

Article

Socio-cultural obstructions of rural landholding veracious of women in the case of Boloso sore woreda, wolayta zone, southern Ethiopia

Tadele Tesfaye Labiso*

Department of Geography and Environmental Studies, College of Social Science and Humanities, Wolayta Sodo University, Wolaita Sodo 5100, Ethiopia

* **Corresponding author:** Tadele Tesfaye Labiso, tadetesfa91@gmail.com**CITATION**

Labiso TT. (2025). Socio-cultural obstructions of Rural Landholding Veracious of Women in the case of Boloso sore woreda, wolayta zone, southern Ethiopia. *Journal of Infrastructure, Policy and Development*. 9(4): 6635.
<https://doi.org/10.24294/jipd6635>

ARTICLE INFO

Received: 24 May 2024
Accepted: 9 July 2024
Available online: 25 November 2025

COPYRIGHT

Copyright © 2025 by author(s).
Journal of Infrastructure, Policy and Development is published by EnPress Publisher, LLC. This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license.
<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

Abstract: The aim of this study was to assess the challenges of rural landholding rights of women in Boloso sore Woreda. The population that used as source of data were sample women from four kebeles, Kebele land administration committee members, Woreda women, youth and children office head, Woreda women's association president, Woreda agriculture office head and Woreda agriculture office rural land administration desk experts. Four kebeles from 28 rural kebeles selected by using systematic random sampling. Data gathered using questionnaire were analyzed using SPSS where descriptive and inferential were used for the purpose. Secondary data were collected from different relevant literatures such as reports, research results documents and publications. As to the findings, women landholding trend in the study area was highly contrasts legally ensured equal holding and using rights of women with men. The community including women themselves perceive women independent landholding as taboo and prohibits it. Even if they hold by different means, the plot of land they got or held was small in size and not conducive for agriculture and house construction. The awareness of women on rural land registration and certification benefit was also poor. Thus, rural women should be initiated to organize and struggle for their equal landholding and administering rights.

Keywords: women; landholding right; community attitude; statutory institutions

1. Introduction

1.1. Background of the study

Throughout history, land has been recognized as a primary source of wealth, social status, and power. It is the basis for shelter, food, and economic activities; it is the most significant provider of employment opportunities in rural areas and is an increasingly scarce resource in urban areas. Access to water and other resources, as well as to basic services such as sanitation and electricity, is often conditioned by access to rights in land. The willingness and ability to make long term investments in arable land and in housing is directly dependent on the protection that society affords the holders of rights. Thus, any concept of sustainable development relies heavily on both access to property rights in land and the security of those rights (FAO, 2003).

Women's access to land and other productive resources is integrally linked to discussions around global food security, sustainable economic development, as well as the pressing fight against the HIV epidemic and prevention of responses gender – based violence (UN Human Rights, 2013). Gender issues which are very important to well-being of millions of women and girls around the world got public attention after these conferences (Almaz, 2007). Few women in developing countries have secure

and independent rights to land. In most places women cannot legally or customarily inherit wealth or property, including land. Nor are they generally permitted to own land in their own right-and when they are, few women actually do. Where women are granted use rights to land, it is usually through the intermediation of male relative. Control over the use of land is also generally vested in men (Mehra, 1995).

Women are most marginalized groups of society in relation to accessing and controlling rural land in Ethiopia. The main challenge for an effective implementation of women's right to rural land in the country is largely attributable to negative attitudes and harmful practices which deny women's right to own, administer property and control the rural land. Moreover, women do not have customary right to inherit land their family, and control of land falls chiefly in the hands of husbands (Hussen, 2014).

The research conducted by Gashaw (2015) focused on Women's land use and household food security; the study conducted by Assefa (2017) focused in assessing women's right to access and control land and the efforts of husband's migration on women in Hadya zone, SNNPRS; the research conducted by Melese (2019) in *wolaita* analyzed the impact of cultural practices on women empowerment . The researches stated above have limitations covering the social, cultural and institutional challenges that face women in rural landholding rights exhaustively in single study area. Women in Ethiopia are suffering due to the challenges related with poor implementation of rural land holding constitutional rights and land related proclamations and deep rooted social, cultural and institutional constraints, but no study has conducted in the *woreda* to indicate solutions. All the studies used only household head and married women as target respondent for their study by ignoring women that unmarried.

The problem regarding rural landholding rights of women is serious the *Wolaita* zone. Men dominantly control both land ownership and decision makings regarding land issues at rural areas. Women in the family are not expected to inherit their family land. Having this general understanding, this study was intended to assess the overall socio cultural barriers that influence the rural landholding rights of women in Wolaita Zone, Southern Ethiopia. Eventually, this research would fill the gap by briefing the socio cultural barriers/challenges that influence women landholding rights in *Wolayta* Zone, Southern Ethiopia.

The general objective of this study was to assess socio cultural barriers that affect the rural landholding rights of women in Wolaita Zone, Southern Ethiopia.

The specific objectives of this research were to:-

- ✓ Analyze the current trend/status of landholdings of rural women;
- ✓ Explore cultural and social factors that affect landholding rights of women;
- ✓ Examine the awareness of women on rural land use and administration policies and proclamations

1.2. Research design and approach

The study was aimed to investigate socio cultural challenges of rural landholding rights of women in the study area. The mixed approach and descriptive research design would be employed in the study in order to address the existing problem meaningfully .To achieve the stated objectives, both quantitative and qualitative data would be used to get accurate and more complete information.

1.3. Data sources

The data that would be employed in the study gathered from both primary and secondary sources. The primary data was collected from sampled respondents (women, experts and officers) of the study directly. The tools that would be used for primary data are structured questionnaire, unstructured interview, and FGD with unstructured questions. The secondary sources of data include both published and unpublished documents dictating the challenges related with women landholding rights at globally, nationally and locally from known sources.

1.4. Sample size and sampling technique

From a total of 16 Woreda the researcher would select one woreda namely; Boloso sore wolayta zone through purposive sampling method due my experience and frequent observation from the area. Thus From the Woreda 4 (four) kebeles would be selected by systematic random sampling technique. Accordingly, form each kebeles proportionate number of women would be selected, as the study emphasized on women, the target population for the study would be females (women) the age groups 18 and above.

The researcher decided to take the sample population by limiting in age 18 and above. The rationale for this is to collect better data from women who are in different status (married, unmarried, divorced, widowed, household head) and according to the constitutions of FDRE and SNNPRS the legitimate landholding right belongs to those 18 and above. It is difficult to undertake the study on total population of three kebeles. So, it was necessary to determine the sample size by using standardized formula; Kothari (2004) formula of sample size determination was used to determine the sample population from total.

Based on the above formula the sample size (n) =188 NB: -188 is the sample size which will be determined to take from total number of women aged 18 and above (4200) in respective kebeles of the Woreda. It would be distributed (allocated) to each kebeles proportionally based on their respective total women of the age between 18 and above. The proportional size formula used to distribute would be; $P1=(N1\div N)\times n$, $P2=(N2\div N)\times n$, $P3=(N3\div N)\times n$ and $P4=N4\div N\times n$.

Based on this, $P1$ (Dache Gofara) = $(1000\div 4200)*188=44$ $P2$ (Gara Godo) = $(1200\div 4200)*188=54$, $P3$ (Dubbo) = $(1100\div 4200)*188=49$ and Dolla $(900\div 4200)*188=41$ and thus $P1+P2+P3+P4=188$.

1.5. Instruments of Data Collection

The process of quantitative data collection would be carried out mainly by structured questionnaire comprising both open and close ended questions. One hundred and eighty eight (188) or total sample population was participated in the questionnaire as survey respondent. Adequate amount of copies of questionnaire would be distributed to each kebeles of the Woreda. The questionnaire would be translated from English to Amharic or mother tongue with synonym messages. Unstructured interview were held with selected respondents who have better knowledge, experience, and views on the problem of the study. The four focus group discussions in four kebeles, each consisting of 8 members (5 women, and 3 from other

sector office from each kebeles) totally thirty two members focus group discussants would be participated.

1.6. Inclusion and exclusion criteria of variable

Inclusion Criteria

- being dweller of the rural kebeles of the Woreda.
- Those who will volunteer to participate in this study.
- Women whose age is between 18 years and 65 years old

Exclusion Criteria

- Women whose age categories below 18 and above 65 years will be exempted from participating in the study.

Variables to be investigated

Outcome Variable: The socio cultural barriers of rural landholding rights of women in line with the risks of vulnerability and impoverishment (would be measured at nominal level) which includes: (1) Unemployment (2) Homelessness (3) Landlessness (4) Marginalization (5) Food Insecurity (6) Loss of access to common property (7) Erosion of Health Status and (8) Social disarticulation (9) stigma (10) socio cultural factors (11) institutional factors

Exposure Variables: The exposure variables for this study would be socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents and other factors summarized under the **Table 1**.

Table 1. Sample population of the study.

No.	Woreda	Kebele	Total HH	Sample size	Remark
1.	Boloso Sore	Dache Gofara	1000	44	
2.	Boloso Sore	Gara Godo	1200	54	
3.	Boloso Sore	Dubbo	1100	49	
4	Boloso Sore	Dolla	900	41	
Total			4200	188	

Souce ;(Administrative office of the woreda,2022).

2. Data analysis

Qualitative data that would be collected from the focus group discussions and the key informants' interviews would be transcribed from the tape recordings into electronic and print forms. The transcript would be read thoroughly and descriptive summary arranged in different categories of themes. Document review made carefully through categorization and detail analysis. Quantitative data processing, cleaning and analysis was completed using SPSS version 21.0. Binary Logistic Regression analysis would be used to fit a model and to check independent effect of selected exposure variables by using Adjusted Odds Ratio (Forward Stepwise Procedure) at 95% Confidence Interval. Furthermore, inferential statistic technique, one way ANOVA between different age groups was used to analyze specific objective three. The qualitative data would be analyzed based on grounded theory analysis principle.

3. Result and discussion

3.1. Women landholding trend/status

Analyzing the landholding situation of women in the study area is one of the specific objective of this study. As the result of the quantitative data analysis, the current trend/status of women landholding is not satisfactory to meet the goal of fair, equal and equitable landholding rights of both men and women. From survey respondents 22%(41) responded that women hold equally with men. The remaining 32%(60) and 46%(87) respondents replied Women hold less land than men and women land holding is taboo and prohibited respectively.

Table 2. Shows status women landholding.

No	Status of women landholding	Frequency	Percent
1	Women hold equally with men	41	22
2	Women hold less	60	32
3	Women Land holding is taboo and prohibited	87	46
4	Total	188	100

Source ;own survey;may 2023.

The qualitative data gathered from four kebeles through focus group discussion also confirm the result of quantitative data. Accordingly, women are the subordinates and supporters of men. Without the consent of men, they neither own/access to land nor they can manage and plough it. The land of women means the land of their spouses/husbands. The trend of independent holding is not widely practiced and accepted, although the constitution of the FDRE and SNNPRS encourages.

One of the discussants in the focus group discussion of Dubbo kebele has explained when she was talking about the landholding trend of women in her kebele, as follows

“I have land that I use for agriculture, grazing and wood in two different sites. One site/plot is in my birth place that I inherited from my parents after their death due to the absence of male offspring to my parents. Now that land is transferred to my elder son. Another is that I’m living with my husband and children that is the inheritance of my husband from his parents. So, my holding is secured.

This does not mean that all women have secured access and condition to inherit their families/parents land. As occurred in my parent’s case, the only precondition is the absence of male offspring. Even if there is no male in their family, some women leave their land to their grandfather, uncle or near male relative in the form of sharing the products of crops or in the form of long term contract. To tell fact my daughters have no equal access to my land since I have sons. Females are also not claiming their right. Rather they use their share/portion in the form of educational fee(expenses), clothing and other expenses. Because, claiming to hold land or giving land to females is taboo in our community.

Another discussant, Named Abebech Toma from Gara Godo kebele expressed in Wolaitigna (mother tongue) as “Gadeyne paray attuma asassa. Macca asassi woyttoy palaha kattan maatta miiza. Hageeti etassi kumiko, hege anjjo. Hegaappe kanttidi, biitta bantta ishanturanne azinatura mise shaakana giiko, hege qanggetanne xoossa hanqqo

malata". This means "Land and horse are the gifts of men. The gifts of women are surplus food and more cows for milk. If these are realized, it is a great benediction for the women and their generation. If they claim the rights of land holding with their husbands or brothers, it is a symptom of obscenity and fury of God.

The interviewee of LAC member, w/ro Demekech Desalegn, in Dolla kebele explained that.

Landholding of women is not new agenda. They hold their land with their partners. But, the challenge is convincing fathers, husbands and brothers to get the permission of either inheriting family land or equally deciding to do what in their common land. Giving the equal inheritance and managing rights and chance is distasteful in the view of males though it is legitimately allowable.

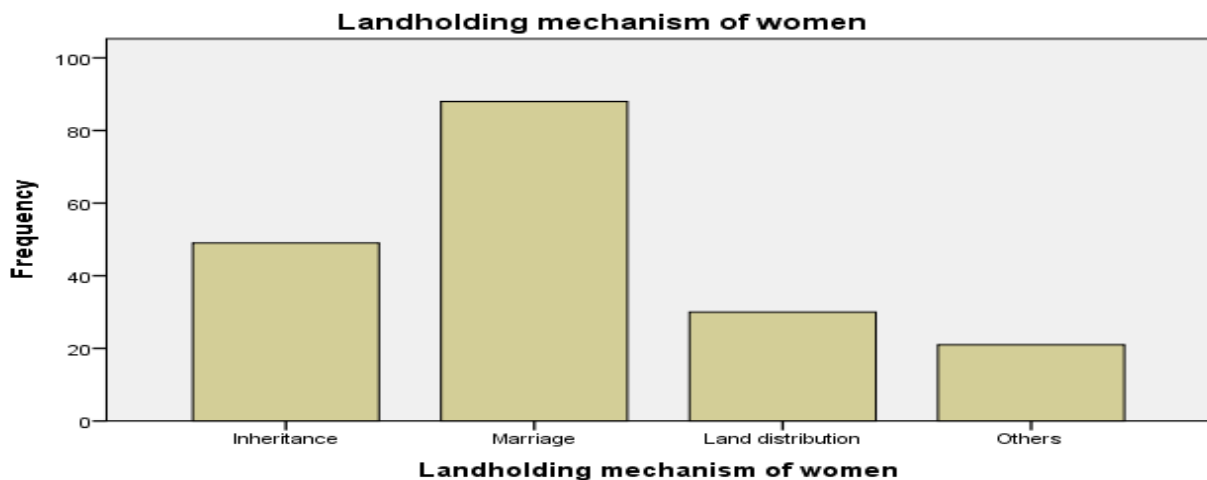
According to the interview of Woreda women's association, even if they get land by different means, it is not suitable for agriculture, forest, grazing and construction. Mostly idle, on-fertile, marginalized and surrounded or locked by neighbors, this is difficult for constructing house. The discussant named Alkase Oshine in Dubbo kebele explained

I inherited 0.25 has plot of land from my family with my step brothers after long time dispute in formal court and clan council (yebeteseb shimagile). Finally, the council divided our father's land to me and my step brothers. The portion that they gave to me is unproductive, which is marginal and surrounded by other persons land and woodland, mainly bahirzaf. It is also difficult to construct house because in all direction the land is occupied by private farmers. But, the land that my brothers got is relatively fertile, large and has outlet to communal land, which is conducive to construct house. The reason they gave outlet-less land was by assuming that she has another land in her husband address and ignoring my constitutional equal holding right.'

The above findings from qualitative and quantitative data shows that landholding right of women in the study area is not formally and equally secured and the amount they get is not fair i.e not equal with male counterparts in all parameters.

3.2. Landholding mechanism of women

According to the result revealed from quantitative statistical data, 45 % (85) women replied that they have/access to land and the remaining 55 %(103) women replied that they have no access to the land by any means although they demand it. There are different means women acquire land. Regarding this study 26 %(49) women acquired through inheritance from their families, 46 % (87) women acquired through marriage, 16% (30) acquired through land distribution, 12%(22) acquired through other ways. This result was from 45% respondents that said that they have land. The remaining 55 respondents replied that they have no access to land have not included in the percentage categories.



Source:-Self survey, May.2023.

Figure 1. Land acquiring mechanism of women.

According to the above result, acquiring land through inheritance from their families is too narrow and minimal. The qualitative data from focus group discussion participants also clarify how land acquiring through inheritance is challenge-full and unfamiliar practice. Even if they inherit, the process is too tedious. From discussants of focus group discussion in Dache Gofara kebele, a woman named W/t Adanech Haile explains the situation of herself as:

I am second child for my family. My elder is male and now he got the temporarily from my parents. In future with additional plot of land, he will be permanent inheritor of the family land with other male children. But, it is not easy and possible to me and my sisters. Because, the women's inheritance of land is not acceptable in the culture of the society.

Accessing land through marriage is the most common way that a woman holds land with their spouses. The survey data result shows this fact. The qualitative data collected from the interview of Boloso Sore Woreda women's association president boldly assures the women landholding right is mainly tied with their marriage. The interview of the president regarding marriage and women's access to land is quoted as:

The woreda women's association struggles to eliminate the discriminatory and discouraging practices in social, economic and political fields. From economic field one is struggling to secure equal landholding right of rural land of men with women at all status. It is difficult to women to acquire land in permanent and secured way. But, the easiest way that women acquire land is marriage. Married women automatically control the land that her husband has. She became the legitimate holder and user of both the land and products from it. Both FDRE and SNNPRS constitutions guarantees the right.

The focus group discussion participants qualify and broaden the women's landholding rights in the life of marriages.

The summarized ideas of the discussants from four kebeles are "Women hold land commonly with their spouses after marriages. But, to assure the continuous security, they should give birth, especially male. Unless, they may face psychological

pressure from the society and the husbands also forces to marry other wife. Then, the first wife is vulnerable to live separately or under the supremacy of the later. The later also control both land and became the sole representative of the husband. So, marriage plus giving birth of male is major criteria to secured landholding”.

The third means that the respondents replied of accessing of the land is distribution of land by the intervention of the government. In the study area 16% (30) respondents replied that they acquired their land by land distribution. According to qualitative data from sample kebeles, the land distribution during dergue regime assisted women to hold land either through their husbands or independently as a head of household. Additionally, women from Dubbo and Gara Godo kebeles acquired land that distributed to their soldier’s husbands that returned to their home after the fall down of Dergue regime.

Finally, the other sources that women hold land are contract from other landholders, the rural job creation package land distribution to unemployed youths and the custodian holdings that women cares for the land of other persons. These all are temporary holdings which support for their short period of time.

3.3. The size of land women hold

The amount of land held by women according to this study is small. As presented in **Table 3**, 76 women (40%) respondents of the questionnaire), responded that their land size is from 0ha (landlessness) to 0.125ha. From 76 women, about 50 were zero hectare holders (none holders).The age of those women is 18 and above to which landholding is secured in proclamation. Again 43 women (23% respondents) participated in survey, responded that their land size is between 0.126ha to 0.25ha. The third group of women (27 women or 14 %) hold 0.26ha to 0.5ha. As the above table portray 22 (12%) of respondents have the land size between 0.51-0.75 hectares. As it is shown on the above table 16(9%) and 4(2%) of the respondents hold the land size between 0.76- 1 hectares and above 1 hectares respectively.

Table 3. Size of land held by women.

No	Size of land in hectare	Frequency	Percent
1	0-0.125ha	76	40
2	0.126-0.25ha	43	23
3	0.26-0.5ha	27	14
4	0.51-0.75ha	22	12
5	0.76-1ha	16	9
6	above 1ha	4	2
7	Total	188	100

Source:-Self survey,may.2023

In focus group discussion with the participants in four kebeles of the woreda , the discourse implies the land size that females hold is too much smaller than that of males holdings. Women with in marriage more control the land they cultivate cabbage and other vegetables. The remaining wide portion of land is mostly controlled by men. As

a chance if women/females inherit their families land, the amount they hold is too small.

Similar study conducted in Tigray region of Ethiopia indicates that the landholdings of female headed household is 0.61 hectare, less than the average size of male headed household which is 0.74 hectare. Higher percentage of female headed household own smaller sizes of land, which is 0.25-0.5 hectares comparing with male headed household where they holds bigger sizes of land (Gebru, 2011). The study of by Mirtuse et.al (2006) also found out 71% of female headed households to own less than 0.5ha compared with 50% of male headed households. The study conducted in Gamo highland revealed that the average land holding size of women was 0.52ha (Teshome, 2014).

In the discussion with woreda agriculture department head, the head officer explained

“Those entitled the land in their names are household heads of their respective families due to absence of their husbands or those of wives with husbands of other source of income especially government employees or trade. Joint holders are couples living together when registration occurred and have had better understanding. The land registered only in the name of husband was mainly due to giving priority to males in order to hold because in the community culture males are the first to hold, husbands with polygamy marriage, poor and corrupt implementation of the LAC, those unmarried at the time of registration and certification and those males got through gift from parents. But, the majority of women which have no certified land were due to no access to land, those got land after registration, the land with disputes and those hold the land in custodian(steward) manner”.

3.4. Sociocultural factors on women land rights

The persistent cultural practices and social order of the community strongly influences the legitimate landholding rights of women. According to the quantitative data collected via questionnaire that portrayed on the below table, the majority of women do not agree on or support the currently existing sociocultural status quo of the study area i.e 17% or 32 of respondents from the total, responded that they strongly agree on social and cultural situations which is conducive for women to hold land in the community and 22 % or 24 of respondent women responded that they agree on that the culture and social order/set up is conducive for women landholdings. According to the **Table 4**, the remaining 45% or 85 of the respondent out of 188 respondents responded that they disagree on the cultural social set up of the community i.e.16 % or 28 of the respondents responded that they strongly disagree on the status quo, which means the sociocultural set up is not conducive for women landholding.

Table 4. Level of agreement on Sociocultural status quo.

No	Level of agreement	Frequency	Percent
1	Strongly agree	32	17
2	Agree	40	22
3	Disagree	85	45

4	Strongly disagree	28	16
	Total	188	100

Source:-Self survey; May, 2023.

These results show that cultural and social set up of the community is discouraging for women to claim their land holding right and they understood the situation they living on. Based on the data collected through questionnaire the reasons why they disagree or strongly disagree, the majority of the respondents said that they are under the control of men/their husbands, brothers and relatives/,the issue of equal holding right is only written presented in the paper but the determinants and decision makers are men.

On the discussion course of focus group women also stridently explained that they do not believe and agree on sociocultural set up of the community. According to the expressions of majority, society believe that women are not loyal and capable enough as men to manage the land up to the end of life, they can sell or hire it without adequate reason; if women hold the land, the men without of blood relation of the family will come and hold the land by the name of marriage which humiliates the dignity of family, Women by themselves feel inferiority for claiming the land by perceiving that what will the society say if they claim equal share from family or husband. Basing on all of these most women agree that sociocultural set up is full of constraints for the land ownership and holdings of women.

3.5. Reactionary community attitude

As per findings of quantitative data, the community attitude regarding women landholding is significantly remains unchanged. As the table below portray, from total of 188 respondents 45(24%) of the respondent women replied that women land holding is acceptable. As it is shown in the **Table 5**, from the total of 188 respondents, 115 (61%) of the respondent women responded it is taboo and unacceptable in the community to own land for women. Eventually, the remaining 28(15%) of the respondent women were not certain to reply confidently on whether having or holding land was acceptable or not acceptable.

Table 5. Community attitude towards women landholding.

No	Community attitude toward women holding	Frequency	Percent
1	Acceptable	45	24
2	Taboo and unacceptable	115	61
3	Not certain	28	15
4	Total	188	100

Source:-Self Survey,May. 2023.

Regarding the attitude of the community the discussants of focus group expressed deeply about holding land for women. According to them, the setup of the society is organized women as the additional property of the male. If a man marries a woman she counted as the manager of husband's property (land, cattle, crop, cloths, etc.).For that she should be careful on that, unless she may face physical and psychological attack from their counterpart including divorce. But, claiming all these properties are

not good for her future life in the marriage. She will be divorced and will send back to her family. The properties including land are sole holdings (properties) of the husbands. Even if Women claim following legal procedure, the process is long, cost, the society also ignores the woman that constantly attends courts, she will be excluded from the local organizations/associations like idir, iqub, and other women related informal groups. This all show that the attitude of the community is the serious bottleneck to secure the holding right of the rural land. From the participants of the focus group discussion a woman named Tamune Tsige from Dache Gofara kebele expressed as follows:

“I was married my husband, Demise Dana Keshamo, thirty years ago. When I marry him my father and mother oriented me to obey and respect him and if not he will ban you, and you may loss the wealth that he has. Similarly, my husband in addition to me married extra two wives. Now he has only two with me. Those divorced did not got any piece of land from our husband, except her cloth and kitchen equipment. She did not claim the land rights. Because, divorcing without getting land was normal practice in the community. Now, the law of government is good. But, both men and women respects the rule of community culture rather than government law. Because government and its law is more attached with educated urban people. She said in Wolaita language as “Nuuni mayza ma’iya wogaa naagidi daana.” This mean, we should respect the culture of our ancestors by and large.”

Similarly, on the focus group discussion held in Dubbo kebele, the discussants expressed that the attitude of community is challenging to the full implementation of the constitutional rights of women landholdings. We, women also gives due attention to the culture of the community and society than that of state laws. From the discussants of the Focus group discussion, discussant named Beyenech Kassa said:-

“I am married and have three children. Regarding land I’m more confident because I have children. Once I married, my problem of livelihood is also solved. Because inheritance of women from their family land is taboo. The only means is marriage. Even in marriage there should be child. Unless in the community there is saying in Wolaitigna language “Yelena machessine Baquluwasssi kattanne ho” o keettaa koshees” to mean that “Only food and hot house belongs to infertile women and mule. The above discussions prove that the attitude of the community is one of most influencing factor of women landholding rights.

“Now the attitude of the community is changing and the participation of women is also progressive. Regarding landholding right our sector jointly works with other sectors to alleviate the long lived discouraging attitudes of the community. Women hold land equally with men, the participation in the activities of agriculture and natural resource management increased, the dispute of land related issues both in kebele and woreda are reduced, and the participation and struggle of women to realize their right is satisfactory. Thus, at the end, I can say now the attitude of community is changed significantly and the negative influence comes from community is insignificant.

Similarly, in the course of interview, the head of Woreda women, children and youth office head explained

“The primary goal of our sector is to assure the equality of women with men. One job process in our office mainly follows the issues of women and children with other stakeholders. We in-doctrine/preach the legal rights of women at different meetings

and platforms. One issue is assuring the equal and equitable economic benefit of women. So, to rural women the core economic resource is land. The right of women to hold land by inheritance, marriage, contract and lease is respected. Again women can transfer their land through matrilineal line to whom they want. The attitude of society mainly men is to deny the right. But, since it is legally accepted, men oblige to obey the law and the acceptance was maximized through time. In addition to our sector, in all government offices, there is gender issue supportive job process. The goals and roles of these are also to assure the equal participation and benefit of women in their respective sectorial mission.

3.6. Males superiority/patriarchy

The quantitative data revealed from analysis of questionnaire shows, 52% (98) of respondents from the total 188 respondents women responded that male superiority or patriarchy is the serious challenge for the legitimate land holding rights of women. As the **Table 6** shows, 37 % (70) of respondents from total of 188 respondent women stated that male superiority or patriarchy is not serious challenge for the legitimate land holding rights of women. The remaining respondent 11 % (20) of from total respondents were not quite sure on whether male superiority or patriarchy is the serious challenge for the legitimate land holding rights of women or not.

Table 6. Shows whether male superiority is challenge for landholding.

No	Is male superiority challenge for holding land?	Frequency	Percent
1	Yes	98	52
2	No	70	37
3	Not certain	20	11
	Total	188	100

Similarly, participants of focus group discussion explained, the decision of male is center of the overall activities of the community. Decision of land is the task of men. Women get land through men. Based on this tradition, all females' gives priority regarding the issue of land to males. In the case of unmarried females, the males in the family decide what to be done on the land of the family. If females raise idea, the males say, "stop you are female, who are you to give the idea on land". In the case of married the role of women is fetching water, cooking food, caring children and managing the home activities. But, the role of men is plough land, solving the problems of boundary, deciding what to do on which plot of land, buying seeds and fertilizer, renting in and renting out land.

3.7. Customary authority's law and clan system

The interviewee i.e worda women association president stated; the customary authorities in the worda influence the constitutional rights of women landholding rights negatively. The president said;

"The customary authorities and clan system is closing the door of woman not to claim their constitutional rights of holding land .If her husband threats, she cannot accuse in formal court unless the clan authorities (yebeteseb shimagile and yegosa idir

dagnoch) permit. Nobody can give the words of witness to the court without their consent. If do so, those individuals will be automatically excluded from the clan idir or other informal association. They charge by money or other means those who make contact with isolated individual. There is a strong belief that the issue of land is the task of the beteseb shimagile whose power comes from words and blessings of the ancestors. They say that the land hold by women is indication of failurity of male line in the clan. Even kebele land administration committee performs the will of different clan authorities' mission, not of the constitution”.

As the one of the discussants stated; The most common inheritance system in the study area is patrilineal, where by succession and inheritance of property are determined through male line (i.e., only sons inherit land from the family plots). Because of the customary influences, daughters are prevented from inheriting family land. This was developed from the expectation that after marriage young women become part of another family.

According to the discussants focus group in four kebeles of the woreda, the expression of women is also more or less similar that of interviewee idea. According to their idea customary authorities are collapsing the legal rights of women in the study area or their locality. Different clans in the kebele have their own councils, leaders, members and they also have code of conducts which is partly written and partly unwritten. Men are founders and leaders of the clan organizations. If any landholding dispute arises among the members of the clan, the authorities have responsibilities to look the issue and pass decision. In the believes of the clan system, the role and responsibilities of women are living under the rule and order of male (male may be father, brother, husband or near relative).The males are responsible bodies to hold the lands of their respective families. According to the clan system, unmarried women can live up to date of marriage with their families but cannot inherit/hold temporarily or permanently the parents' land. Married women can hold until she lives in the marriage.

What hinders securing the women's landholding rights in your community?

Table 7. Sociocultural Elements of the community.

No	Socio cultural element that hinder WLH	Frequency	Percent
1	Community attitude	56	30
2	Males superiority/patriarchy	54	29
3	Customary authorities and clan systems	78	41
	Total	188	100

Source:- Source:-Self Survey, may.2023.

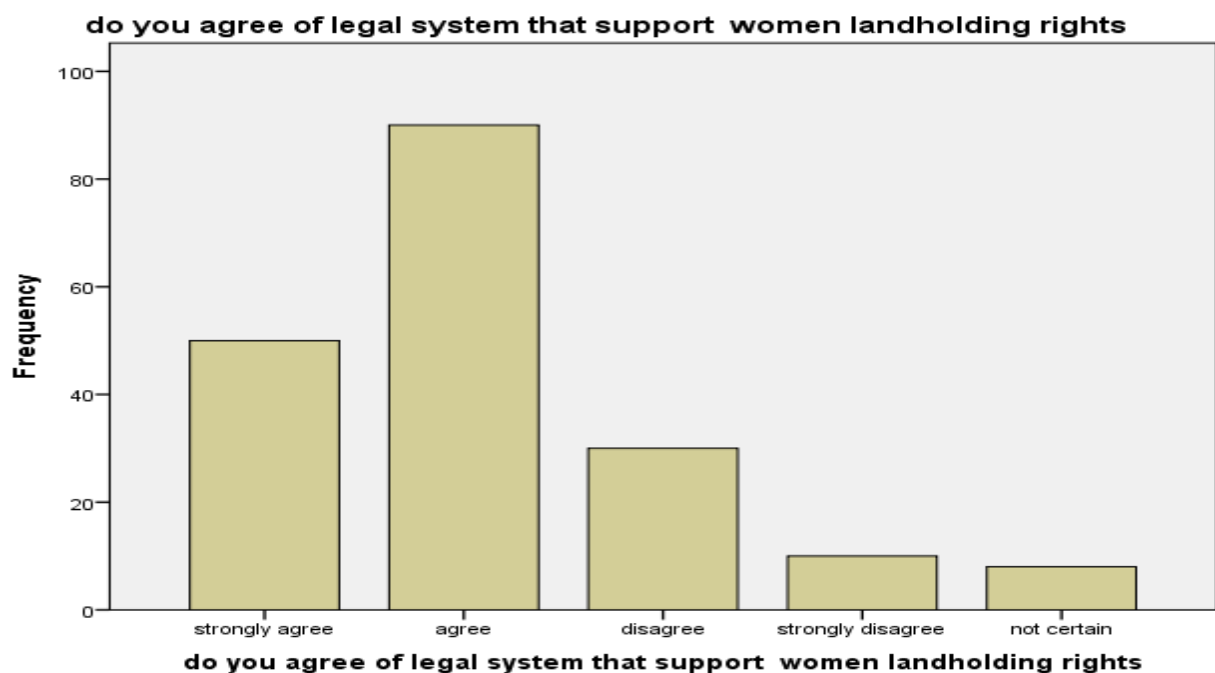
3.8. Women's perception and awareness towards land tenure system

Land tenure security is crucial for women's empowerment and a prerequisite for building secure and resilient communities. Tenure is affected by many and often contradictory sets of rules, laws, customs, traditions, and perceptions. For most rural women, land tenure is complicated, with access and ownership often layered with barriers present in their daily realities: discriminatory social dynamics and strata, unresponsive legal systems, lack of economic opportunities, and lack of voice in decision making. Yet most policy reform, land management, and development

programs disregard these realities in their interventions, which ultimately increases land tenure insecurity for rural women (Mwaura, 2014).

In Ethiopia, the land tenure system reforms have tried to secure land right for women though that of 1974 has failed to do so due to numerous reforms it has passed over the centuries and socio- cultural barriers and practices (Teshome, 2015). In the “Derg” Regime women are unable to benefit equally from the land allocation system because the women’s land right were highly subjected due to birth or nuptial families (Birtukan A. 2016). The Ethiopian Constitution of 1995 granted women to acquire, administer, control, use and transfer and inherit land (FDRE, 1995).

As revealed from the analysis of quantitative data that portrayed on the table below, 50 (27%) of respondents from total respondents, responded that they strongly agree on current land tenure system (state constitution, government policies, proclamations and other laws).Accordingly the existing tenure system support the equal, fair and equitable holding of rural land by whatever means (by inheritance, through marriage relationship, lease, rent, gift).As the table below shows , 90(48%) of respondents from total respondents, responded that they agree on current land tenure system (state constitution, government policies, proclamations and other laws) related with women landholding rights. In contrast to the above statement, 30(16%) and 10(5%) of respondents from total respondents, responded that they disagree and strongly disagree on current land tenure system (state constitution, government policies, proclamations and other laws) related with women landholding rights respectively. The remaining 8(4%) of respondents from total respondents were not quite sure on the legal system and current land tenure system. This implies that 75% women from the survey respondents recognize the current tenure system and 25% respondents from the total respondents do not recognize the system.



Source:-Self survey data,may.2023

Figure 2. Level of agreement of legal system on women land rights.

Are you aware of women landholding rights proclamations ratified in FDRE and SNNPS

Table 8. ANOVA analyzed through SPSS version 20.

No	Items	Sum of squares	Df	F	Sig
1	Between Groups	.661	23	.220	.962
2	Within Groups	32.52	165	.229	
	Total	33.18	188	.448	

Source:-Self survey data,june.2023

As indicated in above **Table 8**, the value of significance (Sig.0.413) is greater than P-value which is 0.05. This result shows; there is no significant awareness/perception difference among different age groups that participated in the survey. This means that the awareness of women in four age categories i.e. 18-30, 31-45, 46-64 and above 65 is not different. It is expected that those in the age intervals of youth and adult are more aware of the laws and proclamation due to the expansion of different media access, literacy and the government's high attention to the participation and benefits of women in social, economic and political affairs.

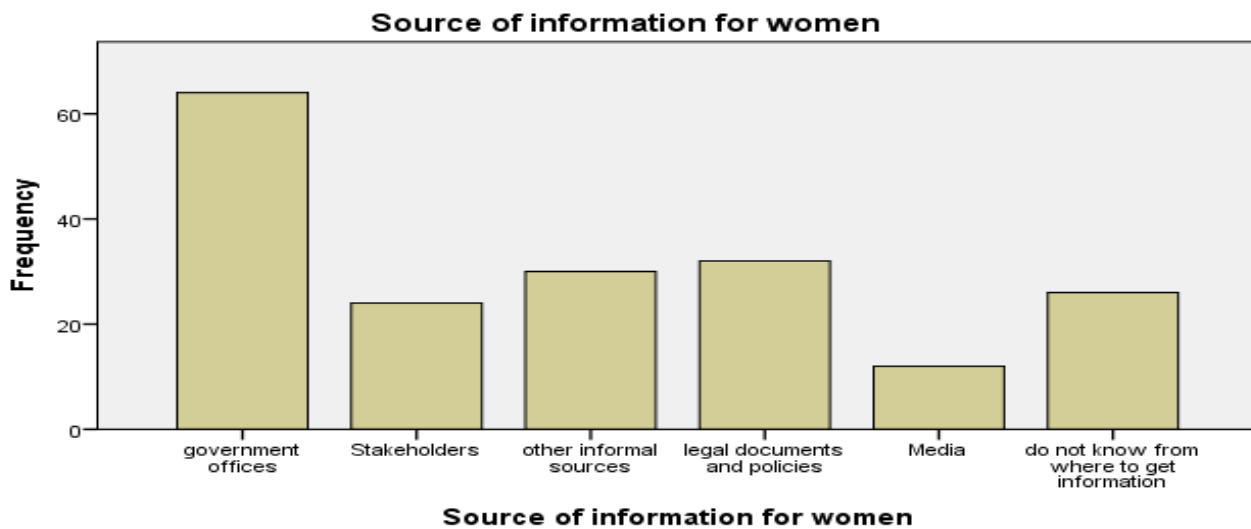
To explore the levels of women's awareness interview with Woreda Women's Association president and one member of land administration committee(LAC) in each sample kebele conducted. Based on this, the woreda women's association president explained the awareness level and challenges that faces them as follows:

The information from Gara Godo Kebele is similar with that of Dolla Kebele with slight difference. The LAC Chairman of the kebele named,

Daniel Tumato, said:-There is a representative of women in LAC. But, the level of awareness is not as men. Men have relatively better exposure to the government policies and different proclamations including the land issues. Men are also to close to different responsibilities which makes them to be aware of the legal issues. Women have no skill and ability to solve land related disputes of the community. The low level of awareness in the proclamation and the passive participation of women to ensure their right are the main problems in our kebele".

As the interviewer understood from FGD in four kebeles (Dolla, Dubbo, Dache Gofara and Gara Godo), Women know the progressive support of government to women landholdings grossly. But almost all women lack the detail knowledge of proclamations and lack confidence and commitment to know what the law dictates.

Generally, women in the study area lack the clear knowledge and exposure about the constitutional rights of their landholding rights and the proclamations ratified regarding rural land use and administrations. Rather, they follow the customary principle that developed through time in the community.



Source; own survey; May 2023

Figure 3. Source of information for women.

3.9. The reason for poor Implementation status of government institution

Based on the results of the **Table 9**, 56(30%) the respondents of from the total 188, replied the officials and experts of government institutions lack will to deal the issues of women landholding rights. 44(23%) respondents responded corruption and prejudice to women are the reasons of non-genuine and unfair implementation, 28 (15%) respondents responded lack of strong women association to facilitated the implementation of become non-genuine and unfair. 24(13%) respondents responded officials' and experts' lack of knowledge to the proclamation and dispute resolution mechanisms affects the genuine and fair implementation of women land rights. 22(12%) respondents responded biased land tenure system facilitated non- genuine implementation of women land rights. The remaining 14(7%) respondents have no convenient reasons that make the implementation very poor.

Table 9. The reason for poor Implementation status of government institution.

No		Frequency	Percent
1	Lack of willingness	56	30
2	corruption and prejudice to women	44	23
3	lack of strong women association	28	15
4	officials' and experts' lack of knowledge	24	13
5	biased land tenure system	22	12
6	have no convenient reasons	14	7
	Total	188	100

As the information revealed from in-depth interview with woreda women association president shows the above described factors influences in one and another way the implementation of the statutory (governmental) institutions. She said”

the kebele administrative council and Land Administration Committee are not happy to no deal the issue of women claims of their legitimate land rights. They

postpone the appointments for consecutive weeks and months which make women to become hopeless from government. Some take bribe from male counterparts and makes women disadvantageous through their decisions. The role of organized movement of women to secure their legitimate right is poor”.

“the attention of regional government to support the implementation of constitution right is weak. There is no affirmative action to women in securing their landholding rights. They cannot compete equally with men to assure their rights, but the government left them for equal competition. There is no training and regular performance based evaluation from regional and zonal stakeholders.”

The above information indicates that the government institutions are not acting to assure the equal landholding rights of women. They lack will to deal with issues; the process administering and solving of women-men land dispute are not free from corruption, lack of knowledge to implement the proclamations, lack of strong women association. But, the significant amount of women does not know the reasons of inefficient implementation of government institutions. This shows women lack awareness and decision making process of their close government institutions. The activities of regional and zonal government institutions, specially agriculture and natural resource sector, are not adequate to improve the lowest level institution’s inefficiencies.

3.10. The influence of customary institutions

The information revealed from quantitative and qualitative data show the customary institutions hinders the landholding rights of women in the study area. Accordingly to quantitative data, 78(41%) respondents from the total 188 ; responded that clan elders’ council (in local Amharic saying Yebeteseb shimagile, Yegosa shimagile) influences women’s right of landholding. 54(29%) respondents from the total responded that local community association (which is locally known as Idir) influences women’s landholding right. The remaining 56(30) % respondents from the total of 188; responded the religious belief and other customary practices of the community affects the women’s landholding rights.

Table 10. Shows the influence of customary institutions.

No	The influence of customary institutions	Frequency	Percent
1	clan elders’ council	78	41
2	local community association	54	29
3	religious belief and other customary practices	56	30
Total			

Due to cultural influences women themselves may be reluctant to become widely involved in political activities and community organizations for reasons like inexperience in public speaking and participation and lack of knowledge about how legal matters function. Thus in the study area, women reluctance to claim their legal land rights could be rated as the fifth most rated constraint as stated by women. Even women knew that they have rights in front of law they don’t claim their rights

due to their preference to have long-term social bondage with their brothers and other male family members.

The qualitative data gathered through interview with woreda women's association president and the information's of FGDs in four kebeles more pledges how traditional or customary institutions established in the community obstructs authentic landholding rights of women. The president explained;

“The overall activities of the society in the communities regulated by clan based an association that includes all the members of the clan. The issue of land is main duty of the clan leaders whose activities are hidden to government and mainly favors males than females. Clan organization mainly targets how to proceed the customs of grandfathers. The tradition of grandfathers of the clan was making males the sole holder of families land. Another challenge is social organization of community mainly idir decides beyond its role. The leaders of idir decide who should inherit the land of family, charge the local government if they expose their work through isolating or segregating from any social services of idir like not participating in the events of wedding, funeral, graduation and other social affairs”.

In focus group discussions the discussants repeatedly explained that they were in under the control of clan elder's council. It is difficult to raise the rights of land confidently as men do. The belief of clan leaders is land is to men. The chance or destiny of women only determined by marriage. Until they get married they can stay in their family home depended on fathers, mothers, brothers or other male relatives. If the women claim their land holding rights to the clan council, the council considers the quest as the curse and failurity of that family. Due to this they either lobby or forces women in order to withdraw case.

Regarding the mechanism that the customary institutions influence women land rights, the quantitative data analysis result shows that, 84(45%) of women from the total of 188 respondents; said that the customary institutions forces women not to ask about their rights., 36(19%) of women from the total of 188 respondents said that the customary institutions weakens the statutory institutions not to perform in full capacity and implement the law properly. The remaining 68(36%) of women from the total of 188 respondents responded that the clan leaders lobby women not to violate the culture of the society.

Table 11. Shows how customary institutions influence women land rights.

No	How customary institutions influence women land rights	Frequency	Percent
1	forces women not to ask about their rights	84	45
2	weakens the statutory institutions not to perform in full capacity	36	19
3	clan leaders lobby women not to violate the culture of the society	68	36
	Total	188	100

Source;own survey, may 2023.

In line with this study finding, the study in Zaghie peninsula of Amhara region by Asfaw and Satterfield shows that the formal justice system has become both inaccessible and dysfunctional at local level. To fill this institutional vacuum, informal system for mediating local level conflicts have been widely promoted. In Zaghie and much of the Amhara region, the chief informal dispute settlement mechanism is

Shimgelina (Asfaw and Satterfield, 2010). As the study conducted in Myanmar, Women are more knowledgeable about customary regimes than they are about formal rights. Customary and formal tenure regimes, when they exist in parallel, often overlap and sometimes contradict each other, negatively impacting the quality of rights of men and women. Because women usually need a male intermediary to access their rights, women are at a disadvantage in claiming their rights in these situations. Furthermore, the plurality of land legislation lends itself to confusion, making it harder for women and men to claim their rights (Louis, et al; 2018).

4. Conclusion

This study aimed to assess socio cultural factors that affect women landholding right of women in Boloso sore woreda, Wolaita zone, South Ethiopia. The study initiated to attain four specific objectives. In this subsection, the conclusion of the study may be drawn from the major objectives discussed above.

The study reveals that sociocultural situation affect women's access to and control over land in the study area. The reactionary attitude of the community, male superiority, and customary authority's law and clan system in the area discourages the landholding rights of women. Land acquisition by unmarried, divorced, widowed and women in polygamous marriages are affected by community customs and traditions. Even if women marry, they should born male child/children. Rural land policy needs to address issues of these different groups of women to make sure that rural women get equal right to land as well as equal benefits from land. Access to land has become challenge to single/unmarried women. Daughters are not protected by customary laws on inheritance and statutory law has not yet challenged community customs and traditions. This study further reflects that community practices deny childless widows' access rights to deceased husbands' land.

Access to information, knowledge and awareness on constitutional women's equal land holding rights is critical to all concerned bodies including women themselves to realize women's rights on land. Knowledge and information on the regional land administration and use proclamation and other relevant legislations is limited among women in the study area. Knowledge and information is essential for women because most women hold not primary right of the land. They have to be aware of the constitutions, proclamations, implementing legitimate institutions, rules and their legal rights to raise claims and to challenge denial of opportunities and rights. The role of different NGOs and CSOs are pivotal to promote the land rights of women. The involvement of NGOs regarding women land rights in the study area is poor.

5. Recommendations

Women's equal inheriting, using and transferring legitimate rights should be respected. The attitude of the community should be changed. To achieve these overall benefits of women landholding in sustainable development context should be implemented.

Promoting women's equal access to and control over land requires addressing socio- cultural issues particularly customs and traditions that affect realization of women's equal rights to land. Therefore, all the government structures from kebele

level to regional level should design strategies to address these issues through advocacy and awareness creation programme to change community attitudes and practices.

Women should be involved in the land administration programme and implementation process including in dispute settlement. They should be empowered to leadership positions in Land Administration Committees. Therefore, the land administration system should design strategies to active involvement of women in the land administration process at different decision-making levels. Land Administration Committee established at village (kebele) level should implement regional and state proclamations genuinely and fairly.

Both governmental and non-governmental organizations should be encouraged to assist with dissemination of information, awareness raising and even develop expertise in law and provision of legal services to help the women, in cases of disputes over land. Currently such services are poor and non-existent and women who take their cases to the courts face substantial monetary and social costs.

The Woreda and kebele government institutions like women affairs office, schools at kebele level, and other related stakeholders should take action to provide training and build capacity to help fill the gaps.

Conflict of interest: The author declare no conflict of interest.

References

- Almaz W. (2007). Women's access to and control overland in the current land administration in Oromia region, M.Athesis. Addis Ababa University. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.
- ARD (Associates in Rural Development) (2004). Ethiopian land policy and Administration Assessment. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: Report submitted
- Asfaw T. & Satterfield T. (2010). Gender relations in local dispute settlement in Ethiopia's Zeghie Peninsula. *Human Ecology Review*, VOL. 17, No. 2, 2010.
- Askale T. (2005). Research report 4: Land registration and women's land rights in Amhara region, Ethiopia. Russel press, UK.
- Asrat A. (2019). Analysis of profit efficiency among smallholder maize producers (evidence from Damot Pulasa District, Wolaita zone, Ethiopia). *International journal of Economics and Business*, vol. 4, issue I, page 60-107.
- Amare B. (2013). Potential impact of land certification on households' land-related investment in Southern Ethiopia. Norwegian University of Life Sciences
- Assefa M. (2017). Women's land right to land: The case of households with male migrants in Hadya zone. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
- Belay, Assefa. (2010). The effect of rural land certification in securing land rights: A case of Amhara region, Ethiopia. Unpublished thesis submitted to the international institute for geo-information science and earth observation, the Netherlands.
- Birtukan A. (2016). Rural women's access to and control overland in East Gojjam during the dergue. *Environmental systems research publications*.
- Daniel Weldegebriel AMBAYE. (2012). Land Rights in Ethiopia: Ownership, equity, and liberty in land use rights. FIG Working Week, Rome, Italy, 6-10 May 2012.
- Dessalegn Rahmato. (2004). Searching For Tenure Security? The Land System and New Policy Initiatives in Ethiopia, Forum for Social Studies, FSS Discussion Paper No. 12, Addis Ababa.
- Deininger, Klaus, with Jaap Zevenbergen, and Daniel Ayalew Ali (2006). Assessing the Certification Process of Ethiopia's rural Lands.
- Elizabeth (2011). Land Rights Issuea in International Human Rights Law. *Malaysian journal on Human Rights*. vol. 4, No. 10.
- FDRE, (1995). Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. Proclamation No. 1/1995. Proclamation of the Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, Addis Ababa

- Gashaw T.(2015).Women's land use right policy and household food security inEthiopia,International journal of African and Asian Studies.ISSN 2409- 6938,Vol.12/2015
- Hadera T.(2002).Women and Land Rights in in Ethiopia. Comparative analysis in two communities in Tigray and Oromia Regional State.EASSI
- Lindner, Samira (2014).Ethiopia: Overview of Corruption in Land Administration. Marie Chêne, ed. Transparency International,U4 Expert Answer. www.transparency.org
- Melkamu B. and Shewakena A.(2010).Facing the Challenges in Building Sustainable Land Administration Capacity in Ethiopia. Peer Reviewed Paper. Working Week 2010.
- Woldemichael Delango, M. (2019). The Impact of Cultural Practices on Women Empowerment: The Case of Offa Woreda, Wolaita Zone, Southern Ethiopia. *Social Sciences*, 8(4), 175. <https://doi.org/10.11648/j.ss.20190804.15>
- SNNPR (2007). SNNPR Rural Land Administration and Utilization Proclamation. 110/2007.
- Rekha.M(1995).Women, Land and Sustainable Development: International Center for Research on Women
- Yirgu Bayu, T. (2015). Socio-cultural and Policy Related Constraints to Women's Land Right: A Case Study from Gamo Highland, SW Ethiopia. *Humanities and Social Sciences*, 3(4), 249. <https://doi.org/10.11648/j.hss.20150304.14>