

THE VALUE OF EARLY MARRIAGE IN AMHARA REGION, ETHIOPIA

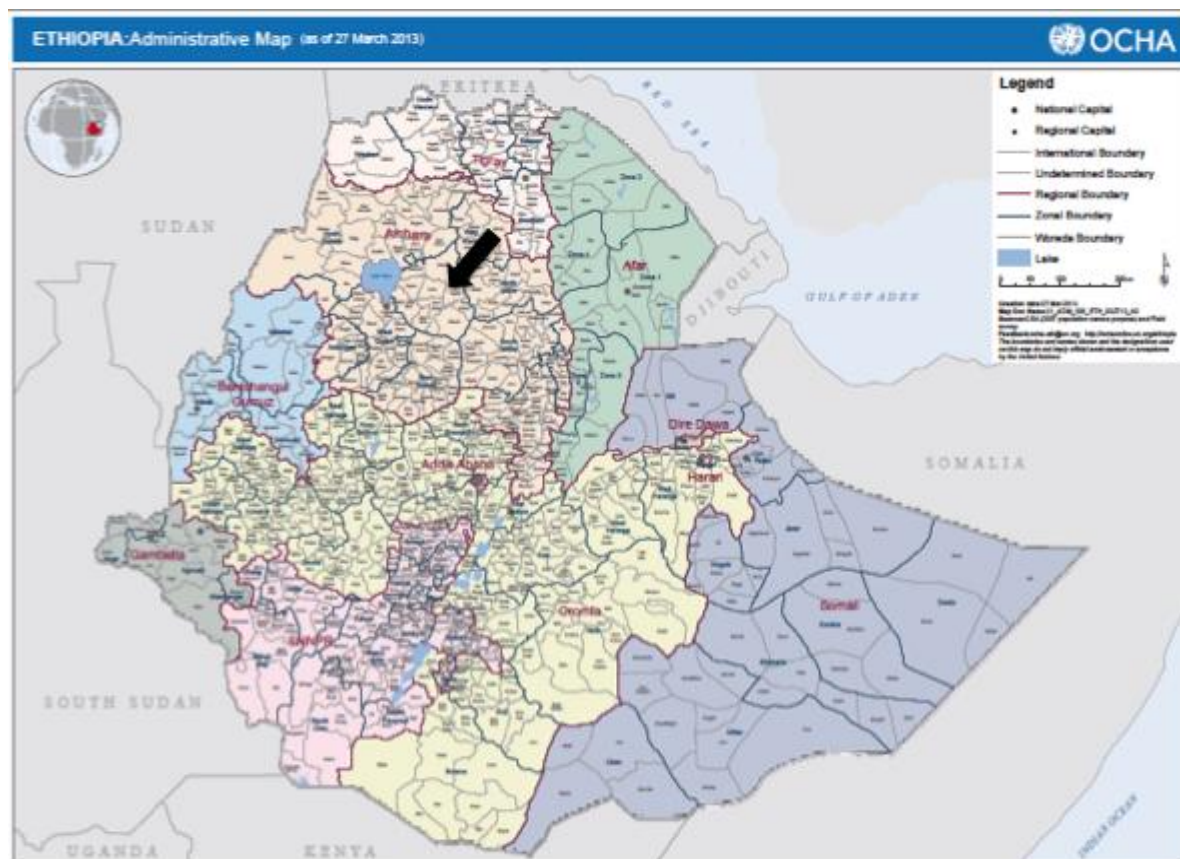
Exploring local understandings of early marriage in a context of active prevention activities and a prohibitive legal framework.

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Research Context

- Farta Woreda (232.181 people)
- Rural Area (97%)
- Ethiopian Orthodox
- Amharic ethnicity and language (99.9%)

(EDHS,2011)



Map of Ethiopia (OCHA, 2013)

Introduction & Relevance

- Legal framework + Prevention efforts → High prevalence?

“How do different key actors value early marriage of girls and young women in Amhara Region in Ethiopia and how do local NGOs take into account these local understandings in their early marriage prevention efforts?”

- Previous research:
 - Lacks focus on knowledge and beliefs of people that are in control of negotiating early marriages
 - Departs from western-based rights-based discourse → glosses over local lived realities
- Goals: gaining insight + bridging the gap between “southern” and “western” ways of studying early marriage

African Feminisms

- Critique on Western-based feminism(s) and approaches

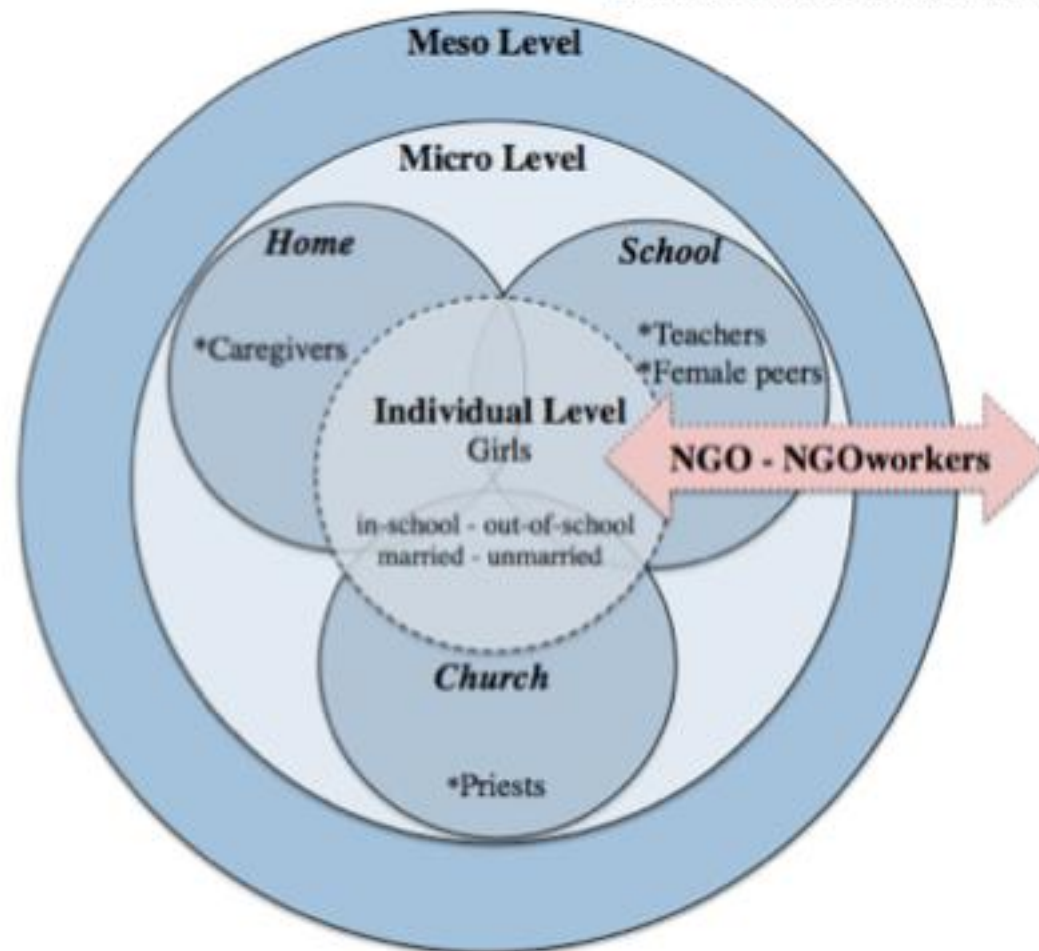
“a social movement that aims to raise global consciousness, which sympathizes with African women’s histories, present realities and future expectations”

(Goredema, 2010, p. 34)

- Acknowledge background and biases that stem from this
- Look further than dominant western-based discourses
- Regard girls and young women as ‘experts in their own lives’

Methodology

- 65 in-depth interviews + 2 FGDs + document analysis



Direct Outcomes

- Large differences between in-school girls and out-of-school girls
- Religious leaders valued EM most positively
- “Gap” between formally educated and uneducated actors
- NGOs influenced teachers and in-school girls directly
- NGOs tended to gloss over the economic component of EM

Practical Recommendations

- Remove obstacles for out-of-school girls to make use of currently available early marriage prevention systems, provided through SRH-clubs and formal education
- Implement projects targeted at married girls in order to improve their economic position and future prospects
- Make teachers more effective actors of change by strengthening their position in society
- Include economic incentives or livelihood improvement in the form of agricultural components in early marriage prevention programs.

Discussion + Conclusion

- ‘Dilemma’ with regard to my presence and position as a researcher
 - Enormous influence of my positionality
 - Social desirability
- Moral dilemma:

“Researchers in fields studying societies, gender studies and feminism are faced with the critical question of what entitles one to be an expert, or to study a subject if you have no legitimate claim to that reality?”

Goredema

(2010, p. 41)

- Taking a critical stance and evaluating how we can cope with this bias

Questions?

