for a solution from them.

*Income*- Now she is working as a cook and sells fire wood to support her family.

*Diversification*- She has also started to send her eldest son to work in others' farm.

*Credit and saving*- She has the information regarding credit and saving schemes, but she has not yet the chance to be a beneficiary of the provision in this qäbälé.

She believes in education and teaches all her children. As much as possible she doesn't want to see her daughters to get married soon. She would like them to finish their education and become civil servants or to go to Arab countries.

After she got divorced she did not get good response from her neighbours. She thinks that everybody hates her and suspects that she is going to snatch their husbands. For her a woman gets respect when she has a husband.

## **16. Alem**

Alem is 45 years old. She is a widow. She has got two sons (26 and 18) and five daughters (23, 20, 24, 16 and 13 years old)

*Land-* She owned land but does not have ox and cow. All her cattle died because of the draught. She has a share cropper. She gets only one sack of sorghum from the harvest. She is not satisfied with the amount of production and the behaviour of the share cropper. She is the ultimate decision maker in the household

*Diversification-* She also collects and sells fire wood to support the household. One of her sons and daughter went to Arab countries a year ago but she has received nothing from them. When she sent them they promised to send her money to buy ox, but they did send nothing till now. She is beneficiary of the safety net programme and sometimes she gets food grain from the qäbälé. After her widowhood, she has never got any support or call from her late husband's relatives and she doesn't know why it happens like that.

*Iddir-* She is member of the female's *iddir*. She drinks coffee on Wednesdays and Thursdays with her neighbours and she thinks that it is one of the mechanisms that help them to share information.

She thinks it is difficult to be happy and food secure being a widow.

## **17. Mulat**

Mulat is 27 years old. It has been one year since she has divorced. Her divorce is not yet concluded properly. After the birth of her fourth child she became sick and her husband told her that he didn't want to live with her. Her children are two, seven, nine and ten years old. Now her ex husband has started a new life with another woman. He snatched all her *Nika* (gifts of marriage) and gave it to the new wife. She reported the case to the religious leaders and qäbälé administration. Even her parents asked him to share



her property. Till now the case is not yet settled. She is still looking forward to get her share of land. One of her little child, whom she is breast feeding, is living with her, the son is with her ex-husband and the rest two are with her parents.

*Income-* They had land before. Now she is living from selling fire wood and charcoal. But she noticed that carrying a lot of wood on back and travelling long distance is tiresome and painful. If she could have got a camel she said, she can carry a lot at one time and get good return. She also engages in preparing and selling alcoholic beverage. The eldest daughter supports her in her work.

Now she doesn't want to get married again. She is rather thinking of going out from Bati and work somewhere else, but she doesn't know where to put her last child. She got no support from the neighbourhood during all her crisis time. It is only her parents that give her hope that she will be okay one day; otherwise she has given up with all the institutions.

### **18. Fre**

Fre is 26 years old. It has been three years since she got divorced. She has one child from her marriage. It is her husband that initiated the divorce. She doesn't know exactly why he didn't want to live with her. When she refused the divorce he himself moved out leaving her alone. She doesn't know where he is now.

*Income-* They did not have land when they got married. Till now she has been supporting herself and her child from the sale of all her jewelleries she got for her marriage (*Nika*). Sometimes she collects fire wood and charcoal.

### **19. Negat**

Negat is 30 years old. It has been four years since she got divorced. She has two sons and one daughter from her marriage. They are seven, ten and twelve years old.

*Land-* She has been struggling for three years to get her share of land. Finally she managed to get .5 hectare of land through the help of qäbälé administration. She doesn't have a grown-up son to help her in ploughing. She always begs for oxen and villagers' labour for ploughing. Sometimes she also hires a share cropper for ploughing. She wants her son's to learn about ploughing and tell them to spend some time with the share cropper to learn how to plough.

*Livestock-* She doesn't have ox and other livestock and this has made her life difficult. Till now there is no specific support she gets from institutions.

*Iddir-* She is member of the female's *iddir*.

*Saving and credit-* She was beneficiary of the credit scheme at one time. Two years ago she bought an ox that cost 800 birr from credit and sold it after a year for 2000 birr. But when she requested to get credit for the second time, she was told that she cannot get a big amount to fatten an ox because it is a very difficult activity for a female. But she is still keeping on demanding the benefit.

She associates her femaleness with hay (*geleba*). She said "Once the wind comes it might carry the hay to some unknown or far away place and the life of a female head is like that. I don't know what kind of crises people will bring me tomorrow; my life totally depends on other people's wishes." She thinks that she loses all the respect she used to have, however she decided to ignore all these and concentrate on her work to win life. She want all her children to attend school. Two of them have started schooling.

## **20. Aregash**

Aregash is 29 years old. She was in marriage for eight years. In the eighth year of her marriage her husband went to Djibouti. It has been five years since he left but she heard from him only in the first two years. From then onwards she has never heard from him. She has three children. They are eight, eleven and twelve years of age.

*Land-* She has one hectare of land. Her land is twenty minutes' walk from her house. The land is still registered in her husband name and she paid tax as a representative. She is observing that her husband relatives are not happy of her presence. They sometimes try to indirectly tell her to leave the children with them and get married to another person. But she thinks that if she leaves the village they will not allow her to have right on her land and house. She negotiates and hires a share cropper by herself.

*Diversification-* She sells alcoholic beverage, raise cattle and also has a mini shop in the village. She sells different kinds of items in the mini market. She goes out to Bati market and town to buy the items. Two of her daughters 11 and 12 help her in the shop.

Some people in the society including her husband's families consider that all what she has is because of her husband. But she said that she gets nothing from her husband and she even calls him a husband only to benefit from the land. She tries to engage in many activities as much as possible.

#### **4.6. Process of Collection of Material**

Data collection was undertaken in two round trips to Bati. The first field visit took 16 days and the second one took 26 days. Personal interview with female heads and male heads took place a minimum of one hour. There were also times when the interview was interrupted due to household activities of the females.

At the beginning of collection of materials, meetings and interviews were held with relevant persons (key informants) to gather information on the current situation of livelihood systems and gender relation in Oromia Region and to discuss existing strategies and problems related to female headed households and livelihood. The results from such discussion led to a series of focus group discussions with female household heads, wives in male headed households and male household heads and personal interview with female and male household heads. As my main research methodology is qualitative method, I started to collect the finding materials from day one through observation.

The interview guide prepared for personal interview with female and male household heads was divided into six different parts: questions that deal with access to different kinds of asset, issues about livelihood activities, decision making role, conflict resolution, coping mechanisms, and interviewees' general perception about their livelihood capabilities and activities. (See appendix 3). The actual content of the list of question is initially generated by reviewing relevant academic and non academic literature, alongside my thoughts about what areas might be important to cover in the interview. As put by Rapley (2001: 18) the list of questions can also help to produce the researcher as competent interviewer. He also stressed that the list of questions may help to follow the interviewees' talk, to follow up on and to work with them and not strictly delimit the talk to the researcher's predetermined agenda. As such I didn't ask the same question in the same way in each interaction, but I often covered the same subject matter in different interviews- either through the interviewee or I raised it as a topic for discussion, such scheme is known as a central rationale of qualitative interviewing, it helps to gather contrasting and complementary issues on the same theme or topic (Rapley, 2001: 18).

I began the interview by getting out my tape recorder, asking them their consent to get recorded and explaining issues of confidentiality. Using tape recorder helped to focus on interacting with the

interviewee and reducing the time spent on writing. It also provided much more detailed recorded verbal data than note taking. Rapley (2001: 18) asserts that the researcher can replay the tapes, produce transcripts and then selectively draw on these to provide demonstrations of the interviewers' argument. The use of tape recorder might increase nervousness and negatively influence frankness and might restrain interaction (Arksey and Knight, 1999: 105). As such the informant possibly feels he or she has to be appealing or impressive and this can alter the account (Minichiello et al., 1995: 99). On the other hand some interviewees may lack trust. They may suspect that the researcher might misuse the information as this is a permanent record (Rubin and Rubin, 1995: 126). However, for the purpose of this study, before I started the recording I tried to explain well about the purpose of the research and create relaxed and encouraging relationship with the interviewees. This made them feel comfortable and find it easier to talk. For the sake of confirming confidentiality, I promised them that nobody would be listening to the tapes except for this research purpose.

Coming to the issue of confidentiality, a researcher should guarantee respondents that the data they provide would be kept confidential. The researcher is obliged to protect the participants' identity, places, and the location of the research (Ryen, 2004: 221). As much as possible the interview guide was designed in a more neutral manner, it does not threaten the informants in any way. As such, some female interviewees in male headed households had questioned the confidentiality of their responses. I felt that their concern emanated from the fact that there could be a possibility that their husbands might have access to their responses. However, I assured them that no one would have direct access to the information except the researcher and concerned parties. In general the interview process was undertaken with the intention of getting their ideas, thoughts, and memories in their own words. This asset is particularly important for the study of women because as Reinharz (1992: 19) argues "this way of learning from women is an antidote to centuries of ignoring women's ideas altogether or having men speak for women." However to protect the confidentiality of my informants identity, I remove identifiers from the data sets. For example, the names of informants are replaced with pseudonyms. Specific addresses are also not used in the entire thesis. As much as possible care is also taken to avoid indirectly identifiable data that may show various information about informants which together provide identification.

## 4.7. The Focus Group Discussion

The focus group discussion was undertaken with female heads, male heads and wives in male headed households. Members of the focus group discussion were selected taking into consideration different criteria. For instance, as much as possible, female heads from different groups, i.e., divorcee, widow and separated were made to take part. In the case of male heads and wives variation in terms of their marital history was taken into consideration (newly married, those who have experienced inheritance marriage, remarriage, etc.). Even though there is diverse experience among each female heads, male heads and wives in male headed households, care was given to get deep understanding of the range of views, meanings and experiences. As much as possible, the characteristics of participants in each group were made to be homogenous, i.e., each group consisted of participants from same sex, ethnicity, religion, and close age group. Attention was also given to composition of participants to ensure reduction of likelihood of problems within the group. However, as put by Bloor (2001) a focus group is a socially dynamic state of affair and characterised by its unpredictability. Regardless of the attention and preparation made, the researcher will not be able to expect or necessarily control the direction of the group discussion and thus subjects which come out seemingly harmless at the beginning may drift into difficult areas. Farquhar and Das (1999) also pointed out the sensitivity of research topics as a cause for unexpected problems, as the sensitivity of the topic is not fixed but socially constructed. They further pointed out that there are potential group members or participants with dominating or reserved character that reflect on particular experiences with negative response.

The selection of participants was done using personal reference. Since the houses in the village are located far from each other and participants who fulfilled the required criteria may not be easily accessible within a given area, it was difficult to easily pick participants. Thus, I recruited participants with the above criteria using personal reference (intermediary). As much as possible, the people in the women's affair office helped me to recruit people whom they have prior knowledge about them. In addition I have arranged a situation where I can meet the discussants ahead of time and get their consent and brief them about the objective of the research. However, important steps like identifying eligibility criteria, number of participants and awareness of research objective and getting the consent of participants had to be emphasised well before the selection process. Talking about recruiting participants through intermediaries, Bloor (2001) pointed out the importance of taking necessary steps to ensure researcher guidelines are used properly. According to Bloor such guidelines consist of distribution of adequate information about the

study for potential participants and getting informed consent of each individual to participate in the discussion. Personal reference on the other hand helped to get familiar or pre-existing groups. The pre-existing groups who have personal acquaintances with each other created an environment that facilitated interaction which approximates to “naturally occurring” data.

In support of pre-existing groups Kitzinger (1994: 105) notes that “above all it is useful to work with pre-existing groups because they provide one of the social contexts within which ideas are formed and decisions made”. During the focus group discussion with wives in male headed households the fact that the participants have prior knowledge about each other and have a tradition of drinking coffee together regularly helped the discussion to be very lively. It also enabled me to uncover some facts which would have been difficult to get using participants who do not know each other. For instance, participants of one of the wives' groups told me that they are member of an *Iqub* (rotating money saving institution) but none of their husbands know about it. They also discussed passionately why they don't want their husbands to know about the *Iqub*. However, even though using pre-existing groups helped to disclose some facts, some pre-existing social groups may find particular topics of high sensitivity create post group discomfort (Bloor, 2001). For instance, in one of the groups consisting female heads, there was a serious challenge that I faced: the presence of dominant personality and lack of experience of speaking in front of some dominant personalities. Even though the group members know each other, I have found that one of the participants was really dominant and wanted to control the whole discussion. Some of the group members were hesitant to give their reflection on what the lady has said, they rather preferred to express their agreement on what has been said. I understood that one of the reasons for such un-interactive discussion was because such females were afraid of discussing some issues in the presence of some influential people., A lady that was dominating the group was serving voluntarily as a women representative in the qäbälé and some of the participants were not comfortable discussing their feeling concerning their livelihood systems in her presence. As much as possible such kind of problems were minimized by incorporating a good number of participants in the group. The number of participants in each group in this study was between six and eight.

Groups can have as small as three participants and as large as fourteen (Pugsley, 1996; Thomas, 1999), but it is quite usual for groups to have shy or submissive participants, as seen above in this study which will have negative impact on the discussion and its result. Larger groups can also have problems. Groups which are too large create frustrating environment among participants if they feel that they haven't had

enough time to take part in the discussion. Too large groups can also become difficult to moderate. The number of participants also plays a role in influencing the transcription of recording of the discussion for subsequent analysis. According to Bloor (2001) for academic research, successful analysis will, in part, be dependent on the ability to accurately attribute specific sets of interaction to individual group members and this may have implications for decisions regarding the optimum size of the group. Such problem therefore can be redressed at least by having six to eight members in a group.

In undertaking the focus group discussion the researcher may face problem of not only identifying willing and eligible respondents but also ensuring that the participants attend the group. Different writers recommend techniques that can be followed to maintain attendance. Among them non monetary incentive, such as undertaking the focus group discussion in a pleasing and accessible location and provision of a selection of food and drinks is emphasised by Morgan (1995). Indeed, for the sake of ensuring attendance for the discussion different mechanisms were used. For instance, in one of the group discussions with wives, the extended cultural coffee ceremony<sup>12</sup> which takes place after lunch was used. For the purpose of this study coffee was prepared and the participants were called out to drink coffee. My brothers who were assisting me in the field work also participated in facilitating the coffee ceremony programme. In Fura Qäbälé on the other hand the discussions with male heads were arranged in the qäbälé compound. The participants were called out to get together in the afternoon after they accomplished their daily job. For the rest of female heads and wives the discussion was also arranged on a market day in the qäbälé compound. Females in the area go out for market within specific days. The fact that the market place is located far from their village and they are responsible for carrying out daily chores, they don't get enough time to go far places daily. Taking this fact into consideration an arrangement was made with women representatives and the qäbälé administration to get selected participants on market day.

The whole group discussion for this study was moderated by the researcher. A particular difficulty lies in striking the right balance between an active and a passive role. The moderator has to generate interest in the discussion about a particular topic, which is close to his or her professional or academic interest (Millward, 1995). As put by Bloor (2001: 70) the interactive nature of focus groups may lead to some uncertainty in the data, resulting from contradictions and unfinished speech, which causes problems for systematic approach to the analyses. As a possible solution to such potential problem an attempt was made in this study to eliminate contradictions or interrupted speech.

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<sup>12</sup> Coffee ceremony: when people drink coffee with their neighbours or relatives by taking longer time than usual.

In order to allow verbatim analysis, tape recording was used. This has also helped me to concentrate my attention freely on the group. A written note was also taken while the recording was done. While I was taking notes, my field assistances (my two brothers) were taking care of the tape recording process. In support of written notes, Krueger (1994) asserts that written notes not only help to protect against the effects of machine failure, but more importantly they provide a means whereby observations of the non verbal interaction taking place within the group can be linked to the verbal accounts provided by the participants. For the sake of becoming familiar with the data and getting early thoughts for the analysis the transcription was also done by the researcher herself using a transcribing machine.

#### **4.8. Translation and Interpretation**

Even though all research subjects were Oromo, majority of them speak Amharic (same language as the researcher's) and it was much easier for me to understand what they were saying. However, language by itself cannot fully help to understand the society. Rather knowing the social context of the society adds value on the knowledge to be produced from the interview. As such the involvement of interviewers generally and translators specifically, alters the nature of the research (Temple, 1997: 607). In this research there were situations in which a translator was needed. For instance, some of female interviewees in Fura Qäbälé had difficulty of fully communicating in Amharic. Translators are referred by some people as key informant and are interested in the relationship between the researcher and the interviewees and their social localisation, values and notions of faith (Temple, 1997). Hatim and Mason (1994) also state that translation is affected by contextual circumstances. As put by Flemmen and Eriksen (2009) the positions of interpreters may influence the translation through the words they choose to use. They also indicate that it is very difficult to say there is one to one relationship between the position of translators within their own culture and their translation. The translator used in this research was selected using some criteria, as much as possible care was taken to get someone who is originally from the study area, have work experience on gender issues and be female. Prior discussion was also held with the translator about basic concepts and objectives of the study.

Beyond understanding the culture, understanding the sayings, proverbs and interpreting them is very challenging. As such care was taken to get clear understanding of the meaning of different sayings and proverbs. I have also observed that interviewees were using proverbs repeatedly to express their feelings and thoughts. Flemmen and Eriksen (2009: 8) also noticed that in everyday speech of Ethiopians, it is very common to use proverbs and metaphors. In Oromo culture proverbs are strong components of the



general discourse; speakers use the proverbs to add flavour and strength to their speech. They are also guardians and bearers of the people's philosophical wisdom (Jeylan, 2004). The following Oromo proverb about proverbs briefly reveals this fact. *Dubbiin mammaaksa hinqabne, ittoo sooqidda hinqabne* (a speech without proverb is a stew without salt). As such it was common to find the proverbs in the interview process. When proverbs are used, the translator tries to communicate the context of different proverbs and metaphors using appropriate words, rather than using literal meanings. Then I would raise different cross checking questions to relate what the respondents meant to say by each saying. When accounts are translated into different languages it may be necessary to try to convey meaning using words other than literally translated equivalents (Overring, 1987 in Temple, 1997: 610). Simon (1996: 131) also states that the translator has to ask whether the concept is equivalent or analogous to one that we can frame in another language. He further argues that "the answer can be found only in value judgments decreeing the degree of possible equivalence between cosmogonies. For instance, if we see one of the Amharic proverbs used in chapter four:

*Lej adera mallet men amargna new!*

*Lejen yale-enatu lejen yale-abatu yemiyakebet manew!*

What does it mean to give a child to other people?

While it is only his mother and father who are good care takers.

In this case more attention was given to the intended meaning than the actual meaning. The purpose of qualitative interviewing is to derive interpretations, not factors or laws, from respondent talk (Warren, 2002). Accordingly the literal meaning might simply mean that a child's father and/or mother are better care takers than any body else. But when I critically see the intention and tone of the interviewees on the matter it goes beyond its literal meaning. Rather it may imply that there are other parts of the family who would like to take care of the child for other potential benefits. This implies that there is a wide range of social influences in research. As such, the researcher, research participants and the translators themselves are worthy of consideration in knowledge production or analysis of the research. In some places I have put both the English translation and direct Amharic and sometimes the Oromiffa version of the respondents' word. As much as possible care was taken to translate the original language into English, but in some places when I feel that the translation fails to express the intended meaning very well. I also put the respondents' word as they put it in their original language.

## **4.9. Analysis of the Data**

In analysis the researcher is not trying to establish the truth about interviewees' actions, experience, feelings and thoughts but rather how specific and sometimes opposing truths are created, sustained and discussed (Rapley, 2001: 26). The analysis of the material is started by transcribing the Amharic version of the interview into English. After the translation, a lot of categorization and classification were done to select the major findings of the study.

Repeated readings were done to understand the different meaning from each selected category of data. Key notes, which were taken from my personal observation, starting from day one of the material collection also served as a means of additional information to strengthen the analysis processes. Notes, regarding the topics discussed, were also made after each interview. Throughout the research project, I wrote memos about ways of categorizing the data. Such memos included anything that attracts my attention during the initial phases of the analysis. Regarding the use of memos, Field and Morse (1985) wrote that memos serve as memory joggers and to record ideas and theories that the researcher has as he works with the data. Repeated telephone conversation with some of the key informants was also done throughout the analysis to understand some issues and clear out ambiguities.

The transcriptions were read thoroughly with notes that are made on general themes with the transcripts. I have gone through this stage for the sake of getting immersed in the data, to help me to become more fully aware of the 'life world' of the informants. Transcripts were then read again and as many heading as necessary are written down to describe all aspects of the content. The analysis of the discussion was done using indexing process. After reading the text thoroughly and repeatedly, all data related to particular theme were indexed under different heading. As much as possible the indexing was done in relation to the content of the data and the theory and research questions of the thesis. The indexed data were then collected together manually using organized filing system to be able to retrieve them for comparison with other data given the same index. Specific issues pertaining to the nature of the data were noted and addressed during the whole analysis process. In a clearer manner the analysis continued by categorizing female headed households based on the different livelihood activities they have, their ownership of assets and the level of accumulated capital that they are endowed with. The identification of such factors enabled me to further investigate the enabling factors for the prevalence of differentiation of livelihood activities and capital possession among study subjects. Such analysis leads to the recognition of the role of gender based societal norms in influencing the ownership of asset and position of female household heads in the

society. The societal norms in one way or another were identified as related with deep rooted perception and association of roles with specific gender. After identifying the role of deep rooted perception on gender based role, for instance on farming, headship and relationship of female household heads and other parties, further categorization was done to see how such perception affects the possession of different kind of livelihood capital by female headed households. The categorization further led to the identification of differences among the female heads in terms of how they are maintaining livelihood activity and what kind of position they have within the society based on the type and level of livelihood capital they possess. Taking such fact into consideration an attempt was made to show in the thesis, how habitus of actors plays its role in shaping the character of the society and constructing the nature of the different fields like farming. In this study the nature of each field is discussed from the point of view of who has what kind of capital and which capital works well in enabling them to win the game of position taking. Position taking in this thesis is defined as the position of acquiring and maintaining the given livelihood capital that enabled study subjects lead their day to day activity.

#### **4.10. Field Work Challenges**

##### **I) Nature of target groups**

Most qualitative data analysts have commented that the talk of research subjects in interview is always a collaborative production. Mainly the way participants talk about their experiences depends on who they are talking to, what they have been asked and what kind of reactions they anticipate and receive (Prior, 2007). Interviewing female household heads in the wäräda that I was studying was very hard. From the interview I came to understand that most female household heads look upon themselves as neglected from the government side. At the time of the interview I observed that the interviewees consider my presence as an important event - that I was there to listen to their problem and report back to the government so that their socio economic problems will be solved soon. Even though the final output of a well done research may serve as an input for policy formulation, the fact that my interviewees were so eager to benefit immediately from the output of the research made them provide an exaggerated response to the interview guide.

I have learned from the whole process of finding material collection that the informants have hardly been a target for a research and the meaning of research and researcher is not well known by most of my interviewees. Such understanding creates a gap between my interviewees' expectation and the purpose of

my interview. Reinharz and Chase (2003: 77) remarked that researchers need to be aware that women who have never had an opportunity to express themselves may not know what to do when given that opportunity. As such I found my informants responding to the question with a sense that I am someone sent from the government to provide them with economic support. Most of the interview sessions with females were full of a sense of sadness and they were open enough to respond to every question. Whenever the ladies talked about their living condition, there will be a moment of silence followed by tears. As a researcher, I was trying all my best to control the atmosphere of the interview session, but sometimes I also found myself unable to control my feelings and would start to shed tears.

Whenever I finish interview with the female heads there was a saying that they put as a remark. It goes:

“Mechem set selehonsh yyetim asadagi cheger yegebashalena adera yalkuten hulu bedenb lemengest tenageri. Ke Allah tagegnewalesh”, translated:

“Of course since you are female I assume that you can easily understand the problem of a woman who raises her children alone. Please tell what I said properly to the government, you will get the reward from Allah (God)”.

From this and similar remarks they made, I understand that they consider me as someone who has come to solve their problems. But I have also felt that they were more inclined to reflect on the problems that they were facing rather than dealing much on the positive aspects that they have. As put by Hammersley and Atkinson (1996: 152) and Ryen (2002: 17) informants are very crucial for both accessing directly observable activities that are and also validating conclusions based on the researchers own observations. However, if we believe members own explanations it makes us an integral component of the very world we seek to describe (Zimmerman and Pollner, 1970). Thus we are supposed to carefully analyze responses of informants by relating it to observable fact. Similarly in order to better utilize my interviewees' reflections, I have tried to understand their state of condition and judge their response in terms of the position they occupy in the society. The nature of my interview guide which is composed of cross cutting and related but differently put questions also play a role to cross check responses and maintain quality work. Collins (1990: 92) has underlined how interpreting any particular women's silence or speech is a complex task that requires a strong understanding of her social location, including her place within her community and society, the cultural constraints and resources shaping her everyday life, and her particular circumstances. As such, the friendly approach that I followed with my interviewees also helped me to get

time to see the other side of their life. Oakley (2000) also supports this idea by suggesting that researchers should do all their best to challenge the hierarchical research relationship and to make women interviewees equal in the interview situation and overall research process. This involved openness on the part of the interviewer, encouraging the participants to raise questions about the research, and perhaps maintaining relationships beyond the research period.

## **II. (Gendered) power dynamic during interview**

Reflexivity in the research process is “an awareness of the ways in which the researcher, as an individual with a given social identity impacts upon that process” (O’Connell and Layder, 1994). A commitment to reflexivity in the research process comes from the idea that researchers should place themselves in the same critical plane as the researched (Stanley and Wise, 1993; Harding, 1987; Pilcher and Coffey, 1996).

The fact that this study focuses on livelihood of female headed households, I was forced to know whether the society, especially key personalities with different position are knowledgeable about the issue. In order to do this I have raised a lot of questions to some of the key informants and I have learned how much they have antipathy toward gender.

### **Extract: 1**

Researcher- What do you feel about participation of female headed households in the agriculture sector?

Inf 1 - Of course, except for ploughing female heads do participate in all agricultural activity.

Res - How do you accommodate complaints from the female heads regarding participation in agriculture?

Inf 1 - No, we have never heard any complaint regarding this.

Res - That means, female headed households in this wäräda equally participate with the men headed households in terms of agricultural activity?

Inf 1 - Well, before you reach at this conclusion it is good if you talk to the wäräda women’s affairs office.

Res - You mean the women’s affair office is more gender sensitive?

Inf 1 - No, but they have direct contact with the women and they are closer to the issue than we are.

According to my respondent, in principle his office is actively working on gender issues but in reality he prefers to refer gender issues to women's affairs office. In this regard I can see that there is a clear problem of associating gender issues with women's issues. This leads to a question of how a women's affair office can be responsible for the work directly related with gender in agricultural office. Here we can see a clear knowledge gap among the officials in understanding and handling gender issues. As a researcher I have observed that there is a mismatch between what has been said earlier and what is really happening. In such cases the probability of getting dependable information will be under question.

In a similar manner, the following discussion I made with another key informants how some of my interviewees (men) were reluctant to provide appropriate answers to my questions.

**Extract: 2**

Res - What do you think about female farmers' participation in agricultural extension programme?

Inf 2- Yes, the agricultural extension programme gives training on vegetable growing and provides different kinds of extension services and females are participating fairly.

Res - What is the number of female beneficiaries in provision of fertilizer, technology dissemination and quality seeds like?

Inf 2- Oh- very few.

Res - Why?

Inf 2- Because females don't have knowledge, financial capacity and lack confidence to start a new technology.

Res - What about loan service?

Inf 2- I think, we are facilitating loan service to the farmers.

Res - Then, how do you see their condition in terms of benefiting from loan service?

Inf 2- Well, in terms of female headed households, since they are not empowered and don't have the confidence of utilizing the loan efficiently their participation is too little.

Res - So, what mechanism has your office developed to encourage them to do so?

Inf 2- From my perspective, even though the gap between male and female headed households is identified, since there is no intervention done to fill such gap...By the way most of the gender works are done by women affairs offices and if you need I can give you their telephone address and you can take an appointment to have discussion with them. (He quit the conversation and started to search for their telephone number from his address book while walking slowly to open the door).

Understanding the fact that he doesn't want to continue the discussion and he wanted me to leave the room, I left his office after receiving the telephone address. Of course, this kind of unpleasant response could obviously equally be made if I had been interviewing women. However, I have learned that there is a specifically gendered aspect to complicity in interviews with men. The accounts of researchers, who have written about their experiences as women talking to men (Harne, 2005; Warren, 1988) show that this particular research context is characterised by complex rather than straightforwardly hierarchical and asymmetrical power relations. In the case of women interviewing men where the researcher is not powerful relative to the researched, taking a passive role can be disempowering for the researcher. As Riessman (1987) puts the traditional role of women restrain them from challenging men's talk rather the men researchers challenging men interviewees. This suggests there may be a particular gendered connotation to interviewer passivity when the researcher is a woman.

Finch (1984) also argues that when both the interviewee and interviewer are women both parties share a subordinate structural position by virtue of their gender. This creates the opportunity for the development of a particular kind of identification. Whereas, when the interviewees are men they will be more reluctant to talk with a woman interviewer, because, firstly, they are less used to being questioned by a female and, secondly, they do not expect the researcher to understand them because she (the researcher) according to them does not have the same social experience as they have. In addition to that the perspective of the interviewee has influenced the interview interaction, for instance as it was seen in the previous example, even though the interviewee was much expected to reflect the idea from the perspective of what his office is exactly working on the matter, he preferred to respond from his own perspective, as such it is difficult to judge the truth value of the interview simply in terms of whether those responses match what lies in an apparently objective vessel of answers. As put by (Holstein and Gubrium, 2003: 15) "the value of interview data lies both in their meanings and in how meanings are constructed."

### **III). Constructed as privileged part of the society**

In a general chapter on ‘interviewing men’, Schwalbe and Wolkomir (2001) state that men may be threatened by the process of interviewing. This clearly shows how the (gendered) power dynamic during interview could affect the research outcomes.

The interview situation is both an opportunity for signifying masculinity and a peculiar type of encounter in which masculinity is threatened. It is an opportunity to signify masculinity in as much as men are allowed to portray themselves as in control, autonomous, rational, and so on. It is a threat in as much as an interviewer controls the interaction, asks questions that put these elements of self portrayal into doubt, and does not simply affirm a man’s masculinity displays (Schwalbe and Wolkomir, 2001).

As a PhD student, I was located by my informant as belonging to the “privileged part of the society” and I was frequently asked “how did you get this opportunity?” and given the remark “you are really lucky”.

For instance while I was interviewing one of the key informants, he stopped the discussion and said:

#### **Extract 3**

Inf 3 - Did you say that you are a PhD student?

Res - Yes, I am a PhD student and undertaking my PhD project in this wäräda.

Inf 3 – You see, those of us who are working in this region are far from the capital city and don’t have enough opportunity to continue our education. But if we would have been in urban area, we could have also got a chance for further education like you.

Res (wishing to quit this conversation) Yes, but you are also doing excellent job in your region and you don’t have to regret being here. Of course if you want to continue your education, I hope you would get the opportunity.

Inf 3- You see, it is not a matter of lack of knowledge. Yes, I have better capacity than many females but the point is most of the educated females are not willing enough to work in rural area. However, we (men) are sacrificing our time...

What is interesting about this kind of conversation was my informant considers that I and other female PhD students or PhD holders are a privileged part of the society at the expense of those men that are



willing enough to work in rural areas. The fact that my informant feels more powerful during the interview was advantageous for me to obtain more information for my study but I also realized that the information could be a little bit biased as a result of my informant's sense of "superiority complex". Of course, this could have been a benefit in the sense that my interviewee did not seem to feel threatened by me; he did not relate my work with the power of academic institutions and therefore was less likely to be guarded in conversation.

#### **IV). Defending their stand**

During the whole process of interviewing, I have observed that men interviewees would better defend their practice as compared to the women interviewees. In many circumstances the men put that what they are doing is correct and acting according to the norm of the society. Topics like divorce, land holding, inheritance, etc. created an interaction in which male interviewees spoke with confidence. In most cases the interview becomes a proving ground for masculinity and a site for the exercise of male definitions and power displays against ex wives, and sometimes against all women. While there were also some women interviewees who were defending their position. As a researcher I felt that the position taking stance of the men may have its own impact in influencing the research process and output to some extent.

#### **4.11. Outsider / insider dilemma**

There is no doubt that several factors influence the qualitative research process. However, the fact that the researcher is from the same country and speaks same language as the research subjects created smooth fieldwork environment. But it does not mean that it is clear of some outsider / insider dilemma. For instance, all the interviewees were Muslim and followers of Oromo culture, but I am neither Muslim nor Oromo. This, I suspect might have influenced some facts, especially the process of understanding meaning and intention of some practices.

In explaining the use of reflexivity, Pillow (2003: 178) claims that the researcher must become critically conscious of any potential biases he or she might have. This entails critical self-awareness of how the researcher's own self-location in terms of, for example, class, gender, sexuality, race or ethnicity, age, historical cohort, and personal interests influence all stages of the research process. As researchers, our behaviour will all the time affect interviewees' responses and therefore the direction findings take (Finlay, 2002: 531). Similarly, awareness of the interviewees' place in the setting, background, and social

phenomenon that are required to be understood are important for critically examining the research process (Pillow, 2003: 178).

However my experiences suggest that to acquire information that closely represents the real world, researchers must seek, positional spaces, that is, areas where the situated knowledge of both parties in the interview come across, produce a level of trust and co-operation. These positional spaces, however, are often short-lived and cannot be reduced to the familiar boundaries of insider/outsider privilege based on visible attributes such as religion, gender, or ethnicity. In fact, in every interview it may be better to seek shared spaces that are not informed by identity-based differences, because these are not often reliable indicators of an individual positionality. Making the wrong assumptions about the situatedness of an individual knowledge based on perceived identity differences may end an interviewer's access to crucial informants in a research project.

#### **4.12. Issues of Validity, Reliability and Generalization**

According to Ritchie and Lewis (2003, 273), 'The validity of data is traditionally understood to refer to the correctness or precision of a research reading.' Validity is broadly distinct as internal and external. Arksey and Knight (1999) explain that internal validity deal with whether the researcher is investigating what he or she claims to be investigating. LeCompte and Goetz (1982) on the other hand puts that, external validity deal with how much the hypothesis generated, refined or tested are pertinent to other groups with the populations. Such questions of internal and external validity therefore raise crucial issues about the content of a research reading, the truthfulness or subtly of its calibration and the level in which it can be widely applicable. In order to insure the validity of this research therefore, the researcher reflected the phenomena under study as perceived by the study population. The researcher was fully prepared in terms of how to conduct an interview and raised questions sufficiently in order to fully explore participants view. Several interpretation made in regard to the livelihood of the participants are also made based on identified factors that can serve as evidence for the explanatory accounts that have been developed.

As put by Silverman (2005) a reader can say that the claims of a research study are not valid when the researcher has clearly made no effort to deal with contrary instances. As a researcher, we might expect that the interviewee will tell us the truth. But as observed by Weiss (1995: 149) if interviewees want to

keep from us events or behaviours or a sector of their lives, there is every reason to believe that they can succeed. The type of relationship we have with the research subjects influences the level of trust (Ryen, 2007). As pointed out by Seal (1999, 468) trustworthiness is always negotiable and open-ended, not being a matter of final proof whereby readers are compelled to accept an account. Merrick (1999: 30) also maintains that beyond the relationship between the researcher and the research process, validity also depends on the relation between the researcher and the interpretive community.

As much as possible, in this specific study, I have tried to ask concrete incidents to enable me obtain reliable information, information which is easier to interpret. At times I checked on the validity of an interviewee's account by cross-checking with other questions. Sometimes, interviewees can act in an inconsistent way or maintain inconsistent feelings. For instance, when I asked the female heads to tell me about their children living abroad, some of them tried to deny that they have children or get any remittance from them (See Chapter six). Even though this is also one form of finding which can be interpreted in different ways, there were also incidences that I managed to get information about from the subjects themselves or some other interviewees by using cross-check questions. As stated by Patton (2002: 556). '...the strategy of triangulation readily pays off, not only in providing diverse ways of looking at the same phenomenon but in adding to credibility by strengthening confidence in whatever conclusion are drawn. Therefore the researcher has followed triangulation of sources, including comparing data from different qualitative methods ( e.g. observations, interviews and documented accounts) in order to judge the integrity of research evidence.

The weight of providing evidence of validity rests on the researcher (Merrick, 1999). Qualitative researchers who have considered the term validity have seen reflexivity as a criterion to check the validity of their research (Creswell and Miller, 2000: 127). Actually, it is argued that reflexivity is a validation standard that should concern all qualitative researches (Polit and Beck, 2008: 129). In order to recognize research participants' perspectives on the research it is necessary to consider certain methodological issues. For instance flexibility is required to respect as much as possible the primacy of the participants' perspective. Researchers must not be too attached to methods for method's sake (Hollway and Todres, 2003: 347). Flexibility should provide study participants the chance to describe their experiences openly and freely. In this study, flexibility went some way toward creating the validity of the data by ensuring that participants' perspectives were adequately understood and represented.

The notion of reliability is the other quality concepts in qualitative research. As described by Stenbacka (2001) in order to claim a study as part of proper research the concept of reliability should be solved. Ritchie and Lewis (2003, 272) Puts that there are two stages on which it is considered that qualitative research is reliable. First it is necessary to make sure that the rresearch is as strong as it can be by carrying out internal test on the quality of the data and its interpretation. Second, it is also important to provide important information of the researcher process to the reader in order to ensure the trust worthiness of the research. As much as possible, in order to assure the reliability of this research, the field work of this research was carried out consistently, respondents were given opportunity to express their experiences and related matter in regard to the interview guide. As indicated in this chapter the analysis was carried out systematically and comprehensively by providing relevant classifications. As much as possible interpretations in this research are also presented using the words of interviewee.

As pointed out previously in the data analysis part all interview data of this study were carefully tape recorded then transcribed and coded by: identifying topics, themes and so forth... those index became a list of codes, consisting of several topics like, social capital, diversification, negotiation.... This helped me to easily understand the words of my informants. As put by Glassner and Loughlin (1987:27) the goal of developing complex cataloguing and retrieval system helped to retain good access to the words of the subjects, without relying upon the memory of interviewers or data analysts. I believe, this method of analysis helped to develop the quality of the thesis and let readers get some sort of direct access to raw data.

The other issue that comes with validity and reliability is generalization. According to Ritchie and Lewis (2003:264) generalization is all about, “whether the findings from a study based on a sample can be said to be of relevance beyond the sample and context of the research itself.’ As put by Larsson (2009: 28), there are different lines of reasoning regarding generalization. Those who are against generalization argue that there is no need for generalization, i.e., certain kinds of empirical research are meaningful without any claims of generalization. Such perspective emphasizes that the role of a specific study is to contribute to the broader picture by filling a ‘hole’ in the whole but not to say something about other contexts (Wright, 1971; Söndergaard, 2002). As such, they see two aspects to the problem of generalization in qualitative research. First probability sampling is not usual and inappropriate in many instances in qualitative research. Second, qualitative data do not lend themselves to the kind of generalization commonly used in quantitative research, such as using statistical techniques that are based on probability theory (Blaikie,

2006: 253). On the other hand, those on the pro generalization perspective argue that qualitative studies on the whole have difficulties in avoiding making claims about generalization. Wolcott (1994: 113) also asserts that ‘... there must be a capacity for generalization; otherwise, there would be no point in giving such careful attention to the single case.’

In discussing the possibilities for generalizing from qualitative research, Scholfield in Blaikie (2006: 254) argues that:

At the heart of the qualitative approach there is the assumption that a piece of qualitative research is very much influenced by the researcher’s individual attributes and perspectives, the goal is not to produce a standardized set of results that any other careful researcher in the same situation or studying the same issues would have produced, rather it is to produce a coherent and illuminating description of and situation.

In general there is a great diversity among authors in regard to the meaning attached to the term generalization. This is mainly because perspectives on generalisation are largely influenced by the epistemological and ontological orientation of the contributors (Seale, 1999). Even if a study is conducted in a specific place Ritchie and Lewis (2003, 264) pointed out that what matters most in order to draw wider conclusion from a single study is ‘how the meaning attached to qualitative research evidence is conceived and whether it is seen to have any reality beyond the context in which it was derived’. Similarly this study was conducted in specific wäräda and care was taken to keep its quality by investigating issues in depth and from the perspectives of different participants, with ideas, meanings and explanations developed inductively from the data. I believe the result of this research could have relevance to our understanding of how study subjects regular interaction with others (doing gender) affect livelihood of female headed households in the study wäräda and beyond the site in which it was conducted.

## **Chapter Five: Understanding Female Headship**

### **5.1. Introduction**

Varley (1996) argues that female headed households have come to occupy a special place in the gender and development literature partly because of the view that female headed households are a recent peculiarity caused by both social and economic factors. The cross-cultural phenomenon in Ethiopia also suggests that the increasing visibility of male headship is largely based on traditional perceptions of headship (Yigremew, 2001). By implication, implicit in the coming up of the term “female-headed household” is the perception that it is a social problem running against the established norm, i.e., male headship. The creation and growing up of female headed households can be explained from different perspective, where gender relation can be one among many.

By identifying the process by which women become household heads this chapter will show the different characteristics and perceptions about female headed households. Such characteristics and perceptions are mainly expressed in terms of the relationship between female heads and different actors for the sake of access to and control over important livelihood assets. Taking this experience into consideration this chapter attempt to show how the three categories of female headed households, i.e., widow, divorcee and separated female household heads serve as divisions where different forms of struggle are undertaken to meet different objectives. In the process of showing such struggle the chapter attempts to show how the different way of formation of female headed households affect their livelihood situation.

By taking marriage as a basis for gender relation, the first part of the chapter explains how marriage becomes the dominant idea in the life of Bati society, and how such dominant idea is the reflection of gender relation in the society. The different conception of male and female child, the defined role of wife and husband are discussed as basis for gender relation and disparity of capital possession. Showing the fact all the three types of female headships in the material are the result of marriage, the second part of the chapter attempts to explain how these categories of female headed households can serve as a point of discussion. Here the chapter show how marital and social relation between female household heads and various actors, i.e., in laws, elderly people, neighbours and how the community influence the effort that female headed households undertake to secure their livelihood asset. Based on the findings of the chapter the third part then discusses how gender relation equips different actors with different forms of capital and deep rooted disposition regarding female headship. Taking the identified conception regarding femaleness

and female headship this part also discusses how similar and long lasting disposition serves as a means for the subordination of female heads in the process of struggle towards access to and control over means of livelihood. By identifying deviant practices of some female headed households this part also shows how similar habitus not necessarily show similar result and female heads sometimes acts against the rule of tradition.

## **5.2. Marriage as a Base for Gender Relation**

Marriage is an important institution in Bati. The Oromo Ethnography about the Gada system<sup>13</sup> tells us how marriage is an important requirement for both men and women. In the Gada system, unmarried men are not allowed to become full members of the Gada jila, the sacred journey during the power transfer; for instances, the Gada grade of Kuusa<sup>14</sup> is constituted by unmarried young men and considered the most disrespected grade. Men attain their full status only after marriage. Even though women don't belong to the Gada grades, they achieve those statuses through their husband (Dejene, 2009).

Marriage has a signification in showing the beginning of a new form of production in Bati. According to both male and female interviewees, it is the man and his family that initiate the marriage. In a marriage proposal, women often are seen as passive actors where requests are made only by men. Hussein (2004: 108) states that among the Oromo "a man is deemed fuudhe (married) by virtue of his taking a woman to his homestead while the woman is deemed herumte (been wedded) since she is taken away from her parental home." Hussein (2004) cites several authors (i.e.Sapiro (1994), Bartels (1970), and HalComb (1973)) who also remarks that the passiveness of women shows that men are possessors while women are the possessed. After agreeing on the marriage, the parents of the bride groom are expected to contribute to basic livelihood assets to the newly established household. The parents of the bride are not expected to contribute but if she has already owned land it will be additional asset to the newly established household. The newly married wife is brought to the residential area of the husband which is also the area where the married couple is allocated land from his family. But the local administrative unit should approve and certify the allocated land. The bride and groom bring with them start-up capital in the form of land, oxen, livestock, household utensils, and grain stocks (Fafchamps, 2000). In principle, all household assets (land, livestock, etc.) are regarded as the joint property of both husband and wife. The most valuable asset brought to marriage in Bati is land followed by oxen and livestock. The interview with informants in Bati

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<sup>13</sup>An elaborate system of customary Oromo society governance based on generation.

<sup>14</sup> Referes Gada members who are between 24 – 32 years of age.

Sheria court makes clear that ritual gifts like Meher<sup>15</sup> (dowry) signify a greater role in the life of women (Bati Sheria Court, 2008).

Both men and women interviewees said that in married life most livestock are owned by the husband and wife jointly. However, in practice the right to sell livestock and to control over the income seems to mainly fall in the hand of the household head. The interview with women in male headed households gives the impression that as a general rule there is a clear division of labour in the household and men control the task of ox management, farming and marketing. One woman interviewee in a male headed household said “My husband informs me about what is going on regarding land and livestock, but he does this mostly after he has decided on the case.” Another woman in a male headed household also said, “Sometimes I take crops to the market, but I have a doubt that I can bargain like my husband and sell them in good price.” According to the interview, even if there is some room to allow the women to participate in ‘male’s sphere’ the women themselves don’t believe that they are as good as men to do the business. This practice creates a room for the centralized control over land and livestock in the hand of the head. For male household head interviewees such centralization is interpreted as a sense of efficiency and effectiveness in terms of wealth creation and management. Arguing about this practice one male interviewee asked, “What else does the female know except household activity?” Another male head interviewee added that “females' relation with land and livestock is very limited, may be they may milk the cow or heard the cattle but they know little about how to coordinate the farming and marketing activity.”

As can be understood from interview with both female and male household heads, the way children are brought up in Bati gives more attention to producing marriage worthy individuals. This refers to the process of developing children who see marriage as a basic achievement. As every place has its own specific culture and tradition regarding how to grow up their children, in Bati both male and female children are expected to attain certain character of masculinity and femininity. As female head interviewees explained, from the very beginning family take the first hand to decide upon the fate of their children, mainly male children in the wäräda are expected to be a farmer or a trader, administrator of his house and decision maker. Whereas female children are expected to be a wife, mother, responsible for household matters and supporters of their husband. Therefore, the female is raised to be a good wife and care taker of her household, whereas the male is expected to be a good husband and decision maker. This

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<sup>15</sup> A gift provided to the bride from the bride groom as a dowry



starts by assigning different roles in the household for both girls and boys. The socialisation process of their children mainly begins by making both female and male child to follow and learn different character and practices from their respective gender. For instance the daughter is made to spend most of her time with her mother, while the son follows his father in the farming field and market places. According to both female and male household heads, even if the family has children that go to school, after their schooling the girl is suppose to support the mother in household activity and the son should go out to the field. As Zebiba, a widow female head said, from their childhood the girls learn to put on a long dress and scarf on their head. They also learn how to cook *wat*<sup>16</sup> and bake *injera*<sup>17</sup>. She mentioned that her sons never cook or bake, but they used to fetch water sometimes. Zahara, a divorced female head also mentioned that before she divorced, her ex husband used to teach her sons how to prepare and keep the farming tool. Even after they grown up he used to take them to the farm. In explaining how the boys and girls learns a different traits, one male head interviewee said:

In our neighbourhood the boys are seen spending their time together playing outside their house or do some activity, like supporting fathers in cutting trees, carrying farming tool.... Whereas the girls are seen either playing in their home or caring toddlers, washing utensils and cleaning their house. Even, for bathing the boys and men have their specific place to take bath in the river; similarly the women and girls have their own specific place and time to take bath. Both the girls and the women take bath early in the morning or when there is no one around the river.

The above explanation implies that both male and female children learn specific traits and capability. Their sphere of influence is well determined from the beginning; the boys grow up by learning how to influence the unrestricted outside world whereas, the girls learn to master the domestic world. The division of labour, activity and traits between the sexes have also seen taking some form of pattern. For instances from my general observation during the field work, I have seen girls wear similar size of dress, put on scarf on their heads, get shy when someone approach to talk them and hardly seen playing together outside their house, if any it is only with girls. Whereas I have observed boys playing on the field, sitting together and discussing different matters, wear shorts and gently walk on the road. The similar character and action observed in each sex grouping implies that in the wäräda, the socialization of male and female

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<sup>16</sup>It is an Ethiopian stew or curry that may be prepared with lentil, bean, chicken, beef, lamb, a variety of vegetables and spice mixtures.

<sup>17</sup> Spongy flat bread made from the millet-like grain known as teff.

follows some sort of categorizing and giving the two sexes a different places. Each group of gender follow what similar gender is doing and act accordingly.

Both girls and boys are supposed to know and learn many things. For instance, currently girls in Bati have access to education, going nearby city for job or migrating to Arab countries, however the practice still shows that girls are primarily suppose to get married and know how to manage the household activity very well. This is because being a wife is considered as the primarily purpose of a female and she is suppose to access all the necessary capitals through her husband. The practice of dowry giving (*Meher*) also conforms to this fact. Basically during marriage time in Bati the bride groom is expected to give *Meher* in the form of jewellery and cash. The amount of *Meher* may range from 100 ETB to thousands depending on the wealth of the groom. The tradition of *Meher* giving is justified by one key informant from Sheria court: “The women are supposed to support the man in different aspects in their marriage life and he is supposed to show his respect to her and her families through paying the *Meher*.” The idea of *Meher*, as expressed by different women interviewees, is a necessary practice to show their submission to the will of the husband. For instance Aregash, a separated female head, said “*Meher* is our tradition and a woman shouldn’t move to the man’s house without it. She shouldn’t forget that she will be under his control then after.” Similarly, Enat and Berhane, widow female heads, pointed out that they consider *Meher* as a means of valuing their worth in the eye of their husband. Enat said, “If my husband doesn’t give me a *Meher* it means that he doesn’t give recognition to the marriage.” Similarly Berhane pointed out that “*Meher* is the special time that the wife directly gets her own money, clothes and perfume from the husband in her marriage life. If the woman is lucky she is paid more money and jewelleryes. That means she is wedded to a rich man.” As understood from the words of the interviewees the practice of *Meher* is seen in the eyes of the women as a means of valuing their identity; the women value themselves as worth to deserve acknowledgment and gift.

On the other hand the male heads pointed out that *Meher* is a means through which they show their capacity, capacity of administrating and competence to support the family. A male household head said,

When I get married I pay the *Meher* to my wife because this is the only means that I show her and her family that I am capable enough to administer her. How would her parents believe that I can take care of the family if I failed to give her the *Meher*? I don’t think that my wife would also develop trust on me.

Similarly another male head interviewee said, “*Meher* is the most important tradition that men can compete openly with other men. Those who have better wealth have a chance to get a better wife.” The explanation given to *Meher* from the perspective of both men and women interviewees implies that in all cases the involvement of *Meher* in married life signals the give and take position of the couple. Here the woman believes that she is to be given to the husband and she has to be rewarded for the transfer whereas the man believes that it is a means of proving his position as capable man to support his family and get what he wants. This practice also indicates that *Meher* has a symbolic value for both men and women. A man who can pay bigger *Meher* can get his choice and manage to get the needed social respect in the society, whereas a man who failed to pay the *Meher* finds it difficult to get his choice. For the females too, to be wedded to the one who can pay a *Meher* is a means of joining the privileged group.

For women in the wäräda looking for a husband and getting access to land through their husband is a recognised practice<sup>18</sup>. Even though females are currently started to go to school and migrate to nearby cities and Arab countries, the predominant place for women is to get married. A female child is not customarily allowed to inherit land from her parents. She inherits land from her parents either in the absence of any brother or during the death of her parents, otherwise she has to go away from her natal family and get married to look for means of living. Explaining the movement of the female from her parents’ village to the village of her husband, the interviewee female head repeatedly mentioned the Amharic saying “*set eger enji ager yelatam*” (a female has leg but not a permanent residence). This is a saying mainly forwarded to females by the society. According to female interviewees, unlike the male a female is expected to go away from her original place following her husband. Initially the female goes out from her natal family because of marriage. If her marriage breaks for any reason she has to look for another marriage which may result in change of residential place. In this case she would find it difficult to associate herself to a specific place of living. Her fate in one way or another is influenced by the decision of her husband. As such, this practice prevents her from getting control over her parent’s plot of land in her parents’ village. However, the male child is expected to establish his married life in his parents’ village and it enables him to secure the property of his parents.

As can be understood from the practice of the community, a male child is the main protector and administrator of the family land. He is believed to be a guaranty to the security of his father’s property. For instance, when asked who they prefer to allocate land to, most of the female household heads replied

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<sup>18</sup> The practice of moving to husband’s place is considered as rational act.

in defence of males. For them this culture enables them to keep the land under the family line. In this regard, Selam, a widow female head, put her remark in question, “Who else can take care of the farm and the house if the male child has moved to another place?” Expressing how keeping the land under the name of a male child is helpful to his parent, Debitu an elderly widow female head said, “A male child is expected to bring a wife to the village and keep the family’s property. When the father gets tired and old, his son is expected to replace him. Otherwise, the land will fall in the hand of a female who cannot properly defend her ownership and keep its productivity.” She explained that the problem with females is one of administering the land, “a female is a female, and after all she knows very little about land management.” Berhane, a widow female head, also express her idea that land under female children has a danger of being taken away. “If the family has no male child to transfer the land to, they shall feel sorry for their fate, there is no doubt that the female would marry and transfer the land to another family.” This means that there is deep-rooted association of maleness and property ownership and security whereas femaleness is typically associated with being receiver of property. This idea is also shared by the commonly used proverb in Bati *Dhiirti utubaa sibiilaati, intalti karra ambaati* (males are like an iron pole of a house, while females are the gate that belongs to others) which explains how femininity is associated with liminality in the Oromo culture. It is also one aspect of dichotomous thinking in which differences are set in oppositional terms (Leggesse, 1973; Collins, 1998). Thus, it symbolizes a society’s practice that males are more permanent members of the family, and are the ones who would ultimately inherit the heritage of their family, while females are ordained to go out of the lineage through marriage. Because of this, the proverb is used to instruct boys into masculinity and girls into femininity so that each would adapt personality traits, behaviours, and preferences that are culturally considered appropriate to each sex. In this regard we can see how traditional practice of keeping the male child around their parent’s house alienate female’s from the role of managing and keeping the land. The concept of habitus also explains that the process of socialization, lasting dispositions or trained capacities and structured propensities made agents think, feel, and act in determinate ways, which then guide them in their creative responses to the constraints and solicitations of their extant milieu (Wacquant, 2004). As such, individuals demonstrate what they have learned unconsciously and in a pre reflexive manner in their daily behaviour. “The subject is not the instantaneous ego of a sort of singular cogito, but the individual trace of an entire collective history” (Bourdieu, 1990: 91). For instance, the main agricultural work I,e ploughing by oxen which is considered as physically hard to be operated by females is practiced as fits only with masculine character and perpetuates dichotomous thinking of femaleness and maleness. In addition, the idea of land transfer

to men gradually socialises into the traditional practices and give females the other side of the space in land management and ownership issue. This practice in one way or another gives the males a governing position in married life. It promotes the reproduction of subsidiary position of women.

As mentioned by both male and female interviewees, a woman should fully undertake household activities and take care of the family's physical development and train her female child in line with the demand of the tradition. Married women interviewees also said that they are duty bound to train their female children according to the culture and abide to their husband. For them the responsibility of the wife is many. It includes giving birth, preparing meal for the family and undertaking other household activities. They are also supposed to help their husband when they have finished the household chores. According to an interviewee married woman, "I am doing what I have learned from my mother, my mother was obedient to my father. As far as I am concerned my livelihood depends on my relation with my husband so I have to fulfil the responsibility of a wife." Another married woman added, "I am not an office worker, nor a business person; I should undertake my household chores and make my husband happy."

The issue of giving birth to a baby was raised as an important responsibility of the wives by many of the interviewees. For the male head interviewees, the main role of a wife is to give birth to a baby. For instance, one male head interviewee argued that, as much as possible, he wants his wife to behave according to the tradition and give birth to many children but if she cannot do that he would divorce her. He questions the purpose of a wife beyond giving birth as: "What else should the wife do if she cannot give birth to a child?" But, for the female heads giving birth to a baby has more implication than just fulfilling one of the demands of marriage, for them it is also a guaranty to have access to a means of livelihood. For Selam and Zebiba, widow female heads, they couldn't think that they would have been tolerated by their husbands and in-laws to have access to land if it was not because of their children." As said by Selam, "If I couldn't give birth to a baby I don't think that my husband would accept me, after all he brought me to his place to support him and give birth to a baby." Zebiba also remembers how her in-laws were considerate to share her plot of land during the death of her late husband

I remember how my in-laws were against sharing land for their late elder son wife. He died because of malaria, but they associate his death with his wife, whom she did not give birth to a child and they chased her away from the house without any share. Thanks to God, I think they were considerate to give me my share may be because I stayed longer years in marriage and also give birth to a child. I am not sure what would happen to me if I couldn't get my share.

The above facts, as reflected by the interviewees, indicate the deep-rooted conception of the society regarding marriage and the role of females in marriage. In addition, such conception indicates what the females feel about themselves and what position they give for themselves and their husband in marriage. It also signifies how association of roles with the two sexes affects the fate of the couple in their life time.

The fate of marriage in Bati is influenced by lack of fulfilling the expected demand. For instance, those women who cannot conceive feel ashamed of themselves. Both men and women interviewees said barrenness is considered in the society as punishment from God. As it was put by one male interviewee, “God desecrate a barren woman. She is not tolerated in marriage; division of property is unexpected in this regard. She has to return to her natal family; no one is ready to share her penny and take care of her.” For many of the women interviewees, a barren female doesn’t have a say to claim her ownership right. They pointed out that it is a common phenomenon to find a woman that is not fertile to get abandoned from her marriage and property without any claim. This practice is defended by the men as a rational act. For them, the measures that are taken in the community are rational. As such the fate of such women will fall in the hands of the husband.

Giving birth to a baby boy is mentioned as a means of guarantying the marriage in the study area. The experience of both men and women interviewees shows that if wives consecutively give birth to baby girls, some husbands may want to try another marriage. But if the wife gives birth to boys consecutively there will be no negative reaction; rather there will be a sense of jubilation. Regarding the prevalence of such difference, one male head interviewee said, “we love both the female and male children, but we know that the female will be dependent on the property of her husband whereas the male stays all the time close to his parents, he even brings a supporter (the wife) through marriage. This creates a big difference between the two.” This idea was also shared by another male head interviewee who said, “I need someone that I can teach about farming and safeguarding the livelihood security of the household; after all, a female serves her husband’s family – not her own.” This perception, as also mentioned by key informants, contributes to abandoning those females who only give birth to a baby girl.

The disposition regarding marriage in this sense represents the interest of two actors. While the female is expected to fulfil the man’s demand, the man is required to work on the farm and support the family in cash and security areas. But in the process of fulfilling the demand of marriage, men (husbands) are seen taking the dominant position. This is because the basis for marriage formation itself is rationalized as a means of extending the patrimonial lineage of the male and a means of controlling the property. The

discussion of marriage as a basis for gender relation therefore gives a base for showing what looks like the predominant presupposition related to the role of both men and women as actors of marriage life and how such presupposition preferably helped one actor to occupy a dominant position in terms of marital relation. I also understand that such predominant presupposition in one way or another will help to discuss the bases of different relation that prevail in the life of the three categories of female headed households (dominantly results of married life). In the context of this study, the different female household heads are seen exposed to different experience on their headship. Theretofore in order to understand their experience in relation to their headship type, I will disussess the there type of female headed househoholds separately.

### **5.3. Female Headship**

#### **5.3.1 Widow Female Headed Households**

This section of the chapter tries to indicate some factors that affect widow female headed household's access to property ownership. The rational and special treatment to the widow is discussed in detail. Even if there is no accurate data, interview with informants in Bati wäräda Office found that the number of widows in Bati is believed to be higher than divorcee female heads.

In Bati widowhood is considered by the interviewee as phenomena that create harsh living condition. Widows in the community are taken as responsible for the death of their husband. They are also given a common name called *Gefi*, meaning a cause of death. In expressing the association of the widow and death of the late husband widow female heads explain that there is an assumption that the late husband might have not died if he was married to another woman. If the late husband was a young man, it is considered by the society that the widow's fortune is the main cause for his death.

The main reason for the condemnation of the female head by their in-laws emanates from economy and social perspective. In Bati even if the man gets married he is expected to support his parents both in financial and labour and social aspects. Explaining the importance of a married son, Debitu an older female head said, "A married son is the pride and hope to his parents, he is a means and guarantee for our survival. He works on the farm or brings our food by any means. He has information and good contact." By taking her married son as an example, Zebiba also said, "Even if I have my own land I want my married son to live around me, he is both social and economic guarantee to my household." When asked what kind of help they manage to get from their sons, older female heads mentioned that they get labour support and social security through their married sons. Zebiba said, "In addition to getting his labour, his

presence by itself give me a confidence that no one would claim my land and I can benefit from my land. He can construct the compound fence properly and keep my house as respected as before, you see! When a man is around whether he is your adult son or husband the neighbours gives you due respect, the house is protected well because of the presence of a man.” In addition to direct support from their married sons, parents are also beneficiaries from their daughter-in-laws and their grand children. They get labour support from their daughter-in-law and sometimes their grand children too. Enat, a widow female head, remembers the relation she had with her mother-in-law, “when my husband was around, I used to support my mother-in-law in different ways. I remember I used to shop and also fetch water for my in law’s family.” Ayelech, a widow female head also said the following about her relation with her in-laws: “I used to see my mother-in-law as my real mother; I helped her in many aspects. I support her in household activities, wash her clothes and we used to drink coffee together. She also used to take care of my children very well but things did not go well after I lost my first husband.” This indicates that parents of the late man were direct beneficiaries of marriage of their son, and, the loss of the son (married man) by any means becomes hard fact for them. The death of their male child is seen as a loss from both social and economic security point of view.

On the other hand, female heads also associate their lose of husband as cause of loose social and economic support. As understood from widow female heads, when they were in marriage, they were represented by their husband and they got respect among the neighbourhood. Explaining this fact female heads said that before they become widow, they were called as the wife of “someone”. Thus those people who knows their husband don’t hesitate to talk to them and discuss matters. Whenever they arrange any feast or need any help, they used to get the support of the neighbours without reservations. The widow female head pointed out that mainly their husband had extended contact with many people in the wäräda and this enabled the women to know as many people as possible because of their husband. As they explained knowing many people in the wäräda help them to get economic, labour and social support whenever needed. Alem, a widow female head said, “Before my husband died, whenever we face shortage of crop to cover consumption he used to borrow from his friends. His friends also used to borrow from us and returned it in the next season.” Enat also remember the relatives of her late husband and their friends, who used to lend them money when they were in short of buying crop or for medication purpose. She said

When I was pregnant of my third child; I was seriously ill and was supposed to go to Dessi Hospital. During that time my late husband was away for seasonal migration in Afar and I did not



have enough money to cover the transport and hospital cost. Our close friend, whom we know through my late husband accompanied me to Dessie and cover all the costs. While I was away the relative of my husband take care of my children and home property, even after I come back they helped me in undertaking the household activity, till I recovered.

Marriage in this case serves as a means of acquiring social capital both for the wife and mother of married son. However, the death of the man, create both economic and social gap on the widow and the late husband family, This gap, mentioned by the widow female household heads as developing hatred between the widow and her late husband's family, worsened the social relation and brings conflict over property ownership between the households.

According to what has been seen in this study the loss of husband becomes the cause for conflict between the widow female head and her late husband's families. The future of a widow mainly falls on the decision of her in-laws. As explained by widow female household heads, after the death of their husband they are provided with choices from their in-laws either to be inherited by the relative or brother of her late husband or to go away from the village without any claim. Sometimes they are also expected to leave their children with their in-laws and leave the area. The widows said that they see no good reason behind the transfer of their children to their late husband's family. They don't see it as a healthy practice; rather it is a means of owning the labour of the children and their property. Mekedes, a widow female head, expressed her resentment toward the practice as follows:

Though it is our culture, it hurts the widow. Once the widow left her children to their grandparents they would give her no more chance to claim on her property, they will keep the property under their control in the name of their grand children.

Mekedes's idea was supported by many of the widow female household heads. Customarily, in the Oromo system, there were rarely female headed households, because the widow inheritance system provides an opportunity for remarriage for all widowed women. When a man died, the culture required his elder brother to marry the deceased brother's wife (wives) (Dejene, 2009). Similarly as followers of Oromo culture the Bati society provided a family with adequate male labour and orphaned children with a social father. Due to the influence of education, however, this practice has significantly decreased. Some of the female household heads in this research have also passed through this experience. For instance, Selam said, "After the death of my late husband, whom I give birth to three children I was inherited by his

brother and give birth to five more children.” She also added that even if she knew that this thing happened without her will, she didn’t have an option rather than abiding by the rule. Otherwise she could not get her means of livelihood. As understood from the interview, the females are abiding by customarily practices either to enable themselves and their household members get access to basic means of livelihood or keep the social norm and continue the practice. Especially, those females who give birth to a child cannot migrate or easily start some other work and sustain their household because the reproductive activity and household responsibility demand them to stay in their house.

### **5.3.1.1. Rationale behind Widow Inheritance**

The transfer of widow to her late husband’s family has many implications; it is also seen and interpreted differently by different parties. For some of the husband’s family and some of female household heads it is a safeguard against the economic insecurity of the widow and the children. For the widow it is a means of taking away her right of decision making.

As commented by male heads, after the death of their father, the society don’t believe that there is better person for the custody of the children than their uncles, grandparents and their families. They said that they don’t think the widow would be capable enough to maintain the economic and social security of their household. As put by one elderly male heads, “A widow should get married to the brother of her late husband for her own sake.” He continued, “Her new husband doesn’t consider her as a new family member and he will have also good heart towards her children.” Similarly, another male head said, “If a widow doesn’t get married as early as possible, her household will be in crisis, she cannot feed her children and administer well.” I also found that there is an understanding among male heads interviewee that it will be very difficult for the widow to manage the new life and she should look for a new marriage for the sake of her household livelihood. Marriage to another family, as expressed by a male interviewee, would put the safety and economic means of the children under problem. They pointed out the inheritance of the widow by her late husband’s family is a safe way for the economic and social development of the children.

On the contrary widow female heads argued that in practice the culture of inheriting the widow by late husband brother is just a means of controlling both their labour and economic resources by late husband’s family. Explaining about the logic behind such inheritance they pointed out that once the widow is inherited she will continue to submit to the will of her late husband brother and she is expected to give

birth to a child. Her children from previous marriage will no more be given attention by her new husband. However, for the widow a child born from second marriage becomes a threat to children from previous marriage, especially if the widow has land from her first marriage. Birth of new child will bring additional claimant on the mother's land. They mentioned that the marriage is absolutely a good means for the new husband to acquire additional plot of land. As understood from the interview with female household heads there is a widely used Amharic proverb against such practice:

*Lej adera malet men amaregna new*

*Lejen yaleenatu lejen yaleabatu yemiyakebet manew*

What is the meaning of giving a child to custody?

While it is only his mother and father who are good care takers.

The female heads used this saying to indicate their unhappiness about the transfer of the widow and her children to their late husband's family members. As I understood from both male and female interviewees, pressure from social movements<sup>19</sup> and the decline of economic resource in general create an opportunity for the widow to resist the practice of widow inheritance. But widow female heads expressed the view that their resistance may bring up some other pressure on them. As they put it, when the widow resists to be inherited she is requested by parents of the late husband to leave 'the house of the late husband'. Such a measure as explained by female heads is made by the in-laws for the sake of having control over the land. As pointed out by both men and women interviewees, customarily the widow is expected to leave all the property she gets through her husband to her in-laws if she decides to leave the village. However, if the widow decides to keep the property under her control, the late husband's family believes that the land will be automatically in the hand of another family (would be husband of the widow). Nevertheless, any resistance from the widow against in-laws' proposal may end up in confiscating property and sending her away from the house by force.

### **5.3.1.2. Influential Role of In-laws**

For female household heads once their in-laws refuse to let them use their property, the chance of regaining it is very little; negotiation with the in-laws is wastage of time; they prefer to accept the situation and look for other means of income. For instance Ayelech and Selam, widow female heads

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<sup>19</sup>There are some social movements and awareness creation programs organized by the kebele against inheritance of widow, considering the practice as harmful traditional practice.

express their idea that if they would have insisted on getting their proper share and confront their in-laws, they might be cursed by elders or further alienated by the community. According to personal interview with female household heads, elders are considered as having ability to lead community. Even though their judgment mainly going against the interest of widows it is considered by the society that it is for the good of the general public. Since elders are entrusted to judge important community matters, they also embody the ideal life-style and are the bearers and the implementers of community morality.

As explained by both men and women key informants elders are given a big place in the society; their word is respected and going against their decision is considered as acting against the culture. This reflects the symbolic role of elders in the society. The symbolic capital they have acquired through long time cultural practices and domination gives rise to better social acceptability. As pointed by Bourdieu (1977) the owner of an inherited social capital could transform all circumstantial relationships into lasting connections, whereas in contrast, the social relations maintained by those who have to acquire them were more fluid. As such, those women who had good relation with their in-laws through their marriage will automatically lose it when they become widow, whereas elders keep on working on their symbolic capital, accumulated because of their social position. Selam, a widow female head said, “We are always afraid of words of elders. If we go against their word we may face further alienation by the society. As much as possible we try to abide by the words of elders.” This implies that even if the widows understand that the tradition goes against their interest, they have to abide by it. Otherwise, it was mentioned that they will face further suffering.

As I understood from the field work, the in-laws become influential for the sake of protecting the patrilineal land tenure system. Thus, the question is whether or not the land is in the name of the previous family. The experience of Selam and Mekedes explains this practice well. Explaining how her in-laws decided about her livelihood, Selam said:

When my first husband died I was inherited by his brother. My in-laws decided the land from my first marriage should be transferred to my eldest son, but when my second husband died his mother denied me of the ownership right from the second marriage and pushed me out from my house. Now I am raising my six children using only the land registered in the name of my son.

Similarly, Mekedes's experience tells us how in-laws play influential role in deciding the fate of the female headed household's access to livelihood resources:

After the death of my late husband his mother and three of his brothers wanted me to leave the village and they kicked me out from the house. They first asked me to get married and leave the children and the land to them, but I decided to keep my children and land with me. After long months of conversation we couldn't agree and they destroyed my house with fire and let me go away from my living area.

According to Mekedes's experience the right of land ownership by a female household head falls on the willingness of their late husband's household members. Parents of late husband have customary right to decide to whom the land is transferred. Either they make forceful transfer of land to their grandson or they may decide to keep the land under their control.

As mentioned by the female heads, pursuing another marriage or leaving the residence area without any claim by the widow is a relief for the late husband's family while it is a lose for the widow. This is because, till the time of this research has been conducted the regional land tenure policy did not allow property ownership right of people after leaving their residential area. Female household heads in this study also argued that once they leave their living area their land will no more be under their control. In addition to this, once they start new marriage and move to other places, the custom doesn't allow the widow female heads to work on their late husband's land. It is a shame for the female heads to be seen in the village of their in-laws after they get departed in coercive way. Debritu, an old widow female head said, "How a widow would be seen in the village of her in-laws once she quarrelled with them? Once she has gone she is no more a business of the late husband's family." Establishing a new marriage or leaving the residential area by any reason is thus a sign of ending relationship between widow and the in-laws. As explained by widow female heads the struggle to have access to and control over livelihood assets in most cases is dominated by the power of their in-laws, who have well established acceptance in the area for long time. Alem, another widow female head also expressed what looks like her relation with her in-laws after she lost her husband; "I know how much I suffered because of my relation with my mother and brother in- laws. They were too cruel. After the death of my husband their interest was totally on my land and livestock, they have never recognised me and my children as dare to live."

The effort to control over resource in the name of marital relation according to this practice demonstrates that it is not only formal rules or laws that operate within a particular practice. Being a widow here become a reason of conflict a conflict for legitimate ownership of capital, i.e., ownership of land and livestock. However marital relation and interest of the in-laws inhibits authoritative entity of the widow. In practice widows are denied a status of right to decide on their livelihood and right of their children. Their role as a player of the game is challenged by associating them as killer of their husband.

### **5.3.1.3. The Other Face of Widowhood**

As presented above the customary rule puts widow female household head's chance of access to and control over economic source under question. This is attributed mainly to the influential role of the in-laws. However, despite their suffering, there are also cases that some widows manage to get access to property ownership. According to personal interview with a male head respondent, in relative terms, widow female heads get better treatment and consideration than divorced female head from their neighbourhoods. Male interviewees mentioned that the social connection they have had with the late husband and commitments of the widow is the cause for extending their helping hand. Taking this practice into consideration men interviewees pointed out that sometimes they try to interfere between in-laws and widows to settle misunderstandings. As has been told by male interviewees, their intervention may extend to lending their ox and labour to the widow. Sometimes when the widow doesn't have family members to help her they also take hand to negotiate about their land, livestock or even labour on their behalf.

Such material and emotional help of neighbours takes important place in the life of widow household heads. Some of the interviewee widow household heads explained how they are indebted to the help of their neighbours by mentioning their help during negotiation. For instance, Alem argued that.

After my late husband passed away, the relation with my in-laws was totally changed, they did not want to see me around the village, they even refused to share my land. Thanks to my neighbours and friends of my late husband, after long years of negotiation I finally able to secure .5 hectar of land and some cows and cattle.

Debritu, another female head also expressed that her late husband has had good relation with their neighbours and this helped her to know and rely on many people in the village. She mentioned that her late husband was known as a good person in the area, she said "he was kind to lend crop and labour for those who are in need of it". She even remembers times that he used to voluntarily served in the qābälé

and this helped her to get their support to negotiate access to her household means of livelihood. She also pointed out that unlike some other households she is given preference in terms of being beneficiary of fertilizer and any provision from the qäbälé. This implies that the position of widow female heads to control their property relies on symbolic and social role of the man (late husband). The widows are still remembered by the role and affiliation of their late husbands. His symbolic role as a man may be as 'a good man' according to the interviewees, brings better opportunity for some of the widows. In such cases the widow develops better position in the struggle to possess means of livelihood. For Bourdieu the ability of household to successfully manage the material and symbolic resources that they possess for the benefit of its membership is referred to as social capital (Bourdieu: 1986). The ability of households to use such resources for the development of their livelihood therefore emphasizes the importance of symbolic capital necessary to activate social capital. In this case as suggested by Bourdieu how the social networks are used may be as valuable as (or even more valuable than) the existence of social networks themselves. However, according to this research, it doesn't mean that all widow female headed households have absolute support of their neighbours and become beneficiary. The support depends on the social capital their late husband had had before.

The presence of adult son and long years of marriage life also plays a key role to defend economic resources for the widow female headed household. For instance, as it was mentioned by male head interviewees, long years of marriage life is given a special meaning in the wäräda. They said that it is considered as a sign of the wife's submissiveness and her respect to the culture. It helps her to establish strong neighbourhood and social relationship in the community. According to them this provides a good opportunity for the widows who have had long years of marriage to have close and better relation with elders and important personalities. They pointed out that staying long years in marriage by itself is considered as the representation of the women's good behaviour and responsible character. As they put it, it is believed that a woman with good behaviour doesn't nag her husband and she becomes a source of his health and long years of life. Taking this practice into consideration widow household heads who have had long years of marriage get better respect and face less challenge than young widows. Such a widow as it is seen in the study developed trust even among her late husband's relatives. Zebiba, a 58 years old widow household head expressed the situation by saying, "I can say that I have faced no challenge from my in-laws, no one asked me to be inherited, may be because I was not young when my late husband passed away, they did not take my property, may be because I have grown up sons." Similarly Berhane 61 years old widow household head mentioned that her husband passed away after they spend long years of

marriage and managed to establish good relation with his relatives and the neighbours in the qābālē. She said. “During the long years of our marriage I proofed that I am trust worthy and good wife. I was very careful in managing my house and caring my children and husband. I have had also good relation with relatives of my late husband.” This implies that in one way or another those widows who have had long years of marriage are considered relatively stable and with less potential to get land transfer to other family members (other marriage). As also expressed by some of the widow interviewees, once they have grown up children they don’t look for second marriage, rather they prefer to keep the land for their children. This practice, in one way or another, gives confidence to the late husband’s family and creates less challenge in the life of the widow. From this we can see how age plays a big role in influencing once place in Bati. The older the age of the widows, the better it becomes to maintain and keep healthy relation with their late husband family. And consecutively enables them to get their share of property.

As pointed out by female head interviewees, despite the in-laws resistance against the share of their daughter in-law, there are also times that the in-laws became less resistant and agree to the share of their daughter in laws. This is mainly when the household has large amount of land and many livestock. The study found that those in-laws who have large amount of land compared to other households, become less resistance to allow their daughter in law to take her share of property. As expressed by Ayelech when her husband passed away, her in-laws allowed her to have access to the land that is owned by her step son. She was also allowed to take cows. Ayelech mentioned that the parents of her late husband have had large size of land and many livestock and it makes them considerate to allow her to be beneficiary of the land and get access to cows. Zebiba, a widow female head who has access to .5 hectare of land also mentioned that her in-laws have had a large size of land and allotted 1.5 hectare of land for their late son, but when he passed away they were considerate and allow her to have .5 hectare of land and take care of her children. She mentioned that nowadays she doesn’t have any contact with them but they did not hesitate to allow her take a share of land during her widowhood. For Zebiba, in addition to staying long years in marriage, the amount of land the in-laws retain for themselves and the number of children she owns made them to be more considerate.

The above practices indicates that in some situations widow female heads have got a chance to negotiate their right of property ownership and the help of neighbours and close family members plays an important role in this regard. But the study also found that there are also cases that elderly people or neighbours might not want to make further negotiation on some matters. They mentioned that sometimes the



neighbours or own family members are reluctant because they want to keep the status quo of their pre-established relation in the village. As put by Mekedes, the widow whose in-laws fired her house said, 'Even though my father helped me to get back my share of land, I couldn't get compensation for my destroyed house. My father told me to stop further request. He is afraid he may lose his contact and good relation with the community if he keeps on demanding further'.

This implies that there are situations that neighbours, own relatives and elders defend against the right of female headed households for the sake of keeping their own pre existing social relations. Male head interviewees for instance argued that sometimes if the widow is young, parents and elders would prefer to arrange another marriage than helping her to defend her right. The discussion with key informants in the Sheria court regarding the rationale for such assumption indicated that even if there are cases that females might have control over resources, they are not absolutely considered capable enough to lead their household and children properly. Therefore taking this assumption into consideration establishing another marriage is proposed as a better option for young widows. Male focus group discussants also defend the importance of another marriage for widowed female heads, than further negotiation with their in-laws by pointing the practice of female's access to land through their husband. For them since the young widow has another chance of marriage there is no need for fighting with her in-laws. Such assumption indicates how the practice of female headship is represented in the society.

### **5.3.2. Divorced Female Headed Households**

Divorced female headed households are another category of female headship. Divorce between married couples may occur for different reasons. Sources indicate that divorce is more common among the Amhara ethnic group than among the Oromo ethnic group, and more common among Christians than among Muslims (Central Statistical Authority, 1993). There may be several explanations for this. Muslims in Ethiopia may have a stronger tradition of the indissolubility of marriage than do the people who practice the Christian Orthodox religion. This may be in part because the religious authority plays a larger role in Muslim marriages than in Christian Orthodox marriages (Mekonnen, 1986). Most divorce cases are concluded by the willingness of both parties but there are also cases where one of the parties initiated and decided on it. In Bati the interview with female heads shows that both husbands and wives may initiate divorce, but husbands take the prime position to initiate and decide on divorce. The interview with male key informants in Bati Wārāda Sheria Court also pointed out that whoever initiated the divorce it is the man who takes the final decision.

According to male household heads, there are different reasons for the initiation of divorce on the husband's side. Lack of enough resource to maintain the household, lack of love, and health problems of their wives are some of the factors. Female household heads also argued that health problems of wives and barrenness are the main factors. Mulat and Sara are who are victims of such problem said that they have seen no other reason for ending their marriage except their health problem. Mulat said,

After I gave birth to my fourth child I became very sick and my husband told me that he doesn't want to live with me and chased me out from the house. He snatched all my *Meher* and gave it to the new wife. I reported the case to both the religious leaders and qäbälé administration. My parents also asked him to share me the property. Till now the case is not yet settled and I am in a big problem.

Sara's experience also tells us how inability to give birth to a baby becomes as cause for divorce.

I got married two times. I stayed 7 years with my first husband and get divorced. I married again and stayed for 10 years. Now I am divorcee. In both marriages I couldn't give birth to a baby but my ex-husbands had had another wife and just wanted me for my labour. Both of my ex-husbands refused to share me land because I couldn't give birth to a baby.

Such type of divorce according to the culture of Bati is not open for question. It doesn't give any space for further negotiation. As it was repeatedly mentioned by male head interviewees once a female gets married she has to give birth to a baby within reasonable period of time. But, if she fails to give birth to a baby she has to be replaced by another woman. The study by Pankhurst (1992) also indicates how not having a child is often given as a reason for the dissolution of marriage in Ethiopia. According to Pankhurst, having a child to inherit the family land and to carry on the family name is a very important part of Ethiopian culture.

There is a cultural, religious, and social stigma associated with divorcee female heads. Community disapproval is stronger for divorced female heads than the other forms of female heads. This study found that in the wäräda a woman who cannot live with a husband (in this case divorced) is a threat to the society. It is believed among the community that she doesn't have good character and may negatively influence married women. Both female and male head interviewee mentioned that a female is supposed to stay in marriage at any cost, otherwise she will lose a supporter and her house will be a "female's house." A female's house according to them is a house without protector. For male head interviewee a female

cannot properly lead her house alone. The male head interviewees stressed the idea that men are more responsible than the women for their house and they don't let off their wife without a reason. But they mentioned that there are some exceptional cases like "unacceptable" behaviours. "Unacceptable" behaviours according to them include female's adultery, questioning husband's words, and inability to manage the house... All these therefore decrease the status of the divorcee women. Female interviewees also mentioned that despite the reason for the divorce, divorced women are considered as responsible for the divorce.

For the divorcee female household heads getting abandoned from their means of livelihood creates both economic and social problems to administer their household. Very few of them managed to get their share of land, otherwise most of them are found alienated from their property ownership right by force. As some of the divorced female heads mentioned they have faced a lot of difficulty to get a share of their property. They argued that during divorce the headship status and control over household property gives men better power to negotiate and win the game. This tells us that the role of men as heads of a household gives them a symbolic capital to decide on the fate of the women to the extent of abandoning the female's right of property ownership. Headship as explained by male head interviewees, include a capacity of managing household resources and enabling the household to get enough to live. But, they doubt that a female alone can manage to undertake all these activities. For instance in the focus group discussion with male household heads, discussant one (M<sub>1</sub>) said, "when a man heads a household he takes all the responsibility for the income generating activity and representing the household". Discussant two (M<sub>2</sub>) also puts that, "unless the man brings the food grain and money the women cannot undertake her responsibility and the man is the provider of the women", Discussant three (M<sub>3</sub>) also added that, "well, a female can be said that she can lead her house but it is like being one handed, first of all, she failed to get enough to feed the family, Secondly, the household will stay without protection". Similarly, female head interviewees share their experience that there is a big difference between their headship and their ex husband headship. According to Aziza a divorced female head, in both of her previous marriages she was mainly responsible to manage the food and health of her household members, but now she is responsible to look for a share cropper, to follow up the production, to manage the expenditure and worry about the future of her daughters. She said that heading a household is a tough responsibility which she had never thought before. Some call her she is working like a man, but she said

According to our culture a female is suppose to spend most of the time at home, especially if her husband is a good farmer, she is not expected to work in the field, but for me the story is different, I am divorcee. There is no one that takes my responsibility; I have to work a lot to feed myself and household member.

For Negat, headship for a divorcee female is like a burden. She said,

When I got divorced, I suffered a lot to get means of livelihood, after I got my share of land, I always depend on begging people to lend me their labour or sometimes hire share cropper, and there are also times I spend in the field. I also want my children to be a good student and don't demand them to work much in the house but I want my son to learn ploughing too. I realised that heading a household is a big task and responsibility. It takes my energy very well. Despite all my effort to win my household livelihood; I also face bad treatment in the neighbourhood. However, despite all the problems, I am heading my household, rather than submitting my will again to a husband.

From this one can assert that, the nature of division of labour, the type of source of livelihood in the wārāda and perception about divorcee female heads makes the presence of husband as symbolise the presence of a responsible person. In addition it push female household heads to consider their headship as a difficult responsibility. However, despite the different problems they face, they also demonstrate that they can win their household livelihood by undertaking the required task.

Even though divorcee female head shows their dedication to undertake their headship responsibility, the practice still shows that, they are subjected to mistreatment. In addition to losing their right of division of property; the study also demonstrates that if it is the wife who initiated the divorce she is suppose to return the *Meher* (gift given to her during her marriage). As it was pointed out previously on page 104, the bride groom pays the *Meher* to get the support and submission of the bride. As such when she doesn't want to continue to live with him, he can take back the gift that symbolizes his willingness to recognise her as a wife and her compliance to live with him. From this practice one can interpret that the right of married women is subjected to the will of their husband. Similarly, the court decision implies that women have lesser symbolic capital that they can get the will and acceptance of the court to defend access to their property. Whereas, men who enable to show their symbolic power by paying *Meher* while weeded to their wife have the chance to defend their act by taking away their ex-wife *Meher*. In this case, the

divorced women who are treated only in relation to their ex-husband failed to get a place in the Sheria court to defend their right. As the following narration from Aziza also shows, the social practice give little room for accommodating women's interest and force the women to abide by the decision of religious leaders and elders.

When I got married to my second husband I had land that I acquired from my first marriage and it was registered under my name. My ex-husband didn't have land but insisted me that I should give birth to a baby, but I realized that it is a mechanism to get control over my land and decided to get a divorce. The divorce was conducted under customary rule. I have tried to get my share of farm animals, however my ex-husband refused to share; he kept on insisting ownership right over my land. Finally, the elders decided that I have to pay 500 birr for my husband and take my land but leave the house and farm animals for him.

Unlike other divorce female heads that share their experiences, For instance (Ziad and Mulat) Aziza took her own initiation to divorce, however she was made to pay a fine and leave the house and farm animals for her ex husband. Whereas in the case of Mulat and Ziad, even though it is the husband that initiate the divorce, the female heads didn't get the chance to get their share of property or any decision either from qäbälé administration or elders in the village. This therefore can be interpreted that both men and women in the society are treated differently in relation to access to property during divorce. In the one hand, whether the man initiates the divorce or not the culture do not question his right of property ownership. Whereas if the woman initiates the divorce, both the Sheria and elders consider the case as against the husband right and he is expected to be compensated. As it was stated earlier in the discussion of marriage, men are given a bigger place in leading and administrating their household members. Their role as a household head is given a symbolic place to the extent of keeping the security of household property including land. One can interpret this as how the role of men as household heads gives them a symbolic capital to decide on the fate of women. According to Bourdieu (1972: 550),

The position of the spouse in the domestic power structure or, to use Max Weber's vocabulary, their chances of success in the completion of or authority over the family, that is, for the monopoly of legitimately exercising power in domestic affairs, are definitely related to the material and symbolic capital they bring into the marriage (although the nature of that capital may vary according to time and society).

### **5.3.2.1. Divorced Female Headed Households and the Community**

Resettling and beginning a new life is difficult for female household heads in rural society. When the case is associated with divorce it worsens the situation. Divorced female household heads argued that unlike the widow they get hardly any support from the society to get share of their property and to begin new life. Except for their close family members they cannot get the support of people to help them to defend their right of division of property and secure their means of livelihood. They are also unable to use their social relation to negotiate their right.

In addition to economic problem, their headships face a challenge from the community. This goes to the extent of being considered as incapable of leading their household and as potential cause for the disruption of other marriages in the village. Bekelu, divorced female household head, explained the relation she had with her neighbours by saying,

Of the entire problem I face in my headship I really get angry when I think of my female neighbours. They always lack trust on me, they suspect me as having affair with their husbands. I have no boy friend and I don't have any intention to snatch their husband. How then would I get their trust and form good relationship?

Similarly Aziza said,

My neighbours have a doubt on my headship, they think that I don't have any capacity to feed and grow my children. Thanks to God I managed to hire a share cropper and get my land ploughed and feed my household members. I don't have friendship with a neighbouring man. Though my two daughters get divorced it is not because of me. It is their luck. I always advised them not to start relationship with someone's husband. I still managed to feed them and their children too. I am not sure what my neighbours want to see more than this.

The interview with divorced female heads shows that they are hesitant to make friends with men (either single or married) because the friendship might be misinterpreted to mean that the woman is frivolous, immoral, and sexually permissive. The very nature of being divorcee is taken as a good reason to suspect the female household heads of having sexual affair with married and unmarried men. Such situation makes them to have tense relation with wives in male headed households. From the interview with

married women, I have understood that in any case they don't feel happy to have a divorced female head around their village. As one married woman said "If a young female decides to stay without a husband I suspect that she has already started sexual affair with the villagers". Another married woman said, "Female heads are bad-mannered group of the society. This is because they do have no man to control them." Married women believe that absence of a man to control the female heads pushes them to have many sexual affairs with the villagers. The interview with male household heads also makes clear that elderly men suspect female heads with sexual promiscuity. With regard to such blame some of the divorced female heads argued that it is true that many married and unmarried men approach them for sexual affair but it doesn't add much on their livelihood asset. Rather the divorced female heads mention that their position as absence of husband becomes a cause of tense relationship with other women in the community. For Fre, the widely used proverb *lagebash yelem enji hulum mata lemta* (men are eager to visit us every night, but they do not want to start permanent affair (marriage)) works well when it comes to her life. She said that,

If the relation benefits me in terms of supporting my household livelihood I would have been ready to face the blame, but it is worthless. Among the men that I have sexual affairs, it is very few of them that lend me at least their labour; I think they themselves are also afraid of further blames from the society.

Similarly, Ziad a divorcee female head put her experience that," There are times that men approach me for love affair. I am eager to get a husband and showed them my interest, but their interest did not go far beyond sexual affair."

The experience of Fre and Ziad shows that the fear of married women has some ground. This has brought them unwanted treatment from neighbours including lack of trust, get less social acceptance and social relation. Mulat, a divorcee female head express how she is feeling the social alienation by saying,

In our culture when someone lost his beloved one, or organise a feast the neighbours go to his house to express their condolence or support him in labour. We have also a tradition of calling each other and spend some hours in that family. However after I became a divorcee female head, my neighbours stopped to share me information and go out with them. I am not sure why they are changing their behaviour, but I guess they are suspecting me as a treat to their marriage.

As pointed out by the divorced female heads they are always blamed for being morally wrong. Except their family members, they expressed that, in most cases no one wants even to drink coffee and spend time with them. For the divorcee female heads, the economic and labour problem which is related to access to land and male labour push them in a position to open themselves for the demand of men. However their experience tells us that the approach from men mainly remains at the level of sexual affair. The dissuasion with married women also implies that there is clear alienation of divorced female household heads in the culture. As said by discussant one (wf<sub>1</sub>) “I believe that divorcee women are always ready to snatch my husband, they do have no one to control them. Even if I have many divorced female neighbours I don’t have good hurt for them. I don’t want them to come to my house.” Discussant two also added (wf<sub>2</sub>) “there are many divorcee female household heads that get along with a married man. This is illegal but they need land, labour and security for their household livelihood, they can get this through men, therefore they don’t have any shame to have affair with any man that shows them interest.” Whereas, for discussant three there are specific group of divorcee female heads that are treat to others marriage. (wf<sub>3</sub>) “For me young and land holder divorcee female heads are a treat to marriage, the men themselves wants them for their youngness and land. The females are also in need of labour. They are open to men including married ones, once the men are ready to offer them labour, they are shameless.” Explaining why they are resentful towards divorcee female household heads discussant four said (wf<sub>4</sub>)

We know that divorcee female heads are mainly resources less and cannot lead their house properly. This makes them to start affair with men for economic, labour and security purposes, whereas our men take this opportunity to establish affair with them and this makes us jealous on them. And we failed to establish good relation with them as neighbours.

This imply that the neighbourhood relation between divorcee female household heads and married women in the wäräda is challenged by female heads interest that is believed as a mechanism to solve their economic, labour and social relation. However their act is prohibiting them from getting respect for their personality and headship. On the other hand this can also be explained from married women’s security point of view. As it has been mentioned in the discussion of marriage, one of rational for women to get married in the wäräda is to get access to their economic means and social security. Similarly the fear of married women explain that the presence of female heads around would be treat to their means of economy, labour, security and social support. This therefore indicate that in the wäräda females, either in the headship or married position want men to take big role in securing their household livelihood.



On the other hand, the above findings show that divorced female heads are facing a challenge from different direction in the process of winning the livelihood of their households. On the one hand they are abandoned from their means of livelihood by their husbands. On the other hand they are mistreated by the community. This implies that divorcee female heads are trapped between their economic and labour problem on the one hand and social problem on the other hand. The practice of abandoning the female heads, especially divorced once without provision of important livelihood resources and the association of such female heads as morally reprehensible by the community at large in one way or another is related to one major factor. As mentioned before on page 103 the cultural practice wanted the females to leave their natal family and move to the male's village to establish marriage. Such arrangement alienates the females more from the social relation and other benefit that they could have get from their natal parents' village. This alienation makes them vulnerable to mistreatment from their husbands in the name of divorce. Lack of social capital, that they could have get from their natal family and village, thus denies them of the chance to get power to confront their right of livelihood. Bourdieu's explanation of multiplier effect of social capital in synthetic form, the less you have of social capital, the less you will get, explains the above practice (Bourdieu, 1997: 53).

### **5.3.2.2. Capital and Children in Divorced Female Headed Households**

As has been seen above the attitude towards female heads by members of the wider community is not good; it becomes worse in the case of divorced female heads than widow and separated female heads. They are commonly seen by both women and men as unable to provide important capital for children. As expressed by both male heads and women in male headed households children from divorced female headed households don't learn the norms, values, behaviors, and social skills appropriate to their social position. This imply that divorced female headed households are considered by the society as a place of inappropriate socialisation for children. According to the finding, the society believes that divorcee female heads are not in a position to teach their children the needed cultural knowledge. The divorcee female head are blamed of having many sexual affairs, which is culturally and morally unacceptable and disable them to bring out culturally accepted children. For instance, explaining about how there is a difference between children grown by divorcee female heads and male headed households one male head interviewee said that, "It is very difficult to compare children from female headed househohlds and children from male headed households. For instance a son in a female headed household takes long time to start ploughing, but a son in male headed household learns the practice of farming at early age."

Another male interviewee also said, “If a male child has got no land and knowledge from his father, who else could teach him”. In this regard divorced female heads are blamed for keeping their male child ignorant of having basic knowledge. However some of female heads take the stand that they are trying their best to equip their children with the necessary cultural knowledge. In this regard, Bekelu, a divorced female head said,

I know that my children are also alienated in the society; they don't have their father's farm to work on or to learn about farming. I don't have even access to close family members to allow my children to get the knowledge, but I always advise them to use all the opportunity to acquire the knowledge from any farmer in the neighbourhood.

When asked how they can cope with the lack of important capital, Negat, divorced female head said, “Unlike what the society talks about us I am working hard to equip my children with all the necessary knowledge, for instance I always ask my son to go to our farm and watch what the share cropper is doing, sometimes I go together with him.” In this regard female heads are displaying different effort and determination in seeking out resources in systems with low social capital.

This reminds us that activities like ploughing are traits that can be developed through time. Basically male children learn this activity from their childhood when accompanying their father to the farm. Whereas, female headed households who do lack the presence of male labour that can teach and transfer such practice to the male child are blamed for inability to produce culture-worthy children. Such traits are not natural traits as it is considered in the society but socially imposed traits. The fact that females are not allowed to plough and transfer this capability puts the household in a lesser position than other households. In this regard, ploughing is seen much as a cultural practices, despite its nature of physically demanding and difficult to be undertaken by female's who have other household and reproductive responsibility, there is a strong believe that the nature of headship by itself influence the capability of children. As has seen before, farming is the main activity in the wäräda but in the cases of those households who do lack a land the household could engage in other activity. However when a female head is found to be without land or male labour to equip her son with necessary knowledge of ploughing there is a big blame over their headship. Despite such blame, the study found that there are some divorce female heads that work against the assumption of the society but try to fulfil the socially imposed ideas and considerations. For instance, the experiences of Bistrat and Negat show that as heads and mothers they are exerting their effort to enable their children acquire important knowledge (ploughing); otherwise they

know that they couldn't get social acceptability in the area. Bourdieu (1984, 1985, and 1990a) contends that the ability to participate in a status culture is a cultural resource that permits actors to get ahead by managing impressions and constructing social networks that are crucial in occupational achievement. As Di Maggio (1982: 190) also notes, "A person who is at home in a prestigious status culture can display tastes, styles, or understandings that serve as cultural resources". But again, this kind of social and cultural communication is likely to be more difficult for women who are less favoured to be engaged in a male-dominated activity (ploughing) and who do lack male labour to participate in farming. Female household heads therefore may be under greater pressure than male headed households to communicate their assets and abilities more explicitly so as to compensate for their "alienation" from the male only activity, I.e, ploughing.

### **5.3.2.3. Negotiating the Practice**

The livelihood of female headed household works well in the presence of important livelihood capital. Access to ownership and right of land is the essential component of capitals; however, the field research shows that many of the female headed households are denied access to essential capital. But, those female heads who manage to exercise their right of division of property are also found sacrificing their acceptance in the society. For instance the experience of Negat, one of the female head who takes her divorce case to the qäbälé administration and then to the wäräda court rather than to Sheria court tell us that when the female's are strongly pushes the case it is very challenging for them to get social acceptance in the society. According to Negat, when she starts accusing her ex husband in the qäbälé and pursuing the case she faces many opposition from the neighbourhood and pushed to stop the charge. But, she decided to pursue her struggle at any cost and finally she could manage to get her share of land. For her if she would have stopped struggling to get her ownership right, she would have been left bare-handed and lacked economic means to survive. However, she also mentioned her decision did not only bring up positive outcome, but also she lost her respect and social relation in the community. The following, experience of Zahara, who is also divorcee female head, shows to what extent that the resistance against the cultural practice would bring negative impact on livelihood of female headed households.

Even though I managed to get half hectare of land with the help of court decision I cannot plough the land properly because of my ex-husband's repeated attempt to push me away from the place. Sometimes he and his own children (from other marriage) come and destroy the cultivated farm. I also remember a time when my ex-husband told loudly to the

villagers (in a funeral gathering) that I divorced him against the rule of the religion (through secular court not through Sheria). From then onward no one wanted to cooperate with me. My neighbours are even afraid to drink coffee with me. Now I am very much alienated in the society. But I am still not giving up pursuing the case.

As many of the divorced female heads explained, settling divorce case through court is not an easy task. It demands them to struggle for long period of time and face all the challenge they would face in the neighbourhood. This is because according to the customary rule marriage in Bati takes place through Sheria. Similarly divorce is also expected to be concluded according to the rule of Sheria. The Sheria court decides the share of wife and husband. However female head interviewees argue that even though decisions in the Sheria court are very fast, it doesn't seem fair for a woman. According to female head interviewee, the procedure in the Sheria court are not clear and always decide in favour of the man. Practically the Sheria demands that in case of divorce or widowhood, the female shall take one third of the property whereas the male take two third of the property. This according to interview with key informants in Bati Sheria court is because unlike the husband, wife has no big responsibility in the production of wealth and also the husband has already contributed to her in the form of *Meher*. Whereas if they stay very long in their marriage, the share of the female determined based on the year they have spend together in their marriage, if they stay about thirty years she can take half of the property, whereas if it is less than thirty years some people from the court assigned to investigate her social and economic contribution and decides on her amount. Thus, refusing this practice many females prefer to settle their divorce through the Qäbäléadministration. According to the female head interviewees, those women who are well informed and follow the legal means to settle their cases are highly alienated by the society. As the above experience of Zahara and Negat shows, they failed to get the support of their neighbours because they decide to take their divorce case to qäbälé. Alienation in the neighbourhood has a potential problem of exacerbating the livelihood situation of female household heads and their household members. The female heads are seen as going against the rule of the religion. As a key informant in the Sheria court puts it, "once a husband and a wife establish their marriage in Sheria court, they should also come to the court to settle any disputes including divorce. But settling the case through secular means is unacceptable by the religion." This implies that divorced females are facing many challenges from different sides; on the one hand the struggle to win their means of livelihood falls in the hand of their ex-husband. On the other hand the religious rules inhibit them to exercise their right of decision in settling their divorce cases.

In the society men participate in many productive activities and positions, including different administrative positions in the qābälé, religious places and associations which help them to have strong network and relation with different personalities. This enables them to get the support of the society. For instance, as the experience of Zahara shows, her decision of taking the case to the qābälé court, never taken by the community as a step forward to defend her right, rather her neighbours give their support to the traditional culture and stand by her husband side. Even from the experience of some of the female heads (for instance, Azeb, Ziad and Mulat) we can see that men can initiate and conclude divorce in whatever form. The neighbourhood don't challenge or question their act. The study found that the above challenges are mainly associated with, the previously discussed cultural notion that, land belongs to a man and women mainly get land through marriage. In this regard one male household head argues that, "once a man decides to share his land at divorce, it would be difficult for him to get access to a new land, but for a woman it is only a matter of being ready to marry again". Similarly another male head interviewee said that "After all men are responsible for heading and feeding their household members, for this they need a land, but women are responsibility of their husband, if they are divorced they can marry again and secure their livelihood." This can be interpret as, a man has social support that can be considered as a social capital to maintain his ownership of important livelihood resources during divorce; whereas assertive female heads who try to stand their right are feel alienated from the society. As put by Wacquant (1989), "A capital does not exist and function but in relation to a field: it confers a power over the field." In the case of female headship, even though divorcee female heads are dejuri heads, the society fails to recognize their headship as capable to feed their households members and produce culture worthy individuals. This indirectly reduces their potential of acquiring capital which defines the ordinary functioning of a given role.

### **5.3.3. Separated Female Headed Households**

In addition to widows and divorced women, we find a third group of female heads of households, the separated women. Separation here refers to a situation where the couple are living apart. In this context, female household heads are those who manage household resources in the absence of migrant spouses (defacto female headship). In some sense it may seem that separation is the first step to divorce but in this chapter none of the female heads wanted to recognize it as such.

In married life males in Bati Wārāda experience either periodic or long time migration. According to men interviewees, household responsibilities and reproductive activities made married women and female household heads to remain at home. Even though there are different reasons for male migration, looking for jobs for better life is the widely mentioned factor. As mentioned by male and female head interviewees, the marital relation between separated couples continues based on agreements between them. Accordingly, the woman stays in the home being responsible for all kinds of household and farm activities. As explained by separated female heads, the duration of staying away depends on the interest of each family. Some male household heads may stay two to three years and come back to their home village, others may extend their stay for longer period or others may want to take the whole family and live away from their village for good. According to the experience of some of female household heads, their husbands used to stay away for up to three years. But they mentioned that they keep on updating each other through telephone or other means. In the mean time the man is expected to send money, clothes, household utensils and the like to his family. There are also some migrated individuals or household heads that manage to buy houses in urban areas or build houses with corrugated sheets in their village. In the wārāda building a house with corrugated sheets is a means of showing the better economic status of the household than others. According to one male household head interviewee, “If you manage to get a household who has another house in urban area or who changes his hut into a house with corrugated sheet this is mainly because of income from remittance”. Such kind of households are also known for having a lot of cattle and oxen and sometimes they own a mini market in their village. For instance, Aregash is a separated female head, in previous years she was beneficiary of remittance from her husband. Her husband used to send her money and she managed to start growing vegetables and have a mini market. Lubaba is also another separated female head who supports the idea that separated female household heads have better livelihood resources. According to her experience, after her husband stayed away for nine months he started to send her money once in two months and she managed to start cattle fattening. This practice helped separated female headed households to have diversified livelihood activities and assets. In this case female heads whose spouses are away get remittance and their household is not vulnerable to lack of food and manage to have diversified means of livelihood.

The socio economic status of female headed households is influenced by the invisible presence of their husband. The female heads mentioned that even if their spouses are not around, the society including his family members keep on providing their help. This, according to the separated female heads, emanates from the belief that even if the spouse is not around he will be back home one day. According to focus

group discussants with male household heads, the absence of the male for some period of time is taken as a period of owing kindness to his household members. For instance discussant one (Mf<sub>1</sub>) said that, “This is a critical time that the neighbours and relative show the respect that they have for the man, who is living away from the village.” Discussant two (Mf<sub>2</sub>) also said, “No one knows what would happen tomorrow to any of us, so this is a crucial time to lend our labour to the households whose heads are away.” Similarly discussant three (Mf<sub>3</sub>) said, “We believe that the spouse will come back and settle here one day and we have to keep the relation intact by serving his household members with all the necessities.” One of the discussants also told that he and his friends have an appointment to go and visit one of their friends wife, whose husband has went to Jeddah six years ago. He said when they will go they will carry milk for the children and discuss with the wife if she need any help from them. This according to the interviewee is considered in their culture and also religion as holy practice. Even though the husband in separated female headed household is not present the focus group discussant argued that they believe that the husband will be back one day and it will be a shame for them, if he found his family falling in a problem while all the neighbours are around. They also add that in Bati migrating to urban areas and Arab countries to look for job for male heads is a common practice and any of them could go any time and their would come a time that their household would also need a support. They also pointed out that, there are also some male heads whose household were taken care by the neighbours when they have been away. This for them is a means of paying back the favour their household got in their absence. The help include, lending labour for ploughing, lending crops, selling crop to the market, shopping, taking care of their children, building a hut... As it was learned from the interview with key informants and male household heads, there is big hope among the community that this is the critical time that they have to pay back the favour that the neighbours have got from the household whose heads are away. On the other hand it is also a means through which they make the household indebted with the hope that they will be rewarded for their help after the man has returned back. According to Bourdieu (1977), gift giving may be a strategic, self motivated action meant to create an obligation in the partner to reciprocate. This indicates that unlike the other type of female headed households, separated female headed households get better treatment from the society as a result of symbolic capital of their migrant husbands. The symbolic capital in this case is expressed in the form of labour help with tacit expectation of reward.

According to a focus group discussion with separated female household heads, even though their husbands are away they don't experience problem of labour for their farm. Their farm is respected and well protected as if the spouse is around. Their children are seen as equal to those children whose father is

around. According to respondent one ( Sf<sub>1</sub>), “I have never seen my children get bad treatment like children in widow or divorced female headed households, my children have a father and they are still benefiting from their father’s property.” Respondent two (Sf<sub>2</sub>) also acknowledged the support she gets from her neighbours as follows: “The friendship that my husband used to have with the neighbours helped me to get support in different aspects from the society. I get good treatment from the society. The community knows that I have a husband to whom I belong; this makes them to give me respect like any married woman.” Similarly, respondent three (Sf<sub>3</sub>) expressed out how her household has got respect and help from her neighbours.

In the first years after my husband went abroad I did get all the necessary support from my neighbours and my husband’s relatives. I did not hire share cropper, and I didn’t even go out to sell the crop, they were helping me in all aspects. You see my husband has land, oxen and good relation with the neighbour, I think all this helped me to get such support.

Respondent four (Sf<sub>4</sub>) also mentioned that

Before my husband left for Jeddah he used to serve in the Sheria court and he was very much honourable in the community. He was known by the society as one of the elderly people who mediate different conflict and participate in many social activities. He even went to Jeddah for a Mecca pilgrimage and stays there for long years. From the day he has left my neighbours provide me social and labour support

The response of respondent five (Sf<sub>5</sub>) also shows a similar practice,

My house is full, my husband sends many things. Even before he left, our house was full, and he was known as a good farmer and got respect in the neighbourhood and actively participate in religious activities and known for helping the poor. Even if he is not around, the neighbours never hesitate to lend me what I have asked for.

From this, One can interpret that the important place that a person has in the society create honour and it also extends to the level of recognising and acknowledging his family as worthy to get support. In this respect, social capital may compensate for lack of income and may allow socially recognised households



to make better use of their income. Those who already have access to economic and social resources because of their husband will get the most out of their activation of social capital.

According to the finding, despite being de-facto female household heads, there is a strong believe among the community that in separated female headed households the head is still the husband. The interview with male household heads makes clear that in separated female headed households, the husband sends important provisions, including money and sometimes clothing and guidance to his wife. One of male interviewee who has been to Saudi Arabia for three years said, "When I was away I communicate to my wife regularly and tell her what she should do, I also request my neighbours and relatives to provide her labour and social support, her responsibility is only to feed the family. She don't farm or shop crop." One separated female head also argued that in the early years of her husband absence, he either telephone her or send message through people and tell her what she should do. His friends and relatives visit her regularly and do what he requested them to do. She said,

Even though he was absent I did not have burden to head my household, he was almost supporting me in many aspects. My children were also got necessary support from his relative and friends, when they want to go to farm they went to our neighbours or my in-laws farm, they train them very well, by the way one of my eldest sons who is now fifteen is getting himself ready to start ploughing.

In one way or another symbolic role of men is clearly seen in the relation between the separated female headed household and the community. The man is still symbolically considered as head of the family and his absence doesn't deter the community from recognizing his family. Even if he is not around, his symbolic role of "headship" or "fatherhood" or "husband" is recognised and provided necessary support to the female headed household. The fact that children of separated female headed households are treated equally with children of male headed households also exemplifies the practice. The involvement of the man's invisible hand is well acknowledged by the society and helps the household to enjoy economic, cultural and social capital. This explains the strong hand of symbolic capital and its role in influencing access to other types of capital. As mentioned by Bourdieu (1997: 46), "symbolic capital [...], as a potential capacity to produce profits and to reproduce itself in identical or expanded form contains a tendency to persist in its being." As such the availability of symbolic value of the man helps to reproduce further capital that sustains the livelihood of separated female headed households.

As has been observed in the study, it is a common practice that separated (de facto) female heads may wait for the return of their spouses for five or more years. Lack of communication for long years is not considered as end of their marriage by the de-facto female heads. They pointed out that despite the long years of separation they prefer to maintain the attachment. For them they prefer to keep their marriage for the social, labour and economic benefit they used to get before. In one of the focus group discussion with separated female heads they mentioned how they would face an economic and social problem if they would decide to associate themselves with a divorced female, according to them their status of separated female head give them a chance to get access to important livelihood capitals. For instance discussant one (Sf<sub>1</sub>) said,

Even though it has been long years since I communicated with my husband, I am still beneficiary of the land and support from his families, His family come regularly to my house and visit the children, they bring milk and butter for the children, their uncle take my son to their farm. The children are enjoying their relatives.

Discussant two (Sf<sub>2</sub>) also mentioned that,

My mother in law is living next to my house, when I am away for shopping or other purpose she looks after my children, my brother in-law is also taking care of my cattle together with his. My responsibility is only milking the cows. You see! If I recognise myself as a divorcee female head I am sure everything will change and, I and my children will be in trouble.

Discussant three (Sf<sub>3</sub>) also said,

I am living with my children and my mother in-law. When my husband left he wanted me to move to his mother's house. I undertake all household activities and my in-laws also take care of me and my children. We have different farm but we eat together. My brother in law works on my farm, which is registered in the name of my husband. Now, a year has passed since I communicate with my husband and I couldn't find his address. I am worried of why he disappears. If he keeps on disappearing, I am sure his family will considered me as a divorcee. But I don't want to be considered as divorce. Otherwise, I know I will lose my property

The experience of female heads in this case demonstrate a different experience than other type of female heads. Despite being de-facto female head, the availability of husband, give them an opportunity to benefit

from the support of their in-laws and friends. They are also seen denying their headship status for the sake of not losing the property from the marriage and the social support from their in-laws. They are sure that, if they consider the long years of separation and lack of communication as end of their marriage, they will definitely face the fate of a divorcee female. For them associating themselves with a separated female head means becoming divorced and losing their land and other property. As such they prefer to recognise the symbolic power of their husband and keep on getting economic and social support of friends and in-laws. This explains how the association of marriage and property (land) ownership forced the female heads to look for other identity. Headship in this case is therefore represented as a forced response against long time separation between the couples.

Recognition of headship by the female heads signals lack of any remittance from their spouses. Once the husband stops to communicate and send remittance, the female heads feel that they have to recognize their headship position and work towards fulfilling their household daily bread. They said that they will wait for their husbands till they get a final word from them but when time passes they will be ready to accept the reality. This pushes such female heads to be more responsible and concentrate on their headship status and work on it. Lubaba, a separated female head, said, “I have never recognized myself as a divorcee and look for other marriage but I believe that for the time being I am the only responsible person to lead my household.” The problem of long years of separation and lack of communication is the worst for female heads whose husband didn’t own land. Lack of any remittance coupled with absence of land to undertake farming creates serious livelihood problem for the female headed household. Focus group participants of separated female heads expressed their feeling that unlike those who have access to land, when the time of separation extends, their household livelihood will fall under problem. Long years of separation imply no remittance or support from the husband. The burden of strategizing their livelihood activity and sources and household management therefore falls exclusively on them, without their choice.

### **5.3.3.1 Relation under Question: In-laws and Separated Female Heads**

The research found that separated female headed households have better familial relationship with their husband’s families than divorcee and widow female headed households. This is expressed in terms of frequent visit from the family, taking care of their children, ploughing their land, and so on. According to Aregash, when her husband has migrated his families started visiting her house regularly and taking care of her children. She mentioned that there were days that her children were spending the night in their grandparents’ home too. She also mentioned that she used to get support for her farm. However, she

pointed out that such relationship started to get spoiled when it took longer since she heard from her husband. “The positive involvement of my in-laws decreases gradually and our relationship became harsh. They try to keep the land and important livelihood assets under their control using coercive majors.” She continued, “I have realized the indirect push from my in-laws when they were advising me to start a new life.” As she explained, once the husband’s parents recognized that there is no frequent communication between the couple, they will stop to see the female head as the wife of their son. They will consider the separated female head as illegally using “their son’s property”. The societal perception about marriage and property which is mentioned beforehand on page 103-111 explains this case. It has been seen that the social relation of female heads and in-laws has been healthy during frequent interaction of the female heads and the absentee husband. In this case symbolic role of the absentee husband as a head and being controller of the household property brought smooth relation between the female head and her in-laws. This good relation can be seen as a function of the presence of the invisible hand of the man.

Interview with male heads and old female heads also shows that once the separation time gets longer, the husband’s parents feel they are responsible for keeping the property of their son. They believe that the plot of land is a symbol of their son’s identity, so they decide to keep the land under their control till their child comes back. In relation to this, one male head commented that, “the availability of land would help to keep intact the relation between those who are away and the rest of the family in home country, otherwise we don’t believe that there is nothing that attracts the immigrants to come back to their home country”. Similarly another male interviewee pointed out that “parents are trying to keep the security of their son’s land because if a man doesn’t have land in his home country, he will be considered as dependent and insecure and no parent wants to see his son in this position.” This therefore puts parents of a migrant husband to act as caretakers of their “son’s” land and other properties. This also implies how the question of who should control the economy of the household affects relation between the female heads and their in-laws. The issue of associating men as the owners and sole controllers of the household economy brings up stiff relation between the in-laws and separated female heads. As such the economic security of the separated female heads failed to last long since their marriage is confirmed dissolved after some time. This confirms the culmination of symbolic role of a man as a source of symbolic and social capital for the female headed household. It explains how symbolic capital is a transient capital in some instance or how it does not go alone. Because the household economy is for sure believed to be in the hands of the husband, who has symbolic role, loss of contact will definitely bring up financial and social crisis in the life of female headed households.

The push from their in-laws put separated female heads in uncertain economic condition. Some prefer to stay submissive to their in-laws and some start to look for other means of survival. According to one separated female head focus group participant:

I know that my in-laws are not happy of my presence in the village. I face a lot of disregards and bad words from them but till now I have never responded to it, you see once I start fighting with them I know what my fate will be, so I am just submissive to their words for the sake of securing my household livelihood. (Sf<sub>5</sub>)

Expressing her submissiveness discussant six (Sf<sub>6</sub>) pointed out that she and her children are serving her in-laws: “like their daughter I go shopping and fetch water for them regularly, my children also look after their cattle”. (Sf<sub>7</sub>) said, “I am not sure when my husband would come back or when my in-laws would push me out and what my fate would be, but I have decided to look for other means of survival.” This implies how the uncertainty is pushing the female heads to look for ways of survival. In this case female headship brings them a new form of survival strategy, i.e., either submitting or starting out a new scheme. As (Sf<sub>7</sub>) explained, she has already started to work a lot on livestock production, especially cattle fattening. She mentioned she knows that life without access to land is very difficult in the village but the approach that she is facing from her in-laws is pushing her to exercise a new form of livelihood. Such attempts of female heads conform to the contemporary idea of sustainable livelihood studies which focus on the active involvement of people in response and enforcing change. The aim is to make clear that rather than being victims actors play active roles in achieving their livelihoods by continuously exploiting opportunities from the problem.

According to separated female heads, when their husband stay longer than expected time and stop communication, they recognise that the social support they used to get from the in-laws started to decrease gradually and made them to think that their economic and social relation falls under a problem. The forcing measures here explain how much absence of the husband victimised the female head to lack social and economic support from the family and community.

## 5.4. Discussion

The study has shown that socialization into traditional practices is dominantly seen in Bati. This is expressed through, the process of marriage formation, expectations in marriage life, strict division of labor between men and women. The empirical findings in one way or another therefore reflect the experience of female headed households in this specific traditional society. The specific findings in regard to female household heads in this chapter revolve around how cultural practices of access to resources affect headship position of female headed households. As pointed out previously in the discussion of marriage, the land allocation in the wäräda equally benefit both male and females but, traditionally females get land through their husband and this practice give rise to positioning females as receivers in their endeavor to live up to the expectation of the tradition.

The empirical findings tell us that in Bati to get married and stay long years in marriage is a major source of livelihood capital for a woman. The important capitals were discussed as land, ox and labour for ploughing. Subsequently, in the three types of female headed households, the absence or presence of these capitals were seen playing a major role in influencing the livelihood and headship capability of female household heads. In addition to that, the type of female headship also seen as influencing the amount and type of capital that the household has access to. For instance separated female heads were seen getting better provision of capital than widow or divorcee, and widow also get better provision of capital than divorcee.

The empirical data has also shown that despite the different headship status they have, the three forms of female heads are facing a lot of challenges from different parties: their in-laws, ex-husbands and the neighbours. For instance, when we see the challenge in the case of both widows and separated females we see that there is high tension that exists between the female head and the in-laws. Despite the familial relation they have established, economic concern becomes the major focus of their relation. The in-laws wanted to acquire the land and other livelihood resources in the name of protecting “their son’s property” and his children. They put the safety of their grand children and their livelihood security as a pretext for confiscating the female head’s share of land and other important livelihood assets. On the other hand the female heads are seen as either getting submissive to the interest of their in-laws, i.e., get inherited by brother in-laws, serving them through labour or on the other hand settling the case through traditional means, or legal means or starting out a new means of survival to avoid uncertainties. In this case we see the different strategies between in-laws and female household heads in terms of control over means of

livelihood. Here both parties are seen using different capital to have control over the property. For instance the in-laws use their social position, i.e., their elderly personality, chance of acceptability as a means to dispossess the right of female headed households. Whereas the female heads, for instance, widow claim their long years of marriage, divorce also claim their years of marriage and availability of children and separated female heads claim availability of husband as means to keep their ownership status.

As we have seen in this chapter the society gives more respect and credit to elderly household members. Their seniority provides them a chance to get strong social acceptability in the society and a means to enforce their will on the side of the female head. Here we see the prevalence of widely accepted assumption that the will of the elderly should be respected against other competitive ideas, and female household heads should be submissive to the will of their in-laws. In this case we witness power relation between the female heads and their in-laws. The in-laws use the symbolic capital they acquire from the society as a means to win their interest. Any “competence” becomes a capital insofar as it facilitates appropriation of a society’s “cultural heritage” but is unequally distributed, thereby creating opportunities for “exclusive advantages” (Bourdieu, 1977). The exclusive advantage in Bourdieu’s term basically stems from institutionalisation of criteria of evaluation in school. Whereas in the study wäräda even though there is no highly differentiated social structure and system of formal education, different capitals are acquired in the society. The symbolic and social capital acquired by the in-laws in one way or another is seen as eliminating the female household heads whereas giving the in-laws the upper hand to have dominant position in their rival relation.

On the other hand we have seen in the chapter that how eldest widow who had spent long years in their marriage managed to get the support of the community and treated in better way than other female household heads. This imply that how long years of social network that the widow household head acquired before the death of their late husband enable them to keep their means of livelihood.

The ideological gender relation that focuses on ideologies about what men and women are and how they should treat one another create bases for the form of relation female household heads has with their in-laws and the community. For instance, the way the widow and divorcee is treated in relation to property ownership emanates from the ideological perception about how women should act in the society. The treatment may go to the extent of denying the right of the widow and divorcee female head. As understood from the findings the female heads are not seen as an entity with agency. The society failed to see them as

they can decide by themselves and run their household. The practice manipulates their right and existence in accordance to the interest of other parties.

In Bati the man is considered as has better capacity in administering and supporting his household, as one which create livelihood security for the household including for his parents, while the woman's capacity is limited to domestic chores. Such dichotomous way of thinking has seen influencing the position of female headed households, female heads as incapable to keep their property, to negotiate and win their household livelihood. The continuity and uniformity of the women's work tasks, caring for children and animals, serving the husband, managing the household, is secondary in relation to the man's discontinuous, outer-directed and thereby more visible work tasks (Bourdieu, 1998). This shows that like the dichotomies that Bourdieu cites most often in his study of Kabyle, classifications such as head/ subordinate, bread winner/ receiver and similar dualistic concepts prevail in Bati culture. In one way or another, such concepts are found structuring people's patterns of thinking and action. The most essential of these dichotomies is the gender distinction. "The division of sexual labour, transfigured in a particular form of the sexual division of labour is the basis of the division of the world, the most solidly established of all collective - that is, objective illusions" (Bourdieu, 1992: 144).

Even though both male and female headed households in Bati are living in a system that make farming as a typical means of livelihood, the practice has been shown as negatively affecting female headed households access to livelihood resources, specifically divorcee female head. This is reflected through the existing gender relation that brought about strict division of labor and puts female's place subordinate to males. In this chapter gender distinction is seen structuring social life, from the intimate sphere to the public sphere, into a complex. The gender dimension thereby exerts direct influence on the process of access to and control over basic form of capital or means of livelihood. Such practice as has been seen before classifies and limits the space of women in the domestic sphere and leaves them as receivers and care takers, whereas it facilitate men's role of giver and controller. The husband's decision-making role in marriage formation, inheritance of land, inheritance of wife, etc. is always made in an effort to maintain or increase the individual or household economic capital, which indirectly goes with status and reputation (expressed in the form of ownership of land, oxen and other assets). While men were demonstrated as running to maintain their right of access to and control over livelihood capitals, women were given a passive role to secure their right of ownership and control. For instance ploughing which is reflected in the empirical finding as male dominated activity because of its physically demanding activity and gender



bias that see female's as only capable to undertake household activities is seen as allotted only to men. But as many of the female head expressed they are engaged in farming in different aspects except ploughing, therefore the division of labor that associate ploughing only to men, has been shown as emanated from cultural disposition that associate maleness with ploughing and other physically demanding activity and femaleness with reproduction and households activities, This implies how the distinction between public sphere/active participation and private life/ passivity is reflected well in the day to day practice of the study wäräda.

The rational associated with ownership and marriage formation gives widows and separated female household heads better opportunity to acquire social capital. For separated and some of widow household heads, the social activity their husband used to have in the community serves as important source of capital to acquire help from community in different aspects. As the study shows the social capital that the female heads are using is related to the society's perception about marriage formation and role of husbands. The husband in this case represents certain kind of power that makes other parties recognise it and be submissive. The power emanates from the specific disposition the society has for husbands and social capital they are endowed with. This somehow shows the gender distinction and how such distinction serves as a capital, the societal capital that the female heads wanted to get in one way or another. Thus, in the question of who should be the head of a household– the dominant notion is often naturally seen to be male dominance and female subordination. Men hold the capital that defines chances of success in influencing headship position. Hence, for the female heads to get societal recognition they must play by the cultural rules and within the boundaries that men have established. This may help to explain why headship relations at different levels are dominated by men, despite, for example, female heads gradually recognise their power and capacity.

The labour and social relation that the community had with both the widow and the separated female household heads has served as a means of acquiring both labour and social support for the female heads. Such support in one way or another is the reflection of the social capital that men have in the society. In the case of separated female heads, the de facto female head is seen as representative of her household. The role of a man as a source of his family's livelihood security and owner of important cultural capital, including farming enables him to get a symbolic capital that would be potential capital for the female head to get support from the society. Such support therefore is seen in the society as helping the female heads to negotiate their right of ownership against their husband's parents. The amounts of help they get to win the

struggle against the in-laws also depend on the availability of wealth the household has. This shows that the more the household has many oxen and large amount of land the more the household gets better support from the community. This implies how much the symbolic capital of the household head is influenced by the availability of economic capital they have. As such de facto female heads with prestigious and honourable husband are rewarded well. This therefore implies the role of symbolic capital in mediating power relation between female heads and other parties. Legitimacy or distinction is only truly achieved where it is no longer possible to tell whether dominance has been achieved as a result of distinction or whether in fact the dominated agent simply appears to be distinguished because he (more rarely she) is dominant (Bourdieu, 1984: 92). The right to speak legitimately is invested in those agents recognised by the field as powerful possessors of capital. In the case of separated female heads, the powerful possessors of symbolic capital, mainly the migrated husbands become the owners of symbolic power. The fact that the female heads still prefer to be recognised as the wife of their migrated husbands also strengthen the practice that they have accepted the power of men (husbands).

Coming to the position of the divorce female heads and their ex husband, we also see that the rule of the game in one way or another is affected by the habitus that each party has grown up with. For instance, for divorced female heads we have seen that they were abandoned from their marriage because of traditionally accepted conception of marriage. For instance if the woman failed to give birth to a baby or gives birth to female children in a row she should accept it as her problem and leaves her “husband’s house” without any compensation. If the husband wants to establish another marriage he can also snatch her belongings and get married to another woman. Despite all this we have seen that the divorcee female is considered as responsible for the failure of her marriage. On the other hand the dispositions associated with a divorcee female head played a role to make them lose social acceptance in the society and failed to access basic means of livelihood. As has been seen in the finding the divorcee female head is considered as potential cause for disruption of marriage, lack potential to lead her household and she is considered as a threat to married men. Such dispositions are directly related to how practices are habituated among the society. A divorcee female is made to consider herself as the cause of the disorder and become submissive to the decision of the society. The submission goes to the extent of losing basic means of livelihood. Such conception coupled with lack of social support negatively influences the role of divorcee female heads in the process to acquire their share of property ownership. Whereas the ex-husband can use his social capital to help to keep the property of the household under his control.

When we analyze the position of female heads it urges us to see the fundamental pillar of gender relation in the society. As the research data indicate the relationship between men and women in the society is based on sexual division of labour - a system that gives women definite femininity activity and grant men specific masculine tasks. The socialization process also follows this path in the sense that women (mothers) are expected to equip their daughters with the necessary feminine character and men (fathers) are responsible for shaping up their son's with important masculinity character. The household therefore becomes the first place to exercise gender relationship where men perform the leadership and administration while the female perform the subordination and care taking activity. In the analyses of different forms of female headship, the well established conception of household gender relation is clearly seen. Here the female heads express their feeling that they have difficulty of managing their household. They stressed the fact that they have limited capacity to lead their households. For instance, they mentioned difficulty of getting labour for the farm, difficulty of teaching the male child how to farm, difficulty of getting social support, etc. All these recognised difficulties in one way or another emanated from habituated gender relation and are finally reflected in the form of lack of symbolic and social capital.

The basic idea that a man should be the head of the household and the source of important capital creates such a gap that devalues female headship. The sexual division of labour that denotes specific tasks to each sex and gives the "well respected and valuable" tasks to the man fail to accept the role of female as a head. This is clearly in line with Bourdieu's findings about the Kabyle society. In the Kabyle society, things are put dualistically as big/small, inside/ outside, high/low, etc. where in all cases the distinction is clearly denoted between men and women. Similarly we witness dualistic division of labour and vision in Bati society. The vision of females in one way another is to become good wives and the vision of men is to be a good and respected husband. The "goodness" here is determined by the positions given to men and women by the society and available capital of both sexes. As expressed in the concept of habitus, deep rooted dispositions influence the action of individuals. In addition, the availability of capital which can be reflected in different ways also influences position taking stance of actors. Besides, cultural capital through which the intergenerational processes by which senses of identity and belongings are conveyed, felt and expressed relations are seen influencing power relations in female headship. The cultural capital as put by Bourdieu represents legitimate knowledge and ability that permit the difference to be established as natural rather than socially constructed (Bourdieu, 1986). In the case of Bati, men have very well recognised capacity of leading the household, ploughing the farm, training their sons, etc. Whereas being ignorant of such cultural practices are seen affecting the pace of female household heads in the process to

win their household livelihood. Even if gender is implicit in Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital, over generations the transmission of knowledge and ability in relation to gender identity has resulted in assignment of feminine characters as subordinate in some position such as headship.

This doesn't mean that there are no female heads that resist the rule of the game and defend their interest. They showed that belonging to a specific gender does not mean that one absolutely adapts to norms traditionally connected with femininity or masculinity. Despite the implicit tendency to behave in ways that are expected of female heads, we have seen that some female heads are acting against the rules or principles that determine certain ways of behaving. This shows that sometimes there is a tendency of going against the customary rule and the well defined behaviour. There are unexpected and ambiguous situation that force female heads to defy the accepted rule of acting. As put by Bourdieu there are no explicit rules or principles that dictate behaviour, rather the habitus goes hand in hand with vagueness and indeterminacy (Bourdieu, 1990: 77). The practical logic that defines habitus is not one of the predictable regularity of modes of behaviour, but instead 'that of vagueness, of the more-or-less, which defines one's ordinary relation to the world' (Bourdieu, 1990b: 78). But this doesn't mean that the society accepts such deviation in a good faith. As put by Bourdieu (1990b), the operation of the habitus regularly excludes certain practices, those that are unfamiliar to the cultural groupings to which the individual belongs. Such alienation shows the relation of social capital and habitus. For instance, the fact that the words of a husband get better acceptance than a female head enables the husband to have many followers to advocate his action. This alienates the female head from the social support she could have got from the society. This therefore explains the role of symbolic capital which is expressed in the form of social capital toward making the male head champion of the game. In this case social capital is used by players to have dominant position in the rule of the game. Players recognise and utilise relationships of mutual recognition and acquaintance to respond to favours and to call them in. Thus, social networks become a resource to be used to have access to livelihood resources. However, networks themselves can be gendered and therefore can feel exclusionary for outsiders such as women, who feel uncomfortable accessing networks that help support and reflect the gendered nature of headship.

In general we can see a mixture of female household heads, some accept their situation as it is, some are seen making several investments in human capital, social capital, cultural capital etc, as an attempt to have better means of livelihood capital. They are also competing with different patries to acquire their means of livelihood and to become "respectable" women. They exert efforts to defend themselves against being

labelled as sexually available and all attributes which they experienced as being female heads. However despite their attempts to defend their position, the dispositions they acquire and the positioning they are given has also influenced their potential to deviate from and protest against the given status and gender stereotypes.

## **Chapter Six: Livelihood Diversification and Female Headed Households**

### **6.1. Introduction**

In rural Ethiopia women weave together both farm and non-farm economic resources to support their households. However, sex specific opportunities for certain categories of activities have contributed to the economic marginalization of female headed households in rural Ethiopia (Yigiremew, 2005; Stone, 2003). Participation in farm activity has been historically divided along gender lines. The nature of female headed households' economic activities is embedded more on local contexts. More recent participation of female headed households in non-farm livelihood activities associated with poverty and lack of option has, however, brought about some changes in the perception of female headed households to diversify their livelihood. This has produced a gradual shift towards appreciation of other farm and nonfarm activities. As a continuation of chapter five, this chapter tries to show how local perceptions of gender have influenced the livelihood activities of female headed households?

This chapter begins by discussing how farm activity especially crop production becomes or is considered as main economic activity of the society and how it relates with female headed household's livelihood. By doing so, this part will show the position of female headed households in local farming. The second part discusses what looks like female headed households participation in non-farm livelihood activities. In this part an attempt is made to show how participation of female headed households in non-farm activity is mainly done as a means of survival. The third part will look at the role of support from abroad in the life of female headed households. Though females have gender based restrictions to participate in certain activities, this part will show the means through which female headed households are benefiting from migration and what role they are playing in promoting migration. The last part presents the general discussion based on how gender relation and deep-rooted thinking about the practice of farming influence the diversification of female headed household's livelihood activity.

## 6.2. Household Livelihood Diversification

Diversification is defined as the process by which households construct increasingly diverse livelihood portfolios, making use of increasingly diverse combinations of resources and assets (Ellis, 1999). The term ‘livelihood diversification’ is used to denote the range and combination of activities and choices that people undertake in order to achieve their livelihood objectives (Carney, 1998). Families may need to have several activities, they need income in different forms and they need social institutions (relatives, family, community, and so on). As put by Lipton and Maxwell (1992) the cash earning component of income includes items like crop or livestock sales, wages, rents, and remittances. The in-kind component of income refers to consumption of own farm produced, payments in kind (for example, in food) and transfers or exchanges of consumption items that occur between households in rural communities. The relevance of social and kinship networks is worth mentioning in livelihood diversification. Networks with different actors and institution are the necessary factors for facilitating and sustaining diverse income portfolios (Berry, 1989). The role of social institution is also highly significant in terms of facilitating and restricting options of livelihood diversification of different households with different gender, wealth, and income and asset ownership. As put by Ellis (1998), for example, the availability of unequal land right issue might be the cause of different livelihood strategies by men and women.

This shows that livelihood diversification is much broader than income diversification. In the case of income diversification, it refers to the pieces of household income acquired in a given time. Whereas livelihood diversification is a social process that shows a range of complicated activities that a household is involved in over time. Diversification of income sources is also considered as one of the strategies households use to minimize household income variability and to ensure a minimum level of income (Alderman and Paxson, 1992). Though a trend analysis and a record is important for the evaluation of livelihood analysis, Bryceson (1996) puts that in Sub-Saharan Africa diversity has been increasing over time. However, other work in Sub-Saharan Africa appears to suggest that the poorest households are less diversified, despite the fact that they should be more risk-averse (Dercon and Krishnan, 1996; Barrett et al., 2000).

According to economic studies there are many types of groups and sub groups of income sources regarding diverse income portfolios. All investigators may not follow the same conventions for categorization of income, but basically it refers to different “features of seasonality, sustainability, barriers to entry, location, potential income growth and so on” (Ellis, 2000). The primary categories are farm, off-

farm and non-farm income sources (Saith, 1992). On the other hand, Adams and He (1995) identified six major categories, i.e., agricultural, non-farm, livestock, rental, domestic remittances and international remittances. From the primary category farm income encompasses both crop and livestock income. Whereas off-farm income basically refers to wage or exchange labour on other farms, i.e., within agriculture. But it also includes a reward in kind, such as harvest sharing system and other indigenous non-wage labour contract system. Non-farm income refers to income from activities other than agriculture. As described by Ellis (1998), such income may include non-farm rural wage employment, property income (rents, etc.). Urban to rural remittances refer to income arising from within national boundaries, and international remittances arising from cross-border and overseas migration.

This study found that female headed households follow more or less similar pattern of livelihood activities. The majority of female headed households use agriculture as the main source of their household economy. Some of the households combined both agriculture and off-farm activities and the rest do not have any connection with agriculture or farming. The chapter will discuss both agriculture and off farm activities of female headed households by showing the specific role and interest of female household heads, and deterring factors. This will help to clearly put what kind of predispositions, cultural practices and ideas of change dominate specific activities of livelihood. The following part will discuss how farm activities become the dominant source of livelihood for most of female headed households.

### **6.3. Access to land**

In this study farm activity refers to income generated from own-account farming, whether on owner occupied land or on land accessed via household members. Farm income, broadly defined, includes income from livestock as well as crop production.

The majority of households in the study area depend on agriculture, largely on crop production and livestock rearing for their livelihood (Hailekiros, 2004)). However, a large proportion of households engaged in these activities do not mean that all wealth group and female household heads follow similar pathways and benefit equally from this sector. The difference in terms of access and control over important livelihood resources influences the type of livelihood activity that a household pursues. As different studies pointed out land, oxen, and other livestock, as well as labour are important rural economic livelihood resources (Ellis, 2002; Sharp, et al., 2003). Differentiation in access to these resources therefore explains the differentiations in rural society's livelihood activity (Chapman and



Hailekirose, 1999; Yared, 1999). However, different societies give different credit to these factors in terms of defining households' economic and social strata.

In Bati the most important determinant of level of farm income at the household level is the ownership of farm land which is also considered chief economic resource (BWAO: 2008). Households with large size of land have better size of production. In addition to size, the quality (ability to cultivate) matters most. The quality and the location (irrigability and vulnerability to runoff) of the farm plot are more important than mere size.

Farming activity in the study area encompassed rain-fed agricultural production (crop production and livestock rearing), fruits and vegetable production through traditional irrigation systems, backyard poultry and beekeeping activities (BWAO: 2008). The other important farming activity undertaken in Bati area is cash crop. Cash crops like peanut, butter, and *chatt* are mainly farmed by inhabitants of Bati Wārāda. When I was asking the female household heads about what they want their means of livelihood, many of them say they wanted it to be farming, but they stressed on the point that it is not sufficient to live well. Many female household heads told me that they feel secure regarding their livelihood when they have access to and control over the important livelihood assets (land, labour and farming tool).

However, as I have understood from interview with female headed households who are engaged in farming they are not satisfied with the system of distribution and amount of production. This is mainly because of customary rules, shortage of male labour and less quality of land in the Wārāda.

Under Ethiopia's Constitution (1994) article 35, No (7) women have an equal right with men to use, transfer, administer and control of land. The constitution also grants equal right to men and women in the inheritance of property; however, the fact that land is the property of the government makes land owners (mainly men) to respect appropriate land use rights. According to the customary practice of the study wārāda, sons have proper right to inherit the land of their family or they are voluntarily given some portion of the land at the time of establishing a new marriage. The assumption behind this fact, as it was seen in previous chapters, is that man is the head of the family and he has to have basic resources to enable him start administering his new life including his wife; whereas, female heads who don't own land are afraid of what to inherit to their offspring. They are also pessimistic about land redistribution and quality of land in the future. Supporting the argument of one of the female household heads regarding

how the customary land holding system is biased against female headed households, a focus group discussant said,

It has been nine years since I was promised to be given land; I have been applying now and then. Despite the promise I have been granted nothing to support my household. They claim shortage of arable land as a rational (Ff<sub>9</sub>).

Well, I don't mind if lack of arable land is the true reason for lack of distribution, but we have seen that some plots are confiscated from some farmers and given to others. They may have their own reasons for confiscating but I doubt that female household heads are seen as having equal right with other farmers (Ff<sub>10</sub>).

By the way my problem is not why we are not given a new plot; it is why the qābälé is so ignorant to see all these evil happenings on female headed households. Let alone to request a new land, we have problem of benefiting from our legal property (Ff<sub>11</sub>).

**Researcher-** Why you are not benefiting from your legal property?

When we are divorcee, the man is not willing enough to provide us our share, it really takes us long years to secure our legal right and we become victim of the process. No one cares about how we feed our children and sustain our life (Ff<sub>11</sub>).

It is not only being a divorcee, also when we are a widow, unless our in-laws are good hurted or have good amount of property, they don't care about our means of income. When we report the case to qābälé, the qābälé don't take fast action to mediate the problem, unless we get the support of elders or neighbours we cannot automatically become beneficiaries of our legal right (Ff<sub>12</sub>).

If you see my personal experience, I got share of land because of qābälé decision and started to farm by a share cropper. But I mostly found my farm get destroyed after every harvest. Don't you think that my ex husband is not involved in this activity. He has never thought that I could report the case to qābälé and get a decision. I am thankful to the qābälé, but I am still looking for their help to support me in proper use of my land (Ff<sub>13</sub>).

The above discussion tells us how the female heads see access to land. For them, despite the constitutional provision of land, the different customary rules and long process in the qäbälé make them resource poor or failed to effectively use their ownership right.

According to interview with key informants in the wäräda, when compared to other regions, allocated land size in Bati is fair. On average a household in Bati has 0.84 hectare of land, but there is a big problem in its fertility. When asked how they see the level of their farm production, female household heads explained that it is decreasing through time because of poor land fertility and lack of appropriate labour. For instance, Aziza a divorcee land owner, was angry when she was expressed how the production of her farm is affected by the quality of the land “I have 1.25 hectare of land and I cultivate sorghum and t’éf but from year to year the amount of production is really decreasing.” Aregash, a separated female household head also said;

Every year I grow sorghum and maize but the production has never been consistent, we have shortage of rain. The agriculture office advised us to use traditional compost because of the dry weather. Even though I am using traditional compost I couldn’t get any change in the production, the quantity is getting worse from time to time. It is difficult to consider farming as a sustainable means of income but it is what I used to live on. The trend is very scary, I am not sure that my children will benefit more from it in the future; that is why I am pushing them to work more on their education.

Similarly (a widow female head) also expressed her main concern about the consequence of harsh weather on the production and quality of her farm:

I have .75 hectare of land and cultivate sorghum every year. Even though I have tried different methods the production of farm is becoming very low from time to time. I have tried to enhance the production level by changing share cropper. Now it is my own son that ploughs the farm. Though there is some change, the production is not enough to cover the needs of the family. But I cannot see significant change. I think the problem is more of from the weather and quality of the land. For me this is the last option to get livelihood, but when I think of my children’s future, I don’t believe that they can make their livelihood from crop production; I always advise them to work hard in their schooling and become civil servants.

The above reflection shows how the female household heads are expressing their dissatisfaction in their cultivation but still depend on the sector as dominant source of their household livelihood. This urged us to see what local farming looks like and what are the main interests and disposition that exist in the sector.

Local farming in this context provides a means to examine the structure of farming and the position of farmers within this structure. The structure of farming in the study area comprised of the existence of land, livestock and human labour. In addition to this it calls for the acquisition of important agricultural inputs through qäbälé peasant associations and agricultural development programmes, e.g., extension services, technological transfers, etc. The position of the farmer plays an important role in securing access to farming inputs and control over its production. In the process of securing access to such important farming input and control over means of production and farm products, I observed different dependencies, support and influence of different parities including share cropper, family members, peasant associations, agricultural development workers, qäbälé officials, male headed households, and male farmers.

### **6.3.1 Dependence on Share Cropper**

In Ethiopian highland, male labour is an essential tool for the cultivation of farm (Mottram and James, 2005; Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, 2009). Particularly female headed households are in a weak position because it is culturally unacceptable for female farmers to plough with oxen (Benin et al., 2005). However, a study conducted on innovation of women farmers in Tigray shows that few female household heads in Tigray have started ploughing by ox (Fetien, A., et. al., 2001). But interview with key informants in Bati agriculture office shows that till the time this research has been conducted the office has never come across with a female who plough land in Bati.

According to interview with key informants in agriculture office, in Bati there are different forms of contractual agreement pertaining to land. The most common form of such agreements is the share cropping, locally known as ya''akkul<sup>20</sup>. The arrangement of ya''akkul include labor as an item of exchange. The transaction involved the exchange of labor for land. Customary it is a way of leasing the land to another farmer in a sharecropping arrangement. In this arrangement a female farmer (taxpaying tenant of the state) becomes the 'landlord' in relation to another farmer, a sharecropper; who is in need of supplementary land. This arrangement is advantageous to farmers with large households, and thus with access to labor, who need to supplement their land holding. Whereas for a female head of a household,

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<sup>20</sup>Refers equal share of the cultivation between land owner and share cropper.

this lease often leaves her with very little to live from. In ya''akkul the crop is shared equally between a 'landlord' and a sharecropper, a 'landlord' will have to make a living on the crop he or she gets, in this case half of the crop from their field that in many cases is less than half a hectare.

The other form of contractual agreement is leasing out the whole or part of the land for money. Though female household heads confirm the existence of the second type of contractual agreement in the area, they told to the researcher that it is not a common practice.

In share cropping arrangement land is temporarily rented to another household that has labor and oxen and provides seeds to be sown. The agreement is only for a limited period of time and the female heads has a right to choose who ever she wants to be a cropper. A sharecropper usually takes the hay in addition to the crop. A sharecropper's responsibilities include all the farming work, from ploughing the fields in the early season, deciding what to sow, sowing, seeding and harvesting, until the threshing of the crop is finished. For instance t'éf or barley will supply him with hay for his cattle, while he gets stems from sorghum. These stems are useful both as cattle fodder and as fuel for cooking. A sharecropper can ask friends and relatives to help with his temporarily extended land. Sharecroppers farm the landholder's land for an agreed period of time. If a 'landlord' is not satisfied with result, the lease will not be renewed. In many cases the female heads are not happy of the mechanism and arrangement with the share cropper but they consider that they don't have other option to continue to secure livelihood of their household from the land. According to Sara, a divorcee land owner, the arrangement done with the share cropper is more beneficial to the cropper than the owner of the land, but lack of support from father or adult son on the field is pushing female household heads to go for this kind of option. According to her, if the land is fertile she doesn't mind with the sharing arrangement, but sharing half of the production from poorly fertile and cultivated land is unacceptable. Aziza, another divorcee land owner argued that sharing half of the production is too much. In addition to that there is insecurity of land ownership. According to her there was even a time that the cropper went to the extent of claiming her land. She stated that,

After I got divorced, the uncle of my late husband (1<sup>st</sup> husband) becomes my share cropper. He has also his own land next to mine. I thought that since both land are located nearby he would follow up mine as efficiently as his. But after ploughing two years I found him trying to deceive me. I have discovered that he had moved his land towards mine and took some portion from my land. At that time I did not have formal certificate that show the size and

location of my land. But we have a traditional way of measuring the size and locating the position. After long time of quarrel, the neighbours mediate it and I got my portion back.

Female household heads also expressed their experience that even if they have land, lack of labour really affects the amount of their production. The production level, as they said, depends on many factors such as the experience of the share cropper, his honesty, the type of agreement and his closeness to the family. According to Aregash, a separated female head, previously her land was ploughed by brother-in-law and she used to get reasonable amount of cultivation but now she is not happy with the production level produced by the share cropper. She said that sometimes she gets very small amount of crop. As she puts it, “The share cropper works very carelessly on the farm and he cares only about his share. Mostly I myself do the weeding. Whatever amount he produces, he knows that he will take his share at the end. Basically the land is not fertile and when it is done by a careless person the result would be terrible.” On the other hand Negat, divorcee female head, expressed her experience as follows: “Even though I mainly hire a share cropper, there are days that I get the help of my neighbours, when I compare both I prefer the second one, but it is very difficult to get their will when needed.” Share croppers are of with different kind, she said

Most of share cropper’s don’t have their own land, may be they have only oxen for ploughing and work on land owners farm and get busy and failed to meet our demand. Their focus is more of getting whatever they can from different farms. Some are of good kind, especially when they are your relatives and have their own land they are responsible and work properly. But we do afraid any potential quarrel with them and preferred to stick with the non relatives.

The above example shows that in many cases female household heads have resentment about lack of appropriate labour for their farm. This in one way or another has affected the level of production they can get from their land. The issue of share cropper is also discussed with male interviewees. According to them, whoever is willing enough to lend his labour and take a share can get into the contractual agreement. But they stress that in many cases the females are not happy to pay for male labour. According to one of male interviewee,

It is obvious that the share cropper will take half of the crop at the end of the production. Some of us have our farm and we also works as a share cropper. When we are working for a male headed household, the man supports us in cutting and piling hay and grain stalks and

they will also share the fodder. But in the case of female headed households, unless they don't provide any help or agreed before, they are not allowed to take fodder either for their farm animals or for selling.

Another male interviewee also said,

Of course it is very difficult to meet all the needs of land owners, especially in peak time of the year we are overstretched and fail to cultivate the land owner's land in a timely manner. This spoils our relation with the owners. They mostly complain that we are not careful, but once it is our responsibility we are doing our best. I think the problem is with the land quality, lack of enough water and expectation of the female heads.

Female household heads pointed out that in the presence of share cropper, the chance of their children learning about cultivation and getting access to the farm production is very rare. As I have understood from the discussion with both male and female household heads, in Bati for small children getting into their parents' farm and enjoying the production is a regular practice. However, some female household heads pointed out that unlike children from male headed households the chance of their children benefiting from such practice is very little. The household also doesn't have a chance of getting straw and fodder, which would bring additional income. Female household heads' complaints regarding production level and lack of extra benefit from the farm were also shared by male household head interviewees. They said if a male household head enters into a share cropping arrangement he is expected to make some labour contribution such as roofing or masonry work. In this case, the male head is expected to retain the straw or fodder from his farm. Whereas if female household heads enter into a share cropping type of arrangement they will not be able to make a similar type of labour contribution and the share cropper keeps half of the crop production and any straw or fodder under his control.

According to the underlying logic of the exchange paradigm, gifts cannot be given unless the receipt of counter gifts is guaranteed. In Bourdieu's view, the gift can remain unreciprocated only when one gives to an 'ungrateful person' (1997b: 190). This kind of constrained reciprocity - "a binary give-and-take" (Hyde, 1983: 74) - emphasizes the movement inward and toward self, seeking to maintain the independence of the self. It requires that gifts be 'paid off' by giving exact value back in order to remain self-contained and independent from others. This becomes the cause of resentment among the female household heads. In this case, it seems to be that the social norm defines the role and contribution of females and males and

affects the strength of female household heads' fallback position in bargaining relations. According to Bourdieu's analysis of field, in every field actors try to win the game using the capital they have at their disposal. As such, in farming sector, this research found that the sexual division of labour that doesn't allow females in the wäräda to participate in masonry and roofing work increases their burden of paying rather than receiving from the sharecropper. Thus, the socially constructed behaviour and expectation are increasing female headed household's dependency on share cropper and reducing their capital retention capacity to gain much from the sector.

Similarly some of the female heads expressed their experience that the amount of crop produced by the share cropper cannot cover the entire household consumption and household members are forced to look for other means of livelihood. Zahara, a divorced female head, said:

My land is ploughed by a share cropper who starts working when he has finished working on his own farm. He is not a responsible person. For instance, last year my crop was destroyed by rain because he did not collect the crop on time. The level of production is also small to cover the need of my household members. I face shortage of food especially in June and July. Sometimes my young son looks after neighbours' cattle to get additional income. One of my daughters has also gone to Kombolcha to look for work and she supports the households out of it.

Aziza, a divorcee female head also pointed out how difficult it is to depend on a share cropper. She expressed her feeling that the only reason that she hired a share cropper is that she doesn't have a male child that can cultivate the farm. She also stressed the point that in addition to the cost of hiring a share cropper, her household is also facing shortage of production.

Before I got divorced my household used to have relatively enough cultivation that covered the household need, but after a share cropper started to work on our farming the production has never been enough to feed the household member. My share is very small I only get five sacks of crop yearly. To redress this sometimes I and my two divorced daughters go out to collect and sell fire wood and charcoal.



The above finding shows that female headed households enter into agreement with share croppers because of a push factor. The cultural practices that do not allow them to participate in major farming activities demand them to look for a share cropper. However, they found themselves in a disadvantaged position. Their farm land is frequently not sowed, ploughed or harvested on time, resulting in lower production. As a result, this research found that even if some female headed households do have access to land they cannot utilize it effectively and often find themselves facing food shortage.

On the other hand some of the male interviewee, who has experience on as working as share croppers mentioned that they are undertaking their expected task according to the pre-established rule and regulation. Despite their complaints, female headed households are also still dependent on the labour of share croppers. A female farmer without cattle of her own and without male labor in her house is poor in regard to two important factors of production, labor and oxen. Her only asset is land, the usufruct value of land is, however, realized through the input of male labor, which is ploughing. In this case, both parties are seen trying to become beneficiaries of the sector. Rights to land, therefore, seen, to depreciate while the gendered task of ploughing emerges as the crucial factor. This signifies a gendered hierarchal order based on the ability to plough.

This implies ownership of land by itself doesn't allow female household heads to exercise their power of negotiation and become maximum beneficiaries of their land, rather their negotiation power falls under the socially constructed norms that are driving their daily practices. Pre-established customary rules like, equal share of production, dominant role of share cropper on fodder and straw serve to influence negotiation between female headed households and share croppers. Thus share cropping arrangement can also be seen from the perspective of how a household's livelihood involves forms of exchange that are based on local ideal of 'cooperation'. Ya'akkul operate in a social context where lasting bonds with others are necessary, it is embedded in institutionalized social ties and obligations. However the fact that the sphere of exchange in terms of Ya'akkul includes labour as item of exchange, it makes the sphere gendered, because in Bati labour is strictly gendered. Men and women don't have access to these spheres of exchange on equal terms. In Ya'akku female household heads cannot increase their landholding on equal terms with men since women don't plough. Ya'akkul is a sphere of exchange that involves both men and women, but they participate on unequal terms. It is a male and a female sphere, but in the form of a hierarchy based on the fact that men plough the land of female headed households. In this regard female-

heads end up making difficult choices and give up their own individual interest to ensure the welfare of their families.

### **6.3.2. Support from Family Members**

The availability of farm tool and labour force is redressed using different options in Bati. The type of female headship and the availability of adult son, father, close friends and relationship with the neighbourhood play a crucial role in securing the needed help. Mostly female household heads whose fathers are living around them are the beneficiaries. Some female head respondents agree that if their fathers were alive their crop production would be on the safest side. According to the tradition of Bati society, fathers plough their daughters' land after finishing their own. As Mekedes, widow and owner of land, explained her father is the responsible person concerning her farm. After the death of her husband she had never hired a share cropper and her father is responsible to all farm production.

The interview with male household heads indicates that in the community fathers have moral responsibilities to help their daughters and their family. For example, one male respondent pointed out that the presence of fathers around female heads is a pride for the heads; they can serve them both as a shelter and means of livelihood. "If we have widows or divorced daughters we don't want to see them abused by a share cropper." Reflecting on this support another interviewee Mekedes, widow female head said, "I know that my father ploughs the farm as good as my late husband. Unlike the share cropper he doesn't expect a share; rather he offers his help freely. He is also serving me as a good source of information about what is going on in the community." She also mentioned that she is taking care of his cattle, help him in the field and undertakes different kinds of household chores including fetching water and taking crops to the mill house in response to his help. The female heads mentioned that in addition to getting good quality of cultivation, they wish their father to plough their farm for the sake of getting the chance to allow their children enjoy and learn in the farm. As put by Selam, a widow who has access to land but had it registered under the name of her step son, "When close family members plough the farm, children are allowed to get in and enjoy the farm, it creates the feeling that they are equal with children whose fathers are around." Hence the presence of fathers in the village gives female headed households better chance to benefit from crop production. Crop production is influenced by the existence of social support. According to Bourdieu (1997: 51), social capital provides members with the "backing of the collectively-owned capital, a 'credential' that entitles them to credit in the various senses of the word." As such the chance of being around close family members allows female headed households to have the

chance to get the needed support. The very presence of fathers around gives them the chance to get assistance.

The other support that female heads feel secure with in terms of farming is the labour support from their son. Female heads said that male children who are fourteen and above are highly motivated to provide labour to maintain security of the female headed household. Female heads that have adult son express their feeling that the presence of an adult son provides them a safe condition from incurring costs to the share cropper. For them once the son reached fourteen he is not little anymore; he can represent the family and become source of respect. For instance, Selam said, “After my son started out ploughing I have stopped to call for *Jige*, you don’t know how I used to suffer when I call people for *Jige*”.

Reflecting on the situation of her household livelihood Debitu, a widow with land but registered in the name of her son, also said that having a son to plough is better than what they lose by hiring a share cropper. Regarding the importance of male child to support the household livelihood many of the interviewee female heads pointed out that they know that their young children are not fully capable to plough like grown up farmers, but the loss in this case is better than what they lose by hiring a share cropper. However male household head interviewee argued that farming needs both physical strength and knowledge and when the female heads send their young son the loss is much both in quality and quantity. Male head interviewees take lack of adult male (male head) to teach farming to young sons in female headed households as a cause of poor farming ability by the sons. However, even though female heads recognise unproven ability of their young son, they insist on the support of their young children as better option compared to hiring a share cropper. This explains why the demand for getting livelihood from crop production forced female headed households to look for all possible means. Their effort goes to the extent of deploying their young son to start ploughing at an early age.

### **6.3.3. Participation of Female Heads in Qäbälé and Agriculture Extension Services**

In Bati there are some governmental institutions that have close contact with farmers. Institutions like peasant associations, qäbälé, agricultural development agents are some of them. Farming in the study area needs the involvement or help of such institutions to achieve the intended purposes. For instance, the peasant association is serving as a means through which different agricultural provisions are coming through and distributed to the society. The qäbälé also serves as an administrative organ to administer socio economic issues of the society. Whereas the development agents play a role in guiding, training and

following up the agricultural process of the farming society. In order to be beneficiaries of government provisions, the active involvement of the farmer and fair treatment of the institutions is required. For instance, the interview with male household heads tells us that, in many instance male farmers have close contact and involvement in the qäbälé. Information regarding, fertilizer, improved seed, safety net and other related issues are also communicated to them through qäbälé representative. Discussing about to what extent they have relation with qäbälé people, discussant five said. (Mf<sub>5</sub>).

For instance I am elected and serving in the extension programme. We have meetings and discussion session every fifteen days. They also organises us training in the qäbälé compound. By going to the qäbälé we get information about different issues including tax, fertilizer, and land distribution and so on.... We have a tradition of going to the qäbälé regularly and socialise with people who work there. They tell us what is new in the qäbälé.

Discussant six (Mf<sub>6</sub>) added,

There are many kinds of development works in the qäbälé organised under the extension programme and most of the men are part of that, mainly we work on land management and feeder road construction. Participation in different development works at the qäbälé enables us to develop our community and also to get remuneration, if any. Sometimes they distribute oil and wheat flour for the service we deliver. If we don't visit the qäbälé frequently and participate in some of the activities we cannot be beneficiaries of such kind of provisions.

Discussant seven also added that, (Mf<sub>7</sub>)

The development agents are young and cooperative people; they mostly come directly to our farm and teach us new technology. But there are other issues beyond land management, for instance in order to be beneficiates of safety net and saving and credit we have to follow information and fulfil the requirement. For this we should be somehow closer to the qäbälé. Especially when it is not pick time of the season we visit the qäbälé regularly.

However, as has been seen in this study the involvement of female heads in peasant associations and qäbälé activities is very limited. As the interview with key informants in the qäbälé shows female heads are allowed to participate in all structure of the qäbälé. Even though there are some female heads who are actively participating in the qäbälé, majority of them do allocate very limited time for qäbälé and peasant associations. Throughout the field research, I as a researcher have also observed that it is very few females

that are seen visiting the qäbälé for different purposes. They don't have the tradition to visit the qäbälé and related offices unless there are forcing reasons. They visit the qäbälé when they only call for conference or other activity, otherwise going to the qäbälé is not their regular practice.

The interview with Ayelech a widow female head shows that, though some of the female heads have the interest to participate in qäbälé activities and became beneficiaries of important provisions, she has several problems that hinder her initiation and active involvement. She is member of peasant association and she wanted to be active member of qäbälé. But, she couldn't allocate enough time because she is the main decision maker of her household and busy of undertaking both household and farm activity. She argued that,

My two sons are working on the farm. Practically we are working together; I do the weeding and support them in piling the hay. I also prepare clay works every night and sell them every week. All this take my time and I couldn't be active member of the peasant association and never been beneficiary of agricultural technology.

The interview with Fetle, one of the actively participant of women association in the qäbälé shows the positive role that availability of support in the house and non presence of small childer play in providing househohld heads enough time to participate in productive activity outside home.

My son ploughs and works on my farm, I also support him in the farm and do the vegetable growing activity. I don't have small children to take care in the house. My divorcee daughter who is living with me helps me some of the household chores, this give me time to work in the qäbälé. Currently I am the chair person of the women organization in my qäbälé. We have meetings with the women's affairs office monthly. When there is any new information I disseminate to the women. We also contribute and deposit monthly amount of two birr. But, most of the women's don't want to participate. They say they don't know why they are raising the money and don't have time to come to the qäbälé. But I insist them at least to come and participate in the meetings.

The research also found that there are female heads who preferred or associate participating in qäbälé and peasant association as the task of male and insist on limiting themselves in the household. For instance, Berhane, a widow female head, who passed the ownership of her land to her son, said that she has already

transferred her land to him and she is not expected to participate in qäbälé activities, but she expects her son to visit the qäbälé and get up-to-date information and participate actively.

The study has also found that there is negative perception with regard to female farmers' capacity among the society and this affected female household heads participation in different development and agricultural structures. When asked how they see female heads and farm activities, male household heads pointed out that female household heads are helpless and need someone to help them in the farm, otherwise they don't believe that they have a capacity to participate in different positions in the qäbälé. For instance, one male household head said,

If females come to the qäbälé they cannot do anything except attending a meeting; they are shy to speak in front of many people and thus they cannot lead farm works. As far as information regarding agricultural extension services and some developmental works is concerned, we believe that it would be good if those who are helping them (share croppers, their fathers, adult sons, etc.) can participate and get it, otherwise disseminating the information just to the female household heads is useless.

In this regard there is a different disposition among male heads and some female heads regarding the ability of female farmers to participate in qäbälé and peasant association. For the male household heads since female heads don't work on main agricultural activity, their participation is insignificant. But for some of the female household heads, their willingness is put in the shade because of time constrains, perceptions and lack of immediate outcome. As discussed in chapter one crop production is seen as the main responsibility of men and they are suppose to follow and implement information regarding new technologies and any issue related to production. In this case we can see the association of feel for the game (crop production and participation in qäbälé and peasant association) only to male and it influences female heads capacity to exert their maximum effort; rather they were seen recognizing men (fathers and sons) as authoritative entity for the sector.

According to this study, minimal participation of female household heads in different development institutions is also related to lower interest on the part of male farmers to recognize females' capacity. Bourdieu (1993, 86) pointed out that where habitus and field fit, power relations are normalized and seem unremarkable and natural. As such, there is some kind of position difference between the men who are actively participate in qäbälé and extension services and the female household heads who want to be at

least beneficiaries of the system. The embodied habitus in this sense coupled with the feel for the game allows the different parties to naturalize the power difference and occupy different position in the sector. The reason with regard to such practice will be elaborated more in the discussion of farming

## **6.4. Farming**

In discussing farming in Bati I used two interlinked concepts. The first one is the society approach to understand farming. This is related to the kind of perception the society has about farming and how they express farming among other livelihood activities. It includes the attachment and the dependency that the society has with farming. Secondly, the taken for granted practice that makes key activities of farming as the practice of male farmers only. In discussing this issue, the study will look at specific activities which are considered male only activities and the reasons behind this association and how such practices developed as habitus that prohibit female farmers from being main beneficiaries of agriculture.

### **6.4.1. Approaches to Farming**

As has been said in chapter five, in Bati farming is considered as the best option for the livelihood security of the household. Some female household heads pointed out that they have never thought of life in Bati without farming, Aregash, a separated female head and owner of land, said,

As a female I have always been dreaming to get married to land owner that can harvest like my father, even now I cannot see better option than farming. It contributes a lot in covering household consumption and its sells also bring good income. What matters is whether you have appropriate labour and farm tools.

Even though majority of households have limited hectare of land to cultivate, they expressed their attachment to the land as a long lasting practice. Expressing her close attachment to the land Zebiba, a widow and owner of land, said “My parents used to earn their living from farming. My late husband was also a farmer. Now I have small size of land. I know that it is still vulnerable to further distribution among family members. But I don’t see that I can better rely on other means of income than farming.” Regarding such perception, male key informants in the wäräda office also told me that the strong attachment to farming emanated from long years of experience and marketing opportunity of farm products.

The interview with female heads shows that, despite some opportunities in cattle rearing and off farm activities, there is strong association with crop production. Berhane, a widow with .75 hectare of land, said “I think that a real farmer is the one that has land to grow crops, otherwise it is very difficult to rely only on animal fattening.” Her idea is also shared by Mekedes, a widow land owner: “I have never dreamed of living without access to land, I don’t want my children to get ashamed of lack of family land for crop production. I wish to see my children enjoy and play well in their father’s farm”. Enat who is a landless household head also expressed her position that she always felt sorry for her children for not having access to land to grow crop and enjoy the residue like other children. Such expressions about farming by the female heads reflect how the attitude towards farming and crop production has grown gradually for long years and influenced their thinking and position. This example shows the continuing significance of attachment to a specific practice in present-day livelihoods and the fact that female headed households’ livelihoods are intimately connected with this practice. The female heads are aware that farming is their traditional means of survival and it would be difficult to break away from it. According to Bourdieu (1993), habitus is social and individual, in that it reflects and reinforces social classifications and is a reflection of an individual’s lived experience. Furthermore, an individual’s habitus frames the value and use of the various forms of capital to which they have access (Skeggs, 1997: 9). For female household heads, therefore, their way of thinking related to farming influences their association with the different form of capital. As such, land and working on farming is becoming both economic and symbolic capital for these household heads.

#### **6.4.2. Farming: as the Practice of Male Farmer only**

Farming includes ploughing, sowing, threshing, collecting and selling. Among all these, ploughing, sowing, and selling the crop are considered very hard tasks in Bati. Ploughing needs the availability of oxen and *maresha* that need physical strength to plough properly. (See Chapter two, page 12). Both female and male household head interviewees asserted that men unlike female are physically fit to operate the traditional ploughing system. It is also believed by female interviewees that farming needs long years of experience which most men learned from their fathers. Berhane said, “I cannot think that women can operate a *maresha* like men and I have had no interest of practicing ploughing.” Similarly some female heads pointed out that they have never tried to get oxen and *maresha* for ploughing, because they have neither a father nor adult son to help them. As noted by Berhane she has never thought of operating the



*maresha* herself because she has never seen any woman doing men's task and it is also physically difficult to be operated by a female.

During the focus group discussion with male farmers, some of the discussants stressed the fact that ploughing has never been the task of women and they think it should continue as it is. As put by one of the participants (Mf<sub>1</sub>), "If women start to plough, what then would men do? You mean we have to stop eating?" Arguing on the same issue another participant said that (Mf<sub>2</sub>) "ploughing is very respected activity which needs experience, patience and strength, and I don't believe that females have such character." Similarly, another participant in the same group (Mf<sub>3</sub>) said, "I think Allah has allowed only men to plough, I suspect the repeated drought and poverty that we are witnessing these days is the result of this cursed idea of allowing females to plough." During the interview with wives in male headed households, they also expressed their understanding that ploughing and sowing are exclusively left for men. Also Fetle, a female head, pointed out that, "Even if females are participating in farming we are not confident to call them farmers, after all ploughing and sowing are men's tasks. Of course a female may help in facilitating the situation, otherwise if we don't sow or plough how can we be considered farmers?" As understood from the different interviews, both ploughing and sowing need experience and the interviewees associated the expertise only with male farmers. For instance some of the female interviewees pointed out that different crop types have different system of sowing and men are better equipped with the systems. Debritu, a widow and older female head said "Let alone the women men themselves take time to learn how to sow different crops. Do you think that maize and *t'éf* follow the same system?" This idea was further supported by the common saying (Gebere kalzeraw abebbakelum ayamrem), if a farmer (a male) doesn't sow, the farm may not be productive. In this case sowing is seen as traditional work, not because it is as heavy as ploughing but because it needs skill. This represents how farming is strongly associated with men and female farming is unrecognized and unexpected.

### **6.4.3. Men farmis Different from Female Farm**

Crop production, according to this research, needs expertise of individuals who fulfil the important requirement of farming, which female's are not recognised to have it. In this regard, the practice of farming that generates and shapes action throughout the process, influences the position of actors in the farming field. According to Bourdieu (1977: 83) the habitus is product of individual and collective practices; practices which themselves are constitutive of the dispositions of the habitus. Each field has its own logic and it is the field which both informs and sets certain limits on practice. In most parts Bourdieu

sees compatibility of the field and habitus. As such, compatibility helps to ensure the validity of institutions. In crop production, both male and female farmers (agents) are not simply the benign carriers of the rules and norms of particular fields. They are also means for ensuring the practice of farming. This is because the actions of both male and female farmers also shape the habitus of individual who are practicing the task and hence the sector itself. Thus, distinct ‘games’ are played within the farming fields. For example, male farmers at different levels are seen demonstrating their farming ability which is considered and recognized to be of valuable within this field of action. Whereas, female farmers who are participating in farming, except ploughing and sowing are recognised by the community as transferring the main activity for male labour, which make them to associate farming mainly with male. Such recognition therefore put female’s competence and fit for the work under question. In so doing male and female farmers both shape the dispositions and perceptions in farming and the forms of action that are constitutive of who is the main actor in farming.

#### **6.4.4. Ox and Cattle Fattening**

In Bati one of the most important determinants of wealth at the household level is the ownership of oxen (Bati Wārāda agriculture office, 2008). Ownership of other livestock such as cows, sheep, goats and pack animals especially camels are also important factors for wealth stratification; however, despite its importance the availability of oxen within each interviewed female headed household in the study wārāda is low. According to interview with key informant in Bati wārāda office, in Bati ox ownership is not much and female headed households are in a more disadvantaged position than male headed households. A study carried out in Central Ethiopia also shows that the average number of cattle owned by male-and female-headed households is 6.4 and 4.9, respectively (Etenesh, 1999).

This study found that out of the total number of interviewed female headed households only three of them have got one ox, two of them have got two oxen, and only four of them are engaged in cattle fattening. In contrast seven of the ten interviewed male household heads owned oxen. Among this, two of them have only one ox whereas; five of them do have a pair of ox. A number of explanations are given for this. As pointed out by the female heads they have only one or no ox because they are perceived at best as ‘weak farmers’ and often as ‘non-farmers’ by the society. On the other hand, management and security issues are found to be other factors that discourage female headed households from working on livestock. As pointed out by the female heads, taking care of oxen is a difficult job. The ox has to have a safe shade and someone to look after it. The females explained that preparing the needed facilities for the oxen is very

tiresome and costly. An adult son is also needed to take the ox for grazing to wet lands during summer time. As the experience of Aziza shows, her two oxen died because of drought. As she explained this is because she doesn't have a son to take care of them. If she would have had an adult male member in the household he could have taken them to the grass land. Similarly Sara who does not have a son to look after the ox pointed out that unless female heads have got an adult son to look after the oxen, they should look for someone to take care of them. This process as she mentioned is costly and demanding. Hiring someone who looks after the oxen requires her to pay in kind or in other terms. This implies that even though female headed households have the capacity to buy an ox, such administrative and security factors discourage them from investing on oxen.

However, even though female heads had security and administration problem with regard to ox management, they also expressed their experience that lack of oxen is becoming obstacle to benefit well from their land and crop production. In the wäräda lack of oxen can be redressed by some options, basically those households who do have one ox use the system of pairing (*mekenajo*) or renting out their ox for ploughing. They pair out their ox with another household and use the oxen interchangeably. Pairing system is one of the safest systems to get the help of others in Bati. The females that have at least one ox feel a little bit secure than those who don't have any. There are cases that they may pair out with other female heads who has someone to plough for them or sometimes with a male head. The other system is hiring out only an ox for ploughing. This is mostly done by female heads who have someone that can help them in ploughing, but do have no ox to plough by. In this case they are expected to pay either in cash or in kind for the rent of oxen. However, female heads said this is not a usual practice. The usual practice for female headed households who don't have oxen and a person to help them in ploughing is either to lease out the land or hire a share cropper. For instance expressing her experience Negat said,

I do have half a hectare of land. I have a grown up son but I do have no ox to plough my land. I always beg for oxen and villagers labour for ploughing my land. I can say that my life is full of begging labour and farming tools. No one would lend me his labour and property for free; they want to get something in exchange of their labour and material. Most of the time I give some amount of grain in return for ox renting. Otherwise I hire a share cropper and share the production equally. All this makes my life difficult.

The association of oxen with the presence of male both for farming and managing has also been identified in this study as a cause for females to be denied of their share from their marriage. In this regard, Besrat said,

When my in-laws chased me out from my home, they were not ready to give me both my land and livestock. Even though I managed to get my land with the help of qābälé no one wanted to give attention to the oxen, rather they said that “who else is going to take care of them in the absence of a grown up son in the household”, of course my eldest son was only 11 by then and I accepted their decision.

Similarly some female heads noted that they have never felt the need to work on ox raising in the absence of male labour to support them; however, they shared their experience that when their sons grow they feel a little bit more comfortable of having oxen in their house and work on ox fattening. In this regard salam said,

After the death of my husband I was suffering much in dealing with a share cropper. I did not have oxen nor grown up sons. However, two years ago I decided to sell my cows and buy two oxen for ploughing. Now my eldest son is 17 years old and he is capable enough to plough. Now the problem is solved, my son ploughs for the household. We are also leasing the oxen for other households. We are able to cover our consumption from the income. I have also a plan to buy another ox.

The above finding shows how the presence of ox can serve as both a means of securing and also diversifying livelihood of female headed households. It can help them in securing their livelihood in terms of means of farming. It can also diversify their livelihood either by generating income through renting or selling. However, as has been show in most cases the inability to manage and lack of male labour to work on it discouraged most of the female household heads to work on ox raising. This implies that ox raising and management has its own logic and sets certain limits on practice. The limits of the field in one way or another are suppose to durably embedded in the dispositions of agents operating within the field (Bourdieu, 1977). For instance, according to the experience of female headed households, unless there is no adult male labour the household is considered unfit to work with ox. In turn, we find limited female headed household working on ox fattening. For the most part, they are not be aware of the role of their actions in terms of the sector in which they manage. According to Bourdieu this is because practice–

competencies, know-how, dispositions and perceptions are not fully consciously organized. They operate below the level of consciousness and language through a 'feel for the game'. (Bourdieu, 1977:80) That is, social practice often works through an unconscious practical mastery. Similarly, the understanding of ox management among the females in this study has developed them a sense of inability and weak position for the required activity. That is, social practice often works through an unconscious practical mastery. As Williams has put it "most of us, most of the time take ourselves and the social world around us for granted, we don't think about what we do because, quite simply, we don't have to" (Williams, 1995:581). The feel for the game is therefore a pre reflexive, non cognitive form of knowledge which often cannot be explicitly articulated. In addition to this the tradition in the society should be looked as one of the factors to alliterate the actor from feel for the game.

Many female household heads said cattle especially, goat and cow raising is the best option for diversifying their livelihood. They think that unlike having ox, working on goat fattening is easy to manage. Female household heads with a good number of cattle pointed out that they have enough money to buy oxen, but prefer to concentrate on cattle fattening than buying oxen. For Ayelech and Lubaba fattening of cattle like goat is fast moving and not labour intensive and hard unlike ox management. However, they mentioned that cattle fattening also requires the availability of children's labour to look after them and take care of their fodder and grazing land. Interview with male key informants in agriculture office also identified that grazing and browsing on natural pastures is the main source of food for cattle in the wäräda. However, the land available for natural grazing and browsing in Bati wäräda is rapidly decreasing due to the increasing human population and the demand for crop land.

Some of the female heads mentioned that the availability of credit facility also helped them to start cattle fattening. For instance, Lubaba pointed out that she is beneficiary of a credit union and it helped her to start cattle fattening.

I can say that I am a good farmer and risk taker. My husband did not have a land but I got farm and grazing land from my parents. Initially I bought a cow, sheep and goat from the money that I got from credit. The number of my cattle is increasing from time to time. Fortunately, my grazing land is close to my house and it doesn't take me long hours to take them for grazing. I go to Bati market weekly to buy fodder. The availability of cattle is providing me with additional means of income and it boosts my confidence regarding my livelihood.

This implies that even though female household heads know that lack of oxen affects their farming process and production, they prefer to locate their money on other farm animals. For them it is easy to manage and work on cattle fattening. In this regard, the female themselves express their interest to work on in this sector. Perhaps Bourdieu had difficulty explaining women's capital preferences and accumulating abilities because, despite recognizing that women play a significant role in the processes of the gendered accumulation of capital, he rarely considered women as subjects with capital-accumulating strategies. It is important to bear in mind, however, that some female heads managed to work and benefit from cattle raising and creating new financial opportunities for their households. But, the reasons people give for their embodied and reflexive practices would be of little concern to Bourdieu. For him, the actors' own explanations of their practices tend to be an illusion; the true explanation of behavior exists in the habitus. McCall (1992) argues that Bourdieu "stops short of realizing the potential of gendered dispositions because he considers female gender status imbued only with uncontested symbolic violence" (p. 845).

With regard to institutional support for female heads, key informant interviewees from small and micro finance office pointed out that their project has developed mechanism to give some amount of money that enables the beneficiaries to start up the business, but it is very few of them that are using the scheme. Ayelech, a widow female head said that she has already two oxen, two cows and two goats. She knows that if she gets some amount of money she can increase the number of her cows and goat but fear of failure to pay back the money restrained her from being beneficiary of the scheme.

As mentioned by key informant from small and micro finance enterprise, female household heads have good reputation in repaying the loan than females in male headed households. But female heads hesitate much to take the loan initially. As they explained, female household heads have better autonomy in their house compared to females in male headed households and it gives them a chance to work well on the money and repay their debt. On the other hand, the key informants mentioned that such household heads have more burden unlike the females in male headed households and there are times when they may use the money for household consumptions and failed to start or expand the cattle fattening activity. Such experience, according to the key informants discouraged some of the female heads to get the credit and work on other farm activities.

The finding also shows that in addition to cattle fattening some of the female household heads are engaged in poultry production. When I was asking the female heads to describe their farm activity none of them

would consider poultry production as something worth mentioning. As I have understood from the female interviewees raising a chicken and selling of chicken and chicken products is a common practice for most of the households. There is also a tendency of considering the activity as exclusively women's activity. For instance when I had my first interview with a male head and asked him about the number of chicken he had said, "Please shut your mouth, how would I know about chicken". Similarly another male household head pointed out that "We men totally left poultry production to the females, because it is easy to manage and the return is not that significant to be proud of. Let alone the female, small children can also take care of the activity." Concerning this, female heads pointed out that it is common to find some chicken in every house because chickens don't need serious follow up like the other animals. Berhane said,

When I was married my husband had never asked me about chickens and income from them. I doubt he has any idea about how many hens we have had in the house. Now I am getting a little bit older and started to spend most of my time at home but I have some chickens to raise. I feed them anything that I get from my farm; I sell eggs every 15 days. My daughter -in -law takes it to the market. I mainly order her to buy me hair food and coffee from the sale.

Similarly Debitu pointed out that in Bati income from chicken is totally left to the women and they can use it to fill any household gap.

Poultry is not taken like a business in Bati, but it is a tradition to have some number of chickens in the backyard. No one cares about their food. We give them whatever we get. They can easily grab their food from the backyard. Females have full responsibility and right to take care and benefit from them. For instance I always buy my coffee and salt from the sale of chicken and egg. When it is a holiday the price [for chicken and egg] is getting expensive and I get more money.

According to the experience of the female household heads they really manage to cover some of their costs from the sale of cattle, hen and egg. They feel comfortable and content undertaking such practice. This shows that this sector gives better opportunity to females to participate and become beneficiaries of the activity. This opportunity therefore creates a chance for the female heads to manage to work on it as a means of diversifying their livelihood.

The other important farming activity undertaken in Bati area is cash crop production. Cash crops like peanut and *chatt* are mainly farmed by inhabitants of Bati Wārāda. As some female heads explained they are doing well with farm on peanut. They said that cash crop is good source of income to diversify their source of livelihood. They grow such crops in their backyard, and they don't need special male labour to grow it, what it needs according to them is intense follow up. Key informants in agriculture office also pointed out that one of the focuses of extension programme is on vegetable growing and it found female households head as being good participant. For instance one of female head, Fetle mentioned that in addition to participate in her farm, she is now working on vegetable growing. She said,

The extension programme allowed us to participate and work on different activities, for instance I am trained on how to work on vegetable growing and some cash crops like peanut. I am working on my backyard the whole day and manage to get good amount of production. It serves both for consumption and means of getting additional money. It is very challenging and tiresome but it helps me as an additional source of income beyond the crop production.

Some of the interviewed female heads also mentioned that they have started to participate in the sector. As it was also expressed by Ayelech, a widow female head, the very nature of being female head decreases her social position in the society; however, she doesn't want to see her household suffer from shortage of income, as such she is working hard in cooperation with her children in both crop production and animal raising.

I don't have many friends to spend with; I prefer to spend all my time in my backyard with my female and male children. Otherwise it becomes difficult to feed my household from crop production only. I grow papaya and peanut, my children fetch me water and follow up the production. All the household members participate fairly on the work. We work from dawn to dusk to get good production.

This implies that participation in different forms of farm activity other than crop production is given great recognition and acceptance by female headed households. Cattle fattening, poultry and vegetable growing doesn't require special labour of males like crop production and ox fattening. The female household heads have faced no restriction on investing their labour and time on this activity. As such the provision of credit facilities also indicates that there is greater chance for such households to diversify their livelihood activity. However, as I have observed during field work, it is those female heads with access to land who



are more motivated to diversify their income by working on cattle raising and backyard vegetable growing. Otherwise, as discussed in the next section, those without access to land make their livelihood exclusively from non-farm activities. The very nature of giving special focus to male labour still put female household heads in a disadvantaged position to secure their means of livelihood. This in one way or another is related to the long years of experience and dispositions the society lived in. According to Bourdieu's term it is habitus, that habitus 'is history turned into nature' (Bourdieu, 1977, 78). In this case the habitus is an individually operationalised set of expectations and understandings based on the collection of experiences a given individual encounters that shape his or her sense of the 'rules of the game.' It is what regulates interactions within a field in an observable, 'objective' manner, affecting not only the individual but also all those who interact with that individual. In this regard we can see that the field of farming is dominated by habituated dispositions that give more value to farming activities that are dominated by male farmers. The study subjects are still set their mind on getting farm land. They give strong place for ownership of land and crop production. However, the transposable character of habitus also gives rise to the development of detraditionalised ideas that also enable female farmers to shift to female friendly fields of activities to some extent.

## **6. 5. Non-Farm Activity**

Non-farm activities take place outside the agricultural sector, and include activities like handicraft, petty trade, transport, and assorted non-farm activities (collection of fuel wood, collection of water for payment, production and sale of charcoal).

As understood from the study there is the tendency of engaging in non-farm activity when the household has no income from farming (crop production). The main activity of female heads who don't have access to land rests on the sale of fuel wood and charcoal and working as a daily labourer and making beverage. Expressing that she is undertaking the activity because she doesn't have other means of livelihood, Enat a widow who doesn't have access to land, said "Before the death of my husband we did not own land, he was supporting the household through daily labour. After he passed away I have started to support my household by selling fire wood and charcoal. Of course my daughter helps me in collecting firewood, but I prefer her to concentrate more on her education." Similarly Bekelu, a divorcee and landless household head, said,

It has been a year since I have started to live by selling fire wood and charcoal, I do not have any interest to continue selling of charcoal, it is very tiresome and not profitable, but for the time being I do have no other option. I regret that I am not educated to work in the formal sector. I also don't want to see my children to follow my foot path. I am always praying and pushing them to be good students and get hired in government organizations.

Entry into off farm activities like selling fire wood and charcoal is based largely on location, and lack of other means of survival. Female heads who are engaged in selling fire wood and charcoal said that even though it serves them as a means of their household livelihood, the activity is very challenging and tiresome. From my observation the majority of men who are engaged in the same work have camel or donkey to carry it to the market, but women carry charcoal and wood on their back. It prohibits them from collecting and selling good amount at one time, which makes their life difficult. For instance Mulat, a divorcee female head put her experience as,

After I got divorced, I lost my land and I made my living by selling fire wood and charcoal. I have to walk everyday about forty minute to one hour to collect the fire wood and prepare the charcoal. I sell them once in a week in a Bati market. Bati market is far, it might take minimum of two hours walk from the village, carrying wood and walking all this distance is tiresome and painful. I wish I hire a camel and load it. But the money I got from this business is too small to hire a camel.

Bekelu, a divorcee female head also share her experience that her ex husband used to hire a camel and sell charcoal in Bati and sometimes he went to Djibouti and brought money to cover their expenses. After they got divorced she is supporting her household only by selling charcoal. She get very little because the market is too far and she cannot carry much on her back. It is also very expensive for her to hire a camel like they used to do before.

In addition to being challenging, the female household heads also said that this activity is not recognized in the community as a real work. Expressing the practice that they face because they are engaging in this activity Enat, a landless household head, said "I am engaged in this activity because I have no other means of living, I am from another village and I don't have family members to help me get land from the government, but my neighbours call me "*enchetlekami*" (wood collector), which has a negative

connotation.” Adding on this point Alem who has land but also works on fire wood and charcoal collection said,

I don't have formal education or skill to be engaged in. I am engaged in collecting fire wood and charcoal to diversify my livelihood. The amount of production from my land is very small, but my neighbours are not happy of what I am doing, they always try to advise me to stop collecting wood. In our community farming is the only respected and income generating activity but I know why I am engaged in wood collecting, my income from farm is very small.

The above practice explains that despite the long standing practice that land is essential means of livelihood in rural areas, non-farm activity is taken as a way of survival, active reaction out of desperation (poverty, lack of assets, vulnerability, and disaster).

In addition to selling fire wood and charcoal, some female household heads are engaged in handicrafts. The most common types of handicraft are weaving and pottery. The major part of the handicraft product is sold locally to fellow villagers or at local markets, and few craftsmen market their products through traders. Ziad, a divorcee female head who has no land, said “My household doesn't have any land to get crop production, in order to feed my children I prepare and sell pottery product, one of my son also looks after neighbours' cattle and earns income, I have no formal education on pottery, I just inherited it from my mother.” Ayelech, who is also engaged in pottery, explained that her knowledge of pot making enables her to get additional income for her household. She said she didn't have formal education that enables her to earn money, but she decided to prepare pots every night and take them to market twice a week. Pot making in the area is basically the work of females, but as identified by some of the female household heads it is considered as one of the activity among some of income generating activities. Those people who are engaged in pottery are alienated in the society. They are considered as originally from minority ethnic groups descended from north eastern Ethiopia. As much as possible people try to restrict themselves not to have connection with this group. When expressing her experience Ayelech, who is engaged in pot making as a side business, mentioned that her neighbours are not interested to drink coffee with her and to visit her home, nowadays all her friendship is limited to her children. She said, “The community believes that pottery makers are limited to specific ethnic group and they shouldn't be mixed with the other community. I think this is outdated! This is the 'job' I inherited from my parents. I am proud of what I am doing.”

Interview with female household heads also made clear that though some of female heads have the skill they resist to engage in pottery making activity. Interview undertaken with key informants in small and micro finance office also makes clear that in their income generation project, they cannot get as many participants of pottery makers as in other activities. They failed to get the confidence of the participants in pottery making, but female heads show interest to be engaged in food and beverage. Beverage preparation is mostly practiced by women who don't have access to land. They engage in preparing alcoholic beverages such as *tela* (traditional beer). However, they pointed out that even though they are used to this work, it cannot be taken as sustainable means of earning income. It is seen by women to be a traditional practice within the family rather than as a 'business' per se, despite its income generating capacity. Mulat, a divorcee landless household head, said "I used to prepare *Korefe* (traditional non alcoholic drink) and sell it in my house; my daughter helped me in labour. Of course the income from it is good, but these days the cost I incur is much compared to the profit. I am thinking of increasing the price but I am also afraid that I may lose my customers." Regarding how selling of beverage is not becoming as profitable as they think, Aregash, who has access to land but diversify her livelihood by engaging in selling *tela* and opening a mini market said, "Nowadays the males prefer to drink *Areki* (traditional alcoholic drink) in *chat terra*, otherwise they prefer to go to Bati town for other drinks. The number of visitors is decreasing, but at least the income helps me to cover some expenses." She said the business is very challenging. Nevertheless, according to her, most of the female heads prefer to exert much effort to get their livelihood or diversify their income sources.

The above finding therefore explains that female household heads have good motivation to work on non-farm activities. They can experience greater self-esteem, more personal freedom and flexibility to participate in income generating activities and achieving gradual success. However, the long standing practice that associates rural livelihood mainly with crop farming have seen still pulling the female heads behind to let themselves open for new way of livelihood. Their experience also demonstrates that despite their attempt to diversify their livelihood activities the attitude of the society towards the different kind of activities, and traditional way of approaching new concepts have influenced their capacity and benefit from the sector.

## 6.6. Support From Abroad

Female headed households diversify their livelihood through support from migrated household members. Here migration refers to a situation where one or more household members leave the area for unknown period, and in so doing they are able to make financial and different contributions to their household wellbeing. A regular flow of financial capital is crucial for livelihood security. Financial capital is probably the most 'versatile', but the 'least available', asset for poor rural communities (DFID, 1999). Regular flow of money, and the availability and accessibility of other financial resources, such as remittances and local credit facilities are important in creating an economically strong environment that can enable communities to strengthen their adaptability to livelihood changes (Scoones, 1998; Ellis, 2000). As mentioned in chapter three, migrations for the sake of looking for labour in nearby towns and in the Middle East is a common practice in Bati. Key informants in the wäräda office also argued that both male and female members of the household in Bati migrate either temporarily or permanently.

Even though there is no clear information about what kind of activities migrants undertake abroad, key informants in the Wäräda Liaison Office and Sheria Court said that male migrants work as daily labourers, whereas females are hired as house maids. According to them the majority of households in Bati get regular remittance from migrated household members. They point out that it is very difficult to find a household that has not at least one member in labour migration. This study also found that even though responsibilities related to household chores don't allow most women to migrate, the limited livelihood opportunities in their community and the locational advantages push at least one of their household members to migrate to nearby Arab countries. In most cases husbands take the highest number to go and work abroad than the wives. One of the male head interviewee argued that many of his relatives including his daughter are living in Jeddah. He has also gone there two times and managed to get good amount of money to support his household members. He sent his daughter to Saudi Arabia because she couldn't establish marriage in Bati. As he said, "if a girl turns 19 before marriage she cannot get good acceptance in the society and she starts to look for means to move away from the town." Another male head interviewee also said that he went to Djibouti four years ago and stayed there for two years. He managed to buy additional ox and many farm animals from the money he collect there. Like the men, women also migrate in search of domestic work. However, migration is very challenging for female household heads. Their children or deserted female's without children have better chance of migrating than the female household heads. Explaining this practice, key informants in the wäräda women's affair office said

nursing activity and headship responsibility of female heads create difficulty to look for work abroad. In this regard, Bekelu, a divorcee female head said both her ex-husband and she used to live in Djibouti and come to Bati to establish marriage. After they got divorced, her husband went back to Djibouti leaving all the children with her. She is now thinking of going back there but she doesn't know whom to leave her three children. According to her the children are too young to live by themselves. In this regard migration of the female head could be a means to support livelihood of the household, but small children who really need the support of their mother are influencing the change of female household head migration.

Even though the chance of transient migration seems very limited for female household heads, it is found that they have the chance of benefiting from remittance through household members. However, when I was undertaking personal interview with the female heads some of them did not want to mention remittance as a source of their livelihood diversification. As understood from both female and male head interviewees and also explained by key informant in the Sheria Court and Wārāda Office, most parents don't know exactly what kind of activities their children's are engaged in abroad, and this makes them hesitant to speak openly about their children's migration and source of remittance. Regarding this practice Debitu, whose daughters are in Jeddah, said that she doesn't have any idea of what her two daughters are exactly doing there. She said that she gets clothes and money from them. But she is praying to Allah to bring them back to her. As she puts it, "People say different thing about what female migrants are doing abroad. My daughters told me that they are working as housemaid servants and they send money out of that. However I don't feel comfortable when I think of their way of living." Contrary to this, some female household heads expressed their feeling that even though they are not sure of what kind of situation their children will face they prefer to send them to Arab countries and earn some income. Commenting on this idea Ziad, a divorcee and landless household head, said "I know how much I am suffering from being a divorcee and landless, I don't have anyone to support me, but I don't want my children to face the same experience like me, I am always trying my best to make them good students, otherwise I prefer to send them to Jeddah when they grow." Similarly Fetle who has two daughters in Jeddah said that life in Bati is becoming expensive and availability of land cannot guarantee their future life and she would like her children to get income through employment outside the county. She said,

Life in our area is becoming costly, even if we have land; it is very small and with low productivity. The only future my daughters have had in Bati was to get married. I experienced how much it is difficult to live being economically dependent. That is why I

have pushed them to look for employment outside the country. Now they have started to send money for me. I am also advising them to save their money.

Though remittance from abroad is one of the means to diversify livelihood, this study found that there are two ways of looking at households who have children living abroad. On the one hand, the society is not sure what kind of activity that young females are engaged in. Female heads mention that, there is a rumour that they might work there as prostitutes. This creates a feeling of shame on the parents in home country. Taking this into consideration, as mentioned earlier, some female heads were trying to keep silent about daughters living abroad and remittance from them. On the other hand, the remittance from outside is bringing visible financial change in some households and attracted others' eyes. Such households become financially stable and manage to save money. Regarding this Aregash and Zebiba, who have children living abroad, said that they are getting better respect among their friends because they are economically well and have a mini market in their compound. As Aregash argued, "After my son has migrated he started to send money and I manage to save it and open a mini market in the village. I can say that I am benefiting well from it. It will also serve him as a source of income when he comes back to his country." Expressing her experience Fre, a divorcee female head, said, "When I am in need of money, I prefer to borrow from those households who have children abroad; I guess they are better-off than other households and we mainly call them *habtam Enat*." (Wealthy mothers)." As expressed by the female heads, such difference due to remittance has brought income difference and social gap among them. As such female heads with significant remittance have been able to get implicit respect, expressed in the form of getting borrowers who recognised their economic status. Migration of their children in this case has given a chance to some female household heads to get economic benefit which has also paved the way for getting symbolic capital.

Remittance as a source of better recognition and status among the society can be explained Bourdieu's social change theory. For Bourdieu social changes understood to be potentially at issue when there is discord between the previously routine adjustment of subjective and objective structures: a difference between the feel for the game and the game itself. Even though Bourdieu sees compatibility between habitus and field, this unity is, however, neither fixed nor inevitable; the habitus for example has a mobility character which may disrupt the routine adjustment of subjective and objective structures. The habitus that character female heads as poor in both economic and social terms has been seen changing

while the economic status of some of the female heads changes because of remittance. In addition, changes in objective structures may disrupt the synchronicity of habitus and field, indeed, such changes may not necessarily lead to either social transformation or increased tendencies towards critical reflection since there is inertia, or what Bourdieu terms a hysteresis of the habitus (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992:130). But nonetheless, when the adjustment between habitus and field is broken increased possibilities may arise for critical reflection on previously habituated forms of action, indeed in such contexts agents may secure what Bourdieu terms a “symbolic mastery” of the principles of the habitus and transforming practices may emerge. The symbolic capital that some female heads manage to secure because of availability of money or potentially being borrower represents how previously situated habituated forms of action among society can be changed when there is change from the objective structure (economic field of action) perspective.

There are also some examples that some female household heads are found become beneficiaries of remittance from daughters and sons who are working as domestic workers and daily labourers in nearby towns. As some old female household heads explain, they have daughters who are working as house maids in Kombolcha and Dessie towns. They support them through sending money and household consumptions. For instance Berhane has a daughter who is living in Dessie. She knows that her daughter’s monthly salary is 300 ETB. She gets her meal and shelter from her masters and she spends money only for her clothing and grooming. When her daughter gets people to come to Bati from Dessie she sends her soap, salt, coffee and money. Sometimes she also sends her used clothes. Zahara is also a beneficiary of remittance from her daughter and son. She said that one of her daughters has left for Kombolcha and got married there. Her daughter married to a civil servant that earns good amount of money. She is also working in a restaurant as a cleaner. Her daughter sends her money and some household consumption in the rainy season. She also mentioned that one of her step sons works as a daily labourer in Kombolcha and comes at least once in a year to visit her. As she said, when he come his pocket is always full and he gives her money to buy important household consumptions. This makes her happy. It gives her respect in her neighbourhood. The association of remittance and livelihood of female headed households in this sense shows that even though the household heads cannot be direct beneficiaries of the system, the remittance from their children serves them as a means of supporting their source of livelihood.



## 6.7. Discussion

The implications of this finding in terms of livelihood diversification are several. Livelihood activities appear to be both a product of gender relation (females are not encouraged to participate in certain activities, potentially main livelihood activities of rural community), and of choice, with those maintaining the strongest livelihood base through concentration on one or two main activities, predominantly agriculture-related. This puts female headed household to be less diverse group, engaging in limited occupations in order to gain minimal income to supplement predominantly subsistence crop production, and in many cases with aspirations to pursue more singularly profitable activities. As such, female headed households prefer to be in the social field of farming to gain access to livelihood opportunity. Following Bourdieu (1993), social field is segmented into sub-fields such as different sectors of work and the informal and formal labour market. Labour markets in, for example, Bati can be perceived as additional sub-fields. Employers (female headed households) and customers (share croppers) have their specific interest and get engaged in this social field hoping to use their capital to their own advantage. In this case share croppers are seen investing their labour and knowledge as a capital to get their share of crop, whereas female heads are investing their land to be beneficiaries of the production. Though ownership of land is seen the dominant capital to win in the field of farming, the presence of ox and labour are other important factors that fulfil the task of farming. In this case the holders of the dominant capital have seen taking the secondary role in negotiating and benefiting from the sector.

This chapter shows that gender based division of labour plays a role in influencing female household heads position in different livelihood activities. Such gender based opportunities emerge when a certain group of gender is able to colonise a particular sector of employment in such a way that same sex members get access to skill development and transfer of knowledge, while at the same time restricting that of the other sex (Portes, 1998), and this is often characteristic of rural livelihood. For instance when female headed households in Bati enter the farm activity they regularly face problems, their capital – know how, general knowledge and abilities related to farming – that was important in the rural context of Bati, is not valued in crop production. Their agricultural knowledge is not enough to get recognition in the sector. The female headed households need instead to know how to ensure male labour; the need to hire a share cropper or look for community help. Even though availability of land is the first step that the female headed households fought for, they fail to get symbolic capital as they lack a male farmer especially a husband or close family member to work on it. This is because as elaborated on Bourdieu's classic study

of French society social order is progressively inscribed in people's minds' through 'cultural products' including systems of judgments, values, and activities of everyday life (Bourdieu, 1986: 471). These all lead to an unconscious acceptance of social differences and hierarchies to 'a sense of one's place' and to behaviors of self-exclusion. Thus female household heads capability to diversify their livelihood sources is confronted by a social system that grants more option and opportunity for rural men. In this sense, their attempt to diversify their livelihood is trapped by customary rule, the deep-rooted practice that associates farming only with male. The customary rules regarding certain livelihood activities are internalized and give the female heads a sense of how to act upon it, without continually having to make fully conscious decisions. As such they are seen associated with only specific activities. Diversification can improve household livelihood security while at the same time trapping women in customary roles (Ellis, 2001).

Gender-segregated and socially determined labour market in Bati makes clear that there is gender selective division of labour. Women bear the main responsibility of housekeeping, child rearing, taking care of the household members and carrying out agricultural work near the house. In male headed households the man is seen as the main cash-income earner and consequently he is the one qualified for ploughing and migrates for work. As put by Bourdieu, people's dispositions and thinking generate practices and limits individuals' possibilities. In this way the finding shows that there are power relations that female heads face in regard to their relation with share croppers. There is also dependencies and hierarchies that female heads develop on male ploughing and positions in farming sector. These all are culturally justified and manifested in daily activities.

We have also seen gender specific limitations in the attempt of female heads towards diversifying their activities from farm activity to non-farm activity. Parallel to this when the female headed households try to either move from farming sector to non-farming sector or diversify their activity they also fail to be well informed or economically capable to work on the sector. For instance, those females who are supporting their household by collecting fire wood and charcoal fail to be as "productive" as the men because of lack of camel or other transportation means and additional household burden. Differences between the female headed households from male headed households in terms of facilities and transportation (camel) are partly due to the inability of female household heads to access various types of financial and physical capital. Here, their inability can be seen from social practice perspective – a practice that associates livestock management only with the availability of male labour. As such, poor access to such assets limits female heads capacity to benefit more from the activities. Unequal asset

distribution has led to an unequal distribution of non-farm income, thus causing further polarization of income distribution. This example suggests that, despite their status, moving from one sector to another for the sake of diversifying livelihood is one dimension of creating new social spaces. When they move from one sector to the other, they find a new context, in which their interactions are embedded (Giddens, 1992). In the new space, they find a different setting that provides a different framework for interactions, their power relations and interactions change within their specific livelihood activities. For instance in the sector of cattle raising, vegetable or beverage making female head face a space which they can work well and shows their expertise. As discussed in Bourdieu's social theory, social action is neither entirely determined nor entirely arbitrary. In this context the notion of habitus is crucial, the habitus concerns a dynamic intersection of structures and actions: it both generates and shapes action (Bourdieu, 1977:83), beyond being physically less demanding, issue of interest, experience and acceptance play a role in the success of female household heads who are participating in the activity. Their habitus, therefore produces enduring (although not entirely fixed) orientations to the action of cattle raising.

Although the non-farm activity creates new social space that connects different spaces, these spaces provide very different contexts for the female household heads. For instance, it has been seen that those female headed households who have children in other towns or countries are found to have better diversified their means of livelihood. They manage to get good amount of money or gifts in different forms or get a chance to open mini market in the village. On the other hand, the availability of male member in the female headed household has also served as a means of additional income (economic capital) by lending labour to others. In this regard, social capital that emanates from familial relation has been found helping the female headed households to diversify their livelihood. Relying on close relatives or family members is therefore helpful as it provides economic support while searching for means of livelihood. In the best case scenario, these relatives are able to defend their right of access to land, access to labour and economic capital in the sector they themselves already work in, mostly farming.

The majority of female household heads felt stigmatised by society in their low income earning capacity and lack of land or male labour. Many internalise and get used to the stigma, resulting in low self-esteem and their feeling incapable of achieving a higher social position. They are hesitant of getting sustainable means of livelihood; feel less confident because of their poor symbolic and social capital and possibilities. This made them to accept occupational and wage discrimination. For instance, the female heads don't hesitate to make their young sons start ploughing as early as possible or to be hired as cattle herders at any

age. Young daughters of female heads are also engaged in petty trading and provide labour support to their mothers. The migration of children from female headed households to look for employment opportunity also reflects how such household members are ready to accept any occupational offer to manage to diversify their livelihood activity. The difficult decisions made by female-heads to involve children in labouring activities to maintain the wellbeing of the household illustrates how social structures are being shaped and reshaped. Female heads, I witness, do not necessarily make black-and-white choices. Instead, they navigate a grey and vague terrain when deciding sending their young sons and daughters on farming or migration to uplift or maintain household livelihood. Social theorists argue that this happens because of the social realms 'dependency upon human agency' (Lawson, 1997, 157; Bourdieu, 1998, 25). Here, social structures depend on human agency, and are intrinsically dynamic and internally related to each other.

The intense commercialisation of everyday goods and services and the need to have social support in order to ensure access to them add to female headed households' daily costs on their need for diversifying their livelihood because of harsh economic conditions of the wārāda. This limited opportunity means many female headed households are forced to stick to their limited activity and to their limited social capital (either from children or father). They prefer to accept their situation and to earn a regular (though small) amount of money. Gender plays a role in constraining the pattern of livelihood diversification of the household (Davies and Hossain, 1997). For instance, the total or partial exclusion of female household heads to migrate, overburdened nature of female heads by the domestic activity, and denial of basic cultural capital may give rise to less or limited option for female heads to participate in activities outside home or farming. As a result of the socially defined role of men and women, female headed households' ability to participate in productive activity and diversify their income is restricted.

Another reason for female household heads limited livelihood diversification is their livelihood pattern and the fact that they oscillate between at least two worlds or are involved in social practices including farm and non-farm activities. The majority of the female household heads have put part of their mind on crop production. Others are looking forward to see diversified means of income, focusing on non-farm activities and migration of children as better means of diversification. This has an influence on how the female household heads invest in or sustain their different forms of capital. If they think that they will get a chance to regain access to land and labour, they do not invest in their own cultural capital and choose instead to follow the easiest path, i.e., start to collect fire wood and charcoal. Furthermore, they do not

build up more social capital but instead remain within their existing social network. The majority of them had been in married life and depended on income from agriculture and benefited from family ties, and other forms of social and symbolic capital. However, after they get divorced, widowed or separated the female heads started to live without the economic and social support of their ex-husband and in-laws, although some did own access to land and livestock from their parents. These experiences give us an insight into the heavy psychological burden female heads have to carry whenever they have tried to diversify into other sectors, with forcing measures. As it has been shown in the finding they wish to concentrate more on crop production, but at the same time they have the concern that if they do not diversify it or move to other activities they cannot cope with the living situation.

Bourdieu's work on habitus has been criticized for being rather pessimistic and for not presenting many options as to how habitus might change. However, this deterministic and reductive view does not hold, in my opinion, since the process of life trajectories influences habitus and renders transformation and adaptation both possible and necessary. The experiences of female headed households serve as witnesses to show that habitus can change over time and from one generation to the next. For instance, in the case of migrant, transnational activities can influence their habitus, in that traditional structures change and new moral duties arise, for example to family members back home. However, people who are left behind also experience changes in family and household organisation. For example, some of the female household heads do believe that the chance of exclusively depend on land for sustainable livelihood is becoming unlikely, rather they are deciding to send their children to school for better future. Whilst these practices are small and dominated by certain female heads, they are fast becoming mini-growth poles, influencing the aspirations of some household members away from traditional farm enterprise towards these non-farm sectors. The path towards participation to non-farm activity shows this practice. However, such practices are still undertaken within the expectation and limitation of customary rules. In such cases female heads who manage to participate in beverage and pottery making are expected to respect the traditional normative expectations. Nevertheless, while keeping to these patterns, they can gain a new economic independence by getting support from the community, family members and, earning their own money and being able to manage their own financial source.

Although Bourdieu is "undoubtedly right to stress the ingrained nature of gender norms" his lack of a sustained consideration of gendered habitus in relation to the field means he "significantly underestimates the ambiguities and dissonances that exist in the way that men and women occupy masculine and feminine

positions” in contemporary society (McNay, 1999, 107). In so doing, he is inattentive to the “internally complex nature of subjectivity” (McNay, 2000, 72), as well as the impact of particular social changes on how women “inhabit, experience, move across, change and are changed by new and emerging social fields, as well as by gender relations within existing fields” (Kenway and McLeod, 2005, 535). This implies that in the process of winning their interest in non-farm activities too, female household heads are still trying to keep the value and norm of the community. Otherwise, their chance of benefiting from the sector becomes very minimal. As clearly put by (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992: 98), every social field has its own rules which are neither explicit nor codified and which can, with caution, be compared to a game. These principles constitute what is possible or impossible, and what is allowed and not allowed within the game. These constitutive rules are only very rarely explicitly formulated. Players consciously or unconsciously accept the explicit and/or implicit rules of the game.

The process of diversifying livelihood from farming to non farming activity by female headed households reproduces power relations and habitus, but these can at the same time be transformed and merged with modern patterns. Whereas some female household heads are challenging the idea of depending on land for the future generation, they have decided to send their children to school and motivate them to look for jobs elsewhere in the world. Daughters are migrating to Saudi Arabia and Jeddah alone to find work and contribute to the family’s income.

When people diversify their livelihood, economic, social or cultural capitals are not simply transferred to the new setting where they are then evaluated within a new habitus. Instead a process of valuation and exchange continues through the new social fields well after they have started the process. Thus, the habitus itself is subject to change (Kelly and Lusia, 2006: 837). However, when applying the concept of habitus, one has to be careful not to slip once more into generalisations about the household, or community scale by treating female household heads as people who share a common habitus. Nevertheless, as this finding has also shown, it takes a long time to change social structures and that this change does not affect everybody in the same way.

# **Chapter Seven: Social Capital Approach to Livelihood of Female Headed Households**

## **7.1. Introduction**

Rural households are characterized by devoting much time and resources on extending and nurturing personal or family networks. Such experience shows their devotion in an investment in future livelihood security. Social relations and institutions are key mediating factors for livelihoods, because they encompass the agencies that prohibit or facilitate the exercise of capabilities and choices by individuals or households.

There are indications that women and men access and use different social networks. For example, fieldwork from South Africa (Moore, 1994 b), Tanzania (Narayan 1997), Zimbabwe (Hagmann 2000), and Kenya (Nyberg 2004) testifies that women are closer than men to informal local institutions, men being, in turn, predominant in the formal (or semi-formal) organizations. According to these researches, unlike men's women's network consists of a larger proportion of kin overall as well as more different types of kin, but fewer different types of non-kin. A case study by Torkelsson (2007) on Gender and Social Network ties in rural Ethiopia also indicated that women's social network ties revolve mostly around bonds at a local level but lack bridges to formal institutions or the formal economy. Torkelsson's study further shows that women invest in social bonds, or relational social network ties, i.e., in household welfare and possibly neighborhood relations. Taking the above statements into consideration, this chapter seek to identify the different kinds of social relation and networks that female household heads have access to and benefit from. Such effort is believed to have implications for both the wider social capital debate and for the understanding of participation in different kinds of social networks. Thus, this chapter is organised around to answer how gender relation and capital possession influence female headed households' opportunity to mobilise social relation and social capital.

This chapter is organized in three parts. The first part discusses social marginalisation of female headed households and subsequent outcomes and the second one discusses familial relation by giving much emphasis on family ties and their support. The third part looks into the impact of reciprocity and poor financial capital on the social capital of female headed households. Then, the fourth part disucss about

female headed households' participation in qäbälé, together with their membership in association. This is followed by general discussion.

## **7.2. The position of Female Headed Households**

Bourdieu's assertion about social capital clearly shows the importance of relation and membership in a group as a means of further connection and socialization. The potential capacity of a person to be a member of a group and form relationship depends on the position of members in a given culture or class. The position of female headed households as defined by the society and perceived by the female heads themselves also plays a vital role. For instance, as pointed out in chapter four, the different kinds of female headed households face different treatment by the society according to the type of each female headed household. For example, when we see the position of female headed households in the eyes of male household heads, female headed households are presented as "needy" and "unmanaged." When asked how they see the difference between females in male headed households and female household heads,

Researcher: How do you differentiate females in male headed households and female heads?

(Mf<sub>1</sub>), "We believe that those who are living with and headed by their husbands have good behaviour and are more responsible for their house."

Adding on Mf1point (Mf<sub>2</sub>) continued,

(Mf<sub>2</sub>) "I believe unlike female household heads wives in male headed households manage their house very well and save a lot, because they have an advisor and controller. Female heads don't have husbands that consult and guide them. I don't think that other household members could be as good advisors as a husband."

(Mf<sub>3</sub>) "Those females who are household heads don't have the support of their husbands unlike women in male headed households and they are dependent on the labour of the community. As he further asserted, married women, at least live with husbands that can share their burden.

Researcher: can you give me visible example that you consider as difference between this two groups.

(Mf<sub>3</sub>), "If a woman is married she is respected, we men are not even allowed to see them in full eyes, they can get everything through their husband".



(Mf<sub>2</sub>), “It is difficult to compare those women, but we can see that women in male headed household get daily guide and support from their husband. Their activity is under the control of their husband and you cannot see them going out of the norm”.

(Mf<sub>4</sub>), “For me married women have great confidence on what they are doing, because they have the support of the community and their husband. You see them manage their children and household carefully, you see them socialize easily. All this is because they have confidence”.

(Mf<sub>3</sub>) also mentioned how married women are relatively well in terms of resource compared to female household heads, “Whether they have land or not married women are not as disparate as female heads. Their husband is responsible to feed the family and search for means to support the family. This makes married women stable in terms of resource than female household heads”. When asked how female heads are considered in their society, a female head discussant agreed that their acceptance by both male household heads and females in male headed households is not good.

Fh<sub>8</sub>. After I got divorced the treatment from the society changed. The social relation my household had before dropped. Me and my household members are treated very badly “Yesew tensh”

Adding on F<sub>8</sub>'s idea F<sub>9</sub> continues:

Fh<sub>9</sub>. If you are a female head you are considered like something which is not worthy. No one gives value for the existence of a female headed household. “Endekelal eka tetayalesh”.

Researcher: In what sense are you considered unworthy?

Fh<sub>11</sub>. Once you are a female head no one would give due attention to what you are talking about and your needs. After I became a widow no one respected my word.

Fh<sub>12</sub>. You see! Let alone being alive, I suspect, no one cares for us even if we are found dead. For them we don't fulfil the criteria of a household (Mutet belen derek belen benengege enkuan akababiw ayfekdunem.).

The above wording of female household heads tell us that they are represented as households that are not as worthy as male headed households. Such representation in one way or another gives them low status in the society. As the discussants puts it they do not get respect and recognition in the community and in turn, it affected their subsequent relations. ‘There is a diminution of symbolic capital entailed by being

women' (Bourdieu, 2001, 93). This fact keeps them away from being favourable choice for forming further connection and relation.” In this regard, the most fundamental attributes of positions and dispositions or social structures are those related to positions in relation to economic and cultural production. Thus, further analysis of relation and the position of female headed households call for investigating cultural dispositions regarding different households and subsequent characteristics.

### **7.3. Marriage Formation**

As pointed out in previous chapters, marriage is given a special place in the lives of Bati society. It is considered as a means of extending the lineage and getting access to means of living for women. As understood from interview with female heads, even if marriage in Bati is mainly initiated by the man's family, the woman's family prefer to establish marriage relation with a man that has land, house and other important capital. Female household heads expressed their wish that they would love their daughters get married to a man that has land and livestock. However, the study found that daughters of the female heads have difficulty to get husbands that fulfil their demand. It follows that, through the mediation of household capital, marriage exchanges are a matter of economics and that marriages take place between households on the same economic level. When asked what looks like the opportunity to get a husband, female interviewees pointed out that their social position in the society is putting their daughters in the lower ladder of choices. According to this study, it is very difficult to discuss about class and class differences in Bati taking the existing living and economic status of the society into consideration. However, there are some differentiations and categorizations among the different households due to cultural differences and subsequent perceptions. For instance, in the individual interview, Debitu, a female head who has two daughters that have gone to Jeddah six years ago, said that she observed that males are not interested to marry girls from female headed households. As she pointed out 'it is a shame not to get married in time, they become the talk of the village and get ashamed and decide to migrate to Arab countries or nearby cities.' Alem whose elder daughter is still at home suspects that being the daughter of a female head has put the daughters in a problem to find a husband. "The society believes that we cannot bring up our children with discipline and provide them the necessary knowledge like children in male headed households; they reject our daughters and the girls feel humiliated." Negat, a divorcee female head argued that, "These days, the men want to get married to women from socially recognised family and our daughters are becoming the last choices." The above interviews therefore tell us that, the deep-rooted disposition among the community regarding children from female headed households has

created the feeling that they don't have discipline and the required knowledge that can be transferred to generations. In this case daughters from female headed households are put under difficult condition. This explains how differences emanating from perceptions categorised the societies into female and male headed households, which vary in economic, social and symbolic capital.

The same question was raised to male heads regarding marriage formation, and they said that, as far as they are willing their daughters don't face much problem in getting a husband. Talking about how their daughters become better choice one male interview said, "In relative terms the girl who is raised in male headed households has better discipline and learns all household matters properly from her mother. The availability of father in close contact has also created a great opportunity to attract men." Another male interviewee said, "In male headed households let alone the daughters, the house itself is more respected than other households. Our daughters are raised under strict supervision and according to the tradition; we also offer them livestock and other help when they get married. This makes them the best choice among others." Another male interviewee also described the implication of getting married to daughters from male headed households: "Those men who married to a girl whose parents are around, think of their future benefit." If her father is respected and well known the new husband will be the immediate beneficiary. He will get a supporter and strong ally. In this case women are considered as a means of exchange enabling men to accumulate social and symbolic capital through marriages, which functioned as investment leading to the creation of more or less extensive and better alliances. Women from male headed households also serve as means of transferring symbolic and social capital to their children and bringing a better family. However, daughters from female headed households are categorised as having less capital to transfer to their future marriage.

### **7.3.1. Second Marriage**

The formation of a second marriage in the study area is influenced by the amount of asset the man and the woman have. According to female head interviewee, the probability of getting the second marriage for a widow without property (land or farm tools) is not easy, but if she is successful in securing important assets, she has better chance for second marriage than those without property.

Female headed households with access to land, even if they still fall in the category of weak households, their land ownership status gives them an opportunity to get better position in terms of their livelihood. The very fact of being land owner would bring about better recognition and respect. Reflecting on this

point, Fetele and Mekedes, female heads who own land and cattle mentioned that they have had repeated marriage proposals but they are always curious about why they have got this opportunity despite other female heads who are badly in need of husbands. Land owner female heads pointed out that their possession of important assets may attract males to establish marital relation than land less female household heads. In this case land owner female household heads may get an opportunity to marry a man with better social resource and recognised status. Getting a husband also becomes important chance for land owner female household heads to get head for their household, labour for their farm and recognition in their village. Therefore their asset ownership status granted such female household heads a potential of trading up and accumulating extra value recognition and become helpful to winning their household livelihood. This experience can be seen from Bourdieu's perspective that what matters most in social relation is the quality of resources that actors can acquire from membership in a given social group (Borudieu, 1986).

Some of the findings in this research show that, from the female head perspective, marriage serves as a means of getting social capital whereas from men's perspective it is a means to get the benefit of the household resource. In this regard female heads get the opportunity to get a husband and be treated like women in male headed households. Aziza's argument regarding what has happened to her as a result of availability of land indicates how female heads with land are better approached by males in the name of marriage.

After I divorce my first husband, I was desperately looking for a husband. I did not have a father or close relative that can support and advise me. I just married my second husband. But after we started to live together I found that he has no source of income and has become absolutely dependent on my land, which I inherited from my family. He also wanted me to give birth to a baby hoping that his baby would have legal claim on the land. I realised that he married me using the advantage that I did not have close family members to defend my right. Knowing this mischief I refused to give birth to a baby and decided to divorce him.

Such mistreatments according to Aziza happened because she did not have a father or elder brother during the marriage. According to her, had it been the case that her relatives were present, they could have properly examined the socio economic status of the man and she could have full information to decide on the marriage. Such practice can also be seen from the point of competition towards building up capital.

The man wanted to get economic capital whereas the woman wanted to get social capital. The availability of land gives the female heads opportunity of marriage, a marriage that could change social status of the female headed households. As such the females want to form relation even without having full knowledge of the economic status of the man. In this case we can see that the ownership status enables the female heads to attract relation that would serve as potential capital for their household. Property ownership may enable them to get status change which is more acceptable than their previous status. However, some female heads also reflected that second or third marriage may serve as a source of social capital but a capital that put their headship status and control over property under question.

#### **7.4. Family ties as Social Capital**

Social capital is culture-specific and consequently must be defined according to the context. The norm-bearing local institutions and personalities (elders, sheria, etc.) are those that define and sanction local culture and customs; in doing so, they have some formal elements and participate in those arena in which social capital is produced.

Support from family ties is one means of securing livelihood of female-headed households. As mentioned in previous chapters, the major source of help currently available from family members for the female headed households is the support from their fathers and grown up sons. For instance, Mekedes, a widow female head living with her father, repeatedly mentioned during the interview that the presence of a father around helped her to get free labour for the farm. A male key informant in agricultural office has commented on the importance of availability of family members around:

We have observed that those female heads with grown up sons or fathers living together or around are participating more in the development work. Such kind of female household heads are participating well in the development work because they can assign the major agricultural activities to their sons or fathers and freely participate in other work.

In a similar manner Fetle, a widow female head that has an adult son pointed out that like the male farmers she is now engaged well in animal husbandry. “Thanks to Allah, my son is taking the major burden of farming activity and I am investing more time in cattle raising.” This tells us that adult sons in female headed households can provide their labour and support the family in securing its means of livelihood. It also helps female heads to get time to be engaged in other agricultural or developmental work and complement the livelihood of their households. However, as expressed by Ayelech even if she is happy

that her son has started to work on their farm she still feels bad when she thinks this will affect his education. Zahara who is also supported by her adult son and daughter working as cattle herder and domestic worker expressed her unhappiness when she thinks of her children's education; they both quitted their schooling for the sake of supporting the household and it is a big sacrifice. Regarding such decisions this study find that parents are happy when they see their children grow and start to support them in economic and social terms, but this is mainly done at the expense of the children's future. As observed in the field work, for some adult children whose households have relatively large land size and small family members engaging in the farming field might be safe, but for those who are with limited land size and large family size it may have a negative influence on their future life. This is mainly because participating in farming with the existing limited size and poor fertility of land put the future life of the children under question.

Even though some female heads managed to get social capital through familial ties, it doesn't mean that they have strong and diverse social networks. But, despite their smaller and homogeneous networks, family ties may provide them with help to overcome some network disadvantages. This happens because as family members, females may have access to male family ties (Marsden, 1988). This also tells how among the Bati Oromo mother child attachment is reciprocal. Children are required to fulfil many obligations of comforting their mothers; the message of a mother in the following Oromo lullaby expresses the reciprocity.

<i>Haati ilma qabdu baddu</i>	A mother who has born a son
<i>Barbaada qabdi</i>	Is looked for, when she is lost
<i>Dhibamtu badada qabdi</i>	Treated well, when she gets sick
<i>Dulloomtu soorama qabdi</i>	Sustained well, when she gets old
<i>Duutu awwaala qabdi</i>	Her mortal remains is rested when she dies
<i>Awwaalli soodduu qaba</i>	Then her burial has a monument
<i>Soodduun dhibaayyuu qaba</i>	The monument also has sacrifice
<i>Soodduunuu walii lama</i>	The monument is of two types
<i>Kan haadha boonaa galma.</i>	And that of proud man's mother is temple.

The song here shows that the female head is supported while alive, and her death is also memorialized by continued *dhibaayyuu* (sacrifice). Their position as the mother of an adult son enables them to benefit

from socially expected tasks and rituals. Women, according to Abbenyi (1997: 24), “use their status as mothers to challenge some of the demands their cultures plea on them, they have seen use this status to make demands and obtain tangible concessions for themselves.”

Those female household heads who have no access to land also mentioned that they managed to get the labour of their male children as means of supporting their households’ income. For instance, Ziad, a female head who has no access to land and important livelihood asset, said, “it seems that the only option that I can feed my household members is through begging but my son decided to sell his labour to rich families, to help them in their farms and get some money in return, sometimes he may bring crops.” She also said that her household managed to get some social relation and support from the households in which her son is working with. Sometimes they cover some costs for her children’s schooling. She mentioned that there are also some female household heads that get such support from their male children. As understood from in-depth interview with both male and female household heads, selling the labour of children, as a form of economic and social transaction is more preferable than asking neighbours or relatives for direct gift or food, which entails loss of respect.

In addition to adult sons and fathers, parents in general are found as important sources of social support and security in bad days. In discussing how males have to take the big share in division of property during inheritance from a family or divorce male focus group discussants mention that, this is because unlike males divorce, widow or separated females in one way or another would go to their brothers’ or parents’ home to pass the bad times. They mentioned that, when women get divorced or forcefully pushed from their property during widowhood or separation they prefer to go to their parents home to look for social support. The field study also shows that in the wäräda, it is a common practice to see many divorced and widowed females with children going back to their family’s home to look for shelters. In this case parents are seen as important social security for such kind of households. Mulat, a divorced female head also told the practice that unlike husband’s family, the wife’s family are the last resort for female heads to look for support. As she put it, after she got divorced the only option to look for help was her parents. Now they are taking care of her two children and they are motivating her to be strong and not to give up. Bourdieu (1993, 143) also maintains that membership in a family is important in acquiring support for different needs. ‘Through people’s contact and membership’ in the family, there are obligations on the part of the family members to provide them with ‘actual or potential support and access to valued resources.’

However, depending on the resources embedded in a family, family ties may or may not actually provide females with better access. The problem that widows, whose marriage is not recognized by the late husband's parents, is also seen as making the widows to see their parent's house as the ultimate solution when their marriage is over. In the wäräda unless the bride and groom are legally married and get the consent of their parents, the cultural practice don't recognise the bride and entitled them to have their share of land. Otherwise, it is assumed that the couple is dependent on the groom's parents. Eventually, if the husband passes away, the wife will not be entitled to claim property and her fate will be to go back to her parent's house together with her children.

While discussing the implications of such cultural practice, female heads pointed out that mostly the groom's parents want to use this kind of marriage arrangement as a way of keeping their land with them in case any problem occurred in the marriage of their male children. The interview with elderly key informants also shows that this mainly occurs when the parents are not happy of the marriage or when the grooms by themselves want to buy time before they gets thier share. This kind of marriage arrangement creates dependent widows who will automatically use their parents' property as immediate source of support. In such cases, the supports that are derived from family can be explained as one form of social capital. This kind of support, according to Bourdieu, can be explained in the form of duty based or voluntary support (Bourdieu, 1993: 143). Support from parents provides the insurance that is necessary to facilitate the day-to-day activity of female headed households.

In the situations where female headed households enjoy social support from their family members, they may get a better environment to rehabilitate and work on their livelihood. Clearly, the commitment and practice of the family members in working productively with female headed households is key factor in maintaining them in their living area and enabling them to get means of living. If the female household heads don't have the networks of family members, their livelihood situation might well have a different ending.

## **7.5. Reciprocity**

Societies have got the opportunity of benefiting from the notion of social exchange. However, the form of social exchange may be symmetrical and explicit, like many social relations that use tactical ways of term of exchange, i.e., a favour done to you today is made in the tacit understanding that it will be returned someday.



From an economist's viewpoint, pure non-cooperative action would lead to inferior outcomes and hence that greater social capital potentially leads to better outcomes by facilitating greater cooperation (Deepa and Landt, 1997: 3). As such, social capital can be possessed and converted into other forms of capital, unless it persists in the social relationship within which the obligation or trust is not contained. Bourdieu has identified that social capital like other forms of capital is known by its convertibility and appropriable characteristics (Bourdieu, 1986). It is appropriable in the sense that network, say friendship, can be used for other purposes, such as getting information or labour force. It is also convertible in the sense that the advantage bestowed by one's position in a social network can be converted into economic and other advantage.

In the study area where large majority of the society depends on farming, female heads who have no father or adult son are forced to call for *Jige* to get their land ploughed. *Jige* is one of the traditional ways of cooperative mechanisms accessed through existing social network and relation that prevail in the study area. Traditionally it involves a situation where the land owner calls for some male farmers to plough his/her land. In exchange, the owner is supposed to prepare lunch and drinks for the farmers. As pointed out by female interviewees, in principle any household can call for *Jige*, at time of shortage of farm labour. However, most female heads don't agree with the idea that they are equal beneficiaries of *Jige*.

Even though female heads argue that provision of labour force for the needy is one of the social norm that female heads can benefit from, they expressed their experience that inability to provide reciprocity would put them behind the resourceful networks. Aregash, a female head with land but has no male labour said, "unlike the male heads most female heads failed to provide agricultural help in exchange for the support they get from the farmers." The field work also shows that female headed households in Bati are clustering around relatively inferior socioeconomic standings and interact mainly with others in similar social groupings. Their social network is poorer in resources, it cannot go beyond household chores, and they cannot even get the trust of male farmers. As put by Bourdieu (1992), creation of trust is implicit in the expectation of a counter-gift in gift exchange; it should not become explicit. However, as has been seen in the field work male farmers lack trust on the potential of female headed households and do not show willingness to extend their helping hand and this lack of trust repeatedly mentioned by other female household heads. Explaining why they resist providing labour help, male interviewees pointed out that the female headed households do accept such generous help without reciprocating and it discourages the males to form relationship. Female heads in this regard prefer not to mention *Jige* as an important social

support. When asked about how she understands the role of *Jige*, Lubaba, a separated female head, replied, “In the area where there is negative perception about female heads getting people organised for *Jige* is really tiresome; I prefer to have a share cropper, with all its problems.”

In discussing social capital Bourdieu (1980) calls attention to two points. The first is the number of relationship that an individual has. He emphasises that simply having a larger number of relation is insufficient; a measure of an individual’s social capital must include some indicator of the resources available through those relationships. In the same way, for the question about what kind of help they manage to get from neighbours, female heads mentioned that *Jige* is one form of help but its importance is declining from time to time. They said that in previous times one call was enough to get people organised for *Jige*, but now the behaviour of the farmers is changing, and this kills their interest to organize *Jige*. Some divorcee female heads also pointed out that after they became divorcee their relation with the neighbours is not as smooth as it used to be, and they lost their courage to maintain strong relation and request their neighbours’ helping hand.

Like female headed households, this research has found that sometimes male headed households also call for *Jige*. Male heads emphasised the point that *Jige* is one of the social support they are benefiting from. One of the moments that a male headed household calls for *Jige* is in the absence of male heads from their living area for short period. Examining the reason behind such difference, this research found that short time absence of male heads for different reasons is a regular and usual practice. And, provision of labour support for male headed household in the form of *Jige* is a normal practice with the assumption that the male head will provide similar favour or counter gift to other male headed household members when he will come back. As such male headed households have better potential to be provided with necessary support as exchange to what has been done to them. In this case, *Jige* can be considered as one form of gift that needs a kind of reciprocity from the recipient. The gift exchange here represents the symbolic capital that the households have.

The very access to *Jige* is emanated from being in a certain network or social relation that can bring out further capital. As such, the very presence of household members in male headed households granted them an opportunity to be beneficiaries of *Jige*, whereas female heads, who lack recognition, and something to give back, failed to be members of a group that can grant them further opportunity. Bourdieu’s discussion of gift exchanges follows the idea that it creates obligation that must be reciprocated, and failure to do so places the recipient in a subordinate position (Bourdieu, 1977, 195). This shows the capacity of implied

exchange in terms of strengthening the bond between giver and taker. In this regard men and women may have different qualities of symbolic capital that can be expressed in the form of social capital.

For Bourdieu social capital comprises sets of networks of relationships which may be mobilised as a resource in the process of class distinction. Like other forms of capital (economic, cultural and symbolic) in Bourdieu's formulation, social capital is accumulated human labour, or accumulated history, which can increase the accrual of other forms of capital (particularly economic and cultural) (Bourdieu, 1986: 293). Social capital is therefore understood as a resource hard wired into the process of the making and remaking of social inequalities. As such, those households without important human labour and recognised symbolic capital failed to get recognition in terms of securing benefit from social supports like *Jige* which operates under implicit obligation.

There is also a tendency that farmers in Bati may respond to the call for *Jige* in a more selective manner. As understood from both female heads and focus group discussants, male farmers give priority to the call of widowed female heads than divorced female heads. This puts divorced and sometimes separated female headed households in a disadvantaged position in terms of access to *Jige*. As discussed in chapter four divorced female heads in Bati wäräda are more alienated than other female household heads. Such household heads have fierce relation with the community including females in male headed households. As a result, creating friendship and open relation with male farmer is becoming a challenge for their existence in the society. It threatens the quality and the volume of network that they can form in their neighbourhood. According to Bourdieu (1986: 249), "The volume of social capital possessed by a given agent depends on the size of the network of connections that he can effectively mobilize."

The reason why members become part of a social association over another include trust, mutual understanding, individual decisions and external factors related to social, cultural, economic and religious obligations, which influence people to join certain groups and not others. In a society where there are strong social norms and values supplemented with a high degree of closure of the social network there is high compliance with local rules and customs that reduce the need for formal controls. In this regard, *Iddir* which is called *Kirre* in the local language is one of the local associations that female-headed households are participating without any financial and moral discrimination. *Kirre* is one of the social institutions that both men and women participate in many places of Ethiopia. It is a funeral association that pays out to the family of the deceased in cash or in kind when a member or relative of a member dies.

As the study by Hoddinott and Dercon (2005) confirms being a female head appears to have no statistically significant impact on the likelihood or extent of *Kirre* membership.

According to the local practice, men and women have separate *Kirre*. In the case of the men's *Kirre* all members are expected to contribute monthly fees. In a similar manner some women's *Kirre* collect monthly fee, an amount, which is less than the men's contribution. This happens because, as understood from both male and female interviewees, a male farmer is expected to have and raise cash for many purposes. As such, they are expected to make their contribution in cash, while the females are expected to contribute mainly in kind. For instance, during funeral times every female member of the *Kirre* is expected to contribute flour or, and cooked food to the family of the deceased. They are also expected to prepare and serve food at least for three consecutive days. On the other hand, the men's *Kirre* raises "some" amount of money to the family of the deceased. The *Kirre* also lend kitchen wares and labour support for wedding ceremony of the members' families.

Most female heads value *Kirre* as a local institution from which they get mutual understanding, trust and the explicit obligation. According to them every woman has a right to be a member of the neighbourhood *Kirre*. In this specific research the female heads are found to be member of only one *Kirre*. They also believe that unlike other support they get, they are satisfied with the benefit they get from *Kirre* members during both bad and good days. The female heads said that in a situation where there is no close male relative and absence of close family ties, *Kirre* really serves important role in their life. Some widowed female heads who lost their fathers and who don't have adult son pointed out that without the help of *Kirre* it would have been very difficult to arrange the funeral of their husbands. In many ways, attendance at funerals can generally be seen as giving shape and form to many social processes within rural Bati. Here, extended family networks and informal social networks are mobilised and enlivened through notions of relatedness and belonging as a means of mitigating the regular impact of bereavement. Being unable to share such burden undermines a household's cultural, social and symbolic standing and ultimately, social position. In this regard both male and female head interviewee said that one must go to *Kirre* members' funeral. Otherwise, no one will come to their or their household members' funeral. It is very important for people to go to the funeral to show their concern. Thus, the creation of societal debts and obligations, through visiting (during mourning periods) helps to establish bonds that hold both localised reciprocal social networks in place. In this case, even if it is not explicitly seen, the reciprocity nature of *Kirre* is explained by the action of the community. As Bourdieu explains using the experience of

Kabylia society, a man who has not responded to the needed request in time, faces his symbolic capital diminished from day to day, whereas the one who responded in time builds his symbolic capital. (Bourdieu, 1977: 6-7). Similarly, the situation of female headed households in this context shows that they are made beneficiaries of this social support not because of having special features but as a result of internalized norms that make such practice possible, the norm pushes them to reciprocate to what has been done to them. In this regard the mutual understanding and support among members emanated not only from the reciprocal actions but also from the customary rules which are preserved by the group memory. Of course such memory are themselves the product of a small batch of schemes enabling agents to generate an infinity of practices adapted to endlessly changing situation, without those schemes ever being constituted as explicit.

## **7.6. Why Poor Social Capital?**

Members use their social networks to deal with day-to-day social and economic challenges and problems. In many societies of Ethiopia membership to *Iqub* is considered the best insurance system during financial crisis situations.

The tradition of *Iqub* is well known in many parts of Ethiopia and it is practiced by those people who have regular amount of weekly and/or monthly income. *Iqub* serves the majority of the private sector in Ethiopia: the rural farming community, the urban informal sector, and micro-enterprises (Alemayehu, 2005; Dejene, 1995; Mengestu, 1998). The in-depth interview with female-headed households showed that, despite its importance, participation of female heads in *Iqub* is insignificant. Replying on how *Iqub* is understood among female heads, interviewee female heads pointed out that in order to be a member of *Iqub* members should have some amount of money on their hand at least every month. However, the female heads said that they do not have regular income that allows them to be members of *Iqub*. Some of the female heads also mentioned that they have had *Iqub* when they were married but they couldn't afford to save money and become member of *Iqub* after their headship. Membership to *Iqub* is one of the means to get access to economic resources; however, lack of diversified livelihood systems put the female heads in a disadvantage position to benefit from it. Emphasizing this point Ziad, a female head with no access to land, said that she knows that she can get money to cover some of her economic needs through *Iqub*, but she is not sure that she can manage to pay her regular due if she becomes member of *Iqub*. Ayelech, a female head with access to land, also pointed out that even though she has land and gets income from the farm, the amount is not enough to cover the household consumption and it doesn't motivate her to be a

member of *Iqub*. While discussing about what restricts them from becoming a member of *Iqub*, almost all female heads pointed out that they cannot get the trust among the society regarding their economic status. This restricts their opportunity to benefit from such associations.

Even though local associations like *Iqub* have potential to influence the social and economic context of the community, some studies revealed the fact that a high level of this type of associational life is witnessed by villages within higher average per capita income (Molyneux, 2002). In the same way, in Bati, unlike female household heads, wives in male headed households and male heads are beneficiaries of *Iqub*, which otherwise serves them as an important source of social capital. In relative terms male headed households have better income than female headed households. Consequently, wives in male headed households manage to save some amount of money from the budget they get from their husbands. As mentioned in chapter four, females are also responsible for selling chickens, eggs and home-prepared butter. Basically, the money collected from such sales is not checked by husbands. As a result, wives can use it for any kind of consumption purposes. This creates better opportunity for wives in male headed households to allocate some amount of money for *Iqub*. Furthermore, male respondents indicated that since they have diverse sources of income like *chat* and vegetable production, they manage to get additional source of income and are able to save some money for *Iqub*. On the other hand, male heads also mentioned that even in the time of shortage of regular income they find ways to be a member of *Iqub*. They told me that they can use their contact and networks to be members and raise money. Replying on how he can manage to pay the monthly due, one male household head said, “there are times when I run short of money but I am always sure that I can cover the *Iqub* payment by borrowing from my friends or traders in Bati market.” Another male household head also pointed out that “It is very difficult to think that we have always money in our pocket, but it doesn’t mean that we cannot get it from different means to pay for *Iqub*. For instance, sometimes I get it from friends; I even remember days that I get it from my wife. Even if I am the main income source, I know that she is good in saving. ”

The above statements tell us that there is a difference among female and male headed households regarding confidence to fulfil financial needs. Shortage of diversified and regular source of income becomes an excluding factor for female heads and also sometimes for male heads from the benefits drawn from financial institutions. Lack of capacity to be member of such local institution has further been eroding their potential to be beneficiaries of social capital. Basically membership to *Iqub* is based on networks that make socioeconomic position of members as a base. Those with better economic resource

and similar marital status form the group that may serve as a base for further relation. For instance, there are wives *Iqub*, men's *Iqub*, etc. Whereas female headed households who lack permanent income that boosts their confidence to establish a network with others developed reduced enthusiasm to establish relation with members of *Iqub*. However, those who have already established the network managed to grow it up into a strong group that has potential to provide them with different resources.

Bourdieu's work on social capital explains related matters by focusing on social networks as constructed through investment strategies oriented to the institutionalisation of group relations usable as a reliable source of other benefits. He focused on the calculative strategies used to be members of the network. As such, female headed households with little financial capacity failed to create networks with *Iqub* members. Even though ability to be direct beneficiary of such social capital requires financial capability, it is also important to distinguish the resources themselves from the ability to obtain them by virtue of membership in different social structures, a distinction explicit in Bourdieu's work. Even though, some of the male heads are not financially strong they take part in *Iqub* through their social networks that enable them to raise money for their membership. On the other hand, female heads whose social networks are limited to narrow contacts fail to be direct beneficiaries of such resource. This confirms the fact that social and other forms of capitals are distributed unequally according to actors' positioning in different fields of action (Bourdieu, 1986).

### **7.7. Participation in Qäbälé**

The Peasant Association (in the qäbälé) is the only formal organization that exists in Bati, and it is linked to the formal institutions of local government. It symbolizes bridges and links to the formal economy, and thus could be considered a tie to social networks with economic returns, even if indirectly. Participation in associational life is thought to generate individual rewards, such as career opportunities and support networks as well as community goods, by fostering the capacity of people to work together on local problems (Lawler, 2003: 21). Social network studies also demonstrate that individuals establish social networks based on their consent and interest. When discussing what female heads reaction to qäbälé participation and other voluntary activities looks like female heads pointed out that having contact with the qäbälé people will help them to get important information and provision and they are eager enough to take part in qäbälé activities. However, they felt that poor time management, lack of previous experience

to participate in public life, and lack of warm welcome from qäbälé people restrict them from establishing social networks with members from other groups.

For female headed households in Bati who are dependent on food aid and safety net programmes, the qäbälé (peasant association) is serving as an important social welfare provision mechanism. These households are expected to be provided with different kinds of support and aid from their qäbälé, which has its own formal mechanism to be accessible to the society. In principle, all households should be equal beneficiaries of qäbälé provisions; however, the female heads argue on the contrary. For instance the interview with female household heads regarding their involvement in qäbälé showed that females have insignificant role in qäbälé matters. Alem, a widow and land owner described her experience, “Even though it is not directly from the qäbälé, we mostly get information from the neighbourhood about any provision, still we are the last to be informed and become beneficiaries of the provisions.” This idea was further elaborated by other female heads as their participation is very much limited to attending meetings. They pointed out that, everything that they are supposed to get from the qäbälé and government organ is related to their relationship with officials in the qäbälé. The officials have little to gain in response to granting land and other farming inputs to female headed households. This indicates that there is interesting relation between land holding and provision of agricultural input and social influence; suffice to say that the marital position of female headed households has hampered them to enjoy their right to gain benefit. The information from qäbälé officials also shows that females are mainly seen in the qäbälé compound when there is either a general meeting or provision of some materials. Key informants in the qäbälé also argued that sometimes limited resources available in the qäbälé are distributed using some criteria like first comes first served. However, very limited social networks that restrict female household heads from access to up to date information is making them the last beneficiaries of the qäbälé provisions.

Female heads who are making some attempt by taking part in voluntary and political associations are also not made beneficiaries of the needed capital. Rather than using their skills and experiences to get more formal and influential roles in the qäbälé, they tend to draw upon their increased confidence, independence and contacts to just feel better about themselves. As far as this research is concerned, there are very few female heads that take formal position in qäbälé that will help them to get better contact and form networks. Nevertheless, they draw on their hard earned time and energy as a resource in the day to day management of their own and their family’s lives, thus there may be very little left to spend on formal public life. For instance, as put by female key informants in the qäbälé, in some of the areas that female



heads become voluntary members, their role is limited to being voluntary food distributor or participation in some awareness creation programme. As such their participation remains within the informal sphere, rather than spilling over into the formal political domain. In other words, their social capital profile is more suited to catalysing informal activity in the immediate community, and to providing a resource for their own and their families' well being. The practice of associating the role and participation of female and male in distinctive social space is further explained by male focus group discussants. Accordingly, a male discussant (Mf<sub>1</sub>) said, "If a women can manage the household we can safely manage the public life." His idea is also shared by another discussant (Mf<sub>2</sub>) who said, "who else can undertake the household chores if we allow the women to take part in public activity." When asked to comment on the practical changes that are witnessed today in many parts of the society, discussant three (Mf<sub>3</sub>) replied that " these days some females are taking different roles in qäbälé and other institutions, but none of us have good attitude towards it; it is after all destroying our respected culture that was preserved for years." In response to a similar question, discussant (Mf<sub>4</sub>) said,

We can allow our females to work on the public sphere but they don't have the capacity and the confidence to accomplish it like the men, after all their expertise is in household matters. Do you think that men can handle the private matters like the women? No, because this is not their area of expertise.

Similarly some of the female heads argued that they prefer to work more on what they know rather than engaged taking part in a new sphere. Thus, female heads in the society often find it hard to play major role in social relationship and formal politics beyond village levels due to both lack of confidence and unfamiliarity with formal procedures.

In general the study found that female heads in Bati Wäräda know that participation in qäbälé and other forms of public life would bring direct and indirect benefit for their livelihood. However, issues related to lack of experience of public life added with overburdened domestic activities and stereotypes towards their capability and interests are holding them back from being beneficiaries of capitals that can be drawn from forming networks.

### **7.7.1. Membership in Development Team**

As farmers, female heads who have land are expected to have close relation with development agents (DA), the development team and cooperatives that are organised in the name of farmers. According to Bati wäräda extension department, the office has organised farmers under three independent teams: animal husbandry, crop production and natural resource management. As a rule, all women farmers, most of whom are female heads, are expected to be members of at least one of these teams. However, the research found that they are still not fully participating and expressing their interest. As shown in the annual report of the extension department, the agriculture office, the only achievement that is witnessed among the three teams is females' participation in animal husbandry. The main reason given for such resemblance is females' belief that they do not have enough labour and land to work on irrigation and other natural resource management unlike the males. This pushes them to concentrate more in the cattle raising area. Female heads also mentioned that, they would love to work in this area because it is what they used to do at home and is less risky. This situation tells us that indirectly females prefer to work more in females' only task. Hence, the associational life the female can benefit in this regard revolves around tackling domestic matters. As observed during the field work, there are 15 development team members in one of the animal husbandry groups and more than half of them are females. Mostly they are observed discussing about activities, but there are times that they chat and relax. This group helps them to work together with females with similar life experience and sometimes discuss private matters. Even though none of the females seems to have strong capacity to tackle other problems, at least they get psychological relief by being together. Females' reaction to being members of only selective membership didn't appear to draw the needed resources and support from development associations. Yet, their use of alternative way of participation can be seen as a form of social capital to deploy some resources which could indirectly provide them with access to emotional support.

The in-depth interview with female heads also shows that female heads don't get clear and up-to-date information about the role of farmers' associations and different cooperation programmes. Some of them are not sure even whether they are members of farmers' association or not. They also said they know that improved seeds and other provisions are made through agriculture extension offices, where close contact with them would give better opportunity to get the service. However, they mentioned their minimal involvement in the programme and less contact with the people in the offices has become a predicament for exercising their right. Similarly, female heads asserted that they don't have the means and experience

of developing a relationship with others in administrative positions in the qäbälé. The development of social networks is dependent both on individual subjective feelings (recognition, respect, and communality) and on the institutional guarantees afforded by the organization (Bourdieu, 1986). This fact throws light upon the gendered relationship between social capital and benefits from different institutions. The relationship tends to be both different and unequal for female and male heads.

## 7.8. Discussion

A consideration of female headed households and their social position highlights some of the grounded complexities of social capital and how it works to variously help or hinder those dependent on and caught within its webs. Accordingly, this research found how important to see the role of and place of social capital in the life of female headed households. While social capital found within social relations that people have, and the local cultural forms of that relation, it also needs to be understood as something that is endlessly created and recreated in particular acts. The different acts can be explained as long lasted for centuries and representing local histories, personal alliances, obligations and purposes: The expression of these transformations can be found in the social mobility and repositioning experienced by some, and the immobility and persistence of marginalization experienced by others. In this regard the ability to speak the languages of power and to engage both with the world of the formal state and with the local institutions of traditional authority and power play an important role. As such the process of examining female headed households and their livelihood brought out how each household is differently located in social fields relating to family, neighbours, and community and how these intersect to produce social capital that is valued in some fields and devalued in others.

From the experience of female headed households, some of the broad areas that fall in the relation of these households and their livelihood are related to connectedness to family, community, and institutions like qābālē. The female heads are disconnected from their ex and late husbands' families, and to a certain extent from the community and institutions. Rivalry on economic resources do not allow them to form familiar relation with their late-husbands' families. Resistance to accept female headship doesn't allow them to create smooth relation with the neighbourhood and the community. The female heads expressed their poor relation with females in male headed households to the extent that they are considered by them as worthless. They have expressed their relation with different institutions as full of resistance and lacking trust.

In masculine domination, Bourdieu (2001: 98) shows how the bourgeoisie women are treated as means of exchange that enable men to accumulate social and symbolic capital through marriages, which functioned as investment leading to the creation of more or less extensive and prestigious alliances. However, unlike the bourgeoisie women who are described in masculine domination female headed households in this study failed to be recognised as potential sources of symbolic capital, which would negatively influence the marriage opportunity of their daughters. Such perception forces the female heads to concentrate

mainly on leading their household using their at most effort. A woman who works as a head of the family is considered to have a gendered disposition which is more masculine than feminine, and this carries a certain amount of symbolic capital necessary for female headship. However, in order to effectively perform her headship position, she is expected to use alternative ways; she may decide to have children and manage her farm work, participate in off farm activities which restrict their involvement in public affairs. In such cases she is reminded of her distinction as a woman in a different way, as a mother, off farm worker, a marginal contributor to both household and work. If the man works on the farm and does additional work to raise his children, he could be rewarded with explicit reference to his gender.

In Bati, the living system does no more than perpetuating existing gap between women and men and working more on facilitating men's advantages. The reproduction strategies imposed by the logic of masculine and feminine enable the men to be possessors of socially recognised resources whereas the females categorise themselves in specific place and for specific activity. Of course the domestic activities (especially the material ones) are apparently recognised by Bourdieu as important cultural capital that mothers should transfer to their female children. However, this remains unrecognised especially when it is located in female household heads who are known as lacking the important skill to get transfer to their family members. In this regard, it is clear that it is not the situation that presents itself as problematic, or it is simply the position of the female heads, rather, it is the disposition among the society in a very asymmetrical gendered form.

Bourdieu sees social capital as a tool of reproduction for the dominant class. Similarly this study shows that lack of basic economic resources and poor recognition in the society pushes female household heads to be less beneficiary of social capital, especially capital that can be derived from socially recognised cultural and economic capital. This may raise the question, can't we talk about social capital in relation to societies characterised like Bati? In farming society, where living systems are more or less similar and there is no significant cultural capital that can make some groups of society more preferable than the others, we are expected to examine societal perception regarding different households. In this regard, as it has been mentioned in this research, female household heads are considered as poorly endowed with both social and economic resources to lead their households. It is also traditionally accepted that men are the ultimate group to participate and drive benefit from social relation. Most of the female heads are excluded from "behind the scenes" networks which are dominated by male farmers. Their networks are organic, and, if recognised, they are seen as threatening or trivialised. Such practice basically shows how gender

distinctions structure social life where the male body is considered to be autonomous, self sufficient and oriented toward public activity, while the woman's body is associated with private space. As such this denomination has limited many of the female household heads from looking for ways of proving their capacity. This has been perpetuating their alienation and limiting their sphere of influence and prevented them from investing more on economic resources, aimed at conserving or increasing their symbolic capital.

Thought they are sometimes excluded from public affairs because of their own free will, women long remained confined to the domestic universe and the activities associated with the biological and social reproduction of the family. This explained by Bourdieu as serious exclusion of women from universe of public and especially economic affairs (Bourdieu, 2001: 96). The particular position of women in the symbolic good market explains the greater part of female dispositions: if every social relation is in one respect, the site of an exchange in which each participant invites the other to evaluate his or her perceptible appearances, then women's disposition which pertains to reproductive activities reduced to what is sometimes called a good house wife according to Bati tradition relative to less directly perceptible properties, such as ability to farm well, and to negotiate on marketing which is greater for men than for women. For men their symbolic representation in the public is greater than how they perform in the household. Being socially inclined to treat themselves as domestic objects and, consequently, to pay constant attention to everything concerned with household activity and reproductive work, female household heads quite naturally take charge of everything concerned with the management of public image and social appearances of the members of the domestic unit- the children, of course, especially female children, who often learn domestic activities and management of household chores. According to Bourdieu's terminology, women are being assigned to the management of the symbolic capital of the family (Bourdieu, 2001: 100).

The other point to be raised is whether mere participation in a group or network enables members to be beneficiaries of social capital. Bourdieu conceptualizes social capital as the interaction between amount and type of resources of a group or network. In this regard he emphasizes on the connection of individuals to the group or ability to draw on these resources. The easiest way that female headed households can at least attract social relation is through ownership of important livelihood assets, land and livestock. In this regard, female heads can get marriage offers. This marriage may serve as a means of exchanging economic resources with human labour and consequently accumulation of symbolic capital.

From the men's point of view, the marriage serves as a means either to get additional economic resources and human labour or a title of a married man: a title that automatically grants him more social respect. Similarly, for the female heads the marriage becomes a means of getting emotional support, human labour for farm work and a means of status change. There will be status change for the female head from widow, separated or divorced to a married woman. Such status change, in turn, modifies the social status of the new household. In this regard, their economic position can be taken as a source of social capital that may result in all these potential benefits, but with the potential expense of losing control over their resources. It makes them suspicious about the fate of their right over their land. In this case, it is difficult to say that the social capital that female heads accessed through marital relationships with men can be translated into useful resources in a number of other fields. The new husband may provide her with labour support and social respect, but their role over their property might not continue as before. The marriage relation that resulted in labour and emotional support as a form of social capital may not be translated into the kind of social capital that gives value in the case of female headed households who are marked by alienation. This kind of social capital may help to build their respect and social value in the society, but still keep their economic capital unrecognised. Whereas for these specific female household heads, the social capital is expected to keep their economic independence as well as help to develop and get recognised their social status and position in the society. This is a case for instance of what Lareau and Horvat (1999: 39) have noted using Bourdieu's theory, "...all individuals have social capital to invest or activate in a variety of social settings or fields; however, all social or cultural capital doesn't have same value in a given field."

People derive social capital from their membership of a group, such as a family or kinship group. Material or symbolic exchanges within these relationships produce obligations and mutual recognition of group membership that may also be socially instituted and guaranteed by the application of a common name (the name of a family, a class, or a tribe or of a school, a party, etc.) (Bourdieu, 1997:51). In the case of female household heads, they have put the relation with their family members and *Kirre* as full of support and important for their livelihood security. Some of these positive terms are suggestive of social capital. The female heads felt cared for, supported and helped in managing their livelihood through their membership in a family that could provide them with labour and emotional support (resources) to maintain their livelihood. They are seen using social support from fathers and adult sons, as either a substitute or complement for husbands. In this case it is the social capital that is considered as a complement that can add up to or improve the efficiency of economic capital by reducing transaction costs. Family ties as social capital can be understood as resources produced by the ties as collective and shared by its members.

In this regard female heads' social network is more likely than men's to remain within the community sphere, rather than growing into other networks that will make them better beneficiaries. Women's networks involve fewer economic resources: they are more dependent on time, assisting others, and other activities that do not bring revenue (Mayoux, 2001; Westermann et al., 2005).

Where the economic support available to women is crucially dependent upon the community's benevolence and the support systems for female heads, women are likely to repress their own self-interest. In the absence of targeted welfare policies and institutional structures supporting female heads, there is likely to be a multiplication of such incidents. But it doesn't mean, in turn, that the community will provide resources indefinitely to female heads. This does not appear to happen, since community and kin support for most female heads is intermittent and/or temporary. The lack of a patriarchal figure in their household may mean that female heads do not participate in the bargaining over resources characteristic of two-person households. But nonetheless they often remain trapped in community and kin structures that perpetuate patriarchal values, and where women's individual self-interest continues to be pushed aside. This shows that most of female household heads are less able to orientate themselves or their households towards a more inclusive articulated economy through the capturing of some provisions from qābālé and diversification of their local income generating base. Such households are adversely incorporated not only within a broader macro economic reality but also within a set of highly localised and unequal socio economic relationships. This social context simultaneously provides both marginal opportunities for survival for the female headed households as well as an opportunity for other households to absorb human labour and expand their economic base. Therefore in the process through income diversification strategies, understanding who is positioned to take advantage of these, and how households end up being marginalised, is vital to both the analysis of social capital. For example, Bourdieu, whose work focuses on the roots of social inequality, argues that social capital is distributed unevenly among people who possess different economic and cultural capitals. In other words, he argues that one's access to social capital resources and the nature of the social capital are both structurally determined by the social position one occupies. As a result, groups in the top hierarchical positions can use their social capital to exclude others and deny them opportunities, in so doing limiting their social mobility and thus contributing to intergenerational inequalities. Reconnecting description of social capital with a strong account of households and cultural categorization and its absence also raised the need to pay attention to what Ortner (1999) has described as the power problematic. It requires us, in other words, to take seriously both the analysis of meaning and the analysis of poor relations and how they change. It is important to focus on the



fact that these households histories disclose in ways deeply shaped by existing power relations, at both the micro and the macro levels.

Bourdieu sees social capital as made up of social obligations ('connections') '... [it] is the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition' (Bourdieu, 1986, 47). However the issue of reciprocity and norms in Bourdieu's explanation of social capital take a lesser space, but he gives focus on reciprocity when explaining about symbolic capital. However, as witnessed in this study, the practice of some of the local institutions like *Jige* and *Kirre* take place effectively when the rule of reciprocity is respected. Reciprocity has seen taking the main role to sustain the relationship and consecutive benefits. For instance in *Jige* the trend has been that the male farmers decline from extending their helping hands to the female headed households, especially for divorced female heads. This happens because despite the obligation and societal norms, there is no explicit reciprocity that these households could manage to give as a result of the support they can get. On the other hand, it has been shown that all types of female headed households are free to form membership and get benefit from *Kirre*. This is because the norm makes membership in *Kirre* obligatory and with implicit rewards and punishments. That means, those who failed to attend the funeral of village members cannot get people to cover their funeral services and expenses. Such norms are sustaining *Kirre* as important social capital for all kinds of households. This therefore tells us that even though norms and obligations seem to be operating in the life of societal relation, reciprocity takes the main role in perpetuating social capital.

The other characteristic of social capital seen in this study is the issue of mutual recognition. This is how it acquires a symbolic character, and is transformed into symbolic capital. Distinctions between female headed households and other households, according to the distribution of economic and social capital are seen in the research transformed into meaningful differences, mediated by symbolic capital. "Symbolic capital ... is nothing other than capital, in whatever form, when perceived by an agent endowed with categories of perception arising from the internalization (embodiment) of the structure of its distribution, i.e., when it is known and recognized as self-evident" (Bourdieu, 1985: 204). The symbolic capital takes a taken for granted character. For instance, it is taken for granted that male headed households are best choice for marriage and economic security for the society, but not female headed households. These categorizations are real practices that exist and grow only in inter subjective reflection. And thus it hides the arbitrary way in which the forms of capital are distributed among households in society.

In general, female headed households' survival is made possible by complex and difficult social and economic relationships that are shaped by the exchange of gifts and services, which sometimes take the form of goods and labour. These goods and services can be linked to monetary payment, but often they are part of a more complex web of exchanges, obligation and loyalties. For example, farming for rich households is badly paid, hard physical labour that creates much larger surplus value, in cultural and symbolic terms, for the owner of the farm. The difficult decisions made by female heads to involve children in labouring activities to maintain the welfare of the household illustrates how societal structure is being shaped and reshaped. Female heads do not necessarily make clear choices. Instead, they navigate a dismal and vague terrain when deciding between pulling their sons or daughters out of school to uplift or maintain family welfare. Social theorists argue that this happens because of the social realms 'dependency upon human agency' (Lawson, 1997: 157; Bourdieu, 1998: 25). Here, social structures depend on human agency, and are intrinsically dynamic and internally related to each other.

Further, female household heads' lower participation in village level committees or other more formal politics is partly restricted by their economic problem. Their inability to be beneficiaries of government provisions is in part mediated by their limited relations with qäbälé officials and community. According to Bourdieu (1986: 249), "The volume of social capital possessed by a given agent ...depends on the size of the network of connections that he can effectively mobilize." It is a quality produced by the totality of the relationship between actors, rather than merely a common "quality" of the group (Bourdieu, 1980: 2). Membership in groups, and involvement in the social networks developing within these and in the social relations arising from the membership can be utilized in efforts to improve the social position of the female headed households in a variety of different fields. However, their poor economic resource coupled with poor social networks exacerbate lower social position of female headed households. This highlights the complex ways in which female headed households are linked and variously excluded or embedded on adverse terms within the rural economy and complex societal structures of the village.

## **Chapter eight: Gender Relation and New Form of Femininity**

### **8.1 Introduction**

Cultural notions of gender are constituted and elaborated in the spheres of social reproduction and production, and are necessarily seen in the livelihood activities of households. The social construction of gender relation occurs through processes which occur on a daily basis in the practices which develop in the peasant villages (Radcliffe, 1986).

In this thesis we have seen the situation of female headed household in terms of headship, livelihood and different forms of capital. In doing so, female heads have seen getting poor recognition in terms of headship and difficulties in diversifying their households. Their social capital is also discussed from different perspective and presented as it depends the norms of the society and the reciprocity nature of the specific capital.

Based on these points important gender issues are taken out and discussed to help us show and reflect on contemporary gender practices. One central premise of this analysis is that differences between men and women are socially and culturally shaped, and that this accounts for the diversity of behaviour associated with each gender. Thus, the social and relational settings that create gendered behaviour become particularly important focal points. In this chapter, the construction of gender is studied in a context where female headed households are in a way unwelcomed phenomenon and femininity is challenged. A headship is both a responsibility and a means of exercising freedom, allowing the researcher to study the different picture of female headship in one setting, and giving a more complete picture of women's practical concern.

This chapter is presented as a summary form of identifying gender related issues that have been discussed in the previous chapters. In fact, by presenting gender related issues it tries to answer one of the research questions: How does female household heads challenge the meaning of femininity? The first part tries to see practical facts regarding gender relation in Bati by bringing lively arguments from focus group discussions and in-depth interviews. By showing how marriage is arranged and what basic division of labour between men and women looks like, this part explains how women passively live out the cultural practices, while men are defending their necessity and naturalness. The second part tries to show gender practices that female household heads are raising for negotiation or working toward bringing change. In

this part, the attempts made by female household heads to get out culturally driven economic dependency are discussed. The third part discusses how these practices can be seen in relation to Bourdieu's discussion of gender and social change.

## **8.2. Issues on Gender Relations**

### **8. 2. 1 Headship**

It has been shown in the different chapters of the thesis that certain types of activities like heading a household, ploughing, ox fattening, transient migration, and participation in qäbälé are left mainly to men. A number of justifications are given for this: men are physically strong; they are capital accumulators, etc. On the other hand, the identification of women as dependents and capital recipients has prevented them from exercising leadership roles, participating in ploughing, ox fattening, raising of camels, marketing and capital creation. For instance, in Bati heading a family or household is considered as the ultimate role of a man. Their economic efficiency and physical strength coupled with the socially recognised value equip men to lead their household. As pointed out by women interviewees in chapter five, the headship role of men is socially recognised and legitimate. Ayelech, a widow female head said, “How on earth can a woman head her household like a man? How can she organise the reproductive and productive activities as a whole and head her house, unless she is forced?” Her idea is shared by other female head, who claimed that it is really very difficult and tough for women to lead a household in a situation where they cannot use their labour freely to produce food. This idea as shown in chapter six has emanated from the deep rooted sexual division of labour that a woman cannot plough land and feed her household. Sara and Negat, female household heads with access to land argued that if they were as strong as men to plough and allowed to participate much in outside household matters they could get good amount of production and lead their household property. According to them, they are heading their household because they don’t have other option. Similarly, as said by most male household heads a female who is heading her household is one among the unfortunate women. It is widely believed among men and women that If the woman were fortunate enough she could get the support of a husband and would not be forced to do men’s activity. Both men and women have doubts on women’s headship capability. The women interviewees including the female heads consider headship as something like a curse that is imposed on them. They put inability to get access to means of living and efficient labour as limiting factors for headship. For instance, during in-depth interview both land owners and landless female household heads expressed their headship status as a necessary evil, which they are forced to shoulder. Enat, a landless female head argued, “It can be said that I am the head of the household, but except adding burden I benefited nothing out of it

and I came across no one to recognize my effort.” Her idea was also supported in many of the in-depth interviews. Negat, a land owner female head said,

Like male household heads I have land and decided on it independently. But how can I exercise my freedom in a situation where I am restricted to exercise my utmost effort. I cannot plough by myself, I cannot freely socialize with my neighbours, I cannot get labour support from the community... so what is the value of my headship?

This implies that the headship status demands something they don't have. For instance, when asked about how they perceived their headship status female heads said that they have never tried ploughing while heading their household. Social sanctions on female ploughing forced them to find a share cropper and they had been badly treated by them. They are forced to give half of their annual cultivation to the share cropper because they are a female and don't have male labour to support them. Being a female head might be a minus in this situation – trying to participate in “men's job” would make it even worse. Women have to face the reality that the elements headship demands are closely connected to the dominant idea of masculinity in their culture. Headship is a position that seems to demand some extra qualities that men have. If the masculine characteristics of headship are transferred to female farmers, the women themselves stand against it. Selam, a female head with access to land, said

Headship and ploughing are connected with recognition and physical strength. The community expect you to be tough yourself when your job is tough. You ought to be tough in human relations too. But I have never felt such recognition, as they don't want to recognize how I am struggling with different activities. They want us to leave the position.

This implies that headship is given a symbolic value and attached to masculine character. The masculine characters are taken for granted to be fulfilled by male heads. Those heads who failed to fulfil the requirement also lack the symbolic capital that gives them recognition.

The arguments raised regarding headship show that the culture associates maleness with some kind of ‘power’ that enables them to be engaged in the hard work (animal husbandry, fattening of ox, ploughing, etc.) and a force that can protect the family from any attack. Such power in one way or another enables the men to have recognized livelihood assets, like human capital (men are able to farm but females can

take part in supplementary works). It has also enabled them to have economic capital (through transfer of land to the male child), and social capital (the representation of men in many institutions and social gatherings). Thus, the ability to own important livelihood assets gives them economic and social power that is well recognized in the society. For instance, the availability of farm land and livestock for farming plays an important role in securing crop production. Unlike women, men can use their own labour to work on their farm and reduce additional costs that affect their income level.

On the other hand, the concept of headship tells us that women are not able to exercise headship with all social recognition. Rather, women have been given mainly the role of managing household chores. Even after getting married, men keep on deciding on important matters. Some female heads pointed out that they used to get controlled in some matters. However, they mentioned that organizing both household and outside matters is a new phenomenon that they are facing. Low acceptance of “female headship” by the society also affects the level of their effort to win livelihood demand of their households. As shown in chapter five, poor reputations of female household heads among the society also becomes another predicament toward effectively running their responsibility. Tendency of winning the game in every practice requires ability to have the needed capital specific to the game. Capital is a representation of power. In Bati men possess the capital that facilitates their opportunity for success, while women have minimal participation in “men’s activity” that allow them to increase their capital. Lack of capital in one way or another therefore puts them in a lesser position to win the game and get recognition for their position. This relates to Bourdieu’s understanding of social reality as arbitrary, contestable and compelling. For Bourdieu, position taking (or ‘stance’) is closely related to the positioning of the actor in the social field: ‘Both spaces, that of objective positions and that of stances must be analyzed together, treated as “two translations of the same sentence” (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 105). Accordingly, headship calls for many things for its existence, among all cultural capital takes the dominant place. Cultural capital according to Bourdieu is related to socially recognized ability. Lamont and Lareau (1988:156) proposed a useful definition that distils Bourdieu’s most compelling argument. “Cultural capital is “institutionalized, i.e., widely shared, high status cultural signals (attitudes, preferences, formal knowledge, behaviours, goals, and credentials) used for social and cultural exclusion and privilege.” Cultural capital is not, then, just a general resource available and valuable to everyone; it is largely the property of specific groups, groups that benefit because “their” particular cultural signals, not others, are rewarded. Bourdieu insists that the evaluative criteria are socially biased, despite their “natural,” taken-for-granted status. In the case of Bati, therefore, even if it is difficult to find cultural capital that go in line

with Bourdieu's explanation of the socially biased criteria, in the thesis we have seen the practice that favour men over women for the headship status. Men are allowed to change their virtue and skill into knowledge and to exercise their headship freely whereas females are expected to look for the helping hand of men to fulfil their livelihood and head their household. As it was shown in chapter four, elders who are endowed with power to mediate the society decide in favour of males; they uphold the subordinate role of women and submission of female heads to the will of their in-laws than pursuing their own life. In this regard the evaluative criteria are gender biased that associate the task of one group of the sex with specific activity, or that reserve social field of practice for men, from which women are customarily excluded.

### **8.2.2 Cattle Management and Marketing**

The other sector in which variation of gender practice is observed is farm animal management and marketing. As indicated in chapter five, men and women have specific socially recognized tasks. Women's restriction to household activities allows them to have some involvement in animal husbandry, whereas men, taken to be physically and culturally fit for farming activity, have more association with ox and other big farming animals.

Putting the case as a normal condition, many of the female head interviewees pointed out that they have much to do with poultry and cattle raising unlike the men. The association of women with this specific activity urges us to see the rationale behind. Female heads argued that in many cases females are given a responsibility of taking care of small animals and their products like chicken, sheep, goat, calf and milking cows, churning milk and selling eggs. They have also mentioned that even if small girls are also going out to look after cattle, the main responsibility is given to the male child. According to reading from the Oromo ethnography, earlier times milking cows was the task of men and women were responsible only for preserving and managing milk; however with declining of herd size and production of milk, men abandoned this activity (Dejene, 2010; Jewlan, 2004). Women interviewees also mentioned that the size of the animals coupled with less management problems enabled them to have close relation to this activity. It also enabled them to have an absolute right to use the sell from such animals and their products like egg, butter, etc. When asked why they have had unlimited right in managing this activity, wives' focus group discussants said it is because women are considered capable of undertaking the task, unlike some other activities.



Our task is mainly confined to home and we can easily take care of them, taking care of such animals and managing the products doesn't need big space and skill. (Wf<sub>1</sub>)

I don't think that it is only issue of space or technique but we are more affiliated with small and female animals. For instance I prefer to milk cows than taking care of oxen. Similarly I believe that hens are created for us (females). We know how to deal with them; they will also help us to fulfil the immediate need of the family. (Wf<sub>2</sub>)

How do you fulfil the immediate need from it? (Researcher)

Men don't bother about the sale of hens and eggs, you see! They don't want us to nag them for every penny; at least they allow us to cover some needs from the sale of such things. Do you think that married women request their husbands to buy cosmetics and coffee? No, they cover it from the sale of small animals and their products. (Wf<sub>3</sub>)

I think our husbands know that we cannot get enough amount of money from the sale of chicken, egg, or butter. That is why they let us decide on this issue, for instance if the estimated sale of butter is more than 20 birr, they will take care of it otherwise we are free to decide on it. (Wf<sub>4</sub>)

Have you ever seen a man selling egg and butter in the market? No, it is because it is not men's activity. We farm the hens and get the eggs; we also make the butter from the milk so men don't want to interfere in this matter (Wf<sub>5</sub>)

The above argument illustrates that there is consensus in such division of labour. For instance, women know that "their needs" like cosmetics, coffee.... are supposed to be covered through their own sale and they are keeping on working to preserve the status quo. On the other hand, men let the women to concentrate on such activities and use the money up to some limit. However, if the sale excels some level it will be under the control of men and this fact is known by the two parties. As indicated by key informants, there are some proverbs that indicate such practices. To give example from the Oromo folk proverb: *Dhirti re'een elmitu, garuu waan baatu hin walllltu* (men don't milk goats, but still are not ignorant of how much milk the goats afford). This practice represents how the symbolic representation of rural economy in the study area affects the relation of men and women.

Similarly the focus group discussion with the male heads shows that men are responsible for taking care of and deciding on big farm animals and their products. When asked how family members are taking care of

farm animals, almost all male heads agreed that there is clear division of responsibility between the male head and the wife.

When we got married, my wife had an ox from her parents but it is me who has been responsible for taking care of both of our oxen. She might sometimes look after them in the field; otherwise I take care of them. When we decide to sell cows, it is me who is taking it to the market. I negotiate and sell them with a good price. (Mf<sub>8</sub>)

It is not questionable that the man is the absolute decision maker on the use of oxen and camels, but the females can work on other animals. Sometimes my son helps me in this regard otherwise my wife knows nothing about the price of an ox. I feel that the oxen are like my sons, they are the source of my livelihood. I could not farm without them. If I lose them I will become like a female. My fate will be to stay at home to look after chicken (long laughter). (Mf<sub>9</sub>)

Well, all household members are beneficiaries of the product of farm animals, thus we have to share responsibilities according to our potential. How can a woman spend her day with oxen? Can she plough? No. how can a man spend his time looking after chicken? Can he tolerate to be idle the whole day? No. (Mf<sub>10</sub>)

As men, we have been taking care of oxen from our childhood. Even now while we farm we are mostly accompanied by our sons. They carry the farm tools to the field. They also learn how to use the oxen for farming and their needs. But if the women go for farming they cannot do it, I have even a doubt that they know exactly the name of each farming tools. (Mf<sub>11</sub>)

The above argument shows the existing symbolic value of farm animals. For the men taking care of chicken is considered as an activity performed by an idle person. Even, the extent of not recognizing the money from the sale of small animals and their products by the men shows the insignificant value given to such animals and the women, who are the immediate beneficiaries from the sale. Basically, taking care of chickens and preparing homemade butter is considered by both men and women as time taking. But the men believe that women have the time.

On the other hand, big animals and their outputs are given better value. For instance ox ownership symbolizes maleness, ability and security. Everything that is associated with physical strength and mechanical skills is given masculine qualities. Ox management is therefore a strong masculine symbol.

This is because ox ownership and management serves as a symbol of masculinity; it becomes a vital source of masculine gender identity. Ox is part of the picture that men show of themselves and it tell us that the persons are in possession of qualities required of a man. If you do not possess these qualities, you are not a real man. Ox and land confirm men's distance from women and establish their connections to other men. Men demonstrate physical strength and technical skills by using oxen.

This practice creates a boundary between men and women. Both parties are seen comfortably practicing their specific tasks. Female household heads put their physical weakness and lack of experience as a reason for not working with big animals. This implies that they accept the existing situation and concentrate on small animals. On the other hand, men emphasize their ability to secure the livelihood of their households and transfer such cultural capital to their sons as a point to defend their position. Even though it seems that women inability to participate in ox management represents their weak position, they are also defending their ability by participating in cattle raising activities. They prefer to concentrate on small farm animals, taking their position and the human labour requirements into consideration. This implies that even though women are not given a chance to exercising their freedom of choice, they are working in the sector they think they can be productive.

### **8.2.3. Marriage**

As shown in previous chapters, marriage in the study wäräda is basically arranged by parents, but remarriage is mainly done by the consent of the couple, a female is expected to get married in her teenage years. As such marriage has really different meaning for men and women. Women want to get married to get access to important livelihood resources, social respect and for reproductive purpose. On the other hand, men want to get married both for reproductive purpose and securing cultural and symbolic power. The language of sexuality in Oromo emphasizes the importance of masculine potency or virility in marriage. Thus, the word *ulffaayuu* (becoming pregnant, passive) is used for women, while *ulfessuu* (impregnating, active) is used for men. In his writing of the Oromo culture, Legesse (1973: 18-19) also stated that a man gets married for the purpose of raising children and maintaining the continuity of his line of descent. This issue was raised in focus group discussion with male and female heads who supports this argument. According to men focus group discussants, when a man is capable enough to breed children and feed his household he should form his family and extend his line of descent.

How can a young man stay in his parents' house while he can farm and support his family? (Mf<sub>1</sub>)

A man should get married to be stable and defend both his own and his parents' house. (Mf<sub>2</sub>)

Marriage is very important for a man for the sake of securing the next generation. He has to marry a woman from good family and live a stable life and secure the continuation of his line of descent.

(Mf<sub>3</sub>)

Here the discussants explain what is expected of a young man, who is expected to render economic and social support to his parents. These two aspects (economic and social) are important means for sustaining the livelihood of the households. The discussants have also mentioned that marriage serves as a means of getting a stable life, stability in terms of getting a partner that helps him in both the reproductive and community activities. The discussants' position to defend the importance of men for the livelihood security of households explains how such perspective is well inculcated in the mind of the society and how they are working towards perpetuating the practice.

On the other hand the reason for marriage formation by the women was presented as a means to get safe place to secure economic means and cultural recognition. As discussed in chapter five, parents prepare their girls for marriage from their childhood. Both men and women focus group discussants argued that in their culture females get social recognition when they get married. According to the discussants, if the husband is a good farmer and rich, the female will automatically get respect among the neighbours, they treat her in a good manner. They further said that, unless she is sick or have some problem, a young girl should get married; otherwise it is a shame for her parents. It is also pointed out that marriage is a means of living a secured life, economically and socially. They also mentioned that it is hardly possible to find a female who lives a socially acceptable life unless she gets married as early as possible. The above arguments show that the women themselves have accepted the fact that marriage is one of the purposes of living and a means of getting livelihood. In this sense the habitus that the individuals grown up with and developed through time become factor to influence their activity. The arguments that reflect the habitus of the society also imply that marriage has a social capital aspect that married women can benefit from. The social respect and secured life are some of the expressed points that can be accessed through marriage.

In order to maintain a certain distance from masculinity, the women also have to ensure that their activities do not make their men less masculine. If he is interpreted as being less masculine, they themselves become less feminine. They are judged as a woman by the kind of husband they have, just as they are judged as a man by their wife's activities. The two genders thus confirm each other's dignity and

identity. The expressions of such a confirmation are multiple and more or less visible. This practice, in turn, has made women dependent on men's labour for their livelihood. This makes men responsible for farming, representing the household in different meetings and community works, and serving as a means of socialization. In most matters, headship goes with maleness, which represents the ability to lead the family in both economic and social aspects. The rationale associated with the formation of marriage, i.e., considering men as means of securing a living and livelihood resources and considering women as a means of complementing reproductive activity, is seen as challenging livelihood choices of female headed households.

#### **8.2.4. Divorce**

Unlike most traditional Oromo societies in Ethiopia, divorce is a widely practiced phenomenon in Bati (BWAO, 2008). Even though there are many reasons behind divorce, the reason in the formation of marriage plays a big role in the occurrence of frequent divorce in Bati. In spite of the demands of the Civil Code<sup>21</sup>, equal division of property during divorce, the customary law operates in favour of men. According to female household heads, women are seen as a property to be owned (get married) at any time and to be thrown out (divorced) at any moment.

Divorce can be initiated for different reasons and both parties have the right to initiate it. However, an interesting fact that has been seen in this research is, despite the right to initiate a divorce, the divorcee female is facing many problems and forced to pay fine or repay the *Meher*. As understood from the field work such practice arises from the deep-rooted understanding among the society that once the female got married she has to live according to the will of the husband. Otherwise, attempts to withdraw from the marriage at any time may create denial of access to land and livestock. Whereas if the man wants to initiate the divorce he can do it any time without prior notice. His doing is taken as ordinary and common. As understood from both male and female key informants, as a practice divorce is not encouraged in the society but once it is committed the divorced woman becomes liable and susceptible to further problems. According to this study, a wife is considered as a property of her husband and is vulnerable to customary rules. She is given to marriage as early as possible because she is expected to support her husband; he needs her to give birth to a baby, to prepare food and arrange household matters, otherwise it is assumed that he cannot lead a life without a woman. The interview with both male and female interviewee pointed

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<sup>21</sup> The 1960 civil code is still in force

out that in the society the number of men who are living alone either after their first marriage or before getting married is very less compared to women. This, as discussed with the interviewee is because the males believe that they cannot live without the females. It is not expected that he can prepare food, he even cannot take care of children.” The proverb that is widely used in the society, in this regard, *Mana onaa mannaa, mana niitii ontuu wayya* (Better a hollow wife than a desolate house) shows how important it is to have a wife for a man. As some writers argue, this is a way of esteeming a wife’s nurturing quality for the sake of integrating women into the patriarchal structure (Bartky, 1996; Sarhuony, 2001). Thus due to the complementarities of spousal roles, both husband and wife need to remarry upon divorce.

A woman who gets divorced can marry again, but if she has no property and is not young it is very challenging for her to get a second husband. Reflecting on this point, male household heads agreed that if the new wife is not young, she cannot be easily manoeuvred by the husband. Explaining this idea one male interviewee said, “If my wife cannot give birth to a baby or is not active to handle household and farm activities, why should I marry her?” Another male interviewee also said, “I believe that in most cases a divorced woman has some kind of problem that her ex-husband is not comfortable with, so how would I marry her, at least she should be young and capable or have some asset that supplements the household income.” Female heads also said they need to stay in marriage and they initiate divorce when they cannot tolerate the mistreatment from their husbands. “I have tolerated my husband for long years; finally I decided to divorce him knowing all the bad treatment I would get from the society” (Zahara).

In this regard we can see the experience of female household heads who have initiated divorce from two perspectives. On the one hand it can be seen that despite the existing sanction, women have got a chance to decide on the fate of their marriage. On the other hand, this chance is exercised by few women. As it has been said in previous chapters marriage is operated on the principle that the male is the head and decision maker on everyday activities, whereas the female’s role is limited to domestic sphere (household matters). As such, women have developed a disposition (*habitus*) that considers their role as subordinate to the male and a disposition that puts the male as the ultimate source of livelihood. Such dispositions make the females submissive to their marriage and protect the customary rule. However, the customary rules do also respect the right of the women to decide on their fate, but it comes with a lot of problems that go to the extent of pushing out the female heads from their home place. This shows women’s (subjects) freedom in this case is overshadowed by the day to day dispositions that keep the customary rules. As put by Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992: 199), “the scope of human freedom... is not large” They recognize that

‘there exist dispositions to resist’ but insist on the need to examine under what conditions these dispositions are socially constituted, effectively triggered, and rendered politically efficient (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 81).

On the other hand the resistance by some women against such customary rules can be seen as a step that moves the concept of doing gender one step further. As put by Bourdieu, change of disposition or habitus influences game of the field. The research shows that those who own land from their parents or prior marriage or who determine to defend their right of division of property are initiating divorce. They are determined to face any challenge that comes because of divorce. Factors like economic position and human capital are giving them power to move forward to exercise their right. According to Bourdieu’s analogy, the feel of the game works best when the players possess the needed capital and disposition, but when there is a change of capital and disposition it also reverses the game of the field. This implies that habitus is not exclusively deterministic but can be changed in progress.

### **8.3. Resisted (negotiated) gender relation**

#### **8.3.1 Exit as a strategy**

According to Bourdieu, the reproductive activity of women, including mothering and other domestic activities are potentially transferred from generation to generation and enable women to get cultural capital, but he failed to show us the association of such aspects of habitus with institutionalized form of work or other dimension of further endeavours. Bourdieu’s theories are realist in that they force us to understand the difficulties of change, including, in the sphere of gender, the collusion of some women (Krais, 1993). But when we come to the practice of female household heads in the study wäräda, we can see some form of progress in terms of capital transformation. For instance, even though getting into marriage is a necessary requirement for females, female heads would like their young and unmarried girls to go abroad and work. Some of the female heads expressed their view that living according to the culture is now becoming very challenging for the young generation. They insist that they don’t want to let their daughters to wait for marriage, knowing that getting access to land is becoming very difficult. Fetele, who has sent her two daughters to Jeddah, said that she wanted to see her daughters living a good life in Bati, but she has a doubt on their chance of getting basic means of livelihood and economic freedom.

I don't want to see them being dependant on their husbands and get abandoned in the future. These days the amount of land inherited from parents is becoming too small to support the family's economic need. I wish they can work abroad and get money to buy land and livestock for themselves and the household too.

Her idea was also repeatedly raised by some female heads as a means of securing the economic freedom of their daughters. As understood from the female heads, sending daughters to Arab countries might potentially be interpreted by the society as inability to get marriage demand. The female head also mentioned that it is certain that their daughters are the second in the row of marriage choices compared to daughters of male headed households (respected households - See Chapter seven). The men are also looking for girls from rich or otherwise respected families, a criterion the female head daughters don't fulfil. However, the female heads insisted that despite the cause, they know that sending daughters abroad is rewarding; it will give at least economic freedom for themselves and their daughters.

On the other hand, as understood from interview with key informants in Bati Sheria Court, the need for going abroad or nearby cities by married women is becoming the cause of many divorces and growth of female headed households. The experience of newly divorced female heads has also shown that they prefer leaving Bati than going back again to marriage as a coping mechanism of their livelihood ( Azeb, Fre, Mulat). For instance, Azeb, a newly divorced female head has told the researcher that for the moment she is thinking of going to Saudi Arabia and making money. Even though her parents are pushing her to get married again, she is resisting their proposal and is preparing to go abroad. The experiences of daughters of Ziad, Fetle, Berehane and Zahara (See Chapter five) also tell us that a considerable number of women have left agricultural area to avoid replicating the lives of their mothers. For these women, exit becomes a strategy. It becomes unrealistic to conclude that such women would definitely get better means of livelihood after leaving the rural agriculture. But this illustrates their reaction against the ideal culture or long established disposition. On the other hand, it shows that the women are exercising their right to choose economic capital than social capital, which they could have got through marriage.



### **8.3.2 Sending Children to School**

Schooling is a new phenomenon to the study area. None of the interviewed female heads are literate. They do have no exposure to formal education. Their current and future life is depending on agricultural activities and keeping societal norms. However, majority of the female heads said that they doubt that they would get land to inherit to their children in the future, but they suggested that going to school may enable their children to get better skill that would serve as a source of livelihood. For the female heads education could be one means to minimize potential problems, hoping that education might provide them with the opportunity of looking for other livelihood means.

Female heads are aware of that refusing marriage and sending their daughters to school is a practice against the culture of their community, but they think that it is one among the few means that they could help their children win their future life. According to Selam and Mekedes, taking the fertility of land and means of farming in Bati, having a land itself doesn't guarantee the security of their children, as a result they have decided to educate both their sons and daughters. When the researcher asked them how they would overcome the response of the society, they mentioned that even if it is very important to live according to the tradition they remember any help they got from community in their difficult times and they are now ready to face any response from the society. For them marriage is becoming unsecure especially in terms of property ownership. But, they agree that education would create an opportunity for their daughters to be capital accumulators. They are using the national goal of gender equality on girls' education to improve the position of females. Their strict decision regarding denying their girls' marriage and sending them to school allows us to identify situations where marriage no longer seems to be a good bargain for women; it might in fact be seen as a source of continuing (but tolerable) hardship.

### **8.3.3 Refusal of Remarriage**

As marriage is one of the preconditions for the accusation of economic resources, females are seen looking for second or third marriage, however as it was clearly seen in chapter six some female household heads are expressing their refusal for remarriage. Some of the female heads remember how they were badly treated in resource allocation during and after marriage and they don't want this to be repeated in their future life. Female household heads who have property (land and/or livestock) and younger sons are uncertain about what would be the fate of their property and decision making role if they will get marry.

They are also not willing to put their autonomy and freedom for negotiation. The female heads made note that the society prefers married women than them and they are sure that their dignity and respect in the society might not be the same as married women but they know that they can live well from their economic freedom. This implies that the female heads are looking for their economic freedom over the social respect. They mention that marriage could be one means of getting the social respect, but at this critical point they prefer to remain as heads of their household and enjoy their independence. As mentioned by the female heads the fight to reach to this conclusion is very tough, they compromised many offers, but they managed to look far ahead behind their decision for freedom. As put by Moore (1994: 139), "It is not just economic hardship that has put pressure on conjugal relations, but the changing nature of expectations, self-worth and agency."

The availability of financial asset granted some of the female heads to manoeuvre around such choice; however, those who don't have any reliable property to lead their livelihood are still looking for second marriage. This implies that conscious actions and decisions are not independent acts rather they are dependent on many factors, among which economic aspect takes the critical part. The female household head's bargaining power emerges from the assets they control, but not from the customary law. Thus, even if refusal of remarriage by some of the female heads implies definite action against the norm of the society, it doesn't tell us that they are fully dependent on their own labour and capability to lead their livelihood. They are still looking for the labour of men, either as a share cropper, or social helper in many of their livelihood activities.

#### **8.3.4. Standing against the Sheria Law**

The division of labour that is expressed in terms of sexual difference demands the women to dominate the productive (household) activities and allow the men to consider work outside home. This gives great interdependence between womanhood and domestic activity and dependant personality. Whereas, despite such strong dependency nature of women on the will of the man, these days female heads are observed taking dispute with their ex-husbands to the qābālē. As it was seen in chapter five, despite all the sanction they are facing, some females are seen taking their case to the court. Marriage problems are customarily solved by elders. As put by a married female interviewee, "Whenever a dispute occurred the elders interfere to solve their problem. As far as they are concerned none of their problems have been solved properly but once the elder interfere and warned they submit to their word." Married woman also argued that even though they know that their judgment may not be fair, they prefer to abide by the rule than

going to the court. They pointed out that, these days some women are prosecuting their husbands or ex-husbands in the court; these women are totally discarded and hated by the society. But, whenever they think of accusing their husband in the court, it always comes to their mind that they will face the same problem like the ones who accused their husbands before.

Prosecuting a man by a woman especially for the sake of marital relationship is considered as going against the Sheria Law and creates a negative impact on the life of the female heads; it might create exclusion from different social engagements too. According to the Sheria Law, couples who are not happy in their marriage should settle the problem through Sheria Court, but going to the qäbälé or secular court is condemned by the society and religious leaders. Nevertheless, female heads expressed their feeling that even though it is considered as something against the norm of the society, they are sure that they cannot get equal share of their property through the sheria court. They said going through the secular court is the last option that they manage to get back their property ownership and means of livelihood. For instance Zahara, a divorced female head said,

Everybody in the neighbourhood can simply recognise how I am living in the village; it is all because I sued my ex-husband in the court. Some of the women in the women's affairs office praise my doing, but the neighbours don't take it as a good measure. For me what matters most is what I have achieved, for the time being it enabled me at least to get a share of my land and I am still waiting for the final say.

Here the most striking point is that masculinity and femininity start to lose most of their ties to the submission of the rule of the game. The submissive and subordination roles are no longer primary source of identity for some female household heads. Female household heads are becoming active in struggling to secure their right and right related activities have become important sources of their identity.

## 8.4. Discussion

In the study area, the rigid cultural constraints that protect women human development are apparently influencing the possession of cultural and economic capital. For instance, some female heads spoke in an authoritative manner, but they were unable to ‘speak with authority’ because their thoughts are not authorized by the society. This is not because it didn’t conform to the rule of the country, but because they were not authorized to be actors in their headship matters, in this way any authority they claim is effectively de-authorized.

Bourdieu pointed out that social practice is a practice of classifying; it is a practice ordered and structured according to systems of classification, one of the most powerful classifications is that of gender. Bourdieu emphasizes that gender is a construct that differentiates according to the antagonistic and complementarily principles and operates as a highly complex, differentiated and vital symbolic order. In masculine domination (2001) Bourdieu notes that the gender classification refers, in the last instance, to the division of sexual labour, both in the act of sex and in sexual reproduction. Masculine domination, for Bourdieu, is nothing other than ‘a somatisation of the social relations of domination’ (Bourdieu, 2001: 23). Yet gender differentiation is perceived not as a cultural pattern but entirely as a product of nature - as “natural”. For Bourdieu, the social division of labour between the genders fix itself in the habitus as deeply and firmly as possible, and, by pretending to be the ‘natural’ order of the world. It- like no other social structure- makes us forget that it is itself a social structure produced and reproduced by humans themselves. Butler (1997) and McCall (1992) argue that for Bourdieu gender operates as a hidden form of capital, and as a disposition, an asymmetric form of capital, As McCall notes:

An attractive woman who must interact with men at work may be perceived by heterosexual men as a distraction at best, incompetent at worst, or even a potential legal threat if she were to charge sexual harassment or sex discrimination, an attractive man however escapes connotations of incompetence and may even consider it his duty to enliven the work place with his stimulating presence (McCall, 1992).

In this case gendered dispositions are hidden behind the nominal construction of categories, such as occupation and femininity, enabling the misrecognition of gender. In line with Bourdieu’s argument, misrecognition occurs when symbolic capital has been acquired by a successful act of legitimating which itself veils the social processes and structures that are necessary to existence. Thus, femininity is

misrecognized as a natural, essential personality disposition. Adkin (2002) also asserts that access to the capital of gender is indeed not universal as only some are able to convert gender into a resource.

The day to day routine of female household heads in the study area explains that they are struggling with both living according to the culture and winning their household livelihood by developing different mechanism. As found out in this study there is a big variation among the female heads themselves and the male heads too. On the one hand there is a broader sanction by males who don't want to accept headship status of females and give them a chance to exercise their right. On the other hand, there are female heads who accept the existing situation and don't feel that they can make change and decide to remain dormant and accept the association of headship and maleness. At the extreme there are female heads who actively participate and try to actively exercise their headship status using capital they owned differently and the right they are granted constitutionally. In this case we can see that female heads are trying to defend their right on one side and sustain the subordination on the other side.

When we see the emerging activities of female headed households we can see that there are gradual changes that contradict with long standing ideology. Their trait of subordination is challenged by embracing concepts like concluding divorce in secular court, sending children to school, resisting remarriage, etc. Had it been the case that all forms of gender relation are natural, it would be difficult to experience such change of view. In doing gender both women and men are seen from different perspective. As defined by West and Zimmerman 'doing gender is routine, methodical and recurring accomplishment' which is embedded in everyday interaction (1987: 126). West and Zimmerman recommended that the focus of analysis should shift from gender as 'achievement' to 'doing gender', and therefore to 'the activities of managing situated conduct in light of normative conceptions of attitudes and activities appropriate for one's sex category' (1987: 127). Here, Bourdieu's idea of gender as a role doesn't account for the work involved in bringing gender in everyday activities, which is core to West and Zimmerman's (1987) idea of 'doing gender'. While West and Zimmerman emphasize change and agency, Bourdieu focuses on dominance, structure and stability. Of course Bourdieu's concept of habitus brings into focus the elements of process and interaction as well as the omnipresence of gender in all social situations. However, he sees the operation of gender dispositions contained by given sexual assignments.

The habitué is precisely this immanent law... Laid down in each agent by his (sic) earliest upbringing which is a precondition not only for the coordination of processes but also for the practices of coordination (Bourdieu, 1977: 81).

Bourdieu observed some change in gender dynamics in certain restricted sectors in contemporary developed societies, especially among the most advantaged social categories, who have gained the most from the critical efforts of the feminist movement. These changes include women's greater opportunity for education and waged labour, greater access to productive activities due to postponement of marriage and procreation, more divorce and less marriages. According to him these have helped to break the 'doxa', resulting in the attainment of different 'sexual dispositions' within the family. Yet he also recognized that, other things being equal, the positions occupied by women are less favoured (Bourdieu, 2001: 92). Relatively speaking, women are paid less, mainly concentrated in the less stratum and more insecure jobs. However, despite these changes in doing gender, experience of a 'sexually' ordered social order results in constancy of the habitus (sexual dispositions) minimal change, where Bourdieu noted discrepancies between declaration and practices (Silvia, 2005). The practice in Bati also shows a lagged adaptation process between change in beliefs and practices.

### **Can we call it a change?**

This chapter shows that femininity is constructed from bits of masculinity and traditional femininity, thus illustrating the contradiction in the shaping of gender. We find both breaks and continuity. One may say that negotiating femininity is very compound. Keeping on heading their household by rejecting marriage proposal combined with waiting for male labour for ploughing is a sign of this complexity - a kind of mix that doesn't go very well together. Further, the analysis has shown that gender is a dynamic phenomenon. Femininity is neither perfect nor achieved once and for all. Masculinity is seen as being as dynamic and variable as society itself. As many feminists agree the living conditions, practices, views and struggles of women today are not reflected at all in Bourdieu's text. Rather Kraus (2006) puts that Bourdieu's work "paints the picture of a gender order so completely doxic and closed that it seems almost totalitarian." This was well presented in the social order of Bourdieu's choice of Kabylia- a society with a gender order "at once exotic- as enclosed and permanent, as though constituting a closed and perfectly ordered universe"(Bourdieu, 2001: 5). The pre-existing and perfectly ordered nature of social practice of

Bati resembles the practice of Kabylia, but when we see the practice of gender in Bati, despite the existing pre-ordered way of thinking, there is also a way that allows the women to speak their mind. The different forms of refusal and resistance implicitly or explicitly explain how the females are not comfortable with the system. They are teaching themselves a way to go out from the system, which can be taken as a first step to show a change of disposition. In this regard they may not be successful in fulfilling their entire dream but it shows how they are determined enough to move the long standing rule of practice into another direction.

While talking about modern society, Bourdieu pointed out that modern society is far from being in a state of 'pre-established harmony', with perfectly orchestrated practices, where the actions of the individual agents, mediated through their habitus together smoothly like the times of a well tuned machine (Bourdieu, 2000: 143). Here he described modern society as a social world with complex structures and divergent life worlds. Even though the life style and system of Bati society doesn't fully represent the life of modern society, from the experience of different kinds of female headed households and their interaction with the society and institutions and impositions they face, we can see that there are various social differentiations that push them to undergo simultaneous processes of stagnation and of social change. The different customary rules of marriage, divorce, division of labour, etc. show there are commonly well understood role for each sexes and disposition among the society - a disposition that shapes the identity of that specific society. The social role in this regard is pre-existence transferred through generation. This also means that individuals must necessarily experience these norms, values and roles as an externally forced and detained identity. However, the eternalness of such pre-existing norms, values and roles is challenged. Unlike the Kabylia society, this represents how the Bati society is exercising their way-out that allows them to practice their right of resentment.

Bati society is ruled by constitutional law. As it has been clearly put in chapter two, the Ethiopian constitution respects the equality of women and men in many aspects. As such women are as free as men to divorce, to decide on their marriage and to own land. Such constitutional provisions coupled with failing to manage to get 'decent means of livelihood has led the female household heads to start resisting the pre-existing playing box. They are getting into a field of open struggle, whereby acting not only as objects but also as social subjects, agents who act in their own rights and in defiance of their own interest. When we see the demand for change for each female household heads, it remains only in their hand and

they are experiencing different struggle by their own means, which represents individual endeavour in challenging roles, norms and values. Such kinds of emerging trends serve as relative indicators. The breakdown of complicity between habitus and field is not well explained by Bourdieu, rather he highlights on that possibility of difference of opinion and disjunction is both evidence of and produces change. There is, moreover, differentiation within and across the identity category of gender, and within the experience of gender (Reay, 2001). Such issues are not easily acknowledged in Bourdieu's account of gender because, as McNay argues,

[Bourdieu] significantly underestimates the ambiguities and dissonances that exist in the way that men and women occupy masculine and feminine subject positions . . . masculine and feminine identities are not unified configurations but a series of uneasily situated potentially conflictual subject positions (McNay, 1999: 107–108).

Instead of the metaphor of 'reflection' to describe the relation of field to habitus, McNay uses 'refraction' to emphasize the non-corresponding forms habitus can take. This is a crucial insight for developing a different analysis of habitus and the differentiated and dispersed effects of the social field; and for understanding the ambiguities and unevenness of gender norms today as women are embedded in and move across diverse social fields. Thus, the unevenness of gender transformation across social classes indicated the importance of Bourdieu's work for theorizing gender.

It has been shown that some female heads increasingly contest the unequal structure of gender relations in Bati society particularly in marriage and headship as they are unwilling to accept the limited opportunities for women to be farmer's wives at early age. While confirming traditional gender positions, O'Hara's (1998) micro-level study may show how gendered power relations operate in everyday life, and how women construct their identity through consent and resistance at the same time.

Bourdieu is mainly charged with having developed a theory that allows little room for social change (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 79-83). While seeing value in habitus for understanding the socialization and reproduction of gender, Arnot (2002) nevertheless identified dangers in working with this concept. She argued that Bourdieu 'offers no account of social change in the cultural arena' (Arnot, 2002: 49), a point that has mainly been and continues to be made about his work (Butler, 1999). In this regard Arnot (2002: 49) argued,



The cultural reproduction of class and sexual identities appears to be a 'deep' unconscious process which, although materially determined, is unlikely to be broken. He seems to discount the possibility of change through recognizing one's own habitus of thought, perception and action, which potentially could lead to a radical programme of action of 'breaking' the sexual and economic divisions of labour instead of just restructure them, such an 'awakening' could only be the product of changed material circumstances, the causes of which remain unspecified.

However, some literatures understand habitus as less tightly deterministic and rigidly presumed, emphasizing more the scope for improvisation and degree of inventiveness alongside the structural and shaping qualities of habitus (McNay, 1999; Ball et al., 2000). Bourdieu himself has defended that 'social fields have their own conventions and rules of the game', the effects of which are uneven producing degrees of continuity and change in habitus (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 96). The field structures and predisposes but at least on Bourdieu's own account, there is space for improvisation; Habitus is 'creative, inventive, but within the limits of its structures' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 19). The creative nature of habitus within the structure itself can be substantiated from one of the widely used proverb in the study *wäräda niitiin dhiirsa mootu olla horn hin gootu* (a woman that dominates her husband will not at all value her neighbours). This shows that there might be some women who are showing "domination" on their husband. According to the work of Disch (1997) this may go to mild objection. As he puts it, in the eye of a person who supports hegemonic masculinity, a wife's mild conformation may be considered as resistance or challenge. But if we deeply see the implication of such proverb, we can see that there is a kind of loop hole that allows the application of dynamism (change of disposition) in the given field.

Despite the general categorization of women as objects in Bourdieu's term we can see a kind of new form of femininity and femaleness in regard to capital possession. As the work of Skeggs (1997) identifies the new form of femininity calls for a question, i.e., What kinds of 'strategies' do women follow and in what circumstances? How is the existence of women as objects- as repositories of capital for someone else-limiting or enabling in terms of their simultaneous existence as capital accumulating subjects? The answer to these questions must be related to historical and cultural contexts, and to the position occupied within the social field. However, the ambivalence that some female heads displayed towards resisting the culture, because of recognition of their subjective position has a potential to point out the emerging sense of

looking for change. The position of female heads in Bati is indeed linked to rules and relations emerging from culture and gender structures that interact with each other in dynamically multifaceted ways. Such conception of social reality helps to highlight the fact that neither these structures nor the positions of female heads are static or unchanging, but are constantly being reconstituted in the very interactions they facilitate. However, routine and regular behaviour patterns do follow from the generalized procedures of actions, which are an outcome of the relational practices and positions of people (Lawson, 1997). But disparities across individuals regarding these practices are apparent and expected, since social positions themselves usually imply hierarchy and segmentation. It is also the case that such a differentiated ascription of rule-governed practices is connected to gender, and other such relations; social positions exist only in relation to these institutional modes. Female heads, therefore, occupy a particular position, one which, though in most instances they are considered as 'not fitting with', is shaped and constituted by their relations with other social positions as well as by other relations and structures.

The experience of female household heads in their interaction with the society tells us that gender is not permanent representation of specific phenomena. The fundamental characteristics of gender are not its presence in specific social situations, but rather its omnipresence in all social situations (West and Zimmermann, 1987). The 'doing gender' concept of West and Zimmermann (1987) is also takes place through the habitus. Because the concept doesn't represent the same thing to everybody universally, it does not even mean the same thing to all individuals in a particular society. Gender is a cultural construct, and women and men are fundamentally cultural constructions.

The obvious fact of biological differences between women and men tells us nothing about the general social significance of those differences: and although human societies all over the world recognize biological differences between women and men, what they make of those differences is extraordinarily variable (Moore, 1994: 70).

The experience of women in general and female headed households in particular are heterogeneous and contradictory, which encompasses subordination of women to the pre-existing social order on the one hand and a sense of freedom in which female household heads bring into being, despite condemnation from the society, on the other hand. For the female headed households the potential conflicts between different concepts of order and ways of behaving raise questions against the taken for granted nature of established practices, which pave the way for the creation of space for resistance and change. This

implies that gender practice is updated and changed over time. As such, unlike the Bourdieu's Kablye society, Bati society is marked by relative complex structure, criteria and social differentiation. Thus, it challenges the pre established harmony between habitus and the social order, which puts the perfect balance between individual action and the gender order suggested by Bourdieu's argument in 'Masculine Domination' (2001) under question.

Despite the emergence of new form of femininity, it seems that the core of the gender system is maintained. The analysis confirms what other studies have also shown: on a relational level, differences between masculinity and femininity are ordered so that feminine is subordinated to the masculine. In a farming context where women are entering men's social positions, femininity is being reconstructed, but in a way that maintains hierarchy. This is particularly visible among female heads who are hiring a share cropper for the farm but heading their household at the same time. The masculine is still the standard, but female heads who own land, oxen and male labour are relatively better in terms of financial capital than other female heads. But, they are not as good as men, because they do not master all ox and land management, or operations. They do not have the technical knowledge of ploughing and important aspects of the decisions are still an area of male provenance. The transformation is, however, distinct on one point: some part of masculine superiority has been challenged from being a most visible and legitimate patriarchal power and pushed to a more covert form of male dominance. Such practice is supported by many feminists authors, who have pointed out that many changes that are perceived as a detraditionalisation of the gender order should be seen less as a dissolution of masculine domination and more as a refashioning of gender in the dominant classes (Fowler, 2003; Adkins, 2004; McRobbie, 2004). In this regard Bourdieu's idea of 'regulated liberties' insist on the specific and historically determinate nature of transformation through an analysis of the variable power relations typifying social practice (Bourdieu, 1991: 102). Regulated liberties are generated through the interaction of the space of object.

'Positions' with the space of 'possible' specific to a given field and through the relations of homology and divergence operating across fields. This dynamic leads to ever more differentiated social relations, or a 'lengthening of circuits of legitimation' that creates a myriad of possibilities for 'invention/autonomy while remaining within the constraints and limits inherent in structure (Bourdieu, 2000: 116).

Female-heads' participation in economic activity and important decisions has not necessarily changed the perception of the 'naturalness' of these women's households or their roles as primary income earners. However, we have seen that there are slight openings that signify the beginning of the struggle while still submitting to the existing structures and their demands. The resistance and struggle imply that they are showing their discontent by introducing new concept in a gradual manner, while abiding to some of the rules. Their resentment may gain very few support from the society which entails that changing a given structure and practice is a long time process. Bourdieu has also tried to show the possibility of gradual change while complying with the given field. Ensuring the autonomy of female- heads requires considering the wider social structures which shape the parameters of their agency. The argument for incorporating social structures into the conceptualization of headship should incorporate social structures, to broaden the methodological boundaries of headship analysis.

## Chapter Nine: Conclusion

This research was inspired by Pierre Bourdieu's work on theory of practice. As mentioned in chapter three, the different interrelated concepts define practice from both structural and agency point of view. Throughout the thesis, issues like habitus and capital were shown as being very important concepts to try to conceptualise the process of social practice in Bati Wäräda. The different capitals that take different forms in different circumstances have also been important explanatory concepts to conceptualise the livelihood activities and negotiation of the studied subjects. As such, this study tried to show how these concepts are integrated and give shape to livelihood of female headed households from gender perspective. The gender concepts that express the relation of male and female in the society are discussed as dispositions that have gradually developed and culturally imposed. Taking this into consideration, female headed households are discussed as based on their causes of formation. The research points out that headship is a position that female headed households have gained from natural and social processes but poorly recognised by the society as a place that female household heads can properly exercise it. It is, thus, practiced and negotiated by female household heads against the deep-rooted conception of gender in Bati. I hope that the present study would feel the gap in the study of female headed households and gender and livelihood in Ethiopia, as it deals with the major reasons and perceptions in relation to how we conceptualise female headed households and what positions they have in a given society and how they negotiate their livelihood and position.

This research argues that the study of female headed households helps to adequately understand the situation of women in general and female household heads in Bati Wäräda, in particular. The study of female headed households, as presented in this research, includes an analysis of female headed household's particular livelihood activities as well as the economic, social and cultural factors and institutions at various levels of analysis that impact upon them. Livelihoods include both economic and non-economic activities and the need to bring together a variety of income, subsistence, and family and community-based activities to sustain a household. For example, as understood from related researches, we know that it has always been difficult for women to meet the needs of a household through reliance on a single activity or income source; however, the various forms this is taking in rural parts of the country, such as Bati, are presented in this study.

Taking the legal provision into consideration, studies pointed out that female household heads have legal right to maintain control over land and freely use their labour and time. Of course this study has also shows that in Bati, female household heads have legal right to have access to land and administer it. However, unlike other studies this study asserts that it is difficult to categorise female headed households into one category and generalise about their access to resources and control over it. According to this study female headed households' way of formation and the attitude of the society toward the formation of each type of female headed households contribute to their difference in access to economic, social and symbolic capital, most importantly to use their labour and time. Economic capital is considered granted to females mainly by good will of males (mostly husbands, occasionally parents and in laws), however this research has also shows that female heads are also exerting efforts in diversifying their means of livelihood. The constitutional right of females as being equal beneficiaries of property right is also seen overshadowed by influential role of customary rules. Similarly social and symbolic capital that emanate from the position of subjects at different level of field is also seen in this research as classifying female headed households in different categories. As such, what makes this research different from other studies is that it puts the three categories of female headed households as having different character and relation with the community, which really has great influence on their access to and control over livelihood capabilities and freedom to exercise their headship.

Headship may seem a simple phenomenon that explains how female headed households are formed. However, behind the different type of female household heads there are many entities that compete over their economic resources: in-laws and relatives of the late husband in the case of widow female headed households, ex-husbands and neighbours in the case of divorced female headed households, and parents and families of husband in the case of separated female headed households. As the different examples in the study show such parties have different interest in the property of the female headed household. The expropriation of the property of female headed households is basically effected by putting female household heads subordinate to the existing cultural practices and customary law. Thus, in discussing the role of agency, this research takes into consideration the push female household heads are facing from their competitors including their in-laws, neighbours, ex-husbands, etc. and the power female heads exert to resist the push. For instance, some female heads negotiate their right of ownership using legal procedures; some also use the support of others. On the other hand, others maintain the status quo in order to prolong their access to land and livestock. For example, separated female heads prefer submissiveness to the words of their in-laws to maintain their access to land and other resources. As discussed in Pierre

Bourdieu's work the day to day practice of the society is a product of both relationship of agency and structure (Bourdieu, 1990: 58-59). This therefore implies that the different female heads follow their own strategy to keep access to livelihood resources. While some of them reproduce their subordination, others use their agency to guarantee the use of their livelihood resources. This indicates that it is by looking at the difference among the female heads and the availability of support that these household heads have that the reader can have better understanding of the way female household heads use their agency to structure the structure.

In its assessment of previous research, this research has tried to show that rural women of Ethiopia are engaged in diversified livelihood activities. It is shown that in some regards women are playing a significant role in farming activities like manual weeding, threshing and transportation of farm produce. However, despite women's active participation in agricultural production and processing and marketing of food products, the studies show that women's identity as farmers face a problem of recognition. On the other hand, previous researches have also shown that the current land proclamation has granted women equal right of access to land with men. Even though it is important and necessary to point out the current development in terms of structural changes, the studies also pointed out the existing gap between the possession of female headed households and others. For instance, in terms of average farm land, women have smaller share than men and they are in short of labour, they have inadequate access to agricultural services, fewer or no oxen, and less access to other livelihood assets. This gender gap was again reflected as explanatory factor of the situation of female headed households. It is very difficult to give a clear picture of female headed households on property right and livelihood issues, just by taking constitutional right. In fact, the constitution governs the laws of all regions, but regions don't follow the same legalized form of property right and customary rule. The customary rule including Nika marriage and share cropping arrangements all play their role in influencing livelihood activities and negotiation power of female household heads. Despite the equal provision of land by the constitution, socially constructed disposition and customary rules are seen putting female household heads far behind negotiating their right of ownership and control over livelihood resources. Marriages arranged in Nika have put the females to look for the hand of a man (husband) or his good will during divorce. This research has explained how the idea behind marriage therefore perpetuates gender gap. By using Bourdieu's explanation of subjects as socialised agents the thesis has elaborated how socially embodied ideas are the bases for social practices in the day to day activity of human beings.

Taking Bourdieu's concept of position taking as a function of feel for the game, this research has also shown how it becomes difficult for female headed households to get societal recognition to head their household. As the different chapters in this thesis show, the headship status of female household heads may face many challenges from the society and institutions. From the society perspective the deep-rooted association of headship and maleness has been creating problems to socially recognise a female's status and position as a head. As availability of land, farming tools, livestock and human labour are essential components of meeting the livelihood of a household, lack of these capabilities associate female household heads with incapability to fit the position of headship. The long standing attitude of associating a woman's place mainly at household level has also limited female heads to have only minimal role in different institutions. Institutions like qäbälé have also been playing dormant role in making female household heads beneficiaries of qäbälé provisions and engaging them in different positions in the qäbälé. Overall, poor recognition of women's capability in agricultural and other productive activities has been denying female household heads the right of ownership of important livelihood capabilities and social recognition of their headship.

Taking the existing gender gap, this research argues that dealing only with the general discussion of institutional provision and economic problem does not solve the basic problems faced by female headed households. The current study discussed social and structural factors that give rise to the current social status of female headed households in the given wäräda. This research illustrates that the livelihood activities of female headed households are intimately connected to the socioeconomic histories of the wäräda, gender relations, local culture, and family and community relations. As identified in this research, female headed households in the Bati wäräda utilize a number of livelihood activities including farming activities, non-farm activities, and family and community support. Multiple livelihood strategies are needed by female-headed households in these rural contexts due to lack of education and training, lack of control over productive resources, and absence of access to credit, land, and other employment opportunities.

Previous works on female headed households and farming pointed out that women can compensate their lack of adult male household members by hiring share croppers or calling for local agricultural labour groups. In addition to explaining what these agricultural labour groups are, the current study explains how female headed households manage to get the labour of share croppers and *Jige* members. As shown explicitly in chapter six female headed households are dependent on share croppers despite their



discontent about the arrangement with and treatment of share croppers. Their discontents are discussed from the point of view of how they perceive the difference of their farm productivity when it is taken care of by share croppers compared to their adult male children and fathers. As I have reflected by putting their argument, female headed households don't get good treatment from share croppers, they get small amount of production and their farms are not as productive as that of male headed households. This is a clear indication that there is a gender gap that shifts towards one party. This also raises the question about the direction the negotiation power is shifting in share cropping arrangement.

The role of gender relation in economic, social and symbolic capital of a household is seen in many literatures. The work of Bourdieu has also maintained that females in many instances don't have a chance to accumulate capital but they acquire it through relation with men, through their husband, for instance. Similarly this research has also found that female headed households can obtain economic, social and symbolic capital mainly through their previous marriage relation. In this regard, as it has seen in chapter five their capital is an extension of the relation they have had with their late husbands or husbands living abroad, or their own relatives. This therefore indicates that there is unequal treatment of the widow, divorced and separated female heads. The association of women as capital receivers from different parties at different level therefore can be taken as one form of gender relation in the society. As such female headed households who lack the support of such parties are facing the risk of poor access to and control over important livelihood capital. The impact of this relation was also expressed by showing female headed households and their ownership and control over land. In this regard, the findings from this research highlight what looks like the security of land tenure and patterns of land ownership from gender perspective. As understood from the experience of interviewed female household heads, they have a problem of retaining control over land that may be legally their share at divorce, widowhood or separation. This was made clear by showing how significant the constraint is on the household economic strategy. On the other hand, some female household heads are seen going forward to get justice for their access to and control over property. This practical shift is an indication that it is important to further investigate the changes we might see in land tenure security by gender given the evidence of both capital accumulating and receiving nature of women in the face of increasing land pressure and poor fertility of land in Bati.

On the other hand, this research has pointed out some of the changes that are seen in relation to female headed households and their livelihood. In this regard, the social capital that was discussed as a capital

representing the totality of actual potential resources that influence networks take the significant position. The presence of fathers and adult male children and daughters was seen as playing important role in bringing some changes. Though absence of husband is discussed among all female heads as critical factor for lack of sustainable means of livelihood, the presence of close family members especially father and adult male was discussed in chapter seven as playing a big role in maintaining female headed household social capital. As such the thesis shows that those female heads who have access to the labour of their father and adult son are in a better position to access farm labour and essential social support than other female household heads. Local institutions like *kirre*, *jige* and *iquib* were also discussed as some forms of social capital in Bati. However except *kirre*, the thesis found that female headed households are less beneficiaries of the other institutions, this was discussed as how lack of enough financial capital and failure to reciprocity affect female heads access to locally available social capitals. As such, this research gives a glimpse on how social capital in its different forms can help to shape the position and status of actors. Of course, Bourdieu's social capital mainly deals with networks represented in group membership and the advantages that emanate from being a member of such groups. This research has elaborated female headed households' social capital by discussing how men at different levels of the society (i.e., fathers, friends of the late husband, sons of female household heads, and so on) can play a role. However, as it is shown in chapters six and seven of this research, some female household heads manage to acquire social and symbolic capital at least among their neighbourhood because of their economic capital. The possession of land by any means helped the female heads to attract men for marriage which in the long run enables the female household heads to join the group of married women and change their status.

Similarly, the presence of daughters abroad or in nearby cities helps female headed households to get economic support and become owners of mini market which would boost their economic position among other female household head. This is an indication of how difference in financial capital creates a gap even among the various female headed households and how such kind of capital helps women to obtain social and symbolic capitals. The meaning of symbolic capital differs from specific situation of one society to another. The possession of economic capital by female headed households implies the potential of acquiring social and consequently symbolic capital, which is less discussed in other related works.

The role of agency in terms of negotiating right is also one of the main points discussed in this research. Female household heads have been portrayed in previous works as entities that have the right to decide by themselves and live independent life. However, the way such household heads use their right of decision

is discussed in this research differently. This is because in this research the role of female headed households in control over livelihood resources and activities is discussed from the point of view of their specific condition like reasons for the formation of their headship, availability of adult male child and father, land, children living abroad, etc.

In the discussion of agency one of the important points that this research tried to highlight is how women are able to use their agency in a context where their position is limited to specific social spaces. Social space is given special place in Pierre Bourdieu's work. In this research females were mainly discussed from taking subordinate position that put their social space limited to lower level. Female heads were expected to abide by the words of their ex-husbands or in-laws or customary rules. In this research the customary laws including religious laws are playing significant role in structuring the life of the society, including the day to day activity of female household heads. However, the research has also shown the attempts made by female household heads to defend their right by passing over their lower position and taking the social space to a higher position. Some of them were seen trying to go to the extent of using constitutional provision as a guarantee to struggle for their ownership right. The female heads have also been seen using the national policy and bypassing the local law and manoeuvring their right of property ownership. For instance they are taking exist as a strategy. They prefer either to send their daughters abroad or preparing themselves to go abroad rather than looking for second or third marriage. The research also shows that despite the traditional system of men initiating divorce there are women who initiate divorce and secured their means of livelihood. For those who were divorcee the research shows that they are also taking their divorce case to the court and get justice on share of their property. These are all indicating that the female heads are using the national law as a capital to demand their right. Of course, managing to get an overnight change is unthinkable. Even Bourdieu has tried to show in his discussion of habitus that 'habitus is an open system of dispositions that is constantly subjected to experiences, and therefore constantly affected by them in a way that either reinforces or modifies its structure' (Bourdieu, 1992: 133). This implies that the change could be very slow but possible.

This is an indication that the movement that few female heads are undertaking will bring a chance of moving the struggle one step further and create slow but important movement among other women. Without recognising such moves among women it is difficult to understand how agency is playing its role in challenging the practice. I believe that change is particularly important in order to see the different female household heads enjoy their right of headship and livelihood security. The experience of some of

determined female heads in the community can serve as exemplary to show that there is a room for the female heads to exercise their right of access to and control over means of livelihood. In Bati, at least, from legal perspective we can see that there is a platform that enables the female heads to work towards the goal they aspire to achieve. But negotiating their headship position and securing their livelihood is not as easy a term as it is thought. As the study showed, gender relations in Bati are highly structured and greatly embodied and reproduced in the habitus of individuals. I can conclude that the strategies Bourdieu proposes for change—principally a disjunction between field and habitus, and the regulated liberties—are not best suited to changes in gender systems because “gender operates across fields” and “regulated liberties concerning gender are often reactionary (Chambers, 2005, 342).” Because gendered habitus tends to be strong in all fields it “can not be drastically undermined by mobility across fields” (Chambers, 2005, 343), and thus maybe “even less susceptible to change than is the habitus more generally” (p. 323). However, with only some women critically reflecting upon gendered dimensions of their habitus, and only a selected few attempting to initiate changes in their livelihood activities, it is necessary to consider who is likely to do so. The ability to reflexively analyze gender norms in traditional Bati culture tends to depend on the individual’s gendered habitus instilled during childhood, their lived experiences and position in the society, and the opportunities available for them to move across social fields. For example, it appears that those female heads who own land resist marriage proposals, some also choose exit as a strategy for their children. These female heads reflect differently on the gender and sexual politics of their experience of life in Bati: observing gender bias, a selected few become resistant to the tradition. Perhaps it is worth while considering that whether the ability of land or support from abroad to some female heads help them to enjoy social recognition and social capital or may be symbolic capital, which mainly denied from female head) has increased their potential for reflexivity. If this is the case, one way of encouraging further reflexivity and changes in gendered habitus may be as to help female heads secure their access and control over economic resources, which then lead to interaction between fields, between communities or way of life, so that individuals become aware of new options.

In this work, I would like to raise many questions and give direction for future research. First, further research that involves a larger study sample than was possible here should be conducted on women’s livelihood activities in the study area. More information on the types of livelihood strategies female headed households are adopting and how they are connected to household and community gender dynamics and broader socioeconomic and political factors should be the subject of a research combining gender and development studies. More research will shed light on the viability and long-term

sustainability of female headed household's contemporary livelihood activities in Bati and the various forces that impact upon them. Second, this research shows that further investigations are important to understand the power shift between female headed households and other parties in terms of land ownership and control over resources, taking the existing socio economic situation of the study area. Thirdly, more work must be done to understand the diverse meanings of 'head of household' in the wäräda. This is a question about power and control as well as women's identities and roles within households and communities. Assessing the various definitions and conceptualizations of the term 'head of household' in the study wäräda involves talking to men as well as women and investigating local gender relations as well as the value of people abroad and socioeconomic and political factors.

In terms of the prospects for a national gender issue, this work contributes to ongoing gender discussions about female household heads organized nationally. By constructing analysis of female headed household's livelihood in Bati, comparing each of them, and then connecting common processes that affect them, one can see how solidarity, as defined by Mohanty (2004), in terms of mutuality, accountability, and the recognition of common interests, could be developed among the different female headed households. Embedded in a common set of processes, they face diverse issues and utilize different strategies. However, they share some common factors, i.e., being headed by females, face recognition problem and lack the presence of adult male household members. Taking such common ground into consideration, they could come together and overcome the crisis.

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## Appendix: 1

### Description of female headed households

Number	Name of female head	age	Marital status	No of children	Source of main income	Average farm size( hectare)	Land ploughed by
1	Aziza	40	Divorced	4	Land	1.25	Share cropper
2	selam	42	widow	8	Land	.75	Two eldest son
3	Ayelech	39	widow	5	Land	1.5	Son
4	Sara	50	Divorce		Land	.75	Share cropper
5	Berhane	61	Widow	2	Land	.75	Son
6	Zebiba	44	widow	5	Land	.5	Son
7	Debitu	63	Widow	7	Land	.75	son
8	Mekedes	36	widow	3	Land	1.00	Father
9	Bekelu	30	Divorced	4	Selling charcoal		
10	Azeb	23	Divorced	Pregnant	Sell fire wood and charcoal		
11	Fetle	47	Widow	4	Land	.75	Son
12	Zahara	48	divorce	6	Land	.5	Share cropper
13	Lubaba	37	separated	4	Land	1	Share cropper
14	Enat	29	widow	5	Sell of fire and charcoal		
15	Ziad	34	divorced	4	Serve as cooker and sells fire wood		
16	Alem	45	Widow	7	Land	.5	Share cropper
17	Mulat	27	divorced	4	Sell of fire wood and charcoal		

18	Fre	26	Divorced	1	Sell of fire wood and charcoal		
19	Negat	30	divorced	3	Land	.5	Share cropper
20	Aregash	29	Separated	3	Land	1	Share cropper

## Appendix 2. Livelihood Framework

Lively hood platform	Access modified by	In context of	Resulting in lively hood strategy composed of	With effect on
Asset	Institutions Rules and customs Land tenure	-Shocks  -Drough  existing national economy	Natural resource based Activity	Family development
Natural capita  Physical capital				Deterioration of income
Human capital	Associations  Local administration		Non farm activity	
Social capital				

DFID's sustainable livelihoods framework (Ashley & Carney 1999: 47)



### Appendix 3

#### List of key informants

1. Ato Ahmend Endir- Mayer of Bati Wäräda Administration
2. Ato Bati Tolera- Head OF Wäräda Administration
3. Wrt. Aselefech Neguse- Executive officer of the wäräda Administration
4. Wrt. Aminat Endris- Head Of Women's Affair Office and Women's Organisation And Development
5. Sheh Ahmed Ali- Judge , Bati Wäräda Sheria Court
6. Ato Teferi Gezmu- Head, Agriculture office
7. Ato Wagari Etana- Head, Agriculture Extension Department
8. Ato tolosa, Ato Melaku and Ato Tesfaye- officers, land administration office
9. Ato Abdu Shumye- Liasen Officer , the wäräda Administration
10. Ato abdisa Bula- coordinator, Food security office
11. Ato mesfin Eshetu- coordinator, cooperatives department
12. Ato arba Jundi- coordinator, agricultural input supply and distribution office
13. Ato Melaku Geleelu- Head, Environmental production and land administration
14. Ato Bera Bogale- officer, Information and planning

## **Appendix 4.**

### **Interview Guide**

#### **General information**

##### **Informants**

Literacy rate

Age

Sex

Marital status

##### **Family size**

1. Can you tell me about permanent members of your household, their name? Relations with the family?
2. Are there any household members who are periodically members? Who they are, their relations and purposes.

#### **A. Access to Resources**

##### ***Land***

3. Do you own a land? Do you have control as formal owner? How did you get the land? Tell me about the land distribution.
4. How many hectares (*timad*) is it?
5. Who ploughs your land? If share cropper, can you tell me about the extent of your bargaining power or any problem created in relation to this?
6. If you have land, how much of it are you allowed to use freely? What do you think about its quality? If there is any restriction, what do you think is the reason behind? (Role of family, relative, etc.)
7. Any land or boundary conflict?

##### ***Farm tool***

8. What kind of equipment, and farm tools do you need for the work on the farm?
9. Do you think that you have enough farm tool, equipment and livestock to fulfil your need?
10. If there is any restriction, what do you think is the reason behind?

### ***Water, grazing land***

11. Do you think that you have enough water to plough your land? Or tell us about your experiences related to access to irrigation, adequate rainfall, etc. instead.
12. Do you have easy access to grazing land? If you have, is it close to your dwelling?

### ***Livestock***

13. Can you tell me about your livestock?
14. How many animals, poultry, cows, goats, sheep, donkey, and so on do you have?
15. Do you rent oxen? If you rent them, what does the renting mechanism look like? Who does the bargaining?

### ***Crop, fertilizer and credit***

16. Do you have access to crop, fertilizer? Where do you mostly get these inputs from?
17. Are there any difficulties to have access to fertilizer and other inputs (discrimination)?
18. Do you remember a time you were discriminated from access to fertilizer and other inputs?
19. Do you have access to loan and credit?
20. If yes, what are the sources (formal and traditional institutes like *equib*) you have access to?
21. Can you tell me the mechanism of access to loan and credit? Is it suitable for you?
22. Do you remember a time when you were discriminated from access to credit or loan?

### **B. Membership to associations (social capita) relationship with different associations**

23. Are there any local associations like *kire*, *mahber* or others you are a member of and get support from? What is the rationale behind membership in such associations?
24. What is your role in local associations that you are a member of? (How do you express your idea?)
25. Are you a member of any formal association like **PA** or *wäräda* or *qäbälé* level?
26. Do you have any leadership role in the associations?

### **C. Activities**

#### ***Activities outside home (relationship between households)***

27. Who is working on the farm?
28. If you are working on your farm, can you tell me about your activities in detail?  
Land preparation, ploughing, sowing, weeding, manuring, cutting, threshing, collecting harvest, transporting harvest to store, storing of grain
29. Is there any family member that works with you in the farm?
30. If you rent a labour, what looks does the renting mechanism look like? Are you comfortable with the mechanism, if not, why?
31. Do you have any other skill than farming that enables you earn money?
32. Do you earn money from other sources than from farm activities?

#### ***Activities (in the household)( Relation Ship Between Household Members)***

33. What does division of labour in the household look like?
34. Can you **describe** to me your main domestic activities?
35. Do you have anybody that helps you with the domestic chores?
36. Can you tell me the role of your children?
37. Do you think that you have enough time to undertake other productive and community activities?

### **C. Decision making**

38. Who is the main decision maker in the household?
39. Who decides upon expenditure on food?
40. Who decides upon expenditure on labour mobilization?
41. Who decides upon expenditure on marketing?
42. Who decides upon expenditure on storage? and
43. Who decides upon expenditure on other activities in the house?
44. Do you think that you are free to use your time and money and the resources?

### **Conflict resolution methods**

45. What is the conflict resolution method in the household like?

Do household members discuss on problems or blindly decide on the matter?

### **D. Perception**

46. What do you think about your economic position?

47. What do you think about tomorrow?

48. What do you think about your food, shelter, money and climatic condition?

49. Can you tell me about your main expenditure?

50. How do you come up with this kind of expenditure pattern?

51. Do you think that you have spare time? If yes, how do you spend your spare time?

52. How did you end up to be a female head?

53. How does it feel to be a female head in the family, the neighbourhood, and the village?

### **D. Coping mechanism**

54. Is there any family or governmental support you have access to? If yes, what kind ( food, loan, gift, aid)?

55. Do you think that there is a discrimination against females in the provision of different support from different institutions? If yes, how? ( Support like EGS)

### **Focus group discussion (For females in male headed households)**

1. What does the status of women in your society look like?

- a. How they are considered,
- b. Good women, bad women,
- c. How do you and the society define a farmer?

2. What does access to and control over land and farm tool for women look like?

- a. Favourable/difficult
- b. Tell us why it is difficult

3. What does division of labour in your households look like?

- a. What are the domestic activities performed by women?
- b. What are the domestic activities performed by men?
- c. What are the productive and community activities performed by men?

- d. What are the productive and community activities performed by women?
4. What does the decision making process in your household look like?
    - i. Who decided on what matters
    - ii. Storage, marketing....
  5. What does the role of extended families (relatives, senior and junior males, and neighbours in controlling women's labour and household activity) look like?
  6. What does the role of different cultures and customs that affect the livelihood activity of women in your village look like?
  7. What kind of household livelihood strategies are you engaged in?
    - i. Tell me about your preferences.
    - ii. Do you think that it is viable?
  8. What is the trend of livelihood activity like?
    - i. Causes of the changes
    - ii. 10 years ago, now and future plan
    - iii. Constraints and opportunities to your livelihood activities
  9. Are there any local associations that have a role in your livelihood?
    - i. What are they? What is their role?
    - ii. Access to credit and how much they benefited you
  10. Are there any formal associations like **PA**, keblebe or wäräda level you are part of
    - i. What are they?
    - ii. Can you tell me your leadership role in the associations?
    - iii. What is their role related to your livelihood?

11. Perception

What is your perception about your ability? In agriculture, and other activities.

**Focus group discussion (For female headed households)**

1. How is female headed household defined in your village?
2. What is the cause and status of female heads in your society?
  - a. How they are considered,
  - b. Good female heads, bad female heads,
  - c. How do you and the society define a farmer
3. What is access to and control over land and farm tools for female headed households like? (quality)
  - a. Favourable/ difficult
  - b. Tell me why it is difficult
  - c. Problem of female heads
  - D. What were the inheritance (division) mechanism of property with your ex- husband looks like (divorcee or widowed).
  - E. Extent of bargaining power with the share holder or cropper. ( if the land is hired)
  - F. Boundary conflict
  - G.
4. What is the division of labour in your household like?
  - d. What are the domestic activities performed by women( you, your daughter)?
  - e. What are the domestic activities performed by men (fathers, sons, etc.,)
  - f. What are the productive and community activities performed by men (fathers, son, etc.)
  - g. What are the productive and community activities preformed by women. (You, your daughter)?
5. What does the decision making process in your household look like?
  - i. Who decide on what matters?
  - ii. Storage, marketing....
6. What does the role of extended families (relatives) senior and junior males, and neighbours in controlling women's labour and household activity look like?
7. What does the role of different cultures and customs that affect the livelihood activities of female headed households in your village look like?

8. What kind of household livelihood strategy are you engaged in?

- iii. Tell me about your preferences.
- iv. Do you think that it is viable?

9. What are the trends of livelihood activities like?

- v. Causes of the changes
- vi. 10 years ago, now and future plan
- vii. Constraints and opportunities to your livelihood activities

10. Are there any local associations that have a role in your livelihood?

- viii. What are they, their role?
- ix. Access to credit and how much they benefited you
- x. What is the treatment of female heads by these associations like?
- iv. How do you see loan policies and administration? Are they strict, flexible and accusable to poor peasants?

11. Are there any formal associations like **PA**, qäbälé or wärädath that you are part of?

- xi. What are they?
- xii. Can you tell me your leadership role in the associations?
- xiii. What is the treatment of female heads by this association like?

### **Focus group discussion (For males)**

1. What is the status of men in your society like?

- a. How they are considered?
- b. Good men, bad men,
- c. How do you and the society define a farmer?

2. What is access to and control over land and farm tool for men like? (quality)

- a. Favourable/difficult
- B. Tell us why it is difficult.

3. What is division of labour in your households like?

- a. What are the domestic activities performed by men?



- b. What are the domestic activities performed by women?
  - c. What are the productive and community activities performed by men?
  - d. What are the productive and community activities performed by women?
4. What is the decision making process in your household like?
    - i. Who decides on what matters?
    - ii. Storage, marketing....
  5. What does the role of extended families (relatives) senior and junior males, and neighbours in controlling women's labour and household activity look like?
  6. What kind of household livelihood strategies are you engaged in?
    - i. Tell me about your preferences.
    - ii. Do you think that it is viable?
  7. What does the trend of livelihood activity look like?
    - i. Causes of the changes
    - ii. 10 years ago, now and future plan
    - iii. Constraints and opportunities to your livelihood activities
  8. Are there any local associations that have a role in your livelihood?
    1. What are they, their role?
    2. Access to credit and how much they benefited you
  9. Are there any formal associations like **PA**, kebele or wäräda level you are a part of?
    - i. What are they?
    - ii. Can you tell me your leadership role in the associations?
    - iii. What is their role, related to your livelihood?

## **I. Key informant interview**

### **A. Officials (Agriculture extension workers) PA Leader, or land redistribution committee members**

- What is the mechanism of land redistribution in the region?
- When was the last land redistribution done in the region?
- What does the fertility of land in the area look like?
- What is the land marketing system in the area (share cropping, cash rentals)?
- Do you think that access to land is associated with higher productivity and economic status?
- Do you think that access to oxen is associated with higher productivity and economic status?
- What are the customs and rules regarding access to land, land tenure and security of tenure?
- Are female headed households allowed to hold their own land?
- What does female headed household mean in this village?
- How much are women involved in off farm activities? Married women, female headed households
- What is the participation of women in an agriculture extension services like?
- How do you see the role of women in agriculture? Do you think that they could utilize resources as efficiently as men?
- What does the food security strategy of the Oromia region say about off farm activity?
- What kind of female heads are engaged in off farm activities?
- What are the criteria for membership to farmers' cooperation?
- How do you see the livelihood strategy of female and male headed households?
- What is the information dissemination mechanism in this village?

### **B. Female affairs officials**

1. How is a female considered in the society?
2. What is land and asset distribution to women in the wäräda like?
3. Do you think that women are beneficiaries of their labour, especially female headed households?
4. What are the most known problems that female headed households face?
5. What is the reason behind the proliferation of female headed households? And how are they defined?



