

Minority Rights Group International (MRG)

**Submission to the 49th Session of the Committee on the
Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)**

**Relating to the Combined Sixth and Seventh Periodic
Reports of the Government of Ethiopia**

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Contents

| | |
|---|---------|
| Introduction | Page 3 |
| General Points | Page 3 |
| Thematic Areas of Concern: | |
| 1. Political Participation | Page 5 |
| 2. Education | Page 6 |
| 3. Health (including Harmful Practices) | Page 7 |
| 4. Land Rights and Economic Participation | Page 9 |
| Recommendations | Page 11 |

Introduction

About MRG

Minority Rights Group International (MRG) is a non-governmental organization (NGO) working to secure the rights of ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities and indigenous peoples worldwide, and to promote cooperation and understanding between communities. MRG has Consultative Status with ECOSOC.

Ethiopia is home to more than 80 different ethnic groups. No one ethnic group has an overall numerical majority. The Oromo are the largest ethnic group (34% of the total population). The Amhara are the next numerous group at 27% of the total population. Many of the smaller ethnic groups have less than 10,000 people.

A number of Ethiopia's ethnic groups practice Pastoralism – “peoples whose livelihoods depend on extensive common property use of natural resources over an area, who use mobility as a management strategy for dealing with sustainable land use and conservation, and who possess a distinctive cultural identity and natural resource management system.”¹ Pastoralists are not a homogenous group and vary in ethnicity and socio-cultural set-ups, production forms and strategies – namely, degree of mobility, level of dependence to livestock, engagement in the market, cultural practices etc.

Governmental policies and legislations largely favoring sedentarisation through land tenure reform within Pastoral areas place serious pressure on Pastoralist lifestyle and livelihood. Other factors, such as climate and environmental changes² are also challenging. Pastoralist women are heavily disadvantaged, as a result of their belonging to the communities and their roles, responsibilities and status in the communities: a “double bind of pastoralist women”.³

This report is based on primary and secondary information collected for the MRG report “A double bind: The Exclusion of Pastoralist Women in the East and Horn of Africa”, as well as other work carried out on Pastoralist women’s rights by academics and NGOs. We will focus on the specific situation of minority women, including Pastoralist women, in Ethiopia, with the aim to articulate specific issues related to pastoralist women which are frequently invisible. Our main areas of concerns are:

1. Political Participation (Art. 7)
2. Education (Art. 12)
3. Health, including harmful practices (Art. 12, Art. 1-5, Art. 14)
4. Land rights & economic participation (Art. 11, 13, 14, 15)

General Points

Importance of Data Disaggregated by Sex and Ethnicity

Where Governments do not collect and disaggregate data by both sex and ethnicity (or other minority status, for example, religion or language), it is impossible to get a full understanding of the situation of women from those groups, groups which are frequently amongst the most marginalised in society.

The Ethiopian Government does not disaggregate data by sex and ethnicity; however, its system of Ethnic Federalism means that it is possible to use regional data to get a picture of the situation of some groups. Although there is a mixture of different groups who live in each region, many regions have a numerical majority population which the region is named after, thus general trends can be described. For example,

- 1 Dana Declaration, (Jordan, 2002), in Osman, A. Challenge in Policy and Practice: Pastoralists and Nomadic People, The State of the World Minorities and Indigenous Peoples 2009, p. 37
- 2 Regional Pastoral Livelihoods Advocacy Project, *Pastoralism demographics, settlement and service provision in the Horn and East Africa*, London, Overseas Development Institutes, 2010, p. 1 <http://www.odi.org.uk/resources/details.asp?id=3301&title=pastoralism-demographics-settlement-patterns-service-provision>
- 3 Kipuri, N. & A. Ridgewell, A Double Bind: The Exclusion of Pastoralist Women in the East and Horn of Africa, London, MRG, 2008, <http://www.minorityrights.org/7587/reports/a-double-bind-the-exclusion-of-pastoralist-women-in-the-east-and-horn-of-africa.html>

the Gender Parity Indexes for Primary level in Annex 9 on page 41 of the State report (CEDAW/C/ETH/6-7) shows that the regions with the worst gender parity are those where minority groups predominate.

| Federal Region | Gender Parity at Primary level according to Annex 9 of State report* | Population make up of the region | General situation in the region |
|---|--|---|---|
| Gambella | 0.66 | The minority Nuer and Anuak groups make up approx 67% of the population of the region. (Nuer are 0.2% and Anuak are 0.12% of the total population of Ethiopia) | Development of region has been “underfunded or neglected... Gambella remains desperately in need of roads, infrastructure, schools, hospitals and clinics, electricity provision, and numerous other services”. Relocation of other 'highland' groups to Gambella has resulted in increased conflict over resources since 2003. 'Highlanders' are dominant politically and economically with the minority groups marginalized. ⁴ |
| Somali | 0.71 | 95% of the region are minority Somali Pastoralists (Somali are 6.2% of the total population of Ethiopia) | “Somalis complain of a lack of development in their region. The government acknowledges the many problems, including poor infrastructure and lack of educational opportunities, but blames the rebellion for the underdevelopment.” ⁵ |
| Afar | 0.72 | 92% of the region are minority Afar Pastoralists (Afar are 1.3% of the total population of Ethiopia) | The region is particularly sensitive to drought. “With poor infrastructure, few schools and little access to health care, the Afar remains one of the most marginalized peoples of Ethiopia”. ⁶ |
| Ben-Gumuz | 0.76 | Minority Berta and Gumuz groups make up 47% of the population of the region. (Berta are 0.25% and Gumuz are 0.22% of the total population) | The region is remote and lacks transportation and communications infrastructure which hinders development. Almost ¾ of the population lack safe drinking water and adult literacy of women is only 23% (compared to 47% for men). ⁷ |
| Oromia | 0.81 | The region is 85% Oromo | The Oromo are numerically the largest ethnic group in Ethiopia; however, they have been marginalised politically and economically over decades. Adult literacy for women is only 29.5% (compared to 61.5% for men). ⁸ |
| Southern Nations, Nationalities & Peoples | 0.81 | The region has 45 different minority groups | SNNPR is the most rural region in Ethiopia with 90% of the population living in rural areas. Infant mortality is 85 per 1000 lives births (national average is 77). Adult literacy for women is 22% |

4 IEMI report

5 MRG World Directory of Minorities <http://www.minorityrights.org/3923/ethiopia/somalis.html>

6 MRG World Directory of Minorities <http://www.minorityrights.org/3929/ethiopia/afar.html>

7 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Benishangul-Gumuz_Region

8 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oromia_Region

| | | |
|---------|--|---------------------------------------|
| (SNNPR) | | compared to 57% for men. ⁹ |
|---------|--|---------------------------------------|

* National average is 0.87. All gender parity figures from page 41 of the State report (CEDAW/C/ETH/6-7)

If other indicators of human development were disaggregated by sex and ethnicity or by Federal Region, it is highly likely that minority women in these Regions would be disproportionately disadvantaged compared to the overall population of Ethiopia.

Government restrictions on NGOs

In 2009, the Ethiopian government passed a new law, the Charities and Societies Proclamation. This law restricts the activities of NGOs in that charities established by Ethiopian Nationals are not allowed to receive more than 10% of their funds from foreign sources, including international agencies and Ethiopians resident overseas. It also bans charities established by Ethiopian residents which have Ethiopian membership from working on the “advancement of human and democratic rights, the promotion of gender equality and the promotion of the efficiency of the justice and law enforcement services” and provides strict penalties for any violation of the law. This has effectively cut off funding and stopped Ethiopian NGOs working on human rights issues including those of minority women. Ethiopian NGOs are not allowed to work on conflict issues and yet women are often the victims of violent conflicts leaving them as widows and household heads in cases where husbands are killed in the conflicts, further increasing their burdens. They are also victims of rape during conflicts. In cases of displacement, they are badly affected because they are left with the responsibility to care for the children and elderly.

A number of UN bodies and NGOs have expressed concern over this law. In 2009, CERD recommended “that the State party consider reviewing this legislation to ensure that due consideration is given to the important role of civil society organizations in the promotion and protection of human rights, including in the area of racial discrimination”.¹⁰

Thematic Areas of Concern

1. Political participation (Art. 7)

The principle of gender equality and the prohibition of gender-based discrimination in the political and public life are safeguarded under the Ethiopian Constitution. Related regulations were subsequently adopted and the Electoral Law modified, with the aim to increase women’s participation, as the State Report mentions. Women, however, remain under-represented political life in Ethiopia and the lack of specific measures to support Pastoralist women’s participation in the political and public spheres compromise their ability to be represented at all levels of political institutions- including institutions focusing on pastoralist issues, such as the Pastoral Development Department which has the mandate to coordinate interventions in pastoral areas.¹¹ In a study of five countries with Pastoralist population, although women in Ethiopia comprised the greatest number of Pastoralist women parliamentarians,¹² women continue to face barriers which reduce their ability to make substantive changes in policy-making. Possibilities to be involved in political processes, in setting the agenda and expressing views remain limited for Pastoralist women.

Despite an official target of one-third female representation in regional parliaments and district councils, women at every level of the political ladder are underrepresented. After the 2005 elections, only one woman MP (previously two) was in a Regional Parliament of over 160 MPs. In the Council of Elders, two women sit alongside 13 men an innovation imposed on the Gurti from above. The representation of women in both Regional and National Pastoralist Elders Councils is minimal. In January 2004, district elections in Somali Region returned 356 women out of 3,309 councilors elected (NEB 2004) just 10.8 percent. Data from the National Election Board of Ethiopia showed another decrease in women’s candidature in the 2010 elections, in comparison to 2005. Of the 2,188 candidates to the House of People’s Representatives

9 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Southern_Nations_Nationalities_and_Peoples_Region
 10 UN Committee on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination, UN Doc CERD/C/ETH/CO/7-16 , Para 16
 11 Regional Pastoral Livelihoods Advocacy Project, op. cit., p. 8
 12 Kipuri, N. & A. Ridgewell, op. cit., p. 21

(HPR) women constituted only 12.4 percent and 15.3 percent of the 4,746 candidates to the State Councils. While in 2005 around 15 percent of women were candidate to the HPR and 23 percent were State Council candidates.¹³ Despite the lack of disaggregated data, it is possible to believe that this trend might be reflected in the already limited representation of Pastoralist women.

Lack of representation in key decision-making institutions invariably impacts on the extent to which the needs and interests of Pastoralist women will be reflected in policies and taken into account in decision-making.¹⁴ Gender inequalities frame the organisation of public and political life placing further barriers on women accessing these spaces. Research has demonstrated that even after accessing a position of power, women's ability to influence decisions and make a difference is limited. For instance, in the Somali Region two women were integrated into the gurti (Council of Elders) and it seems they have been unable to influence decisions: 'We only listen, and try not to interfere with the proceedings of the elders on the Gurti committee.'¹⁵

As constituency members, women's ability to frame their concerns and make their voice heard is also curtailed: "It seems that there is little opportunity for Karrayyu women to participate in the decision being made, or to define what **they** want as pastoralist women"¹⁶, which echoes discussions with Somali women in rural Gashamo (Somali region), where women shared that they felt ignored by "politicians, who talk only to men."¹⁷

2. Education (art. 10)

Pastoralist women and girls' access to education is severely hindered by the lack of possibilities to access educational opportunities. Recent government initiatives to provide alternative basic education (vague in scope and limited results) fail to respond to the need of pastoralist and semi-pastoralist communities¹⁸. Additionally, traditional practices such as early marriages compound girls' ability to access and/or complete education.

A comparison of the national and regional average educational attainment from the Domestic household survey in 2005 shows that the percentage of people with no educational attainment is higher in pastoralist areas and is highest amongst women. Nationally, 52.4% of males and 66.8% of females have no educational attainment whereas in the Somali region, the figures are higher. 82.4% of males and 88.8% of females have no educational attainment.¹⁹ Likewise the literacy rates for males in Pastoralist regions are higher as compared to females. In the Somali region, the literacy rate for male pastoralists is around 22.7 percent and only 4.8 percent for females,²⁰ which suggest that when there is choice boys' access will be greater than girls.

A new initiative, Alternative Basic Education (ABE), aims to increase access to basic education in Pastoralist areas. Under this initiative, the State party reports an increased female enrollment with an average annual growth rate of 11.6 percent. This is higher than boys' enrollment which is increasing by 10.5 percent.²¹ While this is a step forward, this information is not disaggregated by ethnicity and the State

13 EU Election Observation Mission, Ethiopia Final Report : House of People's Representatives and State Council elections, May 2010 http://www.euom.eu/files/pressreleases/english/final-report-euom-ethiopia-08112010_en.pdf

14 Devereux, S. *Vulnerable livelihoods in Somali Region*, Ethiopia, DS Research Report 57. Brighton, p.119 <http://www.ntd.co.uk/idsbookshop/details.asp?id=894>

15 Ibid, p. 119

16 Flintan, F., Cullen, B. & S. Latosky, Pastoral women's thoughts on change, 2011, p. 15, http://www.future-agricultures.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=7510&Itemid=967

17 Devereux, op. cit., p. 81

18 Kipuri, N. & A. Ridgewell, op. cit., p. 14

19 Kipuri, N. & A. Ridgewell, op. cit., p. 10

20 Devereux, op. cit., p. 81, in Flintan, F., Cullen, B. & S. Latosky, op. cit., p. 20

21 Committee on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women, *Combined sixth and seventh periodic reports of States parties – Ethiopia*, CEDAW/C/ETH/6-7

report does not specify the scale of the project, nor how the gap will be bridged at higher education level.²² Actually, girls' enrollment in primary education is higher but it drops significantly at the secondary level. For instance, at the primary level, the number of female students compared to male students is 44 percent, whereas at secondary and tertiary level it is 34 percent and 23.2 percent respectively.²³

Traditional practices in Pastoral communities also impact on women's ability to access education; however, it is important to note that harmful practices are not confined to minority communities. In the politically and economically dominant Amhara region, nearly half of women are married before the age of 15, the highest marriage rate in the country.²⁴ Early marriage, in addition to psychological and physical effects curtails girls' abilities to stay in school. In the Amharha region, 78 percent of girls never married were attending school, while only 8.9 percent of currently married girls were in school.²⁵

Limited numeracy and literacy skills have major impacts on pastoralist women's economic opportunities and security, as well as their participation in public and political lives. Pastoralist women in the Afar region also identified the lack of education as a dominant factor which restricted their rights to property.²⁶

3. Health, including harmful practices (Art. 12, Art. 1-5, Art. 14)

The Pastoralist way of life has specific implications for women's health: "Long-distances are traveled when moving the livestock (often with the homestead) on a low-energy diet and health. Heavy loads of water, fuelwood or other resources are carried long distances causing stress on the body. Cooking over wood fueled fires can cause respiratory and other diseases. The collection of firewood exposes women's injury from falls and the risk of miscarriage."²⁷ Data on pastoralist women's life expectancy and male/female ratio raise serious concerns about their access to quality health care in a timely manner. A myriad of socio-cultural factors, most importantly preferences for males over females has influenced the intra-household allocation of resources. Other practices, such as Female Genital Mutilation are widespread amongst many communities in Ethiopia, including pastoralist communities and have negative impacts on pastoralist women's health, including maternal health.

In pastoralist areas, unlike the national average, men outlive women. Based on the 1997 population census, the Ministry of Agriculture and Pastoral Extension team estimate that of 8 million people living in pastoral areas at the time, 4,2 million were men and 3,7 million were women.²⁸ The sex ratio average in pastoral areas is 103.8 boys to every 100 girls and is sharper in predominantly pastoralist areas, such as Afar and Somali region, respectively 126:100 and 125.3:100.²⁹ The sex ratio in favour of boys is consistent across age cohorts in pastoralist areas.³⁰

The lower status of women dictates access to care allocation of resources such as food in favour of boys over girls in pastoral households. These preferences place women and girls at higher risk of malnutrition. Malnutrition amongst pastoralist women is also heightened by environmental and climate changes. Rationing food is a coping strategy disproportionately borne by women. In extreme case, it might even damage a women's health. A Karrayu pastoralist explains "I was pregnant on the drought of 2000 and I had to make the food go forth. Often I use to go without in order to give more food to my husband and

22 Gender Gap Index 2007, Available at: https://members.weforum.org/pdf/gendergap/ggg07_ethiopia.pdf

23 Central Statistical Agency, Third Population and Housing Census of Ethiopia, 2008
http://www.csa.gov.et/pdf/Cen2007_firstdraft.pdf

24 Alemu, B & A. Mengistu, Women's Empowerment in Ethiopia. New solutions to ancient problems, 2007
http://www.pathfind.org/site/DocServer/PI_WE_paper_final.pdf?docID=10202

25 Ibid.

26 Flintan, F. et. al, Study on women's property rights in Afar and Oromyia regions, Ethiopia, 2008, p. 60
http://www.elmt-relpa.org/aesito/hoapn?id_cms_doc=58&download_file=on&get_file=127

27 Bates, L. *Smoke Health and Household Energy*. Issues Paper NO R8021. Rugby: ITDG, 2002

28 Flintan, F., Cullen, B. & S. Latosky, op. cit, p. 8

29 Central Statistical Agency, Population and Housing Census. Addis Ababa, 2007, in Regional Pastoral Livelihoods Advocacy Project, op. cit., p. 15

30 Ibid.

children. (...) I had problem at childbirth because of poor nutrition.”³¹ Likewise boys tend to be given priority for healthcare. In the Gashamo district of the Somali region, sick boys are more often taken to the health center, whereas daughters are given herbs.³²

The DHS 2005 indicates that the Maternal Mortality Rate is 673 per 100,000, which is one of the highest in the world. The same report shows that only 6 percent of Ethiopian women deliver accompanied by skilled attendants and although only 28 percent of Ethiopian women get antenatal care, the figures are lower in Pastoralist regions – just 8 percent in the Somali region. The use of contraceptives is also low and among married women stands at just 14.7 percent nationally and only 3.1% in the Somali region.³³ Pregnancy is an obvious risk for young women – when not fully developed, complication during pregnancy and/or delivery are more likely. At least one percent of women have experience obstetric fistula³⁴- leading to incontinency. Young women are usually thrown out of their home.

FGM

Harmful traditional practices, such as Female Genital Mutilation also jeopardize safe delivery. According to the United Nations, women who have undergone FGM are up to 70 percent more vulnerable to fatal bleeding after giving birth and infant mortality is as high as 50 percent.³⁵ FGM is widespread in Ethiopia; however, “women living in pastoralist areas have a nearly 100 percent chance of undergoing FGM.”³⁶ For example, more than 91 percent of the women in Afar region undergo one of the most severe forms of FGM/C (infibulation or type III). This number is still lower than in the eastern Somali region where, according to the Ethiopia Demographic and Health Survey (EDHS) of 2005, 97.3 percent of the women undergo FGM/C, against 73.3 percent nationally.³⁷ Health risks associated with FGM are considerable apart from a range of obstetric complications, such as postpartum haemorrhage and death of the baby as mentioned above, immediate risks of severe blood loss, shock and infection, etc.

In 2004, the Ethiopian Government enacted a law against FGM, although no prosecutions have yet been brought under this law: “Women have the right to protection by the state from harmful customs. Laws and practices that oppress them and cause bodily or mental harm to them are prohibited.”³⁸ To date some districts have banned FGM, including in Afar region (most recent case of elders outlawing FGM in pastoralist communities in two districts of Afar region Amibara and Awash-Fentale³⁹ Some declines have been observed – the EDHS found only 62.1 percent of girls between 15-19 had been cut compared to 73 percent of those aged 20-24. A 2010 study conducted by the Rohi Weddu Pastoralist Women's Development Organization also confirmed that FGM/C had sharply declined in local communities over the past decade. For instance, more than 200 children were not circumcised in Gewane woreda, which officially declared it had stopped 6 February 2007.⁴⁰ However, changes in attitudes within communities will take longer: A study in Mille, Afar and Fentalle Oromiya found that 82.1 percent of boys say they would not marry girls who had not undergone FGM and 70 percent men and women would not allow their son to marry a woman who did not undergo FGM: “If Afar women are not infibulated, if happens at all, they would not get a husband so they must infibulated.”⁴¹

Harmful Practices Relating to Marriage

31 Getachew, G., Tolossa, D. & G Gebru, 'Risk perception and coping strategies among the Karrayu', *Nomadic Peoples* 2008, pp. 102-3

32 Devereux, op. cit., p. 122

33 Kipuri, N. & A. Ridgewell, op. cit., p. 12

34 Alemu, B & A. Mengistu, op. cit.

35 WHO Study Group on Female Genital Mutilation and Obstetric Outcome. “Female genital mutilation and obstetric outcome: WHO collaborative prospective study in six African Countries.” *The Lancet* (3), June 2006, 1835-1841.

36 Kipuri, N. & A. Ridgewell, op. cit., p. 13

37 UNICEF, Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting, 2007 http://www.unicef.org/ethiopia/ET_fgm.pdf

38 Criminal Code of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia Proclamation No.414/2004

39 <http://www.irinnews.org/report.aspx?Reportid=91732>

40 Asmelash W. M., The role of men in ending the impunity of violence at the community level, the case of Afar in Ethiopia, Rohi Weddu Pastoral Women Development Organization, 2007, <http://www.uneca.org/acgs/new/Presentation-RohiWeddu-March-8.doc>

41 Asmelash W. M op. cit.

Misinformation about condoms is apparent in some instances and results mostly from the limited access of pastoralists to health education and information. For example, some Hamar elders in South Omo Zone, Ethiopia, believe that condoms actually cause AIDS because the two appeared at the same time.⁴² The risk of contracting HIV/AIDS is also compounded by the practice of early marriage – young girls marrying men older than them who are likely to have had several wives. Polygamy is a common practice in the Afar region – men may receive permission to marry up to four wives, but with preconditions (difficult given the precarious economic situation in the region). Men also marry younger girls and divorce elder women, leaving older women alone.⁴³ The Rohi Weddu Pastoral Women Organisation in Afar also mentions a practice called mira which entails sexual abuse or group rape in the absence of the husband. This practice has severe implications both physical and psychological, including risks of HIV/AIDS.⁴⁴

As the State report says, the legal age for marriage is 18 years and forced marriage prohibited. However, early marriage and marriage through abduction still happens. “According to surveys conducted by the National Committee on Traditional Practices of Ethiopia (NCTPE), the prevalence of marriage by abduction is 80 percent in Oromia Region... and as high as 92 percent in Southern Nations Nationalities and Peoples Region (SNNPR), with a national average of 69 percent.”⁴⁵ Marriage by abduction happens when a man’s family does not have enough money to pay the girl’s family a ‘bride price’. He abducts her, holds her for a period of time, rapes her and then negotiates to pay a small amount to the girl’s family so he can marry her. Adolescent girls are particularly vulnerable to abduction on their way to and from school and those who are abducted frequently return to school afterwards. The fear of abduction may cause girls to drop out of school.⁴⁶ Despite the law, the continuation of the practice shows the difficulties in enforcement of the law.⁴⁷

The State report acknowledges that domestic violence is pervasive in Ethiopia;⁴⁸ however, the lack of data disaggregated by ethnicity means that there is little evidence regarding the level of domestic violence in minority and pastoralist households. “In the Afar Region physical abuse seems to be accepted as a necessary means of instilling discipline, although if serious harm is inflicted the marriage can be terminated. Yet this only happens in extreme cases, as wife battering is accorded little attention.”⁴⁹

4. Land rights & economic participation (art. 11, 13, 14, 15)

A large part of Pastoralist women’s vulnerability derives from their limited control over key productive resources. As a woman in the Somali Region said: “We don’t own anything. There is nothing that belongs to us.”⁵⁰ Some Pastoralist women complain specifically about their restricted ownership of livestock, especially large stock, which in Somali culture are traditionally the property of men: Even if a woman owns animals before she gets married, when she gets married, the animals become her husband property.⁵¹

However, Flintan⁵² maintains that the traditional collective management of resources by Borana pastoralists safeguarded women’s rights in accessing to land and resources to a certain extent (through husband and inherited livestock before marriage). Access to land is granted to women through their

42 Kipuri, N. & A. Ridgewell, op cit., p. 12

43 Asmelash W. M op. cit.

44 Asmelash W. M op. cit.

45 UNICEF, op. cit.

46 “The gender dimension of minority and indigenous education” in State of the World’s Minorities and Indigenous Peoples 2009, MRG 2009, p. 79

47 Flintan, F. & A. Mohammed, Gender based violence among the Afar in Ethiopia, Haramata, 2009, p.11
<http://pubs.iied.org/pdfs/12556IIED.pdf>

48 Committee on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women, *Combined sixth and seventh periodic reports of States parties – Ethiopia*, CEDAW/C/ETH/6-7, para. 34

49 Kipuri, N. & A. Ridgewell, op. cit., p.9

50 Devereux, op. cit., p.122

51 Devereux, op. cit., p.123

52 Flintan, F., et. al., 2011 op. cit.; Flintan, F. ‘Sitting at the Table: Securing benefits for pastoral women from land tenure reform in Ethiopia’, *Journal of East African Studies*, vol 4. no. 1, March 2010, pp.153-178, p.162
http://www.wocan.org/files/all/securing_benefits_for_pastoral_women_from_land_tenure.pdf

husband and decision over the use of the resources are made jointly and 'unilateral decision-making is considered uncustomary.'⁵³ Also, "Women are far from powerless in society, however, and, for example, have full authority over all the food (meat, milk and grain) that is brought into the house. Although the household head is automatically recognised as being male, women's power over food allocation thus questions such dominance at this and other levels."⁵⁴

New land tenure laws fostering sedentarisation and privatisation (land rights lost if the land is not used every season) undermine customary traditions, which in turn erodes the protection of women's rights.⁵⁵ Men tend to own almost all large stock (camels and cattle) and women own mainly small stock (goats and sheep). According to some, Somali women "are not really supposed to own animals', 'We are pastoralists by name only: it is the men who are the actual pastoralists since they own the animals (...)'⁵⁶ These views are not shared by all women. Some maintain that they can and do own animals. "Women have always been able to own animals when they are unmarried or divorced. If a woman owns animals before marriage, they remain hers after marriage."⁵⁷

With changes in land tenure, there is a greater need to access other land for grazing which leads to walking further for water, etc. Women take a disproportionate role in domestic duties while also being actively engaged in work that contributes to household food production and income generation⁵⁸. "Gathering and selling natural products of fuel wood and charcoal is an important source of secondary income for many Karrayu pastoralists. Mostly performed by women, the work is arduous and time-consuming, increasing women's burden."⁵⁹ Environmental changes have resulted in greater burden shouldered by women: "increased crop cultivation and environmental degradation are creating additional burdens for women. In support of this point, Denebo Dekeba, a Karrayu man from Central Ethiopia, estimates that 90 percent of livestock activities are undertaken by women"⁶⁰. Increasing burden also impacts on women's and girls' ability to access education and constrains their participation in public life.⁶¹ As a Hamar woman from South Omo said: "There is no limit to the work we do because all tasks wait for the woman ... I prepare breakfast then go to the field to farm, fetch water, take care of the children, build and repair the house, prepare food and take care of goats. Since there are no grinding mills we use our hands to grind flour. We do not get even a bit of rest."⁶²

In the Somali region, women have been increasingly participating in income-generating activities, as a way to contribute to household incomes and to diversify sources of income. This has placed a greater burden of providing for the family on women.⁶³ However, it appears that women retain a greater control over their own earnings. "When a woman earns an income, she can spend her money as she wants. She has complete control over it because she earned it. She doesn't have to consult her husband.) (...). In some senses, therefore, this increased autonomy has been accompanied by an increased burden of responsibility on those people within Somali society who already take on more responsibility for domestic reproduction and household survival than anyone else."⁶⁴

Women's rights to property are denied with the perpetuation of common practices such as Wife's Inheritance. Although upon marriage, women bring livestock into the household, depending on custom they may not inherit the property of their husband. The practice of Hisku or widow inheritance in the Afar region signifies that a deceased brother's relative inherits the wife and wealth of the deceased brother. It is

53 Flintan, F. 2010 op. cit., p.162

54 Holtzman, J. 'Politics and Gastropolitics: Gender and the Power of Food in Two African Pastoralist Societies', Journal of Royal Anthropological Institute. Quoted in Flintan, F., op. cit., p. 161

55 Flintan, F., op. cit., p. 161

56 Devereux, op. cit., p 48

57 Devereux, op. cit., p 48

58 Devereux, op. cit., p. 123

59 Getachew, G., Tolossa, D. & G Gebru, op. cit., p. 101

60 Kipuri, N. & A. Ridgewell, op. cit., p. 7

61 Kipuri, N. & A. Ridgewell, op. cit., p. 3

62 Kipuri, N. & A. Ridgewell, op. cit., p. 8

63 Flintan, F., Cullen, B. & S. Latosky, 2011, op. cit., p. 19

64 Devereux, op. cit., p.126

performed without consent of the woman⁶⁵. Karrayu women in Fentale District bordering the Afar region, are also deprived of inheritance rights or entitlement to their husbands' livestock and other possessions.⁶⁶ Absuma, the practice of cross cousin marriage also denies married women's rights to property. Young girls are married (with or without their consent) to an uncle's son. The practice is believed to strengthen family relations and retain property within the clan in the Afar region.⁶⁷ Afar girls are generally married at about 12-15 years old and the husband can be 60 or 70 and already married.⁶⁸

As mentioned earlier a strong impediment to access to property rights identified by Pastoralist women in Afar, Borana and Oromyia is the lack of education. Lack of skills also curtails Pastoralist women's ability to access loans and credit. They are considered less 'credit worthy' due to their lack of skills. Conversely they lack property to use as collateral to obtain government provided credit.⁶⁹

Recommendations to the Government of Ethiopia

- The government should acknowledge that accurate data disaggregated by ethnicity and gender is essential to develop and monitor effective programs to improve the situation of minority women. The government should collect ethnic data sensitively, working on a consultative basis with minority communities and in accordance with basic principles of confidentiality.
- The Government should revise the 'Charities and Societies Proclamation' of 2009 and ensure that NGOs working on the rights of minority women can operate freely and receive resources from both domestic and foreign sources to carry out their activities.
- The government should consider introducing special measures, in consultation with minority communities and minority women especially, to increase the political representation of minority women.
- The government should increase its efforts to ensure access to education in Pastoralist areas. It should urgently implement programmes designed to ensure Pastoralist girls receive quality education in order to reverse the current trend for literacy and educational attainment to be lowest amongst girls in predominantly Pastoralist regions.
- The government should introduce healthcare programmes specifically designed to address the very high maternal mortality rate and the low numbers of women who deliver their babies with skilled attendants, especially in Pastoralist areas.
- The government should ensure full implementation of the laws prohibiting marriage by abduction and requiring a minimum age for marriage. A large community education programme is likely to be needed to inform the population about the laws and the benefits to the family and community of girls' marrying later following completion of their education.
- The government should work with Pastoralists communities to implement programmes to improve their economic situation with a specific focus on economic participation of Pastoralist women. Policies that revoke Pastoralists rights to access and/or use natural resources without free, prior and informed consent and compensation should be abandoned. Policy makers should ensure that Pastoralist women are able to access existing programmes and schemes such as loans and credit without discrimination.

65 Asmelash W. M. op. cit.

66 Getachew, G., Tolossa, D. & G Gebru, 2008, op. cit., p. 97

67 Flintan, F. & A. Mohammed, op. cit.

68 Asmelash W. M. op. cit.

69 Flintan, et. al. 2008