

**Conceptualising Childhood: Perceptions and Practices
of Childhood Education and Migration Among the
Argobba Community in North-Eastern Ethiopia**

**By
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Declaration

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Anannia Admassu

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Abstract

This thesis explores how childhood among the Argobba communities in north-east Ethiopia is shaped by local social and cultural attitudes and some aspects of political changes and globalisation. By investigating children's perspectives with regard to their roles in households and communities, it examines what influences children and adults' perceptions and practices concerning children's education and migration. Given the importance of generational relations among various ethnic groups in Ethiopia, the research asked how children and young people react to cultural contexts and societal values and examined whether existing generational relationships and cultural context have shown changes over time.

Drawing from the social study of childhood and through adopting a social constructivist approach, the research explored how their childhoods are constructed and reconstructed in the course of their interactions with their peers, families and community members. The research used Anderson's (1983) framework of 'Imagined communities' to explore the differing ways of how sociocultural values and the legacy of past traditions shape children and adults' imaginings regarding their identity and future livelihoods. The research found differences between the perspectives of children and adults on how childhood and education are conceptualised and practised. Aspirations related to migration were largely economic, and despite the many risks, migration was believed to be beneficial by children and adults alike. An examination of generational relationships reflected both tensions and collaboration between generations, which facilitated and, at times, constrained the agency of both children and adults. Changes are also emerging in kinship and familial relations

due to emergence of transnational families and better financial standing of successful migrants. Improvements in the expansion of media technology and better transport enabled children and young people to migrate.

The originality of my thesis, therefore, lies in the under-researched nature of the Argobba people. This is mainly true for the children as no other studies have presented the perspectives of children as 'active participants' and explored their agency in light of the emerging impacts of globalisation on their perceptions and practices of education and migration. By showing how sociocultural values shape childhoods and presenting the relational nature and interdependencies between children and adults, this research contributes to the social study of childhood and further theorisation of generational differences among marginalised ethnic minorities such as the Argobbas. Furthermore, the research builds on Anderson's framework of 'imagined communities' through demonstrating how changes in the social and economic contexts as well as globalisation influenced children and young people's imaginings. Hence, the research argued that while adults tend to maintain the legacy of their ancestral traditions and ethnic identity, which were often related to the past, children and young persons form their imaginings into the future using education and migration as a vehicle towards achieving their aspirations and their transitions into adulthood.

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List of Abbreviations

ABE	Alternative Basic Education
ACRWC	African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
ADA	Amhara Development Association
ANRS	Amhara National Regional State
BRI	Belt and Road Initiative
CHADET	Organization for Child Development and Transformation
CREC	College Research Ethics Committee
CSA	Central Statistical Agency
CTB	Culture and Tourism Bureau
EFA	Education For All
ESDP	Education Sector Development Program
EPRDF	Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front
FDRE	Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
GCIM	Global Commission on International Migration
GTP	Growth and Transformation Plan
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
ILO	International Labour Organization
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MoE	Ministry of Education

NCTPE	National Committee on Traditional Practices of Ethiopia
OAU	Organisation of African Unity
PIS	participation information sheet
PTAs	parent—teacher association
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SES	socioeconomic status
TPLF	Tigray People’s Liberation Front
TVET	Technical Vocational education and Training
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

Chapter 1.

Introduction

1.1 Statement of purpose

This research sought to explore perceptions and practices of childhood, migration and education among the Argobba communities in north-east Ethiopia. The Argobbas are among various ethnic groups in Ethiopia who live in unique village settlement patterns in the north-eastern part of the Amhara Regional State. Although they were later dispersed into the eastern and south-eastern part of the country, Argobba Woreda¹ and the villages in Shonke and Teleha located in north-east Ethiopia are recognised as places that represent the historical and cultural artefact of the Argobbas. I present a detailed account of the Argobbas in Chapter 3.

My initial thoughts about undertaking research on the situation of migrant children grew from my observations of many children who were migrating from the rural parts of the Amhara region to the town of Kombolcha where CHADET² was implementing projects to support vulnerable children. With a focus on supporting children to be enrolled and retained in school, CHADET was also assisting migrant children to reintegrate with their families and gain access to services from other organisations and governmental institutions. According to

¹ A 'woreda' is the equivalent of a district and is found in the second layer of government structure from the lowest level.

² CHADET is a charitable organisation that I founded in Ethiopia. CHADET is an acronym for Organization for Child Development and Transformation.

the assessments made on the migratory processes of children and young persons in the area, I learnt that children migrate from nearby and distant locations, including Argobba, to the towns of Kombolcha, Dessie and other urban centres within and out of Dehub³ Wollo Administrative Zone. As an emerging industrial and commercial centre, Kombolcha largely serves as a transit point for many children in their journey to other destinations (Gebre 2012).

Given the remoteness of the location of Argobba, and the value that they attach to their ethnic identity and cultural distinctiveness, I sought to understand in more detail what motivates children to migrate and the perceptions and practices of children and adults towards migration and education. Furthermore, while recognising the existence of tensions between the rights-based approach taken by government and non-governmental organisations such as CHADET (e.g. in the UNCRC [1989] and the Ethiopian Constitution FDRE 1995) and the complexities that parents and communities encounter to realise the best interests of the child, I also explored how conceptualisations and practices of childhood are shaped and examined the age and gender aspects of migrant children to generate data on a topic where empirical evidence is scant. Hence, in undertaking this research, I wanted to explore how the cultural context and globalisation can influence perceptions and practices of childhood, migration and education among the Argobba communities.

The originality of my thesis, therefore, lies in the under-researched nature of the Argobba people. This is mainly true for the children as no other studies have presented the perspectives of children as ‘active participants’ and explored their agency in light of the emerging impacts of globalisation on their perceptions and practices of education and migration. Exploring the issue of childhood migration and education is timely in that it is a current debate in Ethiopia because, on the one hand, the country is striving to create access to education for children based on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

² *Dehub* is the Amharic equivalent of ‘south’ in English. Therefore, ‘Dehub Wollo’ refers to the ‘South Wollo’ Administrative Zone.

and its own Education Sector Development Program, but on the other, it is confronted with the challenges of youth migration, both within and outside the country.

Despite the continued recognition of contextual variations and the socially constructed forms of children and childhoods (Abebe 2008; Boyden 1985; James and James 2008), and the growth in researching the life worlds of children in the global south, very little is yet known about the ways these social constructions have been constituted and practically experienced among communities who attach high value to maintaining their traditions and ethnic identity, like the Argobbas. As conducting research about childhood and children's lived experiences is a recent phenomenon in Ethiopia (Abebe 2015), and given that the literature about intergenerational relationships is limited, this research contributes to theoretical debate in the field social study of childhood and paves the way for further research that will feed into policy and practice.

From a rights-based approach, children have the right to access education, and it is believed that education could serve as a means by which they can realise their abilities (McGrath 2010; Quennerstedt and Quennerstedt 2014). According to contemporary discourses, the expansion of education contributes to social mobility, improves quality of life and reduces poverty (Hannum and Buchmann 2003, 2004; McGrath 2010). In this regard, with a view to meeting commitments made at international levels, such as Education for All (EFA) and the SDGs, as well as the influences of neoliberalism and globalisation, governments have set targets to ensure access to education for children (Boyden and Levison 2000; Kabeer 2000; Kjørholt 2013; Tarabini 2010). There is also a tendency to create educational opportunities for marginalised groups such as women, pastoralists and indigenous and underserved groups, especially in the global south (Torres 2009). However, the applicability of such commitments is challenged by realities prevailing at local levels across cultures and nations (McGrath 2010). In Ethiopia, too, children's educational aspirations and achievements are challenged by a range of socioeconomic and cultural factors despite the growth in the expansion of education (Abebe 2011; FDRE-

MoE 2015; Pankhurst et al. 2015, 2016; Senbet 2010; Stewart et al. 2007; Tafere and Pankhurst 2015). Other studies conducted among migrant children in Ethiopia have also indicated that children miss the opportunity to pursue their education (Erulkar et al. 2006; Gebre 2012). However, the limited studies conducted about the determinants of children's enrolment and dropout in Ethiopia show little evidence of the challenges in the educational trajectories that children among marginalised communities such as the Argobbas face. This research therefore examined what influences children's perceptions and practices with regard to their education.

Many children and young people consider migration a viable option in their life trajectories and transitions into adulthood, and this calls for a closer look into what motivates migration. A number of studies have documented that migration might be a normal aspect of life in a community where both adults and children from poor households migrate, pursuing temporary or seasonal work with certain patterns of expectation including poor household economic circumstances, family dysfunction, death of parents and in search of better opportunities in the cities (Adepoju 1995, 2008; Punch 2009; Whitehead et al. 2007). Nonetheless, current debate provides divergent discourses concerning child migration. The debate that considers children as embedded within the family, who seeks parental care and support, considers migration as a risk; with the assumption that the natural and best place for children is the 'home' that provides a sense of belonging and security (Holloway and Valentine 2000, cited in Ní Laoire et al. 2010). Counteracting the argument that considers childhood as fixed within the home environment, the child as passive and dependent on the family, and child migrants as victims who are vulnerable and need support are a number of studies conducted in the global south that suggest children are social actors who demonstrate agency (Abebe 2008; Atnafu 2014; Boyden and Howard 2013; Hashim 2007; Hashim and Thorson 2011; Huijsmans 2006; Mendola 2012; Punch 2007; van Blerk 2008). This argument considers children and their migration as embedded within intergenerational relationships but examined the agency that children had regarding their decisions to migrate.

Despite the continued number of children migrating from Argobba, what motivates them to migrate, their migratory trajectories and the influence it poses to other children who have not yet migrated have not been studied. This research therefore examined what influences children's perceptions and practices with regard to their education.

When looking at the impact that communication and media technologies, such as mobile phones and the internet have had on establishing connections between people across vast areas instantaneously (Bauman 1998; Williams et al. 2009; Giddens 1994; Orozco and Hilliard 2004; Robinson 2007), globalisation can be seen as having a great deal of influence on children and young persons' behaviour and actions, including decisions to migrate or pursue their education (de Block and Buckingham 2007; Kj rholt 2013; Orozco and Hilliard 2004; Stearns 2005). Improvements in transport and communications and the increased demand for labour and looser immigration processes in the Gulf States are also attracting young women to migrate (Minaye 2012). Razy and Rodet (2016) suggested that, despite the existence of large scholarship about the political, economic, cultural and other aspects of globalisation, we know less about the links between globalisation and child migration, including the growing transnationalism of women, the family, transnational childhood and the impact on children and families in remote localities like the Argobba. Hence, this research intended to understand how children and adults perceive the influence of the changing cultural context and globalisation and the extent to which local practices are affected.

1. 2 Research questions

Based on the review of the literature and against the backdrop of the arguments above, the main objective of this research was to build an understanding of how childhood is constructed in Argobba. Through paying attention to intergenerational dynamics, political changes and globalisation, the research intends to explore the processes and influences that underly

conceptualisations and practices associated with education and migration of children and young people in Argobba.

Main research question

How do cultural context and globalisation influence perceptions and practices of childhood, migration and education among the Argobba communities in north-east Ethiopia?

In order to guide my fieldwork, based on the themes that I identified in the literature, I included the following sub questions to help me to investigate my main research question:

Sub-questions

- a) What are children's perspectives with regard to their roles in households and society?
- b) What influences the perceptions and practices of girls and boys with regard to their agency, migration and education?
- c) What are the adult perspectives on the issues above, and how have children's roles, agency, migration and education changed over time in the Argobba community?
- d) How do children and adults perceive the influence of the changing cultural context and globalisation? And how have local practices been affected?

Having entered into my fieldwork to address these questions and through iterative analysis and reflection the following assumptions and political changes gained importance. Therefore, the way in which I had sought to understand intergenerational differences in perception relating to the above questions became a key focus. During my fieldwork and analysis there were major political changes in the country that are relevant and at the core of how all Ethiopians experience their everyday lives and imagine their communities and futures. I therefore include the reflections below that build on my research questions as these issues influenced my final discussion and conclusions to the thesis.

1.3 Political changes and initial assumptions

As will be discussed in more detail in section 2.8 of chapter 2, recent political developments in the country have organised state administrative structures along ethnic lines. As one of the requirements to qualify for such a right was uniqueness of an ethnic group in its patterns of settlement and in the organisation of its sociocultural practices, the Argobbas got the opportunity for self-administration. Given the length of time between the initial development of the research proposal, i.e. 2015, and the period when the fieldwork was undertaken, the country passed through political turmoil resulting in the declaration of a series of states of emergency. The restriction imposed on the movement of people at specific times to a limited extent affected my fieldwork. The continued ethnic unrest and conflict resulted in the displacement of millions of people across the country and eventually brought changes in government led by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed. A reflection on the rapid political changes that were taking place in the country influenced my approaches to the research although I have already started conducting the fieldwork. Hence, I made considerations to assess the assumptions underpinning ethnic federalism in Ethiopia and its impact on communities such as the Argobbas.

Based on the review of the literature and by way of determining the ways as to how to address the overarching research question, I made initial assumptions regarding the key issues that would help me to effectively gather the perspectives of children, adults and other participants.

By taking the social study of childhood that considers childhood as a social construct as its point of departure (Boyden and Myers 1998; James and Prout 1997), the research asked how children and young persons reacted to the cultural context and societal values that were practised by the community to which they belonged. This is an important area to be explored because many ethnic groups in Ethiopia expect children to be obedient and respectful and abide by already established norms (Amare 2006; Husain 1996; Wondimu 1995). Hence, the research intended to explore whether childhood in Argobba

was shaped largely by sociocultural practices and if children were experiencing a unique or similar form of influence from their family and kinship structures. In relation to this, the research assumed that implementing the often-contested issue of the protection of the rights of children, as ratified in the UNCRC and local legislations, would be difficult to realise among communities largely influenced by sociocultural values. Hence, I assumed that obtaining the perspectives of both children and adults would reveal the key elements that challenge implementation of the best interests of the child, which is also a contested matter but often promoted by rights groups (Tesar 2016).

While intending to address the research question that examined children's perspectives regarding their roles in households and society, and based from a review of the literature about the situation of children in the global south, I assumed that that gender norms might significantly influence the roles that girls and boys might play in households, based on their age and sex. Drawing from existing literature that signifies the existence of gender disparity and the fact that gender roles usually centre on conceptions of femininity and masculinity (Boles & Hoeveler 2004; Fleming et al. 2013; Ouattara et al. 1998), and from what has been documented by studies conducted in Ethiopia (e.g. Boyden et al. 2013; Heinonen 2011; Poluha 2004; Pankhurst et al. 2016; Tafere and Chuta 2016), it was assumed that this might not be different for children and young persons in Argobba. By focusing particularly on work, schooling and marriage, that might affect girls and boys differently, it was assumed that gender norms influence the behaviour and actions of children and shown changes over time.

The social study of childhood emphasises the importance of children's agency (Abebe 2008; Boyden and Myers 1998; James and Prout 1997; Huijsmans 2011; Mizen and Ofusu-Kusi 2013; Oswell 2013). However, recent studies on children and young people's agency indicate that actions by children should be seen as a relational process (Abebe 2019; Huijsmans 2011, 2015; Tisdall and Punch (2012) and should not always be taken for granted and unproblematised concept, as various factors could influence these. In this research, therefore, establishing an understanding of the factors that influenced

the perceptions and practices of girls and boys and their choices and decisions regarding migration and education was assumed to provide an opportunity for assessing the level of children's agency in Argobba. In doing so, I assumed that children's agency and aspirations might be either facilitated or constrained by ranges of factors but would largely be determined by contextual circumstances. Furthermore, the research assumed that the values set by kinship and family structures could have a greater level of influence on the behaviour and actions of children.

Through exploring the capability of children in making decisions and their capacity to adopt different strategies to overcome the challenges they encountered in their generational relationships, education and migration trajectories, this research contributes to knowledge of how children in Argobba shape their childhood and influence others around them.

Concerning the perspectives of adults on issues related to childhood, children's education and migration, at the beginning of the research, I made an assumption that adults would have a certain level of recognition about the competences and agency that children have on matters that affect them at present and into the future. Through using a relational lens regarding intergenerational relations between children and adults, and examining structural issues that prevail in Argobba, it was assumed that the research would reveal disparities and similarities in the views held by different generational groups. This was also believed to define the underlying factors that shape childhood and children's agency in their endeavour to achieve their aspirations and overcome challenges in their day-to-day lives.

Even though there is no consensus among theorists for a common definition of globalisation, Williams et al. (2013, p. 3) described globalisation as the impact of developments on information and communication technology that have made tremendous linkages between the economic, social, political and cultural lives of people in different parts of the world. Hence, the research asked how children and adults perceived the influence of globalisation and how it

contributed to the changing cultural context that might affect local practices. In this regard, an assumption was made that there could be both resistance and openness towards different aspects of globalisation. By placing particular emphasis on the social, economic and cultural aspects of globalisation, the research assumed a certain level of change and transformation had taken place in Argobba. As globalisation also impacts on children who are growing up in a world where media and technological innovations are produced and transmitted on a global scale (Bauman 1998; de Block and Buckingham 2007; Giddens 1990; Kjørholt 2013; Razy and Rodet 2016), the research assumed that children and young persons, as well as communities in Argobba, might be influenced and their day-to-day lives transformed due to migration and other forms of interaction in one way or another. Nonetheless, it was also assumed that there could be differences in how the different aspects of globalisation are perceived and practised by children and adults in Argobba. Hence, the research on the impact of globalisation constituted an examination of how the different aspects of globalisation have affected the lives of children and young persons and explored the extent to which these were resisted and assimilated.

1.4 Research approach

The conceptual framework for this research was informed by theoretical insights from the sociology of childhood and epistemological approaches adopted by different scholars that treat children as active participants in the research process (Ansell 2009; Clark and Moss 2001; James and Prout 1997; Johnson 2010; Johnson et al. 2014; Morrow 2008). As emphasised by researchers about the advantages that could be gained from adopting a constructivist approach in the construction of knowledge (e.g. Burr 2015; Creswell and Poth 2018; Crotty 1998, Guba and Lincoln 1994; Silverman 2017; Stake 1995), this research attempted to gather children's perspectives by employing a mosaic approach and explored variations in the perspectives and experiences of children and adults and changes that have occurred across time and place. The research employed a qualitative research methodology and used an ethnographic approach to document the experiences of children and

young persons, as this approach allows them a more direct voice and participation in generating valuable data around childhood, migration and education. As suggested by researchers (e.g. Buscatto 2018, Creswell and Poth 2018; James and Prout 1990; Thomas 2002), employing an ethnographic approach provided me opportunities to understand participants' multiple perspectives over time and to observe the changing circumstances of children's transitions and how these were negotiated and legitimised by parents and other members of the community. Furthermore, it allowed me to explore children's lived experiences and the linkages between the different aspects of their lives, and to understand the social processes and the contexts in which they occurred.

Drawing on Anderson's (1983) concept of 'imagined communities', the research examined the tensions among adults' imagined communities, which were often linked to 'the past' where they tended to maintain their ancestral traditions and their ethnic identity, while children and young people attempted to reconstruct their childhoods through education and migration as they navigated through rapid political and economic changes, as well as the opportunities created by globalisation and their transitions into adulthood. This research showed the high value that the Argobbas attached to their ethnic identity and illuminated how concerned adults were about globalisation, especially the media, in influencing the behaviour and practice of children and young people, which they feared might compromise maintenance of the traditions and religious values of the Argobbas. By gathering the views of children and young persons, the thesis presents how children and young persons were re-imagining their futures, using education and migration as a means to get out of the rural way of life and shape their own and adults' life worlds through challenging some of the long-standing social and cultural values, such as child marriage and gender inequality.

I made all the necessary preparations before the commencement of the fieldwork. Accordingly, I obtained ethical approval from the College Research Ethics Committee (CREC) of the University of Brighton and Bahir Dar University in Ethiopia. Other issues in relation to these included gaining access to and

obtaining the consent of gatekeepers and that of the children themselves, selecting appropriate venues for undertaking small-group and in-depth interviews with children, and the issue of gender sensitiveness while conducting discussions with girls' and women's groups. I provided information to all participants about the objectives of the research and sought consent to take part in the research. I also took care to ensure confidentiality, anonymity and protection from harm. Although the locations were necessarily being defined, pseudonyms were used to maintain anonymity through ethical protocols.

Three groups of participants—that is, children, adults and key informants—took part in this research. Among the children who participated in small-group discussions, I selected six for in-depth interviews and analysis of their experiences around childhood, education and migration. Participants who constituted the adults' group include parents, key figures, teachers and elders. I purposefully selected the key informants from elders and influential members of the community, individuals holding key government positions at zonal and local government levels, academics and individuals from civil society organisations. I used participatory and innovative approaches, such as drawings and photographs, for probing, facilitating discussions and encouraging participation among children. I also collected observational data to capture what people did, which in turn helped to form the basis for discussion with those observed.

1.5 Key areas of analysis

The research explored perceptions and practices of children and adults of childhood and established an understanding of conceptualisations held by children and adults on what determines childhood, intergenerational relations and decisions related to children's education and migration. Furthermore, it examined opportunities and constraints that children had in participating in decision-making processes in households and communities regarding matters affecting their lives. Based on recent studies of childhood that attend to the notion of children's agency (Abebe 2008; Alanen and Mayall 2001; Boyden and Myers 1998; Kassa 2016; Oswell 2013; Punch 2001; Tafere 2013), this

research explored the dilemma of vulnerability and agency of children, attempting to understand how children and young people's agency was negotiated and expressed, together with the possibilities and constraints of agency in the face of adults' imaginings, which were focused on the past, and children and young people's imaginings, which were largely directed towards the future.

By placing a major focus on education and migration of children, and through examining the prevailing household and intrahousehold dynamics among participants, the research investigated how children and adults perceived of and shaped childhood at a time of rapid changes in the political and economic spheres. It also examined whether these conceptualisations have shown change over time and due to political changes that have taken place in the country following the introduction of ethnic federalism, which granted a right to self-administration for the Argobbas, as well as a result of interventions by government development programmes and aspects of globalisation.

The research explored the existence of direct and/or indirect linkages between education and migration and identified sociocultural factors that have had a direct or indirect influence on children's education. Along with this, the research documented the complex nature of balancing school and work and how some children demonstrated resilience and overcame the challenges in achieving their educational aspirations. In so doing, the research attempted to identify factors that contributed to the low level of enrolment and retention of students and the slow growth and expansion of education that, in turn, revealed gaps between what the government wanted to accomplish and the reality among marginalised communities like that of the Argobbas. Through identifying sociocultural factors that may have a direct or indirect influence on the perceptions and practices of childhood education, this study shows the key issues underpinning decisions of whether adults should send their children to school and if parents and other members of the Argobba community believed education was something that could contribute towards the improvement of the future lives of their children and of themselves.

By avoiding simplifications about the risks involved in the course of migration and generalisations made about children's agency, and drawing from the ethnographic material gathered during the fieldwork, the research presents the impact of migration on the day-to-day lives of children and its influence on household dynamics and intergenerational relations. By connecting the micro-level economic and sociocultural factors of child migration to the complex issues of a new form of consciousness and experiences that have been created as a consequence of globalisation, the research generates a scholarly and theoretical discussion on the issue of child migration. In connection, this study explored the dilemma of vulnerability and agency of children to build an understanding of how decisions to migrate and/or stay were negotiated between children and parents.

Given the recent developments in road and telecommunication infrastructure, which in turn have facilitated electronically based networks, this research assessed and examined the extent to which the daily lives of children have changed and will continue to change in the context of Argobba. It particularly presents how migration influenced children and young persons to maintain intersecting identities between the local and the global in the sense that they had to balance and negotiate between respecting traditional values and realising their imaginings about their future lives in towns and urban centres. By applying a constructivist approach to listening to the perspectives of Argobba children on education, migration and globalisation, and through considering how emerging findings relate to the concept of imagined communities, the research contributes to the growing literature on children and childhood studies in the global south in general, and in Ethiopia in particular.

1.6 Researcher's perspectives

Given my previous experience working with children, and cognisant of tensions between rights-based approaches and my own cultural attitudes and practices that may influence the issues that this research intended to address (Caetano 2015; Davies 2008; Kearns 2014), through being reflexive, I actively

constructed the interpretation and experiences of the research participants and how these interpretations arose. Drawing on Ellis and Bochner (2000, p. 271), I showed concern for those I wrote about and for their place in the story, and how telling their story changed my standpoint as a practitioner and researcher. I made an effort not to be influenced by my previous knowledge and preconceptions about the safeguarding of children and not to be judgemental about how intergenerational relations were maintained and the assumptions of doing research among a predominantly Muslim community. The level of my involvement with and detachment from research participants was balanced—that is, by not fully immersing myself in the day-to-day lives of the community and by not being considered a complete stranger. I was also open to understanding and learning about sensitive social and cultural issues by respecting local traditions and religious practices.

As children and young persons constituted a considerable number of the research participants, I paid due attention at all times to power dynamics and child protection issues by observing the Child Protection Policy of CHADET – Appendix 1 (e.g. Abebe and Bessell 2014; Johnson et al. 2014; Laws et al. 2003; UNCRC 1989). As suggested by Silverman (2010, 2014) and Oltmann (2016), I followed all the necessary steps for conducting ethical research with children, including approaching gatekeepers and seeking the consent of both children and parents, providing the necessary information about the research objectives, not being alone with children and maintaining confidentiality, anonymity and protection from harm. By building an understanding of explicit and tacit knowledge and through avoiding misinterpretations of ideas, I took the necessary care not to commit mistakes that might not be acceptable to both research participants and communities in accordance with the ethical protocols agreed by the University of Brighton in the UK and Bahir Dar University in Ethiopia.

1.7 Organisation of chapters

The introductory chapter provided the basis on which the objectives and key questions of the research were established, placing the research in the context of current debates about childhood, education, migration and globalisation.

Chapter 2 reviews the literature on the issues and concepts relevant to the research and provides the conceptual framework employed to address the research questions. The chapter first outlines the main themes and current theories that served as a backdrop to the research questions, indicating key gaps and offering ways this research addressed them. The first section of the chapter presents an overview of contemporary debates about nationality and ethnicity and why the issue of ethnicity has emerged as a significant phenomenon in recent times in Ethiopia. In light of ethnic conflicts that are being manifested in different parts of the country, which have caused the displacement of millions of citizens, this section provides an account of how ethnic federalism came into being and the significance of providing a right to 'self-administration' for ethnic groups like the Argobbas. The chapter's second section looks at literature pertinent to the current research—that is, issues of childhood and intergenerational relations and children's agency.

Building on the work of scholars who have suggested variations in the understandings and practices of childhood across societies and cultures, the chapter reviews existing literature on how childhood is perceived and practised and the role that children play in households and communities, with special reference to the situation of children in the global south. Concerning children's education, the chapter presents contemporary discourses about the importance of modern education and the efforts made by governments, including the Ethiopian Government, to meet international commitments to create access to education for children. The chapter outlines some of the major factors that are believed to have a negative influence over the educational achievements of

children. A synthesis of migration and globalisation is also made before the conclusion of the chapter.

Chapter 3 provides a general context of the research area through providing a background and historical perspectives of the Argobbas. The chapter gives an overview of the ecology, farming practices and housing styles, as well as the social organisation of the Argobba community. A summary of social services that are being established in the emerging town of Medina, the administrative centre of the woreda, and the overall political context is presented in this chapter. A brief account of the research sites where the fieldwork was conducted is provided before the conclusion of the chapter.

Chapter 4 presents the research design, methodology and methods. It outlines the steps followed to gain access to the research area, how the research participants were selected and the methods employed in the gathering, recording and analysis of data. Particularly, it shows how a 'child-centred approach' helped to generate valuable data for illuminating the life worlds of children in the area. Furthermore, it highlights how data was recorded and analysed. Through a constructivist orientation and adopting an ethnographic approach that provides an opportunity to listen to the perspectives of children alongside adults, the thesis explores how children and adults constructed knowledge regarding the key research questions.

In Chapter 5, the findings are discussed in two major subtopics; the first shows children's perspectives regarding issues of childhood and intergenerational relations and agency, while the second presents the perspectives of adults, including teachers, parent-teacher associations (PTAs) and key informants drawn from the community, government representatives and academia. In this chapter, children's voices and experiences are featured prominently and directly and illuminates how childhood and the everyday lives of children were constructed and reconstructed as a result of interactions and influences posed by people around them, including members of their households and peers, as well as due to the prevailing social and cultural

attitudes and practices and the changing political landscape taking place both locally and nationally. The testimonies from the migrant children and girls who were forced to marriage offer insight into how sociocultural practices, such as child marriage, impacted negatively on children's lives.

Bringing together the main findings of the research, Chapter 6 takes the analysis further by discussing how childhood was shaped by a range of socioeconomic, cultural and religious factors in light of emerging consequences of globalisation and its impact on education and migration. Through pulling the views of children, adults and key informants together, the chapter illuminates the key issues underpinning conceptualisations and practices around childhood, education and migration, as well as the challenges and prospects for the growth and expansion of education in Argobba at present and for the near future.

The concluding chapter presents a general overview of the key findings, research limitations and implications for future research. It particularly highlights the growing tension between the views of adults, whose imaginings were linked to 'the past' while coping with the challenges of the present, and those of children and young persons, who contested some of the long-standing social and cultural values in their attempt to reconstruct their childhoods through education and migration as they navigated through rapid political and economic change and the opportunities created by globalisation.

Chapter 2.

Review of Literature and Theoretical Framework

2.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the substantive focus of the research by presenting a review of literature on pertinent issues and concepts, along with the theoretical framework employed in the study. In the first section of the chapter, I review relevant literature addressing the research questions, especially those issues related to childhood, intergenerational relations and children's agency. Using a relational approach, this section explores the ways kinship is structured and thought about, including household composition, intergenerational contracts and marriage practices, as well as gender roles and norms, especially in relation to age. This is followed by an overview of the literature on children's education and migration, and aspirations and risks related to children and young persons. Next, I highlight how some features of globalisation could impact the lives of children, young people and communities.

The second section of this chapter explores some of the contemporary debates by scholars around issues of nationality and ethnicity. It first looks into broad theories and models of nationality studies relevant to this study and provides an overview of how ethnic federalism came into being in Ethiopia. This then leads us to the line of inquiry this research attempted to address by showing its relevance to the prevailing realities in the country in general and the Argobba community in particular. I present further details regarding the wider historical context, as well as the cultural and religious heritage of the Argobbas, in Chapter 3.

2.2 Understanding childhood: contexts and approaches

Interest has been growing by researchers in various fields of the social sciences, notably psychology, anthropology and sociology, in building an understanding of children and the place they have in society (Crain 2005; James and Prout 1997; Lindon 2005). In this regard, Ariès' (1962) work set an important line of inquiry into the context for research and the conceptions held about childhood at different periods in history (Crain 2005; Thomas 2002). There have been differences, nonetheless, in the methodological approaches followed by scholars in studying children's lives in different contexts over the last century. For instance, from the early stages of the discipline, anthropologists such as Mead (1930), Mead and Wolfenstein (1955), Malinowski (1914) and Benedict (1935) have considered children's lives, focusing on the role of culture and socialisation in moulding the personality of children (Rose 2009). However, with the development of the sociocultural framework and the rise of constructivist and interpretive theoretical perspectives in sociology, the traditional developmental and socialisation paradigms that consider children as *consumers* of the culture established by adults have been criticised (Corsaro 2015, p. 6). I return to the issue of children's agency in the later sections of this chapter.

One of the common concerns in conducting research around the lives of children and childhood is to determine the period when childhood ends and what constitutes childhood. This becomes more complex, as noted by scholars, as different societies have different milestones—such as the commencement of work, end of schooling and gender (girls entering womanhood at around the age of menarche)—to denote the end of childhood (Boyden and Levison 2000; Penn 2008; Tafere et al. 2009; Thomas 2002). Furthermore, categories that are dependent on *childhood* and *adulthood* are culturally variable and reflect the significance of power, position and authority (Christiansen et al. 2006), varying over time and place depending on the social, political and historical context (Cregan and Cuthbert 2014, p. 20).

A review of literature indicated the existence of a great distinction between the ideal Western conception of a child and the different ways of understanding and practices of childhood in Africa and elsewhere in the global south to which Ethiopia belongs (James and James 2008; Katz 2004; Nieuwenhuys 2013; Punch 2003). Hence, conceptualisations of childhood and determining the point at which childhood ends is problematic. In this regard, Boyden (1985) argued,

While children in the industrialized countries are seen as dependent until well into their teens, in many others they are expected to be fully independent from an early age, while in Peru, a significant group of 6 to 14 year olds are heads of households and as such are the principal breadwinners in the family. (p. 203)

Hence, this makes it difficult to employ the legal standards set by international legal instruments such as the one declared under the UNCRC (1989), which defines a child as any human being under the age of 18. In this regard, Johnson and West (2018) suggested,

The definition, practical meaning, scope and potential of the terms children and childhood are often contested even within cultures, languages and countries often involving perceptions of the status of children in society and, ultimately power relationships. (p. 17)

In describing the variations in how childhood is perceived and practised among different societies, especially in the African context, Ncube (1998) noted,

Childhood is not perceived and conceptualized in terms of age but in terms of intergenerational obligations of support and reciprocity where the 'child' is still a 'child' and is expected to support her or his parents and an old age where the parents feel that they are traditionally entitled to obtain such support from their children. (p. 22)

In the case of Ethiopia, in the rural context in particular, children are expected to have come of age and begun to take responsibilities for undertaking certain tasks starting from the age of 7 onwards. This marks children's transition

to what is commonly termed as *knowing his/her soul*—to become aware of what is right or wrong (Heinonen 2011). Elaborating further, Abebe (2008) attested,

An important sign of maturity in most Ethiopian cultures is when children are said to be able to distinguish good from bad, and right from wrong. This is related to their ability to reason and understand why they are punished, and this may occur sometime between the ages of four and seven years old. (p. 95)

In general, the need to deconstruct adults' understanding of childhood has been emphasised in children and childhood literature and contemporary discourses of childhood studies, with the belief that this understanding is influenced by the values and beliefs held by adults (Lowe 2012). In this regard, the importance of the theoretical perspective of social construction has opened a line of inquiry into childhood studies, by which different realities and experiences of childhood should be explored across different societies and cultures, about the variations in how children are perceived and treated, as well as the roles they are expected to play in the social and economic spheres of households and societies at large (Boyden and Levison 2000; Hammersley 2017; James and James 2008; Kjørholt 2004, cited in Abebe 2008). Taking this a step further, Abebe (2008, pp. 19–28) and Froerer (2009, p. 23) suggest that undertaking research on childhood also requires recognising variations that may exist among children in different contexts and the challenges that may be encountered in tackling broad macro-scale, structure-based political, economic and sociocultural contexts that shape childhood.

Conducting research about childhood and exploring their lived experiences is a recent phenomenon in Ethiopia (Abebe 2015). Studies undertaken to date have focused on issues related to documenting the situation of street and working children (Heinonen 2011), orphans and child protection (Abebe and Aase 2007; Crivello and Chuta 2012), child labour (Morrow 2010, Mulugeta 2015; Pankhurst and Bourdillon 2015), intergenerational relations (Kassa 2016; Tafere 2013), sociocultural issues affecting the lives of children (Boyden et al.

2013), livelihood strategies and the risks of exposure to commercial sexual work (van Blerk (2008) and gender and children's time use (Morrow et al. 2014, Poluha 2007; Tafere and Pankhurst 2015).

Despite the continued consideration of contextual variations and socially constructed forms of children and childhood, very little is known about the ways these social constructions have been historically constituted among communities such as the Argobbas. While recognising the tension that exists around how childhood is defined from the point of view of existing legal and international instruments, on the one hand, and the extent to which social and cultural contexts could influence how childhood is perceived and practised on the other, this study explored the context and role of children within households to build an understanding of how children, parents and communities conceptualise childhood—for instance, their views on when childhood ends, that is, when children should begin to take responsibility for themselves, and how adults define their relationships with children.

2.3 Kinship structure and intergenerational relations

2.3.1 Kinship structure

Earlier anthropologists considered kinship central to the social organisation of the non-Western societies they studied (Carsten 2004). This emphasises the idea of mutuality among people—whether by procreation, social construction or a combination of both—and how it is locally constituted (Sahlins 2013, p. 2). Campagno (2009, p. 1) argued that conceptualisations related to kinship constitute a system of social organisation based on an interpretation of links between individuals and have both a universal biological aspect and a cultural dimension that exemplify the diversity inherent in human beings to produce society. Drawing from Carsten's (2004) work, Miller (2007, p. 536) suggested the need to see kinship as a flexible process that can be shaped through negotiations and everyday experiences rather than a fixed set of relationships that often characterise an identity or membership to a given kinship group.

Literature about the Argobbas indicates a kinship structure upon which some members trace their lineage through both paternal and maternal lines is reflective of the characteristic of Semitic peoples (Hailu 2000, p. 198). Emphasising the importance that the Argobbas give to kinship, Hailu singles out kinship as a major criterion for the selection and establishment of residence and the basis for maintaining relationships in weddings and mourning and mutual aid in the economic sphere. Also, kinship ties, especially through marriage, form the basis of establishing building stronger relationship among different groups. This extends to a level where much importance is given to knowing an individual's correct biological line that would confirm whether he is an authentic Argobba, which otherwise would not qualify him as one who would be considered for marriage (Ibid p. 198). There is a locally grounded conflict resolution mechanism, whereby influential and/or informal leaders in the communities play a pivotal role in mediating conflicts that may arise between individuals and couples (Ibid: p. 199).

By avoiding a structural–functionalist approach that considers kinship in relation to social structure, in the following section, I discuss how kinship is structured among the Argobbas, with particular emphasis on household composition, intergenerational contracts, marriage practices and gendered norms of labour, as well as the cultural constructs underpinning such practices.

2.3.2 Household structure

As shown by studies conducted among different societies, the family is considered a social institution that is necessary to fulfil the functions of bearing and rearing children with implications that are meant to be maintained within the wider kinship relations (Thomas 2002). The importance of the family in serving as a central unit of social reproduction has been emphasised by other researchers for the role it plays in providing necessities for life, including imparting life and work skills (Abebe 2008; Watson 2009). In the context of Argobba, the core of the family comprises the married couple and unmarried children. There are also instances where an older person (a father or mother of

either of the couple) could live with the family. The mode of residence is of a neolocal type—that is, any new couple that constitutes a new nuclear family builds a house within the premise of the groom’s parents. As this is considered to be an intermediate way to get the newly wed couple settle right after their marriage, following a patriarchal form of mode of residence the groom is expected to set up his own house some distance away in the foreseeable future, depending on availability of land. Being a parent or a child involves a whole series of expectations and idealisations of what the person who occupies that role should be like and how they should behave towards each other, and serves as an avenue for their role within the larger kinship network and the transmission of sociocultural values.

2.3.3 Intergenerational relationships

In the kinship descent interpretation, generation refers mostly to parent–child relations and is useful for conceptualising the generational dimension of intra-household relations (Clendenning 2019). The term generationing refers to a relational process to signify who is known to be a child and for determining how relationships between generations should be enacted, often characterised by a form of association and co-operation and are flexible and negotiable (Kabeer 2000; Mayall 2002, p. 27; Whitehead et al. 2007). Generational relations and/or contracts are distinct, in some respect, from other forms of social relations because they embody a temporal dimension and are characterised by differences in role expectations based on gender (Alanen 2003). The allocation of individuals to chronologically defined age categories, and the ascription of roles based on such classifications, is widely practised among different societies. This was particularly significant to this research in that it allowed the examination of existing relationships among an ethnic group that claimed to have its own unique tradition and sociocultural practice that gave it an opportunity to self-administration under the new ethnic-based organisation of the country’s different regions.

Drawing from Mannheim's (1952) theory that emphasises a sociocultural and sociostructural approach, Alanen (2003) proposed an approach based on relational thinking, which recognises the agency of both children and adults (Mayall and Zeiher 2003, p. 11). Following Alanen and Mayall's theories regarding relational practices, this research emphasised the importance of not restricting the idea of child participation to the idea of the child as a social actor, but considering the agency of children in the context of the larger social structure—for instance, power that children might be able to exercise to influence others (Mayall and Zeiher 2003). Hence, the concept of a generational approach is believed to help in identifying differences in ideas and perceptions between succeeding generations and intergenerational conflicts resulting from such differences (p. 18). According to the arguments made by Mayall and Zeiher, the dynamics and interactions in generational relations, as well as individual experiences of events and changes that might be different for succeeding generations, are produced in the everyday lives of children and at societal level (p. 19). Hence, generations are mutually constituted and signify a position in the power hierarchy where young persons' identities are moulded as generations (Alanen 2009, p. 323). Such a relationship is detrimental in defining the processes by which forms of knowledge and material goods are transferred between generations, signifying the reciprocities and intergenerational contracts that exist between children and parents. Punch (2002), on the other hand, suggested the importance of exploring interdependencies between parents and children while examining generational relations. This is particularly relevant for this research where children are expected to contribute to the subsistence of their households while at the same time pursue their transitions into adult life.

Prolonged family ties and intergenerational contracts within and across generations in the context of historical and cultural practices indicate the existence of negotiated and constrained interdependencies and change over the life course (Kabeer 2000). Kabeer (2000, p. 465) argued further that intergenerational contracts between parents and children revolve around two different kinds of dependency separated in time: the dependency associated

with infancy and early childhood and the dependency associated with infirmity and old age.

In this regard, Whyte et al. (2008) suggested,

Generation is one of the most powerful analytical tools for studying society because it implies relations in time. Whether we think of intergenerational links within families or across historical periods, generation is about connections and contrasts—and often conflicts—in a temporal perspective. (p. 1)

Whyte's (2008) arguments indicate an implicit moral obligation that is built into intergenerational relations in that parents will care for their children while they can care for themselves and that children will do so when their parents can no longer support themselves through the different life stages—that is, childhood, puberty, marriage, parenthood or other phases set by cultural practices (p. 7). In the African context, the value of the family and deference to parents are even enshrined in the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR; 1981). Article 29 of the charter emphasises that the individual has the duty to preserve the harmonious development of the family and to work for the cohesion and respect of the family and for providing support at time of need (p.8).

In emphasising the importance of maintaining the principle of reciprocity and interdependency between children and their families, Article 31 of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC 1990) provides that children have a duty to work for the cohesion of the family and to respect their parents, superiors and elders at all times, and to assist them in case of need. The Article reflects, according to Abebe (2008, p. 251), that in contrast to the consideration of independence and autonomy as core values related to parenting and socialisation of children in countries in the global north, obedience and responsibility, interdependency and reciprocity between generations are given high value in the global south. Hence, the family is generally assumed as a social institution where children's needs are best met, their rights are

protected and they are prepared for adulthood, which is rooted in the conception that they are dependent, incomplete and passive (O'Connell 2005, p. 64). However, scholars have noted the changing patterns of intergenerational relations to be a consequence of the way children experience their daily lives as family members, with the social construction of childhood and children's agency (James and James 2008).

Literature on intergenerational relations is scarce in Ethiopia. However, the emerging scholarship about power and the reciprocal nature of intergenerational relationships signifies variations among different ethnic groups. Earlier studies made on styles of parenting in Ethiopia indicate that the authoritarian style of parenting is influential among the Amhara and Oromo (Wondimu 1995) and Siltigna-speaking ethnic groups where children are expected to be 'obedient and respectful' towards adults (Ahmed 1996, p. 25). Poluha's (2004) study, for instance, showed that child–adult relations in Ethiopia are often characterised as patron–client, where what adults provide is considered to be higher than what can be provided by children. Parents often encourage such behaviours and take disciplinary measures by means of reprimand and physical punishment (Amare 2006, p. 278). As observed by Abebe (2008), however, there are some variations among ethnic groups such as the Hamar, Konso and the Surma where these relations are egalitarian to the extent of allowing girls to choose their marriage partner (Abebe 2008).

The mutuality and reciprocity in determining intergenerational relations, thereby influencing the level of agency that children may demonstrate in different contexts, have been emphasised (e.g. Abebe 2008; Boyden and Myers 1998; Punch 2002, 2007) in that children contribute either through labour or financially, depending on the context, at the same time learning the material and social competence needed for their later lives as adults (Punch 2001). As is the case in most parts of the global south, these interdependencies emphasise the importance attached to the role of family, serving as a social institution where, on the one hand, children's emotional and physical needs are supposed to be met, and on the other, for passing on the intentions, attitudes, values and

religious beliefs of parents and communities to children as a way of preparing them for adulthood (Doherty and Malcolm 2009; O'Connell 2005, p. 64).

The emerging scholarship in Ethiopia, however, signifies variations in the nature of intergenerational relationships, depending on the contexts in which children are found. In this regard, Tafere (2013, p. 6) observed, in the sites where the Young Lives studies were undertaken, changes in the relationships between children and their parents as a result of exposure to external influences, mainly through education and changing social contexts whereby young people wanted to exercise their freedom in making their own decisions. Kassa (2016, p. 395), on the other hand, noted that intergenerational relationships show variations based on context—that is, either in urban or rural areas—and the socioeconomic conditions of the families and communities in which they are living.

To have a clearer understanding of how kinship is structured and sociocultural practices are organised, this research employed an epistemological framework that is guided by relational thinking (Alanen 2003; Mayall and Zeiher 2003). Employing a relational approach is believed to take into account the different dimensions and dynamics that prevail within intergenerational relationships, explore existing interactions and negotiations taking place between children and their parents and to identify the role of different actors and the power therein in the everyday lives of children, households and the wider kinship system.

This research, therefore, explored conceptualisations held by children and adults regarding the relational approaches of generations, examined the connections between power and agency and how age and gender determined participants' day-to-day lived experiences within the context of the existing kinship structure they were embedded within.

2.3.4 Children's agency

While bringing in different theoretical and empirical approaches to the study of children and childhood, contemporary childhood studies emphasise the

importance of recognising children as social actors and as having agency (James and James 2008, p. 58). The notion of children as *social actors* and the concept of children's *agency* are, however, encountered with opportunities and constraints for children to act and exercise their agency (James and James 2008; Mayall and Zeiher 2003; Punch 2002; Punch and Tisdall 2012). In explaining the complexities involved in how children's and young people's agency could be expressed, particularly when social realities are complex and contradictory Tisdall and Punch (2012) noted,

Children and young people's agency should certainly be a contested and scrutinised concept rather than one which is taken-for-granted, unproblematised or assumed inherently to be positive and desired by all children and young people. (p. 15)

Recent studies indicate that, while emphasising children's agency, it is important to take into account how children perceive their own contributions towards sustaining the wellbeing and livelihoods of their families, rather than focusing only on generational power relations (Butler et al. 2005; Punch 2001). Oswell (2013, p. 37), for instance, suggested that much of the recent sociology of childhood is concerned not only with children's agency but also with reconfiguring our understanding of social structure to the dynamic interactions and influences of children as agentic beings. Oswell further noted that from the perspectives of the sociology of childhood, the main focus of research should consider agency in the context of a series of broader questions about power, structure and culture (p. 40).

In Ethiopia, especially in the rural context, factors that may determine children's agency and generational relations are ownership, distribution and utilisation of resources, as parents and the elderly may possess wealth in the form of cattle or land, which gives them the authority for influencing decisions (Abebe 2008). Hence, the reciprocal nature of intergenerational relationships may be expressed in a way that children are expected to perform duties as assigned by their parents and learn skills and competencies from their parents

that are useful for their adult lives, signifying variations in children's agency depending on circumstances (Abebe 2008). Abebe concluded that children's agency is dependent on the social and material context and their relations with other family members.

Although extensive research has been conducted on childhood studies and child–adult relations in the West, literature on intergenerational relationships and the impact of sociocultural conditions on the agency of children in Ethiopia, in general, and in the study area, in particular, is scant. Alanen and Mayall (2001), for instance, suggested that exploring children's agency as possibilities and/or limitations of action needs to be researched within the context of existing generational structures and social organisation, which may determine the level at which children's powers, or lack of, is determined (p. 21).

Given that comprehensive studies have not yet been undertaken on intergenerational relations in the study area, this research addresses this gap in knowledge through availing evidence on the nature of intergenerational relationships and children's agency among the Argobba community. By considering the interpretations proposed in the social study of childhood, and attending to the dynamics taking place in the community (Alanen and Mayall 2001), this research presents the complexities and tensions, as well as ambivalences of children and young people's lives and documents how intergenerational relationship have been maintained and/or changed over time.

This contributes to existing knowledge and further theorisation about the level of children's agency, showing how children build their competence and the different ways children's agency is structured and negotiated to demonstrate how their place in their communities is determined and whether this has had similar or different influences on the perceptions and practices of children's education and migration in time and place in the study sites.

2.3.5 Marriage practices and norms

There is increasing international attention to child marriage and its negative health and social consequences in different parts of the world, most

commonly Southern Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa (Gage 2013, p. 124; Mutyaba 2011). Following the UNCRC's definition of a child, in this research, child marriage or early marriage is considered as marriage of a girl child who is under the age of 18. Child marriage is practised in Ethiopia despite the risks associated with it, for instance, dropping out of school, gender-based violence, social isolation, poverty, non-use of contraception, unintended pregnancy and reproductive morbidities, including obstetric fistulae (Erulkar and Muthengi 2009). Ethiopia has one of the highest rates of child marriage practices in Sub-Saharan Africa, with the mean age at first marriage of Ethiopian women aged 25 to 49 years being 16.1 (ibid). The forms of marriage practised in Ethiopia show variations across regions. For instance, among the highland agriculturalists of the Amhara region, marriage is arranged by parents and often involves exchange of gifts between families, and most of them do not involve the bride's consent (NCTPE⁴ 2003). According to reports by the Population Council (2004), in the Amhara region alone, 50% of girls are married by the age of 15, and 80% are married by the age of 18. Even though the government has established the legal minimum age of marriage (18 years) and criminalises marriage under the age of 18, child marriage is being practised by communities in the pretext of safeguarding a family's reputation through the protection of their daughter's virtue and virginity, avoiding the risk of girls having sex leading to unwanted pregnancy that may cause social stigmatisation and underpinned by poverty and economic gains (Boyden et al. 2013). From a child's perspective, the greatest disadvantage of early marriage is widely expressed as lose of access to education (Erulkar and Muthengi 2009).

The age and gender of a person has significance in determining how they are expected to behave or discharge their responsibility as member of a household or in the community at large (Pankhurst et al. 2016). The gendered division of labour is very much apparent from an early age, when boys and men are expected mainly to handle tasks related to working in the fields, while girls

⁴ Since 2004, the former name of NCTPE (National Committee on Traditional Practices of Ethiopia) is officially changed to Ye Ethiopia Goji Limadawi Dirgitoch Aswegaj Mahiber.

and women handle household chores. Those groups of girls and boys who have the opportunity to go to school often combine schooling and work. A detailed analysis of gender in the context of this research is presented in Chapter 6.

2.4 Education for children: a right or privilege?

Contemporary discourses concerning children's education are mainly based on the premise that education serves as a means to reduce poverty and improve the quality of life for everyone, independent of where they are (Adepoju 2005; Kj rholt 2013, p. 246). Governments therefore consider education to be a necessary precondition for the achievement of a range of economic goals, for social development and for individual self-realisation (Boyden and Levison 2000; Kabeer 2000; Tarabini 2010). Among international commitments made to expand education are EFA and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), formulated in 2000, with universal primary education for all children in the world to be fulfilled by 2015. Neoliberalism and globalisation processes have also been influential in setting educational standards through the testing of academic achievements and accountability. Similarly, equity-based reform that attempts to serve and provide educational opportunities for marginalised groups such as women, girls and indigenous people and addresses the needs of linguistic minorities has been emphasised (Torres 2009, p. 17).

When seen from a rights-based approach, the right of children to have access to and receive education is established as a human right in the UNCRC and is believed to serve as an important vehicle for further developing children's and young people's ability to enjoy their rights (Quennerstedt and Quennerstedt 2014; Simon 2010). As part of the expression of the commitments of African governments, for instance, provision has been made in the ACRWC (African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child) that stipulates every child shall have the right to education and urges member countries to show a practical commitment for the realisation of this right by making basic education compulsory and free to all children without discrimination.

Quennerstedt and Quennerstedt (2014) argued that there is often tension between who holds the right to education: the child, the parent or the state on the one hand, or the prevailing traditions and cultures that influence the realisation of such rights on the other. Hence, there are unresolved challenges to how education is conceptualised and practised across regions and societies. Kanstrup (2006, p. 17) suggested that the level of applicability of concepts such as 'education for all' is constrained by the lack of a universal definition of education that has the same meaning to all cultures and guarantees the education of children. Kanstrup (2006) suggested further that such conceptions fail to consider the contexts of children and socioeconomic conditions and cultural values, as well as limitations in governments' capacity to deliver education in different parts of the world. Research undertaken in African countries, including Ethiopia, indicates that the value parents attach to formal education and whether children are sent to school depends on the views parents hold on the actual skills their children might acquire: knowledge and skills that would enable them to have better livelihoods (Hannum and Buchmann 2003).

Some studies consider education a protective factor from child marriage (Jain and Kurz 2007). These studies argue that a higher level of schooling for girls decreases their risk of child marriage (UNICEF 2005). Over the last several decades, parents have come to value education for their children, and to be willing to postpone the marriages of their daughters so they can attain a higher education level (Schuler et al. 2005). In a study conducted by UNICEF (2005) among women in 42 countries, those between the ages of 20 and 24 who attended primary level education were less likely to marry by the age of 18 than women without a primary education. The same study found similar results for secondary education. For example, in Tanzania, women who attended secondary school were 92% less likely to marry before the age of 18 than women who attended only primary school.

2.4.1 Context of education in Ethiopia

Despite Ethiopia developed written language very early in its history, education in its modern form was not introduced until the early 20th century (Amare 2006). The periods in which the foundations of education were laid and the time it was expanded can be divided into two major categories: the *traditional* and the *modern/Western*. During the traditional period, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church took the lead in rendering educational services. According to Wagaw (1979), the traditional church education, along with training for priesthood, was aimed at producing civil servants such as judges, governors, scribes, treasurers and general administrators as there was no institutional set-up that could serve a source of trained personnel (p. 11). In the same way, Ethiopian Muslims had maintained their own *Quran schools*, learning to read Arabic in general and Quran in particular (Wagaw 1979, p. 81). According to available literature, the beginnings of modern education can be linked to the missionary schools introduced during the reign of Emperor Tewodros (p. 22). Significant steps in establishing modern education took place during the reign of Emperor Menelik and later expanded by Emperor Haile Selassie.

In providing a brief account of the efforts made to modernise the education sector in Ethiopia, and for the purpose of simplicity, I use Negash's (2006) classification into three periods of modern education expansion in Ethiopia.

The first is the imperial system that started soon after World War II and lasted up to 1974. Significant in the expansion of education during the imperial era was the reconstruction of educational facilities destroyed during the Italian occupation and the introduction of adult literacy programmes. The limited number of students enrolled, and the curriculum put in place was incapable of addressing the growing and changing needs of Ethiopia and its increasing integration with the Western world and other African nations, although securing employment even with just few years of education was not challenging. Most of the schools, especially secondary, were established in the urban centres but

were not meant for children of the ruling elite but also for others coming from ordinary and poor households (Negash 2006, pp. 13–15).

The second period was the time of the military socialist system where the education policy was changed and attempts were made to improve access to education. During this period, the military devised a new education policy tailored towards Marxist ideology and introduced new subjects that were believed to contribute to the further deterioration of pedagogical conditions where a considerable number of secondary school graduates faced unemployment (Negash 2006, p. 19). There was an increase in the expansion of schools and enrolment, especially at primary level, but this was characterised by scarce resources and quality of education. The military regime was characterised by its socialist ideology but, recognising the political and economic equality of nations and nationalities of the country, it set up the Ethiopian Languages Academy, which helped in the development of phonetics to be used by other languages and selected about 15 languages for use in basic literacy across the country (Amhara National Regional State, Culture and Tourism Bureau [ANRS-CTB] 2001, p. 207).

The third period was when the government, led by the EPRDF,⁵ introduced the federal system of governance, which recognised the use of local languages as a medium of instruction. During this period, the government gave wider space to the regional states in the use of local languages for primary education up to Grade 6 and made its intentions clear that it would henceforth concentrate on primary and junior secondary education up to Grade 10, along with the introduction of cost sharing from senior secondary education upwards (Negash, pp. 28–34). Hence, from 1994, based on the 20-year Education and Training Policy, the Ministry of Education (MoE) has developed and implemented successive five-year Education Sector Development Programs (ESDPs). For

⁵ The EPRDF (Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front) led the overthrow of the military government and introduced an ethnic-based politics that divided the country into administrative regions based on ethnicity.

instance, the latest ESDP that covers the period 2015/16 to 2019/20 stipulates that the policy's goal is to improve access to quality primary and secondary education to ensure all children, young people and adults acquire the competencies, skills, values and attitudes to enable them to participate fully in the social, economic and political development of Ethiopia. It also promotes Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET). According to the MoE, TVET's aims are

to produce a lower and middle-level, competent, motivated, adaptable and innovative workforce in Ethiopia, which can contribute to poverty reduction and social and economic development through facilitating demand-driven, high-quality technical and vocational education and training and transfer of demanded technology. (FDRE-MoE 2015, p. 21)

Concerning primary level education, the government claims that it has made considerable progress in creating better access through school construction aimed at reducing the distance between schools and pupils' homes. The establishment and transformation of ABE (Alternative Basic Education) centres into regular schools is considered a major contributory factor that helped to raise the number of primary schools from 11,000 to 32,048 in 2015 (FDRE-MoE 2015). The growth observed in the expansion and enrolment of secondary school students has been huge—that is, about fivefold for the schools. Nonetheless, the disparity between demand and supply has remained huge. Factors that influence enrolment in secondary education, according to the FDRE-MoE (2015) are poverty, lack of transport, the need to work (time and economic restrictions), early marriage (gender biases), lack of accommodation near schools (financial, cultural and social) and disability (p. 15). Despite the growth in efforts to create access, especially to primary level education, there continues to be a high dropout rate in the country. Too many students leave the system early, which is reflected in a Grade 8 completion rate of only 47% (FDRE-MoE 2015). The introduction of higher education in Ethiopia began in the

mid-1960s but has been given priority over the past 15 years. In this regard, there is a focus on establishing new universities across the different geographic regions to provide equitable distribution.

While studies conducted by Young Lives among different communities in Ethiopia indicate that education is viewed as a route out of poverty, the broader national and international literature confirms that the educational aspirations of children, and to a certain level parents, have been challenged by various socioeconomic, demographic and other factors (Crivello and Gaag 2016). Other factors believed to deter the educational performance and aspirations of children include the socioeconomic status of families, access to schools, educational background of parents, living in urban and/or rural settings, parents' inability to meet their children's educational needs, demand for children's labour (especially in the rural context) and gender and age work norms (Pankhurst et al. 2015; Pankhurst et al. 2016; Stewart et al. 2007; Tafere and Pankhurst 2015). In addition to these, especially in the rural context, proximity to water, age and gender of the household head, presence of infants in the house (for girls), ownership of crop land (for boys) and ownership of cash crops are indicated to be factors that influence children's education (Senbet 2010).

2.4.2 Education and children's work

A considerable body of literature documents the competing choices between schooling and work and its variations in time and place. While childhood has become increasingly institutionalised, and the school/work divide has been made clearer in Western countries, in the global south, growing up and children's education is linked with work (Morrow 2010). Through engaging in work, children in Africa handle a range of responsibilities that shape not only their own daily lives and future life chances but also the conditions of those around them, Aitken (2001, p. 22). Dichotomies around the concepts of child work and child labour, according to Tafere and Pankhurst (2015), show the child labour is given negative connotations in that it could be exploitative and could pose risks to the health and wellbeing of children.

In justifying the advantages that children could gain from engaging in work, Morrow (2010) argued,

For children who are working in agriculture, they learn skills and gain insights on how the environment functions that cannot be taught in school classrooms and they should not be withdrawn from work as this may effectively de-skilling the next generation, on whom food production in shifting climatic conditions may depend. (p. 440)

However, a boundary must be drawn between harmful and non-harmful work when seen from the perspectives of both children and their parents, on the one hand, and from the wider sociocultural, economic and political context in which they are living on the other. Hence, it is suggested that this should be contingent on the age of the child and the situation of harm or hazard that work may entail, as unpaid work in the home can be exploitative and harmful, sometimes more so than paid employment, and often children see paid work as preferable (Nieuwenhuys 2013; Pankhurst et al. 2015; Tafere and Pankhurst 2015). While *child labour* tends to denote economic activities outside the household, Bourdillon et al. (2010) suggested this should be seen on the basis of the benefits that children might draw from work appropriate to their age. Bequele and Boyden (1988), for instance, argued that this situation has made the International Labour Office make a compromise concerning how child labour is perceived and practised.

While there is no accurate figure to show how many children are at work at present, in the Ethiopian context, there is little doubt that child labour could be exploitative and harmful due to the country's unique economic, social and developmental circumstances (Admassie 2003). For instance, the data from the *Ethiopia Demographic and Health Survey 2011* (Central Statistical Agency [CSA] 2012) suggests the figure for child labour to be 27% for children under 15. Most of these children were engaged in household chores, followed by family businesses, and paid work was limited. In gender terms, child labour was higher among boys (31%) than girls (24%) and much higher in rural areas (30%) than

urban areas (13%) (CSA 2012). In her assessment of the lives of working children in Addis Ababa, Mulugeta (2015) discussed the different approaches where children are vulnerable or victims, on the one hand, and persons having agency on the other. She suggested,

The vulnerability perspective argues that children need protection because they are powerless to protect themselves, both at home and outside. They are dependent on others to promote their interests and welfare, both as a group and as individuals. Their development will be compromised if they have to work, since work interferes with their ability to attend and perform in school. On the other hand, those who focus on children's agency argue that this contention does not apply to many countries where children are expected to work in order to survive, to attend school and to support their families or earn extra money to obtain necessities. (pp. 93–94)

Studies conducted around children's work and education in Ethiopia have shown various socioeconomic and demographic factors determine the allocation of time between child work and schooling. Drawing from the longitudinal study carried out by Young Lives in Ethiopia, Pankhurst et al. (2016, p. 48) observed that the relationship between school and work is complex and depends on the context in which children live (rural vs. urban), the types of schooling available, the demand and opportunities for work, changing gender and age work norms, ownership of assets, location or accessibility of schools and household circumstances (p. 53).

That said, other scholars have suggested that prevailing social and economic contexts could influence the circumstances in which children need to work. Abebe (2011), for instance, argued that although the contexts in which children work might show changes in response to political economic forces, analysis of children's work should be reviewed within society and culture but without overlooking interrelated macro-level process that might shape children's pathways to work (p.169).

Despite planning and investment for over two decades, there are still millions of children out of school (Grieve 2016). The limited studies that have been conducted on the determinants of children's enrolment and dropout in Ethiopia tells us little about the challenges that children among marginalised communities such as the Argobbas are encountering and cannot explain variations in their educational trajectories. Through exploring the experiences of schooling among children in and out of school, and by examining the prevailing household and intra-household dynamics among the study participants, this research identified factors that are facilitating and hindering children's education among the Argobba. By examining direct and/or indirect linkages between education and migration, and through identifying sociocultural factors that may have a direct or indirect influence on the perceptions and practices of childhood education, this study illuminates the key issues underpinning children's education and whether children, parents and other members of the Argobba community believe or appreciate whether education is something that can contribute towards the improvement of their future lives and those of their families.

2.5 Migration and its impact on children's lives

2.5.1 Migration of people: an overview

Migration of people is recognised as an inherent and inevitable phenomenon in this interconnected world, as it is creating avenues for opportunities for a large proportion of migrants (Adepoju 2008, p. 59). At the international level, migrations have increased greatly in scale and complexity. During the last few decades, there have been substantial increases in rural–urban and interregional migration within and across countries, bringing together a range of different ethno–linguistic and cultural groups from distinct geographic locations (Castles and Wise 2007). It is a phenomenon widely practised in different parts of the world whether it is in Bangladesh or India, in search of better economic or other opportunities (Whitehead et al. 2007), undertaking cross-border work in neighbouring countries or in response to political conflict

(Caouette 2002). Other studies have revealed that, depending on the context, such migration might have been motivated by a strategy for better socioeconomic conditions such as education, health and so on (Afsar 2000). Hence, migration of people does not always mean that it is caused by poverty. Huijsmans (2006) suggested that the unprecedented growth in the migration of people is attributed partly to the increasing inequalities between and within countries and increased access to easy means of transport and media. These features have also attracted academics and researchers to develop a wide range of migration theories and for a better understanding of the processes and challenges in the course of migration trajectories.

The types of migration at international level could be categorised into three: labour mobility, refugee movements and more permanent migration (Kok 2006). According to Ellerman (2003), the different forms of migration have both benefits and disadvantages for sending and receiving countries. These include the loss of human capital for the sending countries, which on the one hand impact the income of their families and that of the nation from the remittances and transfer of skills, and on the other, contribute to the host country's economy by filling the gap of the declining labour force created by the ageing populations. Conversely, Sander and Miambo (2003, p. 1) noted that remittances sent by migrants play a significant role, at both the household and national levels, in coping with the risks posed by poverty and in contributing the balance of payments and on foreign exchange revenues, respectively.

Even though individual migrants and their families tend to gain from migration, there is little evidence to indicate labour migration and flows of remittances have generated sustained growth for the sending countries (Alburo and Abella 2002). At the global level, increasing rural to urban migration has been noted to be a general concomitant to development. In recent decades, population growth in urban areas of Africa, Asia and Latin America has outstripped that of both corresponding rural areas and urban areas in North America and Europe, with up to 40% of developing country urban growth being

attributed to rural to urban migration (Byass et al. 2003, p. 58). The importance of rural to urban migration of people had been documented in the urbanising economies of Asia in countries such as Thailand, Bangladesh and China as rural to urban wage differentials and the return from migration increases (Deshingkar and Grimm 2004, p. 11). Hence, it is suggested that one should acknowledge the important role that internal migration can play in poverty reduction and economic development; it should therefore not be discouraged, but rather, the concern should be about how to maximise the potential benefits of migration for the individual concerned and society at large (p. 4).

On the positive side, some studies stress that migration of people, especially international migration, does not necessarily imply the creation of problems and challenges in migrants' lives. For example, Adepoju (2008) argued that the major challenge is how to make migration work productively for migrants, their families and society. The Global Commission on International Migration (GCIM; 2005), for instance, emphasises that human mobility is inherent and desirable for development processes (p. 1)

In West Africa, for example, people have migrated in response to demographic, economic, political, environmental, conflict and the effects of macro-economic adjustment programmes (Adepoju 1988). While rural to urban migration is intensified as landless farm labourers, deprived of the means to improve their living conditions, are pressured to abandon work and life in the rural areas and emigrate in search of wage labour in the urban areas, it is widely documented in the literature that there has been migration of skilled people, including doctors, teachers, scientists and many students in various disciplines, who have not returned home at the end of their training abroad. Adepoju (2000, p. 283) argued that migration and emigration in Africa are stimulated by the rapid growth of population and unemployment, deteriorating socio-political and economic conditions, which in turn have strained tremendously the region's development process and abject poverty compounded by natural and man made calamities. Adepoju (2008, p. 13) suggested that rapid population growth,

unstable politics, escalating ethnic conflict, breakdown of government rooted in precarious democratisation processes, persistent economic decline and retrenchment of public sector workers are among the factors that exacerbate the migratory process in Africa.

2.5.2 Context of migration in Ethiopia

There is historical evidence to suggest the large movements of people from areas of relatively dense population and low economic opportunity to areas of less density and greater opportunity in response to political turmoil, economic crises, war, famine and poor security conditions in Ethiopia (Ezra and Kiros 2001). While migration during the imperial era may be characterised largely as spontaneous, during the post-1974 period, the great majority of population movements were state controlled and directed or, at least, strongly influenced by the state (Backer and Aida 1995). For example, Rahmeto (1989) noted that during the 1984–85 famine, about 600,000 settlers were moved from drought-affected areas in central and northern parts of the country to south-west Ethiopia, although the settlement programme had encountered serious social problems. Hence, migration in Ethiopia has been largely influenced by the recurring famines and survival strategies (Kiros and White 2004; Kloos and Lindtjorn 1994; Mariam 1985). For instance, Dejene (1990) argued that migration from the villages of Wello in north-east Ethiopia (the area in which this research was conducted) to the resettlement villages was a last resort, and for the migrants, the choice was often between death and migration. Although some researchers have indicated that internal migration is influenced by urbanisation, Ezra and Kiros (2001) demonstrated that rural out-migration in northern Ethiopia has been a response to push factors related to ecological degradation and poverty in rural areas rather than a response to pull factors from urban areas. Given the adverse situation under which the people affected by drought and famines were found, migration has become an official government policy (Mberu 2006).

In general, adequate data is not available on the situation of migration in Ethiopia. Earlier studies conducted on the subject of migration, other than the ones discussed above, have focused on the contribution of migration to the growth of cities, migration of farmers during the slack farm season so as to supplement their income, and the seasonal labour migration to sugar plantations in Mathahara and Wonji and other mechanised farms in north-western Ethiopia, as well as coffee plantations located in different parts of the country (Birhanu 2011), and is predominantly a rural to urban phenomenon.

2.5.3 Migration of children

Child migration occurs all over the world, and each region has its own particular patterns and context. There are different discourses underlying the problem of migrating children at an international level. Attention to studying the migratory processes of children on their own right is, however, a recent development in social science research as they were subsumed within the migration of families (Hashim and Thorson 2011; Punch 2009). Research undertaken in different parts of the world indicates that out-migration of children and adults seems to be a normal aspect of life. For instance, a study conducted in Bangladesh and India found that the migration of adults and children from rural households to Dhaka and Mumbai was motivated by search of economic and other opportunities (Whitehead et al. 2007, pp. 9–10). Some children move in response to political conflict that has disrupted the livelihoods and security of their parents and that of their own. There are also cases where children are forced to migrate because of resettlement and relocation policies and programmes that are instated by governments in response to ongoing political conflicts (Caouette 2002). In many African countries, for instance, sending children to work away from their place of origin is seen as socially acceptable and often occurs in the context of family dysfunction related to large family size or an inability to care for a child (or children) because of a death in the family, displacement, severe economic stress or other factors (Whitehead et al. 2007). In recent times, the situation of children who are leaving their villages and moving to other places is becoming a growing concern in Eastern and Southern

Africa, even in places where there has not been a long tradition of labour migration and population movements, mainly due to civil unrest and poverty but exacerbated by the worldwide economic downturn (Ethiopian Society of Sociologists, Social Workers and Anthropologists; ESSWA 2010).

In light of the findings of research conducted in the global south, however, the dominant notions that consider children in the fixed and bounded spaces of the home environment are being contested, as the everyday lives of children are marked by mobility, living transnational lives as they migrate across national borders (Boyden 2013; Ní Laoire et al. 2010; Punch 2007; van Blerk 2005).

In the Ethiopian context, a tradition of rural to urban migration of children is motivated by different factors. A study by Gebre (2012) on the situation of migrating children in the Amhara Regional State identified a range of factors influencing children's decisions to migrate, including famine and war, environmental and demographic factors, living conditions in rural areas and the practice of early marriage. The majority of migrant girls were married before they left their villages; hence, they took any opportunity to run away from their husbands, lost the opportunity to pursue their education and slipped back into illiteracy (pp. 264–265). In a survey of over 1,000 adolescents aged 10 to 19 years in slum areas of Addis Ababa, 23% of boys and 45% of girls had migrated to the city, mostly from rural areas, for educational or work opportunities. More than half the migrants (52%) were female compared with only 24% of males originating from the Amhara Region (Erulkar et al. 2006).

Further, a study conducted by van Blerk (2008, p. 246) examined the connections between poverty, migration and sex work. The study pointed out that although not all girls migrate to engage in sex work, female migrants were engaged in sex work by leaving home through migration in their transitions to adulthood in Ethiopia. The study concluded that a low level of education that would not enable migrant girls to secure decent employment; harmful cultural practices in some rural areas, including female circumcision, abduction and early marriage; and attracted by the glamorous appearance of those already

working in commercial sex underpinned the migration of girls and their exposure to sex work. The influence of harmful traditional practices such as child marriage for motivating migration is in line with the findings of another study conducted in the Amhara State, which found 42% of households had experienced the departure of a child within the past 12 months of the period the study was conducted (ChildHope UK and CHADET 2012).

As opposed to the negative effects of child migration, on the other hand, Boyden (2013, p. 580) suggested that child migration could help to sustain kin relations and households and facilitate children's progression through their life course and could be considered fundamental to social reproduction. In her study of the linkages between poverty and rural to urban migration in Farta Woreda of Amhara State in Ethiopia, Atnafu et al. (2014) found that youth and members of the community considered migration as a strategy to move out of poverty despite the risks associated with exploitation, abuse and short-term returns.

In recent times, the issue of migration has been featured in public policy agendas as research and literature about migration worldwide increases. Despite the proliferation of research on trends of migration in general, however, little attention has been paid to childhood migration and mobility and how it affects children's trajectories in Africa (Razy and Rodet 2016). As contemporary literature on child migration in Africa portrays the child as victim, exploring children's choices and engagement in decision-making is crucial to understand their migration in a manner that neither romanticises their strengths nor presents them as passive victims (Hashim and Thorsten 2011, p. 4). As a decision to migrate is not taken randomly but is rather a choice influenced by ranges of observable and unobservable factors, conducting research on migration necessitates taking into account the complex processes and being context specific (Tegegne and Penker 2016).

Despite the continued number of children migrating from Argobba, little is known about what motivates them to migrate, their migration trajectories and the influence it poses on other children who have not yet migrated. In this regard,

this study explored the dilemma of children's vulnerability and agency and built an understanding of how decisions to migrate and/or stay are negotiated between children and parents.

Through exploring the many facets of children's migration, and drawing particularly from the stories told by young migrants in which children's voices and experiences are featured prominently and directly, the study illuminated the trajectories of migratory processes and how they impacted on the lives of the migrant children, their families and communities in their transitions to adulthood. Furthermore, the study sought to connect the micro-level economic and sociocultural factors of child migration to the complex issues of ethnic identity and the influences of globalisation from the local perspective and illuminate different aspects and consequences of children's migrations in Argobba, contributing towards generating scholarly and theoretical discussions on the issue of child migration.

2.6 Aspirations and risks regarding education and migration

To establish how the concept of aspiration is used in this thesis, I first provide some of the frameworks employed by different researchers regarding aspirations around education and migration. Bertrand et al. (2004), for instance, suggested that aspirations combine the wants and preferences of individuals, information about the opportunities available, the expectations formed about the feasibility of those wants and preferences and constraints acknowledged by the individual with respect to the future. Dalton et al. (2016), on the other hand, argued that people tend to aspire to what they believe they can achieve rather than something that is perceived inaccessible or unattainable. However, there are other factors at play that might make the process of forming one's aspirations more complicated, in that individuals do not form their beliefs and aspirations in isolation but are influenced by the life experiences of those around them, gender norms, role models and shifts in individual aspirations due to inconsistencies with their own expectations and ongoing dynamism (ibid).

Another view holds that various factors may determine the nature of aspirations and differences in the capacity of individuals to aspire—for instance, between the rich and the poor, the latter having low levels of aspiration as a result of poverty (Appadurai 2004) or being reluctant to aspire higher (Ibrahim 2011). Along the same line of thought, Favara (2016) observed that aspirations such as children’s aspirations to complete university studies correlated positively with the family wealth status. The concept of aspiration is, however, used in this thesis as it relates to what children and young persons aspired to achieve from education and migration, and to explore what influenced and shaped these aspirations and examine whether these were enmeshed with the sociocultural context and the realisation of their imagined futures.

Several theoretical models have been used to study the issue of educational aspirations in the past few decades. Berzin (2010) suggested two relevant frameworks that help to understand educational aspirations. These include the status attainment model, which suggests socio economic status has a large effect on educational aspirations and attainment, and the social support model, which suggests social support—mainly from family, friends and peers—has a positive influence on educational outcomes, including aspirations. There is a further discourse that suggests children’s educational aspirations could be influenced by the educational background or socio economic status of families (Marjoribanks 2005; Stewart et al. 2007), by place of residence, rural or urban (Haller and Virkler 1993) and by level of school performance or achievement (Quaglia and Cobb 1996).

In its multi-country research, where the Young Lives study assessed educational aspirations, high levels of aspiration and commitment to formal education were expressed by children and caregivers who believed that education has a role for children and young persons to move out of poverty and as a means for social mobility (Boyden 2013; Camfield and Tafere 2009; Tafere 2015, 2017). For instance, Crivello (2015 p.43) found widespread consensus among rural caregivers in Peru that school education offers an escape from herding and farming, a path to wealth and material security and a means of

releasing future generations from the hardship and suffering that they had endured. Children living in different contexts have varied opportunities and constraints that suggest aspirations do not guarantee achievements (Tafere 2010). In a study of the educational trajectories of children under the Young Lives programme in Addis Ababa, Camfield (2011, p. 406) and Morrow (2013) found that the educational aspirations of children could decrease and change over time as other aspirations and responsibilities become more important.

Social support models—for instance, family support, love and positive orientation—could serve as a means to provide an opportunity to avoid barriers for young persons with a higher level of educational aspiration to achieve their educational goals. Like that of educational aspirations, Crivello (2015) suggested that imagined futures are also mobilising forces for migration aspirations. Based on accounts from research conducted among children and parents in Peru, Crivello emphasised further that poverty could bring uncertainty and becomes a valuable motivator for migration (p. 15).

While children and young persons aspire to achieve their imagined futures, they are also confronted with a range of risks and uncertainties as they attempt to navigate their transitions through education and migration. Pells (2011), for instance, suggested that risks are understood as factors that increase the probability of negative outcomes. However, the classification of certain experiences or circumstances as 'risky' or 'dangerous' is not a straightforward or a universal given, and the factors that determine whether and how a person might experience it operates at numerous levels (Boyden and Mann 2005, p. 5). The way risk is understood and the meanings given for risks might range, for instance, from behaviour that might expose young persons to different outcomes or problems. Risks could also extend to circumstances that might be encountered as a consequence of migration and early marriage and expose young girls to different forms of risks such as unplanned pregnancies and early departure from school (Hardgrove et al. 2014, pp. 6–23). Crivello and Boyden (2014) suggested that children being at risk is presumed to be a specific, acute stimulus or is an event that provokes a given reaction in children. A growing

body of literature considers chronic poverty experienced during childhood synonymous with 'risk' (Hardgrove et al. 2011; Pells 2011). Researchers have suggested that risk is pervasive in poor communities as a consequence of various factors, including environmental circumstances, poverty and sociocultural practices, and becoming an integral part of the everyday lives of children (Crivello and Boyden 2014; Nieuwenhuys 1994). Boyden (2006, p. 1) suggested that poverty has a multidimensional and structural feature in that it exposes to a range of risks including power imbalances and abuses, rights violations and insufficiency of assets. According to Pells (2011, p. 10), risk factors can be cumulative and compounded, interacting with one another and thereby having an increasingly negative impact on children's life chances over time. Boyden and Mann (2005, p. 13), on the other hand, suggested that how children respond to risks or adversities cannot be understood without reference to the social, cultural, economic and moral meanings given to such experiences in the contexts they inhabit.

While risks are usually thought of as counter to aspirations and hope, a recent multi-country study conducted among young marginalised and street connected youth in Addis Ababa and Kathmandu came up with a new concept of 'positive uncertainty' and argued that, in the eyes of such young persons who are living in fragile and conflict-affected rural areas, and who have migrated to small towns and cities, uncertainty is not necessarily negative as it might also serve as a pathway out of poverty and shape their rights (Johnson and West forthcoming). Hence, in particular circumstances, young people can envision the uncertainty they expect to face, for instance, in terms of migration, as having a potentially positive outcome (Johnson and West in review). Based on the assessments made on how children and adults conceptualise and practise aspirations and risks, this research shows the factors that influence children and young persons' decisions and choices regarding their education and migration.

2.7 Globalisation and its impact on children and young people

Scholars from various disciplines have built different images of globalisation in both positive and negative ways. Some argue that globalisation is not a new concept and has existed for a long time, making significant contribution to the exchange of various aspects of people's lives across the world (Pieterse 2004). Substantial research undertaken by scholars from different fields of study provides a wide range of discourses and contested concepts and definitions. Given the breadth and depth of what has been suggested by followers of different disciplines, in this section, I highlight only existing theoretical discourses of globalisation to set the scene for assessing its impact on the lives of children and communities in general before turning to how globalisation is impacting the lives of children and communities in Argobba.

There is no consensus among theorists and practitioners on a common definition of globalisation (Babones 2007). In discussing the diverse ways globalisation is conceptualised and the complexities in defining it, Orozco and Hilliard (2004) suggested,

The term *globalization*, in its current usage is quite broad and lacks well defined boundaries. Some simply equate globalization with free markets. Others use the term interchangeably with such concepts as *transnationalism* or *postnationality*. Still others use the term as a proxy for *imperialism* or *neo-colonialism*. In the popular mind, *globalization* is often a proxy of *Americanization*. Others use globalization to examine themes that in earlier scholarship came under the rubric of 'development' or 'world systems' theory. (p. 9, emphasis in original)

The arguments made about the positive and/or negative consequences of globalisation, however, are often dependent on the concerns of and what the different scholarly disciplines tend to believe in. For the political scientist, for instance, the focus is centrality of politics over economics (Orozco and Hilliard 2004). For 'cultural theorists' globalisation has three aspects of characterisation: *homogenisation*, where uniformity prevails in different aspects of people's day-

to-day lives such as cuisines, consumption patterns and the like, while at the same time is seen as one that entertains *heterogeneity*, where continued cultural differences highlight the existence of local cultural autonomy and resistance to homogenisation; and *hybridisation*, which stresses new and constantly evolving cultural forms and identities produced by manifold transnational processes (Robinson 2007).

Arguments about globalisation are polarised when seen from an economic point of view. While some argue that free trade has created a path for enhanced economic interlinkages and development, capitalising on the virtues of trade and markets help alleviate poverty and create new opportunities for economic growth and wellbeing, contributing to the alleviation of poverty while others criticise it for expanding inequalities through introductions of new modes of exploitation and domination, displacement and marginalisation (Robinson 2007, p. 11). Despite the wide-ranging impacts that globalisation has created on different aspects of people's lives and across nations in different parts of the world, and the increased movement of labour and capital, finance, goods and services between countries, globalisation is also criticised for increasingly weakening traditional cultures of nations and localities through the spread of Western culture around the world, the United States being seen as a key player and promoter (Erickson et al. 2009). While many observe globalisation as creating economic development, there is a great deal of debate about the threat posed by globalisation over century-long traditions, religious identities, values and worldviews (Orozco and Hilliard 2004). While the cultural convergence paradigm argues that globalisation is leading to increased sameness among different cultures of the world, others emphasise the creation of new and unique hybrid cultures that lie between the local and the global, termed cultural hybridisation (Yankuzo 2014). For Giddens (1990, p. 64), it is about local happenings being shaped by events occurring many miles away, and vice versa, while for Pieterse (2004), globalisation is about human integration (p. 33). Hence, no single discipline can adequately encompass and account for its different dimensions, manifestations and influences (Hooper 2007, p. 5).

Among the dominant discourses in the explanation of globalisation, however, is the impact of new communication and media technologies that have created a great deal of influence in generating and circulating images and enabling connection between people, organisations and systems across vast areas instantaneously (Orozco and Hilliard 2004, p. 17). In this regard, the introduction and growth of the use of the internet and mobile telephony has brought significant impacts through much of the world, enabling many societies to jump directly to new ways of interacting and communicating (Sheller and Urry 2006). In explaining the extent to which the availability of transport and information technology has facilitated the movement of people and information beyond the borders of national states, Bauman (1998) noted,

The separation of the movement of information from those of its carriers and its objects allowed in turn the differentiation of their speed ... the appearance of the computer and World Wide Web renders information, in theory as well as in practice, instantaneously and available throughout the globe. (pp. 14–15)

Bauman suggested further that globalisation has contributed to the shrinking of closely knit communities and interexchange of cultural practices which, in turn, has encouraged the movement of people out of any locality, and the locality they inhabit moving away from under their feet (p. 18).

A review of literature indicates that, in recent times, globalisation has brought about an enormous impact on the economic, political and cultural lives of societies to an unprecedented scale (Al'Abri 2011). In describing the extent to which globalisation could influence the day-to-day lives of communities, Sillitoe (1998) indicated that, as a consequence of globalisation, people will incorporate and reinterpret aspects of Western knowledge and practice into their traditions as part of the ongoing process of globalisation. Expanding on this point, Turner and Khondker (2010) suggested,

No society, however small and remote, could escape entanglement with such global cultural, political and economic processes. Any

sociological analysis of a single society, region, city or village that did not take into account the global context was seen to be inadequate.
(p. 1)

Stearns (2005) suggested that, as globalisation is often seen through broad processes such as economic and sometimes cultural and political terms, its impact needs to be translated into the perspectives of childhood, too. In explaining the challenges that the forces of globalisation are posing in local realities, especially on youth, families and the education system, Orozco and Hilliard (2004, p. 2) argued that the lives and experiences of youth growing up today are linked to economic realities, social processes, technological and media innovations and cultural flows that traverse national boundaries with ever greater momentum. The ways globalisation is impacting on the different dimensions of childhood have also been emphasised by scholars. Finn et al. (2010) proposed that the lives of children around the world are invariably shaped by the effects of global processes on welfare, education, immigration, access to food, water and health care, as well as military alliances, to name a few. More and more children have 'travelling lives' as they negotiate complex circuits of migration and changing meanings of identity and belonging (de Block and Buckingham 2007, p. 10). These large-scale processes are also playing out and being negotiated through intergenerational relations that are often both strained and sustained across multiple borders (Cole and Durham 2007).

The relationship between education and development in the global context implies that developing countries must invest strongly in developing and implementing education policies that deal with global discourses and issues to help them develop a nation that has the strength to integrate with the global system and gain positive impacts (Al'Abri 2011, p. 495). This is based on the argument that at this age of globalisation, in order to be successful in development, nations' education policy has now to consider the broader international and global political economy and the policies, programmes and agendas of international organisations and development agencies rather than focusing on local and national affairs. Globalisation means that the lives of

children growing up today will be shaped in no small measure by global processes in economy, society and culture (Fass 2007). Orozco and Hilliard (2004) argue that educational systems tied to the formation of nation-state citizens and consumers bonded to local systems to the neglect of larger global forces are likely to become obsolete, while those that proactively engage globalisation's new challenges are more likely to thrive (p. 23).

Recognising that different cultures and prior patterns receive and respond to the impact of globalisation in various forms, Stearns (2005, pp. 845–848) suggested that research on globalisation and children should involve a synthesis of children's real lives, their relations with adults, siblings and their peers, and should examine if major changes have occurred in the traditional patterns of family authority over children.

Children of today are growing up in a world where the media produces programmes on a global scale, which influences children's action and behaviour in other countries and cultures (de Block and Buckingham 2007; Kjørholt 2013). In this regard, Razy and Rodet (2016, p. 16) suggested that the link between globalisation and child migration, poverty and aspirations, as well as its effect on the day-to-day lives of children, still need to be documented and analysed. Despite the large scholarship about the political, economic, cultural and other aspects of globalisation, for instance, macro-economic issues like economic growth, employment, foreign direct investment, as suggested by Razy and Rodet (2016), we know less about the links between globalisation and child migration, including the growing transnationalism of women, the family, transnational childhoods and its impact on children and families in remote localities like that of the Argobbas.

Hence, an assessment of the impact of globalisation in this study constituted an examination of issues on how children and communities, as well as the traditional values and practices of the Argobbas, have been affected by the different features of globalisation and the way these have been assimilated over time. In doing so, I explored whether communities believed that some, if

not all, aspects of globalisation, such as the media, have influenced the behaviour and attitude of children and young people and if these were relevant and/or rivalled the culture and the day-to-day lives of the Argobbas.

2.8 Nationality, ethnic identity and the notion of imagined communities

While embarking on this study, issues related to nationality and ethnicity were not considered an area of discussion except to highlight how the Argobbas benefited from their entitlement to self-administration. Nonetheless, during the period of conducting the research, I witnessed a series of states of emergency declared by the Ethiopian Government to contain the rebellion that had sparked in different parts of the country, which resulted in casualties and displacement of millions of citizens. In light of these emerging features, this section provides a brief account of the significance and impact of ethnic politics in Ethiopia in general to connect to the context of Argobba.

The following elucidates the benefits that can be drawn from self-administration and the opportunities for improving and transforming the lives of the Argobba community in general and children and young people in particular.

2.8.1 Nationality and ethnic identity

Given the growing interest in the study of nationalism as a subject of academic inquiry since the late 1980s, there have been continued influences on the division of nation states and among the ethnic groups within them, especially in Eastern Europe (Breuilly 2016). Anderson (1983, as cited in Breuilly 2016) linked nationalism to kinship and religion, emphasised the importance of symbols for political identity and gave an account of the transition from small-scale to large-scale society through the medium of printing, or print capitalism as he called it (Breuilly 2016, p. 629).

According to Anderson's (1983) definition of the nation, it is *imagined* because

the members of even the smallest nation will never know their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each

lives the image of their communion ... it is imagined as a community ... and the nation is conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship. (p. 6)

Here, the work of the imagination consists not in making things up but envisioning something that we cannot see, but which is nonetheless real. Anderson linked the origins of nationalism to the Industrial Revolution and the subsequent growth in print capitalism where a community beyond face-to-face interaction had to be imagined. Breuilly (2016) suggested that Anderson's cases were drawn from the late-18th century United States where nationalism originated and subsequently spread to Europe, and his work focuses on examples based on South East Asian experiences (p. 625)

Central to the nationalist thesis, according to Özkirimli (2010) is

the belief in, and representation of, the nation as mystical, a-temporal, even transcendental entity whose survival is more important than the survival of its individual members at any given time. (p. 52)

In general, scholars who have conducted studies in the field of nationalism and ethnicity have proposed different approaches and theoretical viewpoints. Drawing from the theoretical models and conceptions of nations and nationality studies, a brief account of four theoretical positions are presented here to serve as a backdrop to the arguments that I make in the later sections of this thesis about the issue of nationality in Ethiopia in general and that of the Argobbas in particular. These include primordialism, modernism, instrumentalism and ethnosymbolism. This does not mean, however, that these are the only models that researchers could use as a framework for undertaking studies on the subject of nationality and/or ethnicity in other contexts.

Drawing mainly from the works of Edward Shills (1957), Özkirimli (2017) argued that the term *primordialism* describes relationships beyond the family and portrayed the significance of blood ties and of common territory along with being born into a particular religious community, speaking a particular language

and following a particular social practice as a basis for maintaining attachment to a certain form of identity. However, primordialism is criticised for its tendency to take ethnic and national identity as 'a given', or as a fact of nature, transmitted from one generation to the next with its 'essential' characteristics unchanged; identity is thus fixed, or static (p. 61). Emphasising the socially constructed nature of ethnic and national identity, other studies have argued that the primordial model does not consider changes that arise due to choices and decisions individuals might make as a result of political opportunities and other factors caused by changing circumstances, including language, religion and their boundaries and the chance to assimilate with other societies and redefine identities on a continuous basis (Brass 1991; Smith 1986).

In contrast with primordialism, modernism, on the other hand, claims that nations and nationalism are intrinsic to the modern world, and modernisation theories were formulated in the 1960s in the wake of the movements for decolonisation in Asia and Africa (Smith 1998, p. 3). For modernists, nations and nationalism are products of modern processes like capitalism, industrialisation, urbanisation, secularism and the emergence of the modern bureaucratic state. The assumption of this model, as proposed by Hechter (1975), is that the uneven growth of modernisation creates an unequal distribution of power and resources between the more powerful group, the core, and the periphery, whose economy is dependent and complementary to the core. However, theories that prioritise economic and political factors in explaining nationalism have been criticised on the grounds that they are reductionist, with the belief that nationalism is too complex to be explained in terms of a single factor. For instance, the uneven development between the core and the periphery does not always prove to be true as there have been cases where the peripheries were highly developed, making it difficult to correlate the strength and intensity of nationalist movement with the degree of economic exploitation and backwardness (Özkirimli 2017).

Instrumentalism, on its part, explains that ethnic and national identity becomes a convenient tool at the hands of competing elites for generating mass

support in the universal struggle for wealth, power and prestige (O'Leary 2001, p. 148; Smith 1986, p. 9). In this regard, Brass (1991) made a basic assumption that ethnicity and attachments to a given nation are politically manipulated by elites within the ethnic groups, whereby attaching certain values and meanings to the culture of the group is used as a symbol to gain political and economic advantage for the groups as well as for themselves. In setting out a general framework on the formation and change of identity, Brass (1991) argued that in societies where a great deal of cultural assimilation has already taken place, the boundaries separating various ethnic categories are not clear. However, ethnic differences could become apparent if cultural markers are selected and used as a basis for differentiating the group from other groups, and the ethnic group becomes politicised as justification for a demand for either group rights in an existing political system or for recognition as a separate nation (Brass 1991). Brass's theory is, however, criticised for reducing the parts that members of the ethnic group in question could play, independent of the elite, and for considering them as passive recipients and easily manipulated by the elite.

Ethnosymbolism, on the other hand, emphasises the role of myths, symbols, memories, values and traditions in the formation, persistence and change of ethnicity and nationalism (Smith 2001, p. 84). Ethnosymbolists emphasise the value that ethnic background has in shaping the rise of present nations and nationalism (Hutchinson 1994, p. 7). Smith (1986) argued that ethnosymbolism tends to be exceptionally durable under 'normal' vicissitudes of history, such as migrations, invasions and intermarriages, and persists over many generations, even centuries (p. 16). However, ethnic ties, like other social bonds, are subject to economic, social and political forces and could change according to prevailing circumstances such as intermarriages, migrations, external conquests and the importation of labour. Hence, Smith (2009) argued that many ethnic groups find it difficult to preserve cultural homogeneity and pure essence posited by most primordialists. From the perspective of an ethnosymbolist approach, Smith (1995, p. 33) however argued that ethnic ties, like other social bonds are, subject to economic, social and political forces such

as migrations, external conquests and intermarriages that make it unlikely for many ethnic groups to preserve the cultural homogeneity and pure essence posited by most primordialists and change according to circumstances.

Unlike the primordialists, who tend to take ethnic and national identity as one that is transmitted from one generation to the next with its 'essential' characteristics unchanged, other studies have stressed the socially constructed nature of ethnic and national identity, pointing to the role of individual choice, tactical decision, political opportunity and various contingencies in their construction, while at the same time their boundaries and contents are continuously negotiated and redefined in each generation as groups react or adapt to changing circumstances. According to Smith (2002), the significance of pre-existing ethnic communities that share common myths of origin and ancestors is considered having an attachment to a homeland and in the formation of identities and nations (pp. 12–15).

Nonetheless, a review of the literature on ethnic diversity and tensions and instability therein, at least in the context of Africa, indicate that various strategies are being employed by governments to not only handle ethnic issues politically and institutionally, but also stage ethnic politics or conflicts to use as a tool for consolidating their control over the population (Aalen 2011).

2.8.2 Issue of nationality and ethnic identity: Ethiopian context

In her book *Making Citizens in Africa: Ethnicity, Gender, and National Identity in Ethiopia*, Smith (2013, p. 8) emphasised that attempts to establish and consolidate a national identity in Ethiopia, as has been the case in other postcolonial states, was found contentious due to the country's diverse ethnolinguistic and religious composition. Furthermore, she suggested that ethnic identification has remained a symbolic power and has a form of identity in different spheres of political and other forms of social organisation, despite efforts made by successive political powers to undermine and even eliminate its persistence.

A discussion of national or ethnic identity in Ethiopia necessitates an assessment of how the notion of identity has been constructed and reconstructed by the different ethnic groups and systems of governance over time. This helps us to analyse the circumstances at a national level and contextualise it with the situation at local levels. However, providing a detailed analysis of the success and failure of ethnic federalism in Ethiopia is beyond the remit of this study.

In the Ethiopian context, the successive political systems (the imperial state and the Marxist military regime; the Derge) followed different approaches in addressing the inequalities manifested among the different ethnic groups. Zewde (1991), for instance, suggested that the nature of modern state-building has been characterised by the monarch of the imperial state that traces its line of ancestry to the Solomonic dynasty and the significant place held by orthodox Christianity in the Ethiopian polity. Further, the expansion of the Amharic language took a form of class oppression and exploitation and did not prevent the political mobilisation of ethnicity that had begun to surface towards the end of the imperial era. Following the downfall of the imperial system of governance, the military regime attempted to abolish the feudal socioeconomic structure, recognising the equality of the different ethnic groups through, for instance, the establishment of the Institute for the Study of Ethiopian Nationalities, which was mandated to document the state of the various ethnic groups in the country, as well as draft a constitution meant to accommodate ethnic diversity (Aalen 2011; Salih and Markakis 1998). Other steps taken to ensure the participation of ethnic and religious groups include the recognition of Muslim holidays and radio programmes broadcasting in different languages while the use of local languages as a medium of instruction was under consideration (Smith 2013).

However, following the seizure of political power by TPLF (Tigray People's Liberation Front),⁶ that midwived the birth of EPRDF, the issue of ethnic identity

⁶ TPLF evolved to EPRDF (Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front) by creating a coalition between other ethnic-based groups that were created by it.

was further emphasised and led to the establishment of the regional administrative units based on ethnicity, at least on paper, that seemed to uphold the principle of a federal system providing autonomy to exercise their rights to a level of independent law making and to be represented in the decision-making processes of central government (Aalen 2011; Habtu 2003; Teshome and Záhořík 2008).

Aalen (2011) referred to the new state administrative structure put in place by the TPLF as one inspired by the Stalinist understandings of the 'nationality question' and aimed at overcoming the Amhara hegemony and clear the ground for staying in power and control any opposition forces that may compromise its hegemony. Nonetheless, this has not been realised to the desired level due to the centralised control of the ruling party (EPRDF), the same group that heralded the notion of self-determination of nationalities within the country through providing an article in the constitution on the right to self-determination (Article 39 of the FDRE). The criteria for determining self-administration focused on primordial traits—inborn common culture, customs and language; psychological make-up and identities; and fixed boundaries around each group—all traits expected to be easily identifiable from the outside (Smith 2013, pp. 37–38). Argobba is among such ethnic groups in Ethiopia that have been granted self-administration. This has been stipulated in a proclamation issued by the State Council of the Amhara National Regional State.

While the government took a position that largely gave recognition to ethnicity and nationality (group rights) as the basis for formal citizenship, its implementation has nevertheless been found to be challenging, while in reality, all states have mixed ethnic groups (such as the Southern Region that consists of over 45 ethnic groups). This has also resulted in an increased number of groups to demand their own separate ethnic administrations, detached from larger multi-ethnic administrative areas. To many critics, however, the federal state is a de facto one-party state in which ethnic organisations are mere satellites of one ethnic organisation—that is, the TPLF, which has been the leading unit in the ruling coalition, the EPRDF (Habtu 2003).

Despite the government's belief regarding the advantages that could be drawn from the introduction of ethnic federalism in the country in general and the provision of self-administration for selected ethnic groups in particular, there is limited evidence of how it is interpreted into practice when seen from the perspectives of local administrative structures and communities like Argobba. It is particularly interesting when assessed from the perspectives of children and young people as they go through a dynamic change happening in the political, socioeconomic processes that have occurred during the past quarter of a century, both in their communities and as part of the changes that have occurred in the country.

Drawing from the in-depth interviews conducted with children, parents and government representatives, this study shows how the political structure that allowed ethnic groups to obtain a status of self-administration has impacted the lives of children and young persons in Argobba. In this regard, by going beyond the highly polarised rhetoric of what Anderson (1983) termed 'imagined communities', the study contributes to a growing body of literature on minorities and communities by exploring how, on the one hand, children and young persons imagined their ethnic bondage and identity, and on the other, how changes in aspirations, brought about by greater access to education and migration and the challenges faced, affect youth, especially girls, in their transitions to adulthood.

2.9 Summary of literature and key frameworks related to the research

This research is built on two theoretical strands. Based on key developments in the social sciences that recognise variations in childhood across time, place and cultures, the first strand draws on the social studies of childhood that consider childhood a social construct and children as social actors who are actively engaging with the world around them (James et al. 1998; James and Prout 1997; Wyness 2000).

This is distinct from previous and dominant explanations of child development that were largely influenced by developmental psychology—for

instance, Piaget, whose work on universal childhood considers the child as progressing from stage to stage along a defined line of development (Crain 2005). Vygotskian socioecological theory, on the other hand, emphasises the importance of the individual's internalisation or appropriation of culture where the child's capability develops with the use of language as a cultural tool and the guidance of adults and peers (Corsaro 2015). Socialisation theory, in its part, emphasises a moulding process of children by adults to become competent adults and contributing members of society, but this is often critiqued for its limitations in neglecting children's agency (Crain 2005). Moving away from universal constructions of child development, the introduction of the sociocultural approach (e.g. Tudge et al. 2009) provided new directions for the study of childhood, emphasising childhood as a social construct and culturally variable rather than biologically fixed. As discussed in subsequent chapters, the sociology of childhood emerged as a field of study that does not consider children as a universal category and passive recipients of culture but rather as one who are actively involved in shaping their own sociocultural world and people around them (Boyden 1985; Boyden and Myers 1998; Christensen and Prout 2002; Corsaro 2015).

Seeing children as active agents who can shape their world necessitates grasping children's viewpoints, and this led to the development of a framework that considers children as 'social actors' (James and Prout 1997). The framework is relevant for this research mainly for its recognition of children not as developing beings but as ones who have agency. The notion of considering children as 'becomings' is problematic because of its temporal focus, which might force us to neglect the everyday realities of being a child (Lee 2001). However, there is a tension between the discourses that emphasise considering the child as having agency and the vulnerability and passivity discourse that characterises children as naturally innocent and dependent, often critiqued to be rooted in the Western assumption (Fass 2007, p. 937).

Obtaining children's perspectives, therefore, requires the adoption of relevant methodological approaches that enable researchers to address the

issues of power difference between an adult researcher and meeting the ethical standards regarding the protection of children participating in research (Abebe and Bessell 2014; Beazley and Ennew 2006; Bessell et al. 2016). As shown in the methodology chapter of this thesis (Chapter 4), the research employed a social constructivist approach and an ethnographic and participatory method to gather children's views and explore their life worlds (James and Prout 1997; Nieuwenhuys 1994). In general, the core conceptions of the social study of childhood recognise that children are worthy of study in their own right, childhood is a social construction and children are and must be treated as social agents (Hammersley 2017; Thomas 2002).

Following Alanen and Mayall (2001), this research used relational approaches of generation and examined the connections between power and agency and how age and gender determined the day-to-day lived experiences of children and young persons within the context of the existing kinship structure that they were embedded within. Through employing the framework of the social study of childhood, the research examined how children and adults defined their relationships, showing the complexities and tensions in childhood agency. In doing so, the research illuminated how childhood was constructed in Argobba and makes a conceptual theoretical contribution towards the growing scholarship and debates regarding childhood in the global south.

The second strand of the theoretical framework draws from Anderson's (1983) notion of 'imagined communities' to explore how the Argobbas formed their ethnic identity as members of a group and imagined their relationships with members of their own and other ethnic groups regardless of the absence of face-to-face interaction and gaps in time and place (Anderson 1983, p. 6). Despite the arguments made by Anderson about the centrality of print media in enhancing a sense of imagined community between people and among nations under capitalism, following Smith's (1991) framework of ethnosymbolism, I argue that the imaginings of the Argobba identity is based on common symbols, artefacts and a common ancestral past and collective memory that contribute to the creation of a sense of community and identity of being an 'Argobba'. Smith's

(1991) notion of the significance of historical landmarks such as landscapes, monuments, housing and tomb styles in uniting the present generation with the past fits Anderson's conceptions of imagining one's identity as a distinct group. I provided a definition of Anderson's imagined community in Section 2.8.1 of this chapter.

In this regard, I reviewed the literature on existing theoretical viewpoints and frameworks on nations, nationalism and ethnicity to serve as a backdrop to discuss the issue of nationality and ethnicity elsewhere, in general, and the context of in Ethiopia. Through examining the political environment that promotes 'group rights' and 'ethnic federalism' (Smith 2013) in the country, and building on the imaginings that the Argobbas conceptualised about their ethnic identity over generations, the research shows how an opportunity was created for the Argobbas to gain a status of self-administration.

I therefore found the concept of imagined communities to serve as a good analytical framework because its implied understandings of the world are generated by the actors in the world through their use of resources readily at hand. The notion of an imagined community highlights varied perspectives of children and adults regarding migration and education, leading to the creation of a dilemma among children of being either an 'agent' or 'dependent' on senior others to perform what they value. Based on the backdrop of the foregoing discussions, the research explored present configurations and future imaginings of children and young persons among the Argobbas and examined similarities and differences held by adults and other members of the community and the impact on their aspirations and action in their transition into adulthood.

These two theories neatly connect because they are both suitable to examine the agency of children, generational relations and related issues that the research intended to address and have a similar theoretical orientation in that they are not specific to, say, Western industrial societies.

2.10 Conclusion

In this chapter, I presented a review of the literature that highlights how childhood was depicted and conceptualised by the different fields of the social sciences until childhood studies began to be recognised as a field to explore the state of children and childhood in its own right. In this regard, the chapter outlined some of the key issues, such as generational relations, kinship structures, gender roles and norms, and aspirations and risks, which may have an influence in shaping childhood across cultures and places. The chapter also established the conceptual framework that underpins my analysis through a review of relevant literature regarding children's agency and through an analysis of contemporary discourses about children's work, education and migration. In Chapter 3, I provide a contextual and historical background of the Argobbas, explore the issue of identity by contextualising it to the recent political changes that have created an opportunity for the Argobbas to gain self-administration, and discuss improvements that have occurred in the fields of infrastructure, transport and technology.

Chapter 3.

Context of Study Area

3.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces the basic contextual circumstances and historical background of the Argobba people living in the north-east part of the Amhara Regional State in Ethiopia. In doing so, it first highlights the historical and cultural context of the Argobbas who have settled in different parts of the country and then focuses on the Argobba community where I conducted this research .

As shown in the subsequent sections, despite the Argobbas live in different parts of the country, a special provision for self-administration has been made for those who reside in the north-eastern part of the Amhara National Regional State. This decision is part of the wider political system that was introduced by the ruling EPRDF party, which adopted an ethnic federal governance structure and claims that the rights of nations and nationalities to self-administration are ensured in the country, although the long-term aims and consequences of its implementation is still contested.

This chapter gives an overview of the history and language of the Argobba people; the ecology, farming and housing styles; social organisation; social services; the administrative structures; and political context of the woreda. It also highlights some features of Medina, an emerging town currently serving as an administrative centre of the Argobba Woreda. The chapter concludes with presenting the context of infrastructure, transport and technology and by giving a brief account of the study sites where I undertook my fieldwork.

3.2 The Argobbas: history and language

The Argobbas are one of various ethnic groups in Ethiopia who live in isolated village networks and towns of the Amhara, Oromiya, Afar and Harari regions in north-eastern and eastern parts of the country (Asfaw 2000). There are limited sources, written materials and agreed-upon records that document and explain the history, origin and total number of the Argobba people.

According to Asfaw (2000), for instance, there are three different versions of the history of the Argobba people. Asfaw reported,

The first version holds that when the Arab clan known as Benew Imeya lost its ruling power to another clan 800 years ago and dispersed throughout the world, it came also to Ethiopia. The second version holds that when dispute arose between the Prophet Mohammad and the followers of other religions, eighty-two followers of the prophet came to Ethiopia to Ahmed Nejash carrying a letter asking him to accept Islam. After having delivered the letter, they came to Yifat and settled there. The third version on the origin of the Argobba differs from the previous two. According to this version, the Argobba are not immigrants, but an ancient and indigenous people who accepted Islam very early from religious leaders who came from Arabia. (p. 197)

Kifleyesus's (2006) study, however, is the most comprehensive work that focuses on the ethno-history of the Argobbas. According to Kifleyesus, the Argobbas have experienced cultural transformations as a result of Islamic religious resurgences from the nearby Arabs over the past centuries. In this regard, Kifleyesus suggested that the myths about the origin of the Argobbas relate to

The Arab migration and historical relations to Yemeni Muslim Arab traders who travelled back and forth across the Red Sea coasts, intermarried with, lended to and adopted from the culture of indigenous peoples, and eventually left an Islamic mark on local

populations through mass conversions in the hinterlands. ... Whatever the claims to Arab provenances, the Argobba have managed to preserve their sense of peoplehood for at least eight hundred years using strategies of adaptation and cultural accommodation. (p. 83)

Kifleyesus (2006) further argued that the Argobbas constitute the population who were at that time ruled by the leaders of the Islamic Sultanate of Walasma dynasty in the 13th and 14th centuries, which ended in the 15th century due to the continuous struggle between the Christian state and the Muslim sultanate. Further, Kifleyesus indicated that the Argobbas have established long-standing relations and interactions with their neighbouring ethnic groups of the Amhara (who are predominantly Christians) and the Oromo and Afar (who are Muslims) based on commercial contracts, and at times conflicts, that are believed to have resulted in changes in the political and socioeconomic positions of the Argobbas (p. 9).

The Argobbas are Semitic-speaking peoples, and their language is part of the Ethio-Semitic group of languages. The language of the Argobba people is *Argobbigna*. Rejecting the argument that the Argobba language was formed as a result of the intermarriage of Arabic and an unknown Ethiopian language, Demeke (2009) argued that although some families from Arabia are believed to have mingled with them, the Argobbas are like any other Ethiopian ethnic groups who originated around Aliyu Amba. Hence, he argued, the Argobba language is much closer to Amharic and other Ethio-Semitic languages such as the *Gurage* and *Harari*. In his book entitled *The Origin of Amharic*, Demeke (2009) noted that even though there is no written record that explains the changes that have taken place across history, Amharic and Argobbigna became distinct around the 10th or 11th century AD and during the war in the early medieval period between the Christian Kingdom and the Muslim Sultanate—that is, the Yifat Sultanate, who were both speaking the same language (Demeke 2013, p. 203).

Currently, Argobbigna is spoken, to a limited extent, in the villages of Shonke and Teleha in the Oromiya Zone of the Amhara National Regional State and by a few individuals in some pockets of the remote villages of the woreda. Even in such villages, the language seems to gradually give way to the dominant languages of some other ethnic groups and is submerged by Amharic, *Afarigna* and *Afan Oromo*. Argobbigna is still spoken in conjunction with Afan Oromo and Amharic and enables the Argobbas to be multilingual (Kifleyesus 2006, p. 29). Given the ever-increasing trend in the mingling of different ethnic groups in the country, the decreasing number of speakers of some languages is not peculiar to the Argobbas. In this regard, Demeke (2009) observed that among the 86 languages spoken by different ethnic groups in Ethiopia, about 30 have fewer than 10,000 speakers. Demeke argued further that, in light of the present trend, languages spoken by a few members of some ethnic groups in Ethiopia, for instance *Biraile* and *Anfilo* could soon disappear (p. 1).

As a way of rescuing the Argobba language from disappearance, attempts are currently underway, especially by the woreda administration and the Argobba Development Association, to formulate an alphabet that could represent the language and prepare textbooks of Argobba grammar for beginners. This has involved the collection of words by mobilising human, material and financial resources from different individuals and companies who are willing to support studies that are being made on the culture and language of the Argobba people. In this regard, the formulation of the *symbols* and the publication of two volumes of textbooks on *Argobba Language for Beginners*, as well as an Amharic–Argobba dictionary, have been realised. Even if the Argobbas are granted self-administration, the working language (for government offices) and the medium of instruction in schools is Amharic.⁷

⁷ Amharic is the official working language of the Amhara regional state and the Federal Government.

3.3 Ecology, farming and housing

3.3.1 Ecology

Like most parts of the Ethiopian highlands, the landscape in Argobba is characterised by rugged mountain ranges and arid lowlands that spread over a long line of slopes along the edge and foothills of the eastern escarpment of the Great Rift Valley system. It has three major ecological zones: *dega* (highlands; cold and frost during the cold season), *woina dega* (medium temperature) and *qolla* (the lowlands; hot and extremely hot in the warm season). Rainfall varies and generally falls in two distinct periods. The long rains (*kiremt*) are by and large reliable and normally last from the end of June until the middle of September. The short rains (*belg*) mostly fall in March and April but vary greatly from year to year. Nonetheless, most areas of the woreda are characterised by a shortage of rains. Added to the aridness of the land and inhospitable climatic condition is the scarcity of water across the woreda. The shortage and inaccessibility of water has significant impact the community, particularly children and adolescents as they are given the task of fetching water for their households. The sources of water for both humans and animals are the small streams that usually flow from the upper course of mountains and are found deep between the hilly landscapes. Although the courses of the riverbeds are very wide and fill to the maximum during the big rainy seasons, the volume of water in most of these streams gets very low during the dry seasons. Other sources of drinking water in Argobba are hand-dug wells and springs, some of which are fitted with short lines of pipes connected to communal tap waters and distribution points. At the time of writing, there are only three hand-dug wells and 17 developed springs, 14 of which could be used for small irrigation schemes. Due to the barren nature of the area, the yield of the hand-dug wells is reported to be very small. Hence, as shown in Figure 1, some households prepare and use a water-harvesting mechanism in which they accumulate water in small ponds by using a geomembrane, a strong polyethylene plastic liner to prevent leakages. Such water is used to irrigate their gardens around their homestead to grow onions and some fruit trees such as papaya and mango.

One can see small irrigated plots along some of the riverbeds that are used for growing vegetables such as onions but are not often good enough to plant and produce them at a commercial scale. According to Dehub Wollo Zone water and energy department, however, there is still potential for developing underground water and harvesting rainwater in Argobba.

In general, the development of irrigation programmes has been hampered due to shortage of water and lack of capacity by the concerned government agencies to implement such schemes. Small irrigation projects are now underway with the support of local and international development agencies such as IFAD (International Fund for Agricultural Development) and Amhara Development Association.



Figure 1. A small pond on a local farmer's plot covered with a geomembrane plastic sheet for harvesting rainwater.⁸

3.3.2 Farming practices

The woreda is characterised by a shortage of rain and a low level of productivity. As there is a limited amount of plain land, which is suitable for farming, farmers are often forced to use most of the spaces on sloped hills for the cultivation of crops. Hence, the Argobbas make terraces for growing crops

⁸ All photos were taken by the author unless stated otherwise.

and vegetables, as well as for planting trees and animal feed as well as for the prevention of soil erosion (see Figure 2). According to the Argobba Woreda Office of Agriculture, efforts are underway to rehabilitate places that have been heavily affected by environmental degradation. However, it was noted that people from Afar (a neighbouring ethnic group) often bring their camels and let them graze on the land that has been protected, causing damage to the conserved area which, and at times, causes conflict between the Argobbas and the Afars.



Figure 2. Terracing practices of the Argobbas.

Most cultivated land is covered with long-term varieties of crops such as sorghum, which take up to five months before it is harvested. Other types of crops grown in the woreda include oil seeds, teff, mung beans and so on. In the mid lands (woina dega) and lowlands, they cultivate crops such as sorghum, maize, legumes, sunflower and sugar cane and some vegetables. As many farmers mostly plant sorghum, and due to a lack of rotation of crops, the productivity of the land is showing a decreasing trend from one harvest season to the next. Nonetheless, efforts are being made through government agricultural extension programmes to encourage farmers to plant short-term variety crops such as mung beans, which take only between 45 and 55 days to plant and harvest. Mung beans could also be used as cash crops.

According to the information obtained from the Office of Agriculture of Argobba Woreda, some of the kebeles, such as Kilkilo, Dibe and Fetekoma, are

frequently affected by drought. To address the risk of food shortage in the woreda, an early warning system has been put in place by the government, whereby crop assessments are made in the months of September and October to determine the state of crop production and for making projections about the size of food aid that needs to be made available to communities affected by the shortage of production in the coming seasons. In doing so, areas that are at risk of crop failure are identified, and the details of the number of people who will need food support are submitted to the woreda and zonal level Disaster Prevention and Preparedness units. In areas where the problem is severe, the support could last from six to nine months. Although the government promotes the use of fertilisers for improving productivity, many farmers are still reluctant to use them.

An emerging challenge in the rural areas is, however, the scarcity of land that could be shared among the growing number of family members, on the one hand, and the limited opportunities available for young people to engage in non-farm activities. Hence, migration is becoming one of the options available for young persons in rural areas. On the other hand, the chance for rural youth to access revolving funds made available by the government to support unemployed youth has not yet been realised to the desired level in Argobba. Although the initiative is appreciated in creating an opportunity for the youth to engage in one or another kind of income-generating activity, it is often criticised for the challenges in implementation and allegations of lack of transparency and biases in the selection of eligible beneficiaries (Pankhurst and Dom 2018).

3.3.3 Housing style

A significant cultural artefact of the Argobba people is their patterns of settlement and style of house construction. As documented by Hailu (2000) and according to the accounts of elders in the area, the Argobbas prefer to set up their homes on top of the hills due to its healthier environment and the aim of securing a place that helps to defend themselves from enemies. A typical Argobba house is built of stone, wood and mud; its top is covered with lighter

and smaller wood and leaves, further covered by mud that does not wash away when it rains.

Most of the houses in Argobba are built using stones. Figure 3 shows how preferences are made by the Argobbas in setting up their settlements on hilly locations for reasons outlined earlier—that is, for better security and a healthier weather condition. The walls are made from wood and stone cemented to each other by using mud. With their spectacular housing patterns and structures, the villages of Shonke and Teleha reflect the land use and natural resource conservation practices of the Argobbas, which have been carried forward by subsequent generations.

Among the distinguishing features of the art of house building in Argobba are the ways they make the roofs over their houses and the provision of a space where women take a steam bath, especially following childbirth. As can be seen in Figure 4, the interior of the house contains spaces that are allotted to different purposes, including a place to sleep, for storing grain and a working space for grinding. Most houses have a separate small hut for cooking food. However, in terms of geography, the villages of Shonke and Teleha are not located within the self-administered Argobba Nationality/Liyu Woreda proper but in the Oromo Nationality Zone within the Amhara region, some 40 kilometres up the hill from the town of Kemissie. According to the elders who live in the area, such a traditional house (shown in Figure 1) could last up to 300 years if it is properly maintained; it is inherited by the youngest male son in whose absence a daughter inherits (Hailu 2000, pp. 205–206).



Figure 3. A distant and closer view of the settlement pattern in Shonke and Teleha.



Figure 4. The interior and exterior parts of a stone built house in Argobba.

The fact that the Argobba settlements are on top of hills reflects the sense of insecurity that they have experienced at different times. It is normal to see people carrying guns while travelling from place to place. Storing grain in the ground, for instance, is a practice that was used by their forefathers but still practised by some farmers today, which indicates the sense of insecurity the Argobbas are feeling, even now. A case in point is my observation during my fieldwork when one of my study participants was digging the ground on the premises of his house. When I asked him why he was doing that, he replied,

I'm preparing a place where I'm going to store my grain. It will be safe when we store it in the ground. It won't be eaten by mice and most important of all, it will remain safe even if the village is attacked by the enemy and the house is burnt. The enemy cannot take the grain and I

can still use it upon my return to the village if I were forced to leave due to the conflict. (Jamal, M, 40, Afesso)

Hence, the fact that the settlements of the Argobbas are located on hills, that they carry weapons and the continued practice of storing grain in the ground is indicative of the historical processes that have taken place during the past century in which security has been an important issue. However, the risk of attack by others is a belief held by adults but has less bearing on children and young people as such at present.

3.4 Religion

The Argobbas are followers of Islam. According to the oral traditions held by many Argobbas, Islam entered Ethiopia via their ancestors, and consequently, the Argobbas consider the coming of Islam to Ethiopia and the history of the Argobbas one and the same (Asfaw 2000, p. 55). Nonetheless, according to Ahmed (2001), the penetration of Islam into Ethiopia in general and that of Wollo in particular (Argobba included) indicates that it probably preceded the collapse of the Axumite state, thereby paving the way for the spread of Christianity from the core to the periphery and for Islam to expand from the periphery towards the centre (pp. 33–34). The following excerpt from Ahmed's work on the introduction and expansion of Islam in Ethiopia illustrates how the myth held by the Argobbas about their origin and religion has been conceptualised by the Argobbas:

Islam gained access to Ethiopia especially through the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden coastal areas which were remote from any direct and effective control of the Axumite state, and indirectly, through converts from among the nomadic populations of the deserts of the Horn. The earliest contact between Islam and the Ethiopian hinterland was forged by traders from the coast and the nomadic elements of the interior. ... However, the task of establishing Islam firmly and of nurturing Islamic culture and institutions fell on the more enterprising sections of the sedentary communities domiciled in the ecological

zone that marked the transition from the barren lowlands to the fertile plateau. ... This was further intensified by the activities of Muslim traders who were officially tolerated by the Christian state (although they were not allowed the free exercise of their faith), all prepared the ground for the establishment of small trading settlements which also served as centers of diffusion of Islam. (2001, pp. 33–34)

Ahmed (2001, p. 163) emphasised further that after the coronation of Kassa Hailu (Emperor Tewodros) and subsequently Emperor Yohannes (who succeeded Tewodros), actions have been taken to weaken Islam and convert Muslims to Christianity. Based on Muslim cultural traditions, the Argobbas have certain culinary codes relating to food habits and taboos, hearth and home, clothing and body decorations, songs and dances, and birth, marriage and funerary rites that distinguish them from their Christian neighbours (Asfaw 2000, p. 6). As a way of strengthening the Islamic faith, parents encourage children, both boys and girls, to learn the Islamic faith from an early age.

3.5 Social organisation

Age and gender play a pivotal role in determining both the transitions and life trajectories of children and young persons and the division of labour in the hierarchies of social organisation and economic activities of the Argobbas. In this regard, Hailu (2000) observed four major lines of social organisation in Argobba. These include childhood—when the child is engaged in herding or in domestic chores; youth—when the boys start to engage in cultivation while the girls in the house do chores even if they are enrolled in school; adulthood—when they are involved in the management of the family and undertake other tasks in the community as necessary; and old age—when they take a lead role in organising weddings and facilitating mourning, reconciling conflicts that may arise among community members and provide guidance for paying respect to the culture and traditions of the Argobbas. Women are mainly expected to take charge of family responsibilities beyond giving birth, for instance, nurturing children and taking care of domestic chores such as preparation of food,

fetching water, spinning and so on, while men are expected to take charge of tasks related to cultivation, participation in public meetings and weaving cloth, among other things (Hailu 2000, p. 198).

According to Hailu (2000), marriage is arranged largely through parents. Once an agreement is reached between the families, the process preceding the marriage might include the provision of gifts to the girl in a form of a dowry that might include a hair decoration and a necklace made from silver that signifies the girl is engaged. The necklace is made from modified British imperial silver coins containing a portrait of Queen Victoria. Furthermore, gifts are presented to the girl during holidays such as *Id Al Adha* and *Mawlid* holidays. The entire process of the wedding ceremony takes many feast days, eating and drinking before they leave the bride's family house. Upon returning to his parent's home, the bridegroom will stay in a hut constructed with the help of his father and friends. One can easily identify such houses as they display flags of different colours fixed on top of the huts (shown in Figure 5).

Kifleyesus (2006, p. 27) indicated that, as a way of maintaining their traditional cultural fabric, the Argobbas have continued to practise endogamous marriages that emphasise strengthening ethnic and cultural bonds so as to also build a strong basis for succeeding generations. Parents and grandparents provide the most important traditional influences and foundational functions for keeping children as Argobba. However, at the time when I was conducting this study, some of my key informants told me that the Argobbas have started experiencing intermarriage with their neighbouring ethnic groups provided they are Muslim.



Figure 5. A hut built for a bridegroom in the premises of his parent's house.

3.6 Social services

3.6.1 Education

Despite its physical proximity to Dessie, the administrative centre of Debub Wollo Administrative Zone where the first school was established in 1934, the beginnings of modern education in Argobba can only be traced back to the period towards the end of the imperial era. The first school was built in Argobba in 1974 in a locality known as Sidager in Chomiye Kebele (shown in Figure 7). Showing a slow growth over the past four decades, the number of schools in Argobba has now reached 30. Most of the primary schools, which were originally set up as ABE centres, are in a much poorer physical condition where basic facilities are not fulfilled. As most of the villages in Argobba are located on the top of hills (as shown in figures 3 and 10), they are not accessible and conducive for smaller children to commute between their homes and the schools under the inhospitable climatic condition in the area. Table 1 shows the primary schools and number of students by sex in Argobba Woreda during the period 2014 to 2015 and 2016 to 2017.

Table 1. List of primary schools and number of students by sex in Argobba Woreda during the periods 2014–2015 to 2016–2017.

No.	Name of School	2014-2015			2015-2016			2016-17		
		Number of Students						M	F	T
		M	F	T	M	F	T			
1	Aleye	62	42	104	53	38	91	41	31	72
2	Ailite*	153	166	319	149	173	322	178	199	377
3	Amoye Sette*	274	323	597	293	317	610	292	322	614
4	Aselel Seqa	51	60	111	49	58	107	47	56	103
5	Ayenamba				71	61	132	67	51	118
6	Berzegi*	176	147	323	160	128	288	171	140	311
7	Borara	102	57	159	93	62	155	85	70	155
8	Chomiye*	178	195	373	114	140	254	107	138	245
9	Debala	97	68	165	100	82	182	99	74	173
10	Dibe*	327	316	643	322	307	629	330	302	632
11	Erekoye	40	32	72	41	26	67	39	37	76
12	Faris Gora*	75	70	145	114	97	211	114	124	238
13	Fetekoma*	425	389	814	459	387	846	433	367	800
14	Gobera *	272	287	559	186	153	339	220	171	391
15	Hassenie*	167	184	351	273	295	568	294	306	600
16	Jerjera	49	36	85	193	201	394	202	194	396
17	Kara	176	143	319	27	23	50	30	27	57
18	Kasso Mosebit	55	44	99	60	45	105	53	40	93
19	Kelkilo*	285	314	599	282	306	588	280	285	565
20	Kelikelsha*	172	192	364	192	206	398	213	226	439
21	Koto	102	72	174	131	102	233	145	94	239

No.	Name of School	2014-2015			2015-2016			2016-17		
		Number of Students								
		M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
22	Loko*	211	177	388	207	177	384	206	164	370
23	Medina*	77	110	187	87	148	235	97	174	271
24	Murja	141	172	313	156	179	335	168	185	353
25	Senkelie*	270	324	594	310	391	701	384	430	814
26	Setewa*	137	133	270	145	118	263	153	120	273
27	Shehe Ager	63	45	108	66	43	109	57	39	96
28	Shekia*	143	127	270	147	108	255	166	120	286
29	Tebisa*	105	94	199	98	82	180	107	95	202
Total		4,385	4,319	8,704	4,578	4,453	9,031	4,778	4,581	9,359

* Primary schools up to Grade 8. The rest have grades up to Grades 4 of 5. (Source: ANRS Education Bureau 2017)

Most of the schools in the villages where I conducted this research were built using local materials and with the community's participation. Hence, most of these schools do not have basic facilities and do not even fulfil minimum requirements that a school is expected to have. Two of the schools where I did my field research were *general primary schools* and served students enrolled in both the first and second cycle of primary education—that is, from Grades 1 to 4 and from Grades 5 to 8, respectively. The students enrolled in these schools attended from near and distant villages, locally known as *got*. Students were not required to wear uniforms, and most of the boys wore a skirt that is often worn by a male member of the Argobba community. Of the three schools where most of the study participants were drawn, the primary school located in Gobera Kebele and the secondary school in the town of Medina had relatively better physical facilities—for instance, in terms of availability of sufficient classrooms, a library (with very few books) and relatively decent rooms that served as offices for the school principal and staff. The toilets in the primary schools were in a bad condition. As shown in Figure 6, most of the schools had small spaces used as playgrounds for the children. Except during physical education classes, only a few boys were seen playing football and teachers playing volleyball on the dusty fields where I occasionally participated. As the number of students was already low, most of the schools in the area were not overcrowded.

The teachers assigned in Gobera Primary School lived in the small, poorly structured residential quarters built by the community using local materials around the school, while the teachers assigned in Medina Primary School stayed in the town and commuted between their home and school on a daily basis.

As water was scarce in the area, the Woreda Administration Office deployed three donkeys and hired an individual to fetch water from the nearby water point with plastic jerry cans and to distribute it to the teachers. By the time I was completing my fieldwork, the teachers had been left with only one donkey as two had died. In Argobba, there was only one lower secondary school (Grades 9 to 10), which was established in 2014 along with the village of

Medina being selected as the administrative centre of the woreda. It had the potential to grow to Grade 12 in the following years. Before the opening of their high school, students were obliged to move to nearby towns, such as Harbu or Kemissie, to continue their secondary education.



Figure 6. Primary schools in rural areas with an ordinary (left) and improved (right) infrastructures.



Figure 7. Sidager Primary School, the first school in Argobba (est. 1974).

3.6.2 Health services

According to the data obtained from the Department of Health of Dehub Wollo, there are two health centres (Medina and Chira Health Centres) and seven health posts (one in each kebele) in Argobba. There is also one private clinic in the town of Medina. Sufficient numbers of health professionals are not yet assigned in these government health facilities.

Malaria is reported to be a major health problem. The coordinated prevention programmes being undertaken by the federal Ministry of Health are contributing a great deal to reduce the incidence of new infections in the country in general and in Argobba in particular.

One of the major activities that health personnel assigned in the health centres and clinics is to provide preventive health education as well as undertake follow-up and delivery services for pregnant mothers. Of particular relevance to this research, however, is the age determination test that health centres provide to young girls who plan to marry and their opinion about family planning services. The age determination test is due to the continued pressure from government bodies on communities not to marry off their daughters and to promote family planning.

3.6.3 Medina and development of social services

When it was selected by the Amhara Regional State Government to serve as an administrative centre for the Argobba seven years ago, Medina was like any one of the rural villages in the woreda, both in terms of availability of infrastructure and basic services. The regional government has, therefore, allocated resources for setting up different infrastructure and basic services that are necessary for civil servants assigned there to carry out and coordinate the political, economic, social and other affairs of the woreda. The newly established facilities include the Woreda Administration Office, offices of the police, education, finance and health centre, as well as other government sector offices whose structures require branch offices opened at woreda level. Furthermore, the government has provided other services such as electricity and water supply. With the view that the town will become a major urban centre in the future, many Argobbas who lived in the rural areas and other places outside Argobba came back to Medina and set up houses for themselves or to rent to civil servants in need of residential spaces. For those who wish to continue to live in the rural areas, building and renting out houses is considered another way of subsidising household income. This has also created opportunity

for communities residing around Medina to access different social services. According to the data obtained from key informants, individuals who have migrated out of the country and those who have returned are contributing significantly to the construction of new houses in the town. For instance, the area I stayed during my fieldwork was known as *Jeddah Sefer* because individuals who had migrated to Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, owned most of the houses in that neighbourhood. The mosque, built with the financial contributions of the community, at the centre of the town is a landmark that signifies Islam is at the root of the religious belief of the Argobbas. According to the administrator of the town of Medina, the number of residents reached 3,060 in 2018 of whom 1,745 were female and 1,315 were male.

3.7 Context of infrastructure, transport and technology

When the woreda was granted the status of self-administration in 2006, there was no means of transport to access Medina and most of the kebeles within Argobba. Hence, the civil servants assigned in the woreda were based in the town of Harbu and commuting on foot between the towns of Harbu and Medina. People from Argobba were also forced to walk up to Harbu and other towns located in the neighbouring woredas to get transport services to other destinations. Hence, there was no organised public transport service between Argobba and other places within Debub Wollo until a gravel road was constructed in 2009 by the Amhara Rural Road Construction Agency. Following this, public transport services slowly started operation through using medium-sized buses (with a capacity of 24 seats). The buses serve passengers who travel to and from Medina at least once or twice a day. Given the incompatibility between the demand and supply, Isuzu trucks also provided public transport services..They load people and goods together and could carry as many people as the truck was able to accommodate. It takes up to 90 minutes for buses and up to three hours for trucks to travel from Harbu to Medina, and vice versa. The price was about 30 Ethiopian Birr (equivalent to 1 British pound) for a single journey from either Medina or Harbu.

More recently, *bajaj* (a motorised rickshaw with a capacity to carry three individuals) provided transport services between the town of Medina and surrounding rural kebeles where paved roads were available, including Gobera, one of my research sites located some 12 kilometres south of Medina. At the time of writing, some roads had been paved to connect Medina to the rest of the rural kebeles, although they were not to a standard to be used during the rainy seasons. Such improvements have made the transportation of consumer goods and items to the markets easier for rural communities, although camels and donkeys are still widely used in most parts of the woreda. Improvements in transport and the creation of access between the kebeles within Argobba and the neighbouring woredas have also facilitated the possibilities of migration for children and young people from Argobba.

Only two villages in rural kebeles and the town of Medina had access to electricity services. Like many urban centres in the country, some features of globalisation is becoming visible in Argobba. The wide use of mobile phones made communication easy between communities, although the network covering the area was poor. This enabled migrants residing abroad to obtain timely information about their families and for farmers to have an update on existing market prices, enabling them to sell animals or other items by bypassing the middle person. Children and young people watched Premier League football matches and had acquired mobile phones for use in their day-to-day lives. Many households had satellite receivers, with access to current affairs and movies; the popular ones being a TV channel that broadcast movies and film series in the Amharic language. Internet services are limited to a few government offices in the town of Medina. Hence, children's and young person's use of the Internet and its negative impact is not yet visible at this stage in Argobba. The local government and members of the community had recently taken up an initiative to set up a community radio station in the town of Medina.

In general, recent developments in transport and communication, and improvements in infrastructure and basic services, have reduced the level of remoteness of Argobba within a period of about one decade.

3.8 Administrative structure and political context

To situate the area where I conducted this research within the context of the regional and zonal administrative structures, I first highlight the geohistorical, cultural and socioeconomic features of Debub Wollo Administrative Zone within which the Argobba Nationality or ‘Liyu’ Woreda is located. Debub Wollo Administrative Zone is located in the north-eastern part of Ethiopia and part of what was known as Wollo province during the imperial period. It was later divided into two—Semien⁹ and Debub Wollo—during the military regime. Six different ethnic groups share a common history, culture, economic relationships and natural resources in the zone: the Amhara, Oromo, Agew, Afar, Argobba and Tigraway (Adal 2009 [EC]¹⁰, p. 193). Due to its strategic position in the north-south axis of the country, Wollo province has served as a natural route for population movements and military conquests, as well as a line of retreat for regional and imperial troops (Ahmed 2001, p. 2).

With an estimated population of about 39,112 in 2015 (ANRS 2014), Argobba Liyu Woreda is one of the woredas in Debub Wollo that has recently obtained the privilege of self-administration based on the change in government that adopted an ethnic federalism. According to the proclamation issued by the State Council of the Amhara region (Proclamation No. 130/2006), the Argobba Nationality Woreda was established with an aim of ‘recognizing the identity of members of the nationality and to preserve the culture, tradition, language and history of the ethnic group’ (ANRS 2006, p. 135). Other factors considered as justification for the establishment of the Liyu or Nationality Woreda include the necessity to create a conducive condition that promotes the social and economic development of the Argobbas based on the fact that they reside uniformly in the area. The kebeles that form the Argobba woreda include Fetekoma, Arera Nechero, Chomiye, Emuyeserte, Kilkilo, Yasene-Ager and

⁹ *Semien* is the Amharic equivalent to ‘north’ in English.

¹⁰ EC means Ethiopian calendar (the Ethiopian calendar follows the Julian calendar and is seven years behind the Gregorian calendar).

Gobera. For administrative purposes, the kebeles that formed the woreda were later restructured and raised the number of the kebeles to eight. Furthermore, Article 7 of the proclamation provides for recognising the villages of Shonke and Teleha as cultural centres of the Argobba language, culture and history of the ethnic group as is reflected in the artefacts that exist in the area. The proclamation provides that the woreda could determine the location of the administrative centre and the working language to be used by the woreda. Accordingly, Amharic is currently used as a medium of instruction in schools and as a working language in government offices in Argobba. The term *Liyu* or *Nationality Woreda* signifies an administrative unit that has the status of 'self-administration', whereas *woreda* normally means one of the lowest government administrative units in the country. I use *Liyu* and *Nationality Woreda* interchangeably throughout this thesis.

Figure 8 shows the geographical location of Ethiopia and the Amhara National Regional State while Figure 9 shows the woredas in Debub Wollo Administrative Zone as well as the Kebeles within Argobba Woreda.

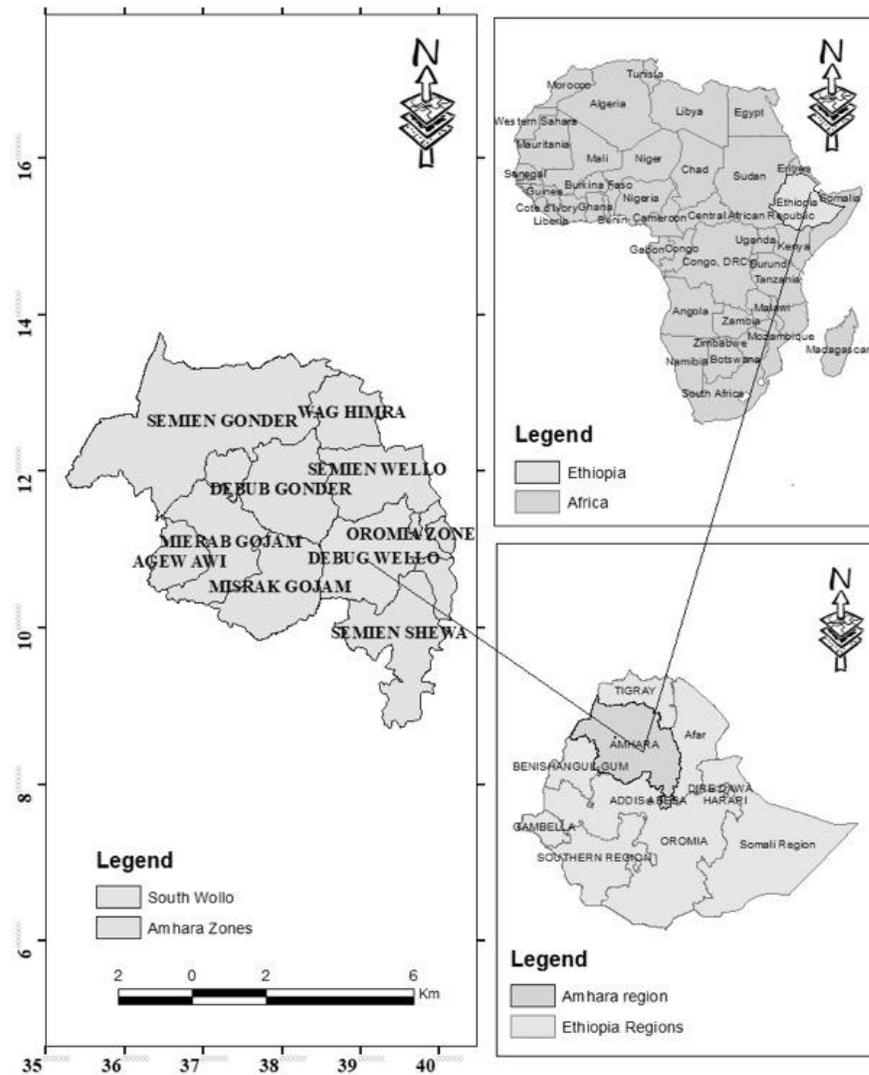


Figure 8. Map of Ethiopia and the Amhara Regional State.

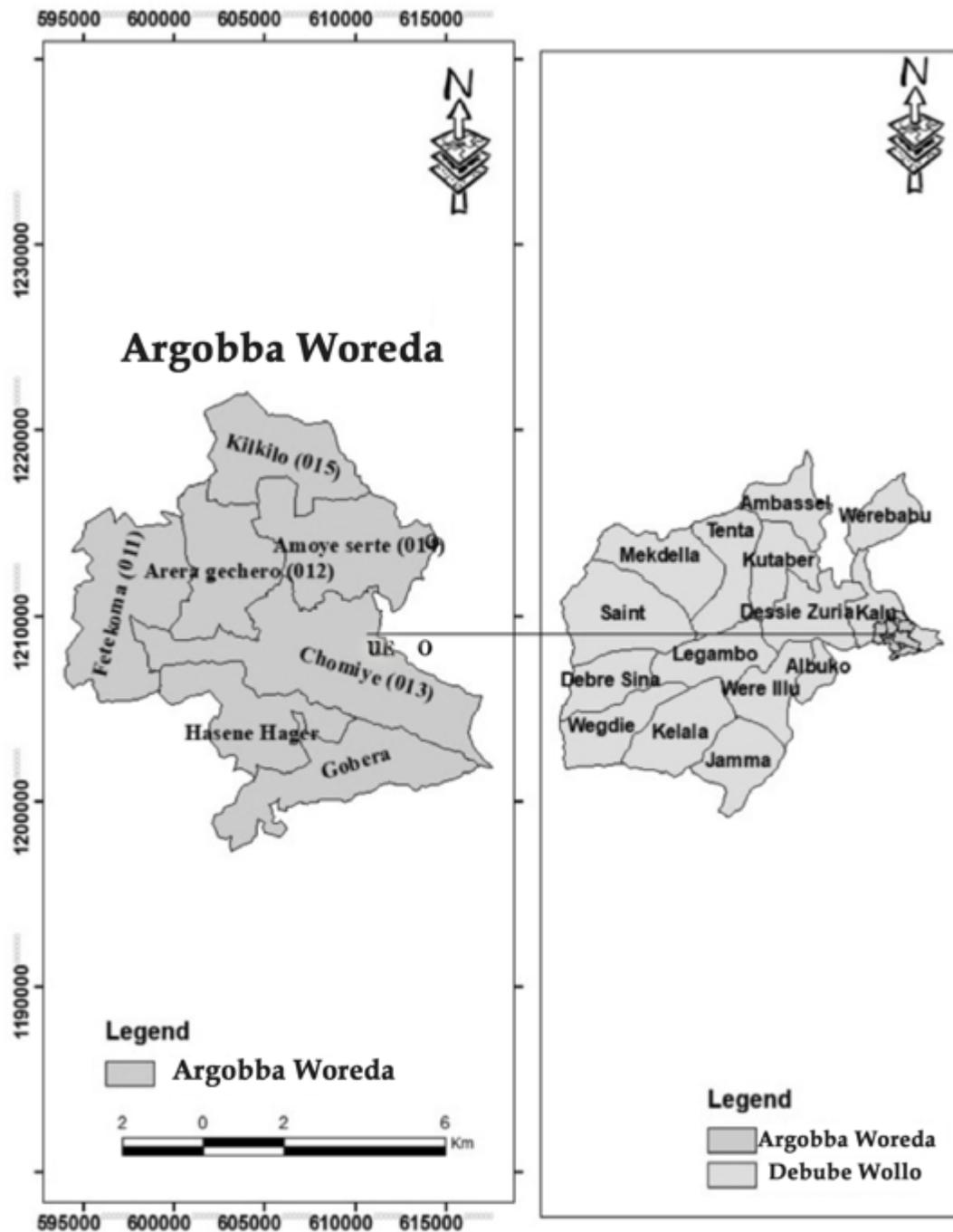


Figure 9. Map of Argobba Woreda.

Like many other rural communities across the country, changes are being observed in the emergence and development of urban areas and increased sense of urbanisation and the establishment of closer ties between the rural and urban communities in Argobba. This is similar to the findings of other studies that have documented changes in rural communities in other parts of the country. For instance, a longitudinal study following 20 communities over 25 years in four regional states in Ethiopia has documented an increased urbanisation of the rural areas and establishment of closer economic and social linkages between the rural and urban communities. This has, in turn, made it necessary to diversify rural means of livelihood beyond farming (Pankhurst and Dom 2018, p. 20)—for instance, trading and migration. In line with other studies, the research showed that in the context of modernising agriculture, shrinking per capita agricultural land, urbanising rural areas and broader economic transformation, farming is no longer the main source of subsistence and economic growth for many rural households and individuals (Gashaw 2018, p. 79).

3.10 Study sites

I chose to conduct my study in three different locations in Argobba, two of which were rural villages and the third one was the emerging town of Medina. The rural sites were relatively remote and homogeneous both ethnically and religiously. As a way of building rapport and becoming acquainted with the leaders of the respective communities, I made several visits to the villages before I started my study. Starting my fieldwork and conducting interviews with both children and adult groups took some time, as I had to wait until members of the community harvested their crops and had time to spare for me. However, my repeated visits to the villages created opportunity for me to identify prospective participants for the study in both the children and adult groups.

The village of Afesso, one of the rural study sites, is situated on a hilltop, representing a typical settlement pattern of an Argobba community. Backing onto the arid plains of the Afar, Afesso (Figure 10) overlooks the town of Medina

and the beautiful landscape and valleys where they both graze their camels and animals and get water for humans and household consumption. Afesso is one of the nine villages or *got* (sub-unit of the kebele) where this research was conducted. To reach the homesteads located at the top of the hill required covering a six-kilometre journey from Medina and walking up the hill for about 30 minutes along a difficult footpath filled with stones that have piled up due to erosion over a long period. The names of the villages and schools in the locality are shown in Table 2.

. **Table 2.** Names of the villages or *got* and the schools in Chomiye Kebele.

Village/Got	Name and Location of School	Grade Level
Village 1	Chomiye (Sidager)	1–8
Village 2	Aselel Seka	1–8
Village 3	Tebisa	
Village 4	Abriye	
Village 5	Me-eti	1–4
Village 6	Ayn-amba	1–4
Village 7	Medina	1–8
Village 8	Afesso	1–8
Village 9	Mutside	1–4
Village 10	Mewlide	ABE

Note. ABE = Alternative Basic Education centre

The second site where I undertook my study was the village of Gobera. Gobera is located some 12 kilometres south of the town of Medina and off the main road that connects Medina to Harbu, a major town located along the Addis Ababa–Dessie highway. The village had nine *gots* distributed across the kebele. Because Gobera is located adjacent to the Oromo Nationality Zone, the language and traditions of the community are strongly influenced by the neighbouring Oromo ethnic group.

There were 19 schools of different levels, including the satellite schools, which served children in the community. The satellite schools were meant to serve small children in the community who could not walk longer distances to reach the nearest primary school. Table 3 presents names of the *got* sub-villages and schools.

Table 3. Names of the *got* sub-villages and grade level of schools in Gobera Kebele.

Village/Got	Name and Location of School	Grade Level
Village 1	Bote, Hermata, Hatura	ABE
Village 2	Saloye, Aygebir	1–4
Village 3	Haboye, Haro, Kurbi	1–4 and ABE
Village 4	Gobera	1–8
Village 5	Sedeta, Kelkelsha	1–8
Village 6	Wachu, Kenbet	1–4
Village 7	Haroye, Agobdi	1–3 and ABE
Village 8	Kole, Bele, Alisho	1–4 and ABE
Village 9	Esoye	1–8

Note. ABE = Alternative Basic Education centre.

Having my base at the premises of the local kebele administration, I was able to gather observational data and access my study’s participants within the context of their day-to-day activities—that is, at work, in and out of school and so on. Other facilities were set up around the kebele administration include a clinic, school and a satellite police station.



Figure 10. Homestead on a hilltop in the village of Afesso.

3.11 Conclusion

This chapter highlighted the historical background of the Argobba community and the geophysical, administrative and political features that have contributed to the emergence of the Argobba Liyu Woreda. As discussed in the chapter, since the introduction of ethnic federalism in Ethiopia, the issue of ethnic identity has taken centre stage. Despite the presumption that the origin of the Argobbas can be traced to the Arabs, studies indicate that they are among Semitic-speaking people, like that of the Amhara, Gurages and Harari who moved south during the Axumite era and characterised by migrations to different parts of the country over the past centuries. As suggested by Kifleyesus (2006), the historical and exclusiveness of their settlement patterns as well as their religion are believed to have created a strong sense of identity and social cohesion among the Argobbas (p. 5). Like other communities in rural parts of the country, children and young people in Argobba have better access to social services and benefit from not only urban rural linkages but also certain aspects of globalisation in that they are better connected to communities in other regions both within and outside the country through the growing influences of

urbanisation, improved means of transport and communication and migration. Although the recent political changes and the coming to power of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed put an end to 27 years of rule by the EPRDF-led government, conflicts incited along ethnic lines have caused the displacement of millions of people in different parts of the country. Most recently, a state of emergency was declared to control such conflicts in the Southern Nations regional state. Nonetheless, major problems have not manifested between the Argobbas and their neighbouring ethnic groups. Given the recent ongoing trouble—for instance, the failed coup attempt in June 2019 and continuing, and perhaps rising, tensions between different ethnic groups—one cannot tell whether things will remain as they are in Argobba, too.

In the following chapter (Chapter 4) I will show the research design, methodology and methods employed in the study. The chapter discusses the special emphasis made on gathering data from children and the methods that pay due ethical and methodological considerations while doing research with children.

Chapter 4.

Research Design, Methodology and Methods

4.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the research design, methodology and methods employed in undertaking the research. As I largely designed the research to obtain the perspectives of children, it is useful to briefly present the underlying principles adopted to encourage children's active participation and steps taken to ensure their safety before, during and after the completion of the fieldwork at this earlier stage. Along with presenting the methodology and the methods of data collection and analysis, the chapter also describes the ontological assumptions and the epistemological approaches used in the study.

This research employed a 'child-centred' and participatory approach that treats children as competent informants in the research process and for obtaining knowledge of children's experiences in ways that would not have been possible using 'adult-centred' mainstream social research techniques, such as formal questionnaires or in-depth interviews (James and Prout 1990; Morrow 2008; Johnson 2010; Johnson et al. 2014). Punch (2002), for instance, advised that potentially, research with children is different from doing research with adults not only because of adult perceptions of children and children's marginalised position in adult society, but often because children are inherently different. I, therefore, employed innovative data-gathering methods to make children more comfortable and maximise their participation in group exercises and small-group interviews (p. 321). This was particularly important as the study was undertaken among communities where the voices of children have not

been given due attention in the past and in light of the rapid social and political changes that were taking place among the Argobba communities at the time of writing.

Following Tisdall and Punch (2012), who suggested that listening to children's views and valuing their voices should not be oversimplified and need not be considered a simple task in practical terms, I made the necessary preparations to address the ethical issues that were necessary for undertaking studies with children. These include issues related to access, obtaining the consent of both gatekeepers and children, building rapport, selecting appropriate venues for undertaking small-group discussions and in-depth interviews with selected children, and gender sensitiveness while conducting discussions with women's groups. Before undertaking the small-group discussions and individual interviews, however, I had informal discussions with the children as a way of laying the basis for making them comfortable and building rapport for the discussions that were subsequently going to take place. Before conducting the task of interviewing the children, for instance, I had spontaneous discussions with the children leading up to conversations about the subject I was interested in. By considering children as competent persons, as suggested by Clark and Moss (2011 p. 5), the study adopted a mosaic approach to gather their perspectives by listening to their voices and through employing a participatory method.

Before launching the research, I obtained ethical approval from the CREC at the University of Brighton. Furthermore, based on the guidelines issued by the Ethiopian Government's Ministry of Science and Technology, I obtained ethical approval from Bahir Dar University in Ethiopia. I also approached and presented the objectives of the study to leaders of relevant government institutions at zonal and woreda level, who in turn connected me to the leaders of the kebeles where the villages and schools that I planned to undertake the study were located. As locations of the research sites are recognisable, children's identities are anonymised. Throughout the research process, I strictly observed the ethical processes outlined in my research proposal and took

seriously considerations about the context and social cultural values prevailing in the study area. I present the steps followed before interviewing the children in detail in section 4.4.2 of this chapter.

4.2 Research design and methodology

Following relativist ontology, that realities are constructed through meanings and understandings that are developed socially and experientially, and subjectivist epistemology, which argues that knowledge is built as a result of the researcher's engagement with the study's participants rather than discovered, this study adopted a philosophical principle of constructionism (Creswell and Poth 2018; Crotty 1998; Lincoln and Guba 1994; Stake 1995).

Burr (2015) suggested that social constructionism is a theoretical orientation characterised by the critical stance that we take towards our taken-for-granted ways of understanding the world and that of ourselves, and argues that the ways we commonly understand the world and the categories and concepts we use are historically and culturally specific (pp. 3–4). Giving an example of how the notion of childhood has undergone tremendous change over the centuries, Burr argued that from the social constructionist position, our understanding and knowledge about a phenomenon is constructed through interactions that people make among them and in the course of social life (p. 4). The most important insight of constructivism is its focus on social processes and addresses the 'how' question in the construction of knowledge in that facts are socially constructed in particular contexts (Silverman 2017, p. 138). Holstein (2018), on the other hand, emphasises how people actively construct their experiences and their world through configuration of meaning and in shaping social reality (p. 396).

Flick (2004) further outlined,

our access to the world of experience—the natural and social environment and the experiences and activities it contains—operates through the concepts constructed by the perceiving subject and the

knowledge deriving from these. These are then used to interpret experiences, or to understand and attribute meanings. (p. 90)

Drawing on the work of sociologists Peter Berger and Thomas Luckman who developed the concept of constructionism in their book *The Social Construction of Reality*, James and James (2008) argued,

The taken-for-granted 'reality' of everyday life arises through the interactions which people have with one another and with the environments in which they live, including both the cultural and natural, material world. This process accounts not only for the different 'realities' which people in different parts of the world experience but also for the differences within any one society. (p. 122)

James and James (2008) further emphasised the immense importance of the social constructivist theoretical perspective in childhood studies in that ideas about how the different expectations, roles and capabilities of children in the majority global south and the types of activities that children are allowed to engage in the industrialised countries are negotiated and constructed through the everyday interactions of people in society, unlike the unitary idea of childhood stipulated in the UNCRC (1989, p. 123).

Guided by principles of the social study of childhood that assume the children's perspectives are not the same as adults', this study explored how childhood is constructed and actively shaped by the social environment in which children grow up and how their roles in households and their communities are influenced by the changing socioeconomic and political circumstances and as a consequence of globalisation. Furthermore, the study explored how children and young people demonstrated their agency in challenging adults' 'imagined communities' (Anderson 1983), that were often directed towards the past, and how they constructed their future through re-imagining their transitions into adulthood through migration and education.

Fitting with my constructivist position and with the aim of gathering data that described children's perspectives, I used a qualitative research methodology in this research. A number of researchers have promoted qualitative research methodology in social research practice as it allows the researcher to generate rich data about the lived experiences of children and to explore the linkages between the different aspects of their lives (Creswell and Poth 2018). Emphasising the strength that could be derived from employing a qualitative research method in social research data, Maxwell (2005) noted,

Qualitative research helps to an understanding of how participants of the research are drawing meanings from and the context that may have an influence over their behaviour or action in a certain way. ... It will further allow flexibility to modify the design and focus of the study as some of the issues might not stay as it was anticipated until such a time that the gathering of data is well in progress. (pp. 22–25)

With the aim of generating valuable data that reflected and represented children's voices more directly and ensuring their active participation in co-constructing how they were growing up, as suggested by Thomas (2002) and James and Prout (1990), the study employed an ethnographic method as a useful means to document children's experiences and to illuminate what growing up as a child meant among the Argobba community at that time. Other scholars have also emphasised the advantages to be drawn from using an ethnographic approach in that it provides an opportunity to gain access to the multiple perspectives of study participants over time. Furthermore, it allows observation of the changing circumstances of children's transitions and how these were negotiated and legitimised by parents and others in their communities. Strengthening this point of view, Buscatto (2018) suggested that employing an ethnographic approach in research has comparative advantage over conventional methods of data collection such as interviews and questionnaires in that it gives access to people's practices that might be hidden or considered to be taboo (pp. 327–28).

I positioned myself in the field and stayed for a period of 10 months. Having my base in the town of Medina, I spent much of my time in the villages where the participants of my study lived. This gave me the opportunity to ask children, parents, key informants and other members of the community about the issues in my research questions and to participate in the day-to-day lives of the community.

During the period of my fieldwork, I attempted to be reflexive and not influenced by my previous assumptions and preconceptions about doing research in a predominantly Muslim community and as an adult doing research with children. While recognizing the fact that I cannot be neutral, or objective, or detached from the facts that I am trying to generate and my own subjectivities, as suggested by Buscatto (2018, p. 332) and Stephens (2009), I took care in balancing the level of my involvement and detachment from the study participants while observing and participating in their day-to-day lives.

4.3 Identification of study participants

Identifying study participants was made possible through the initial contacts that I established with key figures and knowledgeable individuals about the culture, traditions and religious beliefs of the Argobbas. Building such relationships helped me to build rapport on a step-by-step basis and get to know who the key figures in the community were. These included individuals who had worked to document the history and language of the Argobbas, teachers and influential figures knowledgeable about social, religious and cultural practices of the Argobba community and who had lived in the area for at least five years. This in turn paved the way to start informal discussions about the aims and objectives of my study, familiarise myself with members of the community and to walk through the villages where I intended to generate data for addressing my research questions.

Once I had managed to build rapport and identify some of the potential participants of my study, as suggested by Blaikie (2010, p. 179), I used a snowball approach and natural social networks such as friendships to identify

other children and adults. I was able to select 64 children (34 girls and 30 boys) from within and outside schools in the three locations where I conducted the study. I selected the children from three age groups. The first were the younger group that consisted of children who were between the ages of 8 to 10 years, while the middle group included those aged between 11 to 15 years. The older group included children aged between 16 and 18 years. Although there was no strict set of inclusion criteria, for children over the age of 16, I made preference towards children who had come from households with a recent history of a migrant child or other family member. Following the same approach used for the selection of children, I selected 30 adults (11 women and 19 men) to take part in the small-group interviews and in-depth interviews I conducted at a later stage. Participants who constituted the adult group included parents, teachers, key figures and elders. Having conducted all the small-group interviews, I purposefully selected six children and their parents for further in-depth interviews.

4.4 Sources of data and methods of data collection

4.4.1 Document review

Quite often, documents serve as substitutes for records of activities that the researcher could not observe directly (Stake 1995). In this study, a review of documents refers to policy documents, declarations, relevant laws, guidelines and action plans issued by the government concerning children. These include, for instance, a review of the proclamation for the establishment of the Argobba Nationality Woreda, the Ethiopian Constitution, the National Children's Policy (2017) and the ESDP (FDRE-MoE 2015). Other documents included data held in schools and government offices regarding students' records on school enrolment and dropout, evaluation and accomplishment reports on school performance and minutes of meetings conducted by school management and PTAs. Furthermore, I reviewed statistical reports issued by government offices that were relevant to the study. I obtained access to the documents through

approaching the relevant agencies and the support letter I obtained from South Wollo Zone and Argobba Liyu Woreda Administration Offices.

4.4.2 Interviews

Barbour (2018) suggested interviews could be described as ‘conversations with a purpose’ (p. 222). Apart from the knowledge that is going to be constructed, conducting interviews has the advantage of capturing non-verbal elements of the interview process that can be added to the interviewee’s verbal responses, creating a better understanding of how participants interpret and construct meaning on the topics being discussed (Brinkman and Kvale 2015; Denzin 2014; Oltmann 2016; Opdenakker 2006; Silverman 2017). Bogdan and Biklen (2003) recommended conducting interviews has an advantage in that it allows considerable space for shaping the interview’s content during the interview, depending on what is going to be revealed as the discussion progresses and based on the context. As suggested by Roulston and Choi (2018), I made appropriate preparations in the interview’s design and conduct—for instance, in the formulation of interview guides that allowed flexibility and rendered respect for interviewees to encourage them to tell their stories (p. 240).

The aim of using interviews in this research was to build an understanding of how children and young persons demonstrated their agency in challenging adults’ imagined communities and in constructing their futures through re-imagining their future through migration and education. In this regard, the study assessed perceptions and practices of children and adults about education and migration in light of the changing circumstances in the socioeconomic conditions of the Argobba community and examined the increased influences of forces of globalisation and the political landscape both at a national level and in the context of the Argobba Liyu Woreda.

During the fieldwork, I conducted interviews with different groups of participants including children, parents/adults and key informants drawn from the community, government and civil society organisations. There were variations, however, in the form and mode of presentation of the questions and

the discussions with children and adults. I present the different forms of interviews I employed in the study in detail in the following sections.

Key informant Interviews

Bernard (2006, p. 196) recommended that good informants are people whom one can talk to easily, who understand the information needed and who are willing to give it. Furthermore, conducting an interview helps the researcher to learn more about the perspectives of participants of the study and to construct knowledge through uncovering their life worlds (Brinkman and Kvale 2015; Rubin and Rubin 2012).

I purposefully selected the key informants for this study from elders and influential members of the community, and individuals holding key government positions at zonal and local government levels, with special focus on the Department and Office of Education, the Department and Office of Women, Children and Youth, and the Department and Office of Labour and Social Affairs; academics; and individuals from civil society organisations who had experience of working with children. I also used my recently established contact with some of the residents of the town of Medina to select key informants from the community. I conducted interviews with some of the key informants before the small-group interviews with children and adults, which, in turn, helped me to take the necessary precautions not to raise culturally sensitive questions.

Once I identified the key informants and obtained their consent, I provided them with a copy of the participation information sheet (PIS) (see Appendix 1) and gave them time to read through and decide whether they would like to participate in the study. Some practical issues, such as scheduling appointments and arranging venues, were taken care of prior to the start of an interview session. I also sought consent from participants to record their voices. Depending on situations where I believed participants might not be open to provide the desired information, I did not use the voice recorder. Although I recorded the interviews, I also took verbatim notes during the interview to record interviewees' responses.

Conducting interviews with key informants was useful in providing me the opportunity to interact with research participants face-to-face and for gaining an in-depth understanding and interpretation of how they conceptualised childhood, children's education and migration, as well as the changes that had been brought about in the lives of communities due to political and socioeconomic changes and globalisation.

I also asked key informants what signs of change in children's agency and the changing landscape of intergenerational relations there were, if any. Before ending an interview, I summarised the issues discussed and thanked the interviewee, with a request for follow-up information, if needed.

Small-group interviews

Among the different data-gathering techniques, social science researchers are increasingly using small-group interviews or *focus groups* as a method of data collection. Morgan (1996, p. 134), for instance, considered focus groups as research techniques that help to collect data through group interaction, often in conjunction with other methods of qualitative research, such as interviews or surveys, that would provide an opportunity for the researcher to obtain reactions from a relatively wide range of participants in a relatively shorter period of time. Wilkinson (2004, p. 177) suggested that focus groups are beneficial as they essentially involve a smaller number of people in an informal group discussion (or discussions) focused on a particular topic or set of issues. Hence, using focus groups as a data-gathering tool is believed to yield valuable information by creating a group dynamic from participants' spontaneous responses or opinions even if others in the group do not share those opinions (Duggleby 2005; Krueger 2009; Litosseliti 2003; Morgan 1988). It is therefore assumed that people can participate more actively in a discussion when their ideas and assumptions are being confronted with contrary views (Millward 2007). Although there are arguments among some researchers that sensitive topics might influence the level of engagement and sharing of views because of the presence of others in the groups (Morgan 1997), such group discussions are

believed to be instrumental in obtaining participants' perceptions on topics of relevance in a non-threatening way where participants feel comfortable and free to give their opinion without being judged (Krueger 2009, pp. 2–4).

Size and composition of groups

There is little consensus among researchers concerning the number of participants in a focus group. Morgan and Hoffman (2017) suggested that from a moderator stance, smaller groups are easier to manage. Carey (1994), on the other hand, reinforced the view that the fewer people in the group, the greater the likelihood they will interact, and reiterated the ease with which moderators can manage and attend to a smaller group. In this regard, some authors advise that the number of participants in a group should be between six and 10 individuals (Howard et al. 1989), four and eight (Kitzinger 1996) or five and eight (Krueger 2015). In general, it is recommended that the group should not be so large as to compromise the level of participation by most members, and nor should it be so small that it fails to yield the necessary data from the participants (Litosseliti 2003; Merton et al. 1990).

Concerning the composition of participants, Carey (1994) recommended that focus group participants should be homogeneous in terms of age, status, class, occupation and other characteristics as a way of ensuring better interaction among participants. However, Fern (1982) advised that there are only slight differences when comparing homogeneous and non-homogeneous groups, and did not suggest maintenance of homogeneity is necessary. Krueger (2015), on the other hand, suggested that the group's purpose should dictate the degree of homogeneity and heterogeneity in that exploratory research should use heterogeneous groups as they may produce rich information.

To allow better interaction among participants of the group interviews in this study, I organised separate focus groups for girls and boys and for men and women. In each group, there were five to seven participants.

Small-group interviews with children and adults

Bearing in mind the inevitable differences that exist between children (as research participants) and the researcher (an adult), small-group interviews have the advantage of reducing the power imbalance between the two (Johnson et al. 2014). The fact that children are with their peers means they may not feel obliged to answer in ways that an adult wants, and this facilitates building confidence for not responding to the researcher alone (Johnson et al. 2014, p. 38; Laws et al. 2003). It is also believed to address the threat to the validity of findings, which has long been questioned by many researchers (Atkinson 2007).

I grouped children based on age and sex—that is, age 8 to 10, 11 to 15 and 16 to 18. The categories were influenced by my own thoughts and experience of working with children so that participants would feel comfortable when they were with more or less similarly aged children. While conducting the small-group discussions with children, as suggested by Morrow (2008) and Johnson et al. (2014), I employed participatory and innovative approaches, such as drawings and photographs, for probing and facilitating discussions and encouraged children to work in groups while listing items and their opinions on flip charts. I used my previous skills in facilitating interviews with children, employing techniques such as sitting on the floor with the children to narrow the sense of power imbalance between the children and me (an adult researcher) during group discussions. Before undertaking each activity, I informed the children about the purpose of the research and took them through the PIS (Appendix 1) to outline the major issues related to the research. I also informed them that I would answer any questions they had. I constantly took stock of children's actions and reactions during the course of the small-group discussions.

Although there is no general 'rule of thumb' as to the optimal number of focus groups (Stewart and Shamdasani 2015) to be conducted over a certain topic, I held eight small-group discussions with the children and five with the adults. These were largely determined, as suggested by Krueger (2015) and

Morgan and Hoffman (2017), considering data saturation, as the collection of more data would have no additional worth in conducting subsequent group discussions.

Open-ended interview schedules and guide questions were prepared ahead of the fieldwork and pilot tested with children and adults (see Appendices 5 to 7) in another woreda that had a similar context to Argobba. My experience of working with children and communities helped me to develop questions that were relevant to my research questions and to sequence them in an orderly manner to encourage participation. Each session started by taking participants through the questions that were simple, clear and understandable, followed by key questions that evoked discussion for obtaining a detailed understanding of participants' perceptions. Issues covered included childhood, intergenerational relations, education, migration and other issues related to changes in the cultural values or traditions of the Argobbas that had come about as a consequence of socioeconomic and political changes. Also included in the discussions were the extent to which improved transport and communication services, and the prevailing trend of children's migration from Argobba, had brought about any impact on the lives of children and households in Argobba. As suggested by Carter et al. (2008), Silverman (2014, 2017) and Braun and Clark (2006, 2013), I took the necessary care to ensure that questions would not be emotionally intense and distressful and encouraged participants to tell their stories through emphasising the advantages of sharing their experiences. At the beginning of each small-group interview held with adults, ground rules were set, such as paying respect to the opinions of others that may be different from theirs; all points of views were welcome and there were no right or wrong answers. This helped to ensure active participation such that participants established a sense of freedom and mutual understanding among themselves. I answered questions from participants at the beginning and during the course of the group discussions. Before the conclusion of each small-group session, I thanked participants and presented a brief summary of the major points discussed to check if they reflected their views and to check if I had omitted

anything. The interview guides that were translated into Amharic for use in the research are shown in the Appendix of this thesis (See Appendix 8-13).

In-depth interviews and follow-up with selected participants

In-depth interviews are among the key types of methods used in qualitative research (Lincoln and Guba 1994, Wolgemuth et al. 2015). Following the small-group interviews conducted with children and adults, I selected six children and households for further follow-up and in-depth interviews. The aim of these interviews was to generate data that would contribute to the overarching objective of this research and obtain breadth and depth about how children and young people challenged adults' imagined communities through reconstructing or reimagining their futures through migration and education. This also helped me to explore the existence of changing intergenerational relations over time and the broad social, cultural and historical contexts that underpinned the perceptions held about education and migration by children and young people, families and the communities in the study area at large.

4.4.3 Observational data

Observation is a useful tool for collecting data in qualitative research and to capture what people do—as distinct from what they say they do—and can generate data that then forms the basis for discussion with those observed (Atkinson 2007; Denzin 2014; Creswell and Poth 2018). Laws et al. (2003) also noted that observation enables us to look afresh at everyday behaviour that otherwise might be taken for granted, expected or go unnoticed. For social scientists, observation is typically aimed at gathering data on the everyday lives of groups and people to come up with written accounts of their interactions (Wästerfors 2018, p. 314). Hence, it requires being in the setting and taking note of interactions and processes, performances and routines, riddles and ambiguities that we cannot figure out at the desk (p. 315). Observation is most often undertaken through participating in the day-to-day lives of the people in which the researcher is immersed and observes participants observing and

interpreting the meaning of behaviour and the interactions among members of the group under study (Creswell and Poth 2018, p. 90).

I conducted observations from an observer-as-participant stance and did not attempt to present myself as someone who had been fully immersed into the day-to-day lives of the community or a complete stranger who is only there to observe what people are doing. By holding a middle-ground position between participant and non-participant observer and having disclosed my role as researcher, as suggested by Creswell and Poth (2018, p. 172), I came to the point where my presence would not create any embarrassment or a sense of being a stranger.

Because I spent a long period of time with the study participants (about 10 months), using observation as a data-gathering tool helped me to add depth to my understanding of the prevailing intergenerational relations, children's time use and their relations with peers, siblings and other members of the community, and to triangulate the data that I had gathered from the small-group and in-depth interviews. As the observations had taken place within the environments where the study participants lived, this helped me to explore children's situations within the context of home, school and work, and examine the interface between what adults said and did—for instance, about their children's education and the amount of time that children spent in play, study and in handling household chores.

My entry into the observational scene was built over a period of time and in an informal way and took the form of an ethnographical study through which I slowly became part of people's day-to-day lives—for instance, by taking part in the traditional coffee ceremony at which members of the family and neighbours gather during their leisure time. This is a common practice among many households in Ethiopia and members of the community in the study area. During these coffee ceremonies, people would exchange ideas and share opinions on a number of issues concerning the family, crops, their children's behaviour and a range of social, economic and at times political matters. I sometimes

accompanied children and, at times, adults during their work in the fields. My participation in their day-to-day lives gave me an opportunity to observe the existence of supportive as well as unfavourable conditions that may facilitate, hamper or influence children's education and migration in the study area. At all times, I paid due attention to power dynamics and child protection issues by not being alone with children and strictly observing the Child Protection Policy of CHADET (see Appendix 1).

Beyond making inferences from what people said and did, the observations helped me to obtain a better understanding of the physical, social and cultural norms and other contexts under which the participants of the study lived and worked in their day-to-day lives and within their home environments and to understand influences on their behaviour and actions. The sites where I often made observations were the village pathways to the stream where children fetched water, little open spaces where children played, farming plots and grazing grounds. Travelling back and forth between the town of Medina and the villages where I conducted my field research, and going to the local open market to buy foodstuffs for myself, also contributed to becoming acquainted with members of the community and as a learning platform for me in seeing the interactions and transactions taking place between communities with different cultural backgrounds from the neighbouring woredas in Afar and Amhara regional states.

4.5 Recording of data

I recorded data by different methods. These included keeping field notes, which was an ongoing activity throughout the course of the study, and audio recording of individual and small-group interviews.

The pilot interview showed me that I was unable to keep field notes and simultaneously facilitate the small-group interviews, as this required following the flow of discussion and asking questions for purposes of clarification or explanation as necessary. I therefore used a digital audio recorder, downloaded the recordings to my computer soon after each group interview session and sent

them via email to myself as a back-up. I did not record data while observing but wrote extensive field notes after I left the observational scene. Conducting observations helped me to gain an insider's view and led me to make further and more focused observations.

After returning from each observation, interview or other research session, I wrote up what had happened through describing the people I met or interviewed, the places I had been and the events and activities that took place during my interactions and conversations with people and participants of the research. In addition, as part of such notes, I recorded ideas and reflections on what I have observed.

4.6 Venues

I conducted the key informant interviews in the offices of the individuals selected for the interview. I sought permission from local schools to let me use vacant classrooms and/or spaces for conducting small-group discussions with children. Hence, I used spaces within school facilities at times when the classrooms were unoccupied and at places where they chose to freely express their views. I conducted the in-depth interviews with children on school premises as a way to build their confidence in responding to my questions in an environment they were familiar with and to avoid interference from parents by being present at the scene. During the interview sessions, with the help of my field assistant, I made sure that their peers or passers-by did not overhear what the interviewees said. I also made sure that others could see me during the interview session and left doors open when I was using the classrooms. I also took all necessary measures and precautions to safeguard both my own safety and the safety of research participants. This helped me to avoid concerns around issues related to child protection and for ensuring transparency and openness to others during the course of the interviews.

I conducted the small-group discussions with adults at places in open and public spaces, such as where members of the communities sat during their leisure time, and during times that were convenient to participants. These

places were quiet and free from interruptions so that participants were not distracted by other things occurring around them.

4.7 Data analysis

Data analysis is the process of making sense and meaning of data. This involves consolidating and interpreting what people have said and what the researcher has seen and read (Merriam 2002). While there is no one dominant method of qualitative data analysis, it is recommended that a certain level of analysis should start after the collection of some data in the form of establishing categorisation, connections and emerging theoretical frameworks (Bogdan and Biklen 2003; Blaikie 2010, p. 208). As suggested by Maxwell and Miller (2008) and Silverman (2014), I started analysis of data at an early stage to avoid the burden of dealing with a lot of field notes at a later stage. This included reading and thinking about the interview transcripts and observation notes, writing memos, applying coding categories to the data gathered and analysing the contextual relationships.

Ethnographers value the importance of multiple data sources in ensuring the rigour of scholarly work and are less likely to use interviews as a single source of data (Roulston and Choi 2018, p. 245). I followed an iterative approach, as suggested by Kennedy and Thornberg (2018, p. 49), in which I was able to go back and forth through data collection and the fieldwork in such a way that I could decide on the type of new data to be collected next and where to get it.

Drawing from the approach followed by Braun and Clarke (2006, 2013), I employed thematic analysis for analysing and reporting my data in rich detail. Holloway and Todres (2003) also emphasised the importance of *thematizing meanings* as one of the few generic skills across qualitative analysis and in creating links to theoretical concepts. By paying attention to the parts of the group discussions where the most relevant conversations had occurred, I used an analytic framework where I identified the patterns in the data to discover relationships between ideas and concepts around the issues I was exploring.

Given the complex nature of the subject being researched and the nature of the multiple data-gathering tools employed, I used a triangulation method for verifying the views obtained from the different groups of participants of the research. In this regard, I conducted some of the small-group discussions after the key informant interviews with individual participants. I transcribed and then analysed the recorded interviews. To secure the details of how participants expressed the issues raised during the interviews, I transcribed the interviews myself. While doing this, I paid attention to verbatim and linguistic descriptions so as not to leave out important expressions such as tone of voice and interpretation captured during the interviewing process. As suggested by Kvale (2009, p. 180) this helped me to emphasise the social and emotional aspects of interviewees' responses and to understand what they meant, as well as to pick up some elements of the conversation such as gestures and laughter.

By obtaining feedback from research participants about the data I had collected, I was able to rule out the possibility of misinterpreting participants' perspectives, thereby reducing my own potential bias and misunderstanding. In analysing ethnographic data, Fetterman (2010) recommended triangulating the data by testing one source of data against another, looking for patterns of thought and behaviour and focusing on key events (Creswell and Poth 2018, p. 205). As described by Lincoln and Guba (1994), I made efforts to triangulate the data obtained from different sources as a means of refining, broadening and strengthening conceptual linkages of the varied perspectives of children, families and the wider community in the study area. As Locke (2007) suggested, I demonstrated that my study would allow for the examination of competing explanations and discrepant data for testing the conclusions I arrived at (pp. 87–89).

4.8 Ethical considerations

Scholars have emphasised the need for paying due consideration to ethical issues while doing research with children. Ethical research with children, therefore, requires following certain procedures such as understanding and

recognising power relations, seeking informed consent, recruiting and compensating children for their time and knowledge and child protection (Abebe and Bessell 2014; Laws et al. 2003). The need for respecting children's rights when undertaking research with children was also emphasised by the UNCRC (1989).

As discussed in the foregoing sections, through employing different methods of data-gathering tools, I attempted to narrow the differential power relationships between the children who participated in the study and me (an adult researcher). Regardless of attempts made by researchers to narrow this gap, as suggested by Mayall (2000), we cannot claim that we do not have any power over them, and we should encourage children to help us understand their perspectives. I outline the major steps I took to ensure the safety and rights of participants in the study in the following sections.

Access and informed consent

I approached gatekeepers, including school administrators and parents, when identifying children who might participate in the research. I approached parents for their consent about the participation of their children in the research (for those who were under 18 years) by providing them with information about why I needed to conduct the research with children, about protection from any risk or harm during data gathering, the methods of data gathering and where and when the small-group and in-depth interviews would take place. In this regard, parents were given time to reflect on whether they wanted their children to participate and to ask me questions if there were things not clear to them. I indicated to them clearly that participation was voluntary and elaborated that there would be no consequences to their decision. Due to the voluntary nature of the research, I also indicated to them that I would also ask the child for their consent to take part in the research, and that I would address any concerns of the child before starting the research. I also asked children to confirm their willingness to participate in the study. The principals of respective schools first approached teachers who participated in the study and provided them with

information about the objectives of the research by taking them through the issues described in the PIS (Appendix 2) that was prepared in line with the guidelines of the University of Brighton's CREC. This helped them to make the choice as to whether they should participate in the research. This was felt to be unproblematic, as many teachers were clear about what it would mean to participate in the study and did not feel they were coerced to take part.

For illiterate participants and parents, I obtained informed consent by briefing them about the purpose of the research and their contribution to it. The content of the consent forms (see Appendix 3 and 4) were read out to them as a way of seeking their approval and agreement to take part in the research. I avoided a sense of coercion by notifying participants that they were free to withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason. The need for obtaining consent also applied to audio recording the interviews. My female field assistant accompanied me whenever I was interviewing girls and women. Being a Christian and doing research in a predominantly Muslim community, I was also open to understanding and learning about sensitive social and cultural issues, including how I should behave based on what people did with respect to local traditions and religious practices. I paid all necessary attention in my interactions with study participants by building an understanding of explicit and tacit knowledge, and avoiding misinterpretations of ideas and committing mistakes that might not be acceptable by the communities.

Adhering to the ethical standards set by the University of Brighton's CREC Brighton, I carefully handled the data I gathered from individual and small-group interviews, and all physical precautions were maintained by storing the data in password-protected locked office equipment.

Confidentiality, anonymity and protection from harm

As Silverman (2010, 2014) suggested, informants' answers to a question may result in a line of inquiry that was not planned from the start. I was aware that I had to follow the general principles of avoiding harm, keeping the privacy and dignity of those individuals I had interviewed and maintaining the

confidentiality of the information provided by participants of the research. Accordingly, and as suggested by Oltmann (2016, p. 23), I took all the necessary care that the data collected did not identify individuals and that identifiers were not linked to subjects' responses.

4.9 Conclusion

This chapter addressed the research design and methodology adopted in this study. It outlined the methods of data collection and the steps I followed in gaining access to the field that led to building rapport and identification of participants. As seen from the varied methods of data collection, there were logical linkages between the different methods, which allowed triangulation for ensuring breadth and depth of the data generated from different sources.

As demonstrated throughout this chapter, I gave due attention to ensure the protection of study participants, with special emphasis on children. As demonstrated in contemporary childhood studies, and from my constructivist position, this study followed a child-centred approach that treats children as competent informants in the research process, in the co-construction of their daily lives and in helping the researcher obtain knowledge from their perspectives. Employing a qualitative research methodology and ethnographic approach has helped to generate valuable data through providing an opportunity for children to present their voices more directly. Furthermore, it created a chance to gain access to the different aspects of their lives, and to observe the changing circumstances of the study participants over a relatively long period.

In Chapter 5, I look at the findings from the fieldwork, where I largely present children's perspectives and lived experiences while, on the one hand, and showing the challenging processes that they are passing through in abiding to the cultural values and traditions of their parents, on the other. I also show how the agency of children is facilitated or constrained by different factors while they navigating their transitions into adulthood through challenging adults' imagined communities—but reconstructing and reimagining their futures through migration and education.

Chapter 5.

Findings of the Study

5.1 Introduction

I conducted the fieldwork for this research during the periods of July 2017 and May 2018. Having travelled from Addis Ababa and stayed overnight in the town of Kombolcha, the nearest urban centre to Argobba, I arrived in the town of Medina around midday on the second day of my trip. The road that connects Medina to the main asphalt road is a bumpy gravel road with limited access to public transport services and often found to be difficult to travel during the rainy seasons. It is also common for the supply of electricity to be affected during this period due to damage that occurs on the electric poles along the transmission line. My first trip to Argobba was important in that it helped me to create initial contacts with some members of the community who continued to give me support during the entire period of my fieldwork. Meanwhile, I was able to introduce myself to the local authorities and explain the purpose of my visit and the research objectives. This, therefore, made the intentions of my stay in Medina and the purpose of going to and from the rural villages clear to all concerned from the outset.

My entry point in getting to know people residing in the town of Medina began to gain momentum from my search for a place to stay and while buying essential items that I would be using during my stay in the town.

My conversation with the person I met at a place where *ye-jebena bunna*¹¹ was served was instrumental in providing me important information about whom I should contact if I wished to get things moving in the right direction in terms of building rapport.

As a matter of chance, this person ran a furniture workshop, and he even agreed to make a bed for me that I could use doing my fieldwork. I then asked him if he knew someone who rents out a place where I could stay. Through him and other individuals whom I got to know, I managed to identify a place to stay. I got back to Kombolcha later in the day but returned to Medina a week later with some basic items that I needed for cooking and settled in Medina for the period until I finalised my fieldwork. The neighbourhood where I settled was known as *Jeddah Sefer*.

Once I established myself in Medina, I started to get in and around the villages where I was going to conduct my fieldwork. During my first trip to the village of Afesso, Kedir, who was a leader of the kebele, accompanied me, giving me directions and then introducing me to some elders in the community who later helped me out in the identification of children and adults who would participate in the study. One such individual was Yusuf, an influential personality in the village. Having listened carefully to what I was trying to study, he said, 'We will also be studying you while you are studying us'. I asked Yusuf why he said that. He did not reply to my question directly but said it implied people would always need sufficient time to get to know a stranger to build trust in the individual before they were able to work together.

As indicated in Chapter 4, I selected study participants from children in and out of schools, parents and adults, key informants from the community and

¹¹ *Jebena* is a pot made from clay that is traditionally used to make coffee. *Bunna* is an Amharic word to mean coffee. In recent years, there are many places where coffee is made and sold in open spaces around cafes, restaurants and hotels in towns and cities in many parts of the country.

government institutions. In this chapter, I establish how the day-to-day lives of girls and boys are constructed through different practices and experiences including their roles in households, their interactions with peer groups and communities, as well as navigating the sociocultural contexts, values and changing economic and political circumstances as well as the outcomes and consequences of globalisation. The chapter therefore starts with presenting the outcomes of the in-depth interviews with six children (three girls and three boys) presented in the form of pen portraits, followed by the outcomes of the small-group discussions held with children and adults. The chapter ends with a summary of the discussions held with key informants drawn from the community, government institutions and academia.

5.2 Pen portraits

In this section, I present the outcomes of the in-depth interviews conducted with six children who I purposefully selected from in and out of school in the villages where I conducted the study. As I argue later, the issues reflected in the pen portraits make up the central focus of this thesis in that they inform and reflect the key research questions that this study attempted to address. In these narratives, we see how some of the children and young people were challenging adults' imagined communities—but reconstructing or reimagining their futures through education and migration in pursuit of better opportunities in their lives and those of their households, while others were caught between respecting the traditional values and practices of their community and being challenged in navigating their agency in their transitions into adulthood. The pen portraits also depict the challenges that poverty and gender inequality pose on the life chances of children and young people and their conceptualisations and experiences of education and migration in the past and present.

5.2.1 Pen Portrait 1: Grappling with vulnerability and traditional values

Ansha was born in the village of Gobera, some 12 kilometres south of Medina. She was brought up in a family setting until well into her teens. She was 17 years old at the time of the study. Her childhood was similar to other

children in the community until the time when her father passed away due to illness while she was still a child. This forced Ansha, her younger sister and her mother to survive with the meagre resource they generated from the family's agricultural plot, which was not good enough to sustain the family. Her mother was forced to marry such that she would be able to raise her children with the support of her husband. Meanwhile, Ansha got married at the age of 14, just a year before she completed her primary level education.

I met Ansha in the village of Gobera just two months after the break-up of her first marriage. Her first marriage lasted for only eight months. I was able to visit her parents' house and met and discussed with her mother, too. During the time of the interview, she was already back with her parents to assist in handling some of the household activities but keeping her eyes open for another opportunity to get married.

Ansha narrated her story as follows.

I was born and grew up in a family of three children, all of us girls. One of my sisters has died. I was too young then, and I don't exactly remember the time of her death. My younger sister is currently in school and has reached Grade 6. Following the death of my father, my mother had to marry to be able to support our family. The person whom she got married with is a widowed man who already had five children from his previous marriage. He later got two more children from my mother.

But as the children from his previous marriage also came with him, problems began to crop up in our family. There were often conflicts between us. My stepfather was often trying to reconcile these conflicts by warning his own children not to hurt us, as we were *yeteem*.¹² However, his children were accusing him because they think he is favouring us. When the tension grew, I decided to leave the house and

¹² *Yeteem* is a term used in the area to signify a child who has lost one or both of their parents due to death.

went to my uncle's place. My grandfather is alive but he has gotten older and can't be of help for me at the moment.

I slowly began to lose interest in my education and quit my studies after I was promoted to Grade 8. I lost all my hope in my education. This is the time when I began to change the course of my life. I decided to marry. There were two reasons for this. First, I believed that if I get married and set up my own family, I could get my younger sister out of the hostile environment that she is in such that the chances for her to continue her education will be higher. Although she is only 13 years old now, there is also a risk that she may be obliged to quit her education and marry someone. A request has already been made for her hand to my family by a 25 years old man. My second reason has to do with my own situation. In our community, there is a tendency that a girl must marry at the right time. Although there is no agreed upon age about when, the age that is considered to be the right time for girls to marry is between the age of 13 and 15. If she passes the right age of marriage, it is likely that she could be labelled as *kuma-ker*.¹³ It is not acceptable to scold a girl/woman publicly by saying *kuma-ker* or *haftu*,¹⁴ even if it is known that she is a *kuma-ker*. It is really humiliating and has far reaching consequences. This could even incite a fight between kinsmen. Due to the long held belief of *mekenetuawn tifta*,¹⁵ many girls prefer to get married and divorce than not to be married at all. Hence, those whose time of marriage is approaching are advised to marry than not getting married at all. This will change the girl's status not being considered as a *kuma-ker*. In our community, there is a high level of expectation for girls to have an experience of marriage at least once in their lifetime.

¹³ *Kuma-ker* describes a girl whose desirable age of marriage has passed such that men might not be interested to marry her.

¹⁴ *Haftu* has a similar connotation as *kuma-ker* in its ordinary use of the term locally.

¹⁵ *Mekenet* is a thin piece of cloth that women tie around their waist like a belt. The saying *mekenetuawn tifta* conveys a message that she is now mature enough to get married or have sex.

It was during this time that a request was made by a gentleman to my families to marry me. Following our custom, he sent elders to my parents for their approval. I was then asked if I agree to the proposition. I said *deg* [to mean okay] and expressed my willingness to marry him. We knew each other prior to the marriage arrangements as he was living near our place. He was learning and even went to Kemissie to attend his secondary school. The marriage was made upon my own choice *nefsie* [which literally means 'my soul', a terminology commonly used by most members of the Argobba community to refer to oneself]. There was no pressure imposed on me either by my parents or anyone else. Nonetheless, our marriage didn't last. I lived with him for a period of eight months only. The reason for this is mainly due to his behaviour and the way he was treating me. For instance, he feels jealous if he sees me talking to anyone along my way to fetch water. He sometimes beats me. How can I afford not to talk to someone who is living in my own village?

The other challenge that I encountered later was the difficulty involved in concluding the divorce. It requires passing through a lengthy processes of negotiations and renegotiations and brokerage that needs to be made with my ex-husband. Some elders from our community and my relatives tried to mediate the negotiations on my behalf. It took a long time until he gave his words that he has 'released' me. As is widely practiced in our community, he demanded that I had to pay back whatever amount of money that he had spent to during the conclusion of our marriage. I had to ask for the support of my uncles and sale some cows from our family to pay the amount of money he asked for. What he gave me in a form of dowry does not have a value of more than 3,000 Birr¹⁶ (equivalent to £83). But he took 8,000 Birr (equivalent to £220). He didn't leave anything for me. He even took back all the jewellery that was given to me as a dowry. The mediators were trying to convince him that he should not be that rude, saying that 'She is *yeteem*, she doesn't have a father'. However, as I

¹⁶ Birr is the Ethiopian national currency.

was anxious to leave, I had to do everything possible to conclude the divorce. I was therefore forced to sell the cows that belonged to my younger sister too. The cows were handed down to us from our late father. I sold some of the cows that belonged to my younger sister as the money from the sale of the cows that belonged to me was not sufficient to cover the amount of money requested by my ex-husband. Having settled what he demanded, the divorce was finally concluded. Currently, I am trying to pay back the money I owe to my sister by making and selling bed and pillow covers. It is *hosa* [a taboo] to take money that belongs to *yeteem*. She is not yet old enough to say *hafu* [write off] the debt. The money that I reimburse her will contribute to the preparations that are going to be made for her marriage at a later stage. I felt that it is because I don't have a father that I was forced to go through all these challenges. I have now realised that not having a father puts the lives of children under difficult circumstance. He could have defended my rights if he were alive.

I am not doing anything now, except helping with household chores in my mother's place. My former teachers are still encouraging me to continue my education. Although I am aware that education is important, I am not interested to get back to school. My teachers and the school principal have even promised to give me school materials if I get back to school. I know that my stepfather won't be interested to support my education even if I decide to get back to school. I'm aware that I could benefit if I complete my education beyond primary level. Another reason behind my decision not to get back to school is the attitude of the community. It is not normal, or at least not heard of, for a divorced girl to get back to school in our community. People would start thinking that I am doing this just for show off and I am using the school as a pretext to attract the attention of men. On the other hand, I'm not interested in migrating to Djibouti or to the Gulf States. I prefer to marry again. My ex-husband is still interested to get me back, but now I have settled all my debts I don't have any interest to get back to him. I am now waiting until the three months to elapse, as it is the

minimum period of time for a divorced woman to wait before she gets into another marriage. However, I am not intending to jump into another marriage without taking sufficient time to assess my 'would be husband'.

The case of Ansha portrays how parental loss, compounded with poverty and some aspects of sociocultural norms could influence the choices that children who are found in similar circumstances have to bear. What Ansha had imagined to happen in her decision to marry was completely different to what has occurred in practical terms. One could easily notice that what was significant for Ansha was to respond to societal expectations regarding marriage; that is, that she did not want to pass the desirable age of marriage and be labelled as *kuma-ker*. The hostile environment at home and her ambition to support her younger sister also influenced her decision. The challenges that she went through to conclude the divorce also reflects the prevailing gender norms that do not recognise the rights of women in patriarchal societies like those in Ethiopia and the implications of losing one's father in protecting the interests of vulnerable girls like Ansha.

The changing nature of internal household structures also have a significant place in influencing and determining how children should strive to adjust themselves to the changing household compositions and circumstances and in determining their future which, in the case of Ansha, changed her imaginings about the future. By the time I completed my fieldwork, I learnt that Ansha had got married to another person and left the village for the second time. Although I felt that she might not get back into marriage that soon, I was convinced that she did not have any better choice to make given the fact that she was not interested to go back to school or migrate. There was no possibility for her to get employed too. Hence, this was less about choice but a last resort she could opt for. One can also see the lack of importance given to rights or justice where women are concerned. Even if she was being physically abused, she was not able to access legal support or secure any justice.

Unlike her previous decision to accept any offer for marriage straightaway, this time, she tried to assess the situation of the person who wanted to marry her, demonstrating that she had better agency than before.

5.2.2 Pen Portrait 2: Achieving educational targets amidst challenges

My attention was drawn to an issue raised during one of the small-group interviews held with women's groups. The issue was about a girl who had completed her primary education but was unable to continue her secondary level education due to the unwillingness of her father. I later learnt that the mother of this girl was among the participants of the group discussion that my field assistant and I were facilitating. At the conclusion of the group discussions, I asked the woman if she would be willing to give me some more information about her daughter's education and whether I could also talk to her daughter to gain her perspectives. I made an appointment to talk to the mother first, and then to her daughter and also the girl's father (I present the outcomes of my discussion with the parents in section 5.4.2 of this chapter where I discuss adults' perspectives).

The daughter's name was Iman. At the time of the study, she attended secondary education in another town. I communicated with Iman through a mobile phone number given to me by her mother. I briefed her about the objective of my research and asked her consent to become part of the study. Having obtained her verbal consent and fixing an appointment, I travelled to the town of Kemissie with my field assistant to meet Iman. Iman told us the processes that she had gone through to be able to continue her secondary education. This is presented as follows.

My name is Iman. I'm 16 years old. I was born and brought up in Argobba in a locality known as Koye. I am currently attending my secondary education in this town. As you can see, this is very far from the place where my family lives. I had to leave my home village because there is no secondary school there. However, to be able to come here, the processes that I have gone through were not easy.

This requires, above all, obtaining the support of parents (if they have the capacity) or relatives and getting the necessary inputs such as scholastic materials and finding a place to live and some foodstuff to survive.

As you might have noted, education is not considered as something useful in our community. Children who are very much anxious about their studies are considered as individuals who are wasting their time. My father doesn't often think about education in a positive way. He has an opposing view with my mother concerning his own children's education. It's my mother who has always been by my side and has continued to encourage and support me to achieve a higher level of education. This is because, I suppose, she doesn't want us to remain in the village without acquiring proper education. My mother says, 'I don't want my children to end up like me, uneducated'.

I really love to be in school and always wish to succeed in my studies. I was among the few girls who were performing well in school. I have been ranking first until I completed my primary level education. It was only during my first two years of education that my father was willing to buy me some school materials such as pens and exercise books. I was a clever student and was often receiving prizes for my good performance. I passed the national exam for primary level education with a very good score and had to continue my secondary education. However, there was no secondary school either in our village or in Argobba Woreda at the time. One should, therefore, move to Harbu [in Kalu Woreda] or Kemissie [capital of Oromo Administrative Zone] where there is a secondary school. I needed the support of my father in order to be able to continue my secondary education. But he told me that he doesn't have the financial capacity to cover costs related to my secondary education.

As far as I am concerned, it is not only about lack of financial capacity, but lack of interest in modern education in general that prevents many parents from providing the necessary support for their children's

education in Argobba. For instance, my father believes that it would be sufficient for children to complete primary level education. He thinks that this is good enough to enable them to read and write. Due to an increasing influence from my teachers and neighbours, he finally agreed to let me go but his support lasted only for few months. He stopped his support and I once again had to face the challenges ahead of me. It is my mother who assisted me to complete Grade 9. As he still was not interested to help me continue my Grade 10 classes, my mother clashed with him and left home.

As I was determined to continue my education, I came back to Kemissie and sought the support of one of my Grade 9 teachers (a woman) and asked her to find me someone who would be willing to give me some shelter and food but on my part to assist in the household work while continuing my Grade 9 studies. Having sat for the Grade 10 national exams, I went back to my parents in Koye until the beginning of the next academic year. I passed the exam successfully and again I have to get registered for the preparatory level. As usual, my father said he is not going to do anything about it. The deadline for registration was approaching and I lost my hope of continuing my education. Meanwhile, the leader of our Kebele, Gash Tahir, asked me whether or not I have reregistered for Grade 11. When he knew that my father is not going to do anything about my studies, he gave me some money for covering costs related to buying school materials and uniforms as well as for registration. He was even giving me phone calls to encouraging me and not to give up my education. He eventually found some way to put my parents in a safety-net program such that part of the resources that my family earns could partially cover costs related to my schooling. Another encouragement for me was the fact that my mother comes here to visit me at least once in a fortnight.

The encouragement that I was getting from my teachers has been instrumental in maintaining my interest in education. I am optimistic that there is no reason for anyone not to pursue his/her education up

to the highest level possible. But some children might not be interested in attending regular school but prefer to attend religious studies. I don't also think that religious belief [referring to Islamic religion] prevents girls from continuing their education. However, it is also appreciated if they can acquire both formal and religious education. Some families are using religious schools as a pretext not to send their children to the regular education. There are few girls who have come here to attend their secondary level education. When our teachers ask us what we would like to be in the future, I was saying I would like to complete my college level education and get employed in government offices. But my fellow friends, especially the boys were saying, 'This is not a vision that could be realised. We will soon be seeing you here, getting married and with your children'. But now, many of them believe that I have become successful in my studies. They say, 'We are seeing that you are becoming successful. You did what you said you would be achieving'.

My father was not pushing me too much into marriage. But he simply thinks that girls should stay at home and handle household chores until the time they get married. But this does not rule out his interest about marrying me off, as marrying off young girls is a common practice in our community. Hence, I strongly believe that the issue of marriage is a challenge for many girls in Argobba. There are some girls who were interested in continuing their education but were forced into marriage due to pressure from parents. There are also few girls in our community who don't have the interest to continue their education. Some of them even do not show interest to sit for the national exam even if they have attended most of the year's lessons for Grade 8.

I am also aware of the fact that children should contribute their share in handling household chores in the family. Hence, like other members of the family, I was carrying out tasks that were assigned to me. I even take a lead in assisting my mother. As a person coming from a family that relies on farming for its livelihoods, I actively participate in farm activities such as harvesting, threshing, etc. even if it forces me to

miss my classes. Hence, I do much of my studies in the evenings using *kuraz* [a locally made kerosene lamp that is used in houses in rural areas] up to midnight. I was also taking an active part in debates in school. While many students do not show up for tutorial sessions I don't miss them. I even cry when I am forced to miss my classes. In spite of all these challenges, my interest towards education has never gone down.

The case of Iman demonstrates how some children reconstruct their childhood by contesting some of the long-standing traditional values in which children have limited chances for making their own choices and for their voices to be heard. Although her father was not willing to support her secondary level education, the firm stand that she took, along with the support she obtained from her mother, helped her to realise her educational aspirations. It is clear from the narrative that there was a marked difference between Iman's imaginings, which were geared towards the future, and her aspirations to achieve a higher level of education and secure a decent job that would pave the way for her to leave the rural way of life. Meanwhile, her father's imaginings were tied up with maintaining the practices of the Argobba traditions where children should get married once they are of age. The exceptional commitment and support that Iman received from her mother is not normally seen among communities such as the Argobbas where masculine cultural traits dominate. The part played by her teachers and community leaders was instrumental for Iman to exercise her agency. I return to this point when I present the perspectives of parents and children's agency in the subsequent sections.

5.2.3 Pen Portrait 3: Adhering to traditional values and facing the consequences

This story portrays the case of a young girl, Zebiba, whose life course had shifted to a direction that had never crossed her mind before. I came to know her when she went to my field assistant's place to have coffee together. I met her a couple of times before the interview. I even managed to meet her mother as their house was near to the place where I use to stay during my fieldwork in

the village. I was sometimes invited to join them when they had coffee ceremonies. Her previous acquaintance with my field assistant was an advantage for me to build rapport and to slowly ask about her experience of education and migration.

Zebiba narrated her story as follows.

My childhood doesn't have any peculiar feature when compared to the situation of other children in an ordinary household in a rural community. I am the third born child in the family with two brothers and one sister and grew up like any other child who comes from a peasant family. While growing up, I enjoyed being part of any activity in the house and I was assisting my family by working in the farm and taking care of other household activities such as fetching water, collecting firewood, etc. My father died when I was a child. Following the custom of inheriting the wife of a deceased brother—widow inheritance, locally known as *warsa*—the younger brother of my father married my mum. He brought his son with him as he was already separated from his wife. However, our lifestyle was changed and the situation in the house became inconvenient for all of us. We were not in good terms with our uncle.

The issue about marrying me off began to be discussed in my family when I was 10 years old. This might have partly been influenced by the widely held belief by members of the community that the girls, especially *yeteem* [orphaned children], might get spoiled if they are not married on time. My parents accepted the request made by my prospective husband while I was 10 years old. But I was given to my husband three years later, when I was 13. There was no one by my side who could defend my interest as my older brother was away and my mother has to abide to sociocultural practice that approves child marriage. I was among the clever students in my school but was forced to give up my education at the level of Grade 7. I attended the first semester of Grade 7 and never got back to school.

The marriage took place as per the arrangements made by our parents and by following the rituals set by the cultural norms practiced in our community. Nonetheless, the course of my life began to change just on first day of my marriage and determined who I am today. [She paused for a while.] My husband couldn't manage to take my virginity. This, in turn, created confusion on his part and his friends [best men] who beat me in a harsh way. The scars are still visible on my legs. [She showed my field assistant and me some of the scars left on her legs]. They also related the situation to some sort of bad evil and consulted local witchcrafts who advised them to slaughter a chicken and force me drink its blood, but I refused to do so.

I tolerated all the pain and lived with him for two months. I then decided to run away to my mother's place. I was in a hurry to show my mum what happened to me. She was really shocked and couldn't believe her eyes when she saw what has happened on my body ... the stains of my blood was visible on my clothes. I tolerated such a painful life for two months only to protect the name of my mother. If I left him on the second day, people would think that I am a spoiled child, as I would be considered as *yeset lij*.¹⁷ I told my mother that I couldn't tolerate this any more and asked her to get me divorced from this man. The man refused to let me go and the process took five months before it was concluded by divorce. This lengthy process gave me a hard time and I couldn't even mingle with people as they have began to point fingers at me when they see how young I was ... saying, 'Is this the girl that we heard her story?' As more and more people knew the case, including staff assigned by the government to work in our village, I couldn't stand the pressure any more. During that time, I even didn't have the courage to get out of my parents' house and go around the village. After my divorce was concluded, I took advantage of the transfer that my brother-in-law who got work in another district. I

¹⁷ The literal translation of *yeset lij* is 'son/daughter of a woman'. It is generally understood to be a child who has been brought up by a woman and who did not get any control or guidance from a father, which is believed crucial to be considered as a good personality.

then left the area and moved with my brother-in-law to a different location where I don't meet anyone from my village. My brother-in-law wished that I continued my education. However, this didn't work out as my sister and her husband began to quarrel as he often stays late in the evenings with his friends. This put me under stress and I decided to once again return back to my mother.

I still couldn't resist the pressure from everyone in the village talking about me. I told to my mother that, like others, I am determined to leave my village and migrate to Djibouti. But my mother strongly refused the idea and tried to discourage the idea of migration. My mum said, 'I haven't even seen you with my full eyes' [to denote her feeling that she is still considering her as a small child]. It was then clear for me that she wouldn't give me any money or support to facilitate my departure. I went to one of our relatives and asked her to give me some money that I could use for transport and food until I reach Djibouti. She then gave me Birr 200 (amounting to £6).

As there was no means of transport, people used to go by foot to reach Djibouti. I tried to identify individuals who are set to leave for Djibouti. I then joined the group and started our journey to Djibouti. We first reached to Asaita—a major transit town between Djibouti and Ethiopia—and continued our journey until we reached a town called Dikel, a small town in the territory of Djibouti.

I had to stay in this small town for some time until I save some money and to learn the language as well. Finding a job was really difficult for me as I was not able to speak any Afar, Somali or French. Also, people do not think that I can be hired as a domestic worker by seeing how young I am, in terms of both physical inability and for lack of skill to undertake any task. I eventually managed to get a job. Before deploying me for the task, my employer asked me to remove my shoes because she wanted me to look like a local Afar girl such that no question may be raised in connection to my employment, I assume that employing a person who has entered into the country illegally

causes a problem for the employers, although it is not serious. My job was to deliver the juice that I prepared to the nearby hotels as many long distance truck drivers stop there to take some rest. I abandoned the job few days later when I learnt that they would not be giving me my wages later on. Nevertheless, my elder sister, who left home before me and was already there, found me another job in somebody's house. We met in Dikel after my arrival into the town. I worked there for six months. Meanwhile my sister was set to go to Djibouti. Although it is not as challenging as coming from Ethiopia, travelling from Dikel to Djibouti is not a smooth one. She somehow managed to reach Djibouti and settled there for the many years to come.

While I was improving my language proficiency and adapting myself to the area, other migrants who have come from my place began to spread the news about my previous encounter with my ex-husband. My previous story and bad experience was still following me like a ghost and I couldn't stand the pressure from the boys who are roaming around the streets and wherever I go out for buying some foodstuff. I had to usually wear jackets and cover my face not to be identified. According to what I have heard later, they even bet amongst themselves that I had some sort of magic that prevents men not to get close to me. Some of them were trying to approach me to marry them. I often tell them that I came here to work and don't have any plan to marry anyone.

One of them was especially interested in me and was often following me along the streets that I use to go in my routine daily life. One day, he followed me and asked me to stop. I continued to walk but he came in front of me and stopped me by force. The guy is also from Argobba. I think one of my colleagues has conspired with him, in giving him information about me. She used to be one of my closest friends but she must be the one who made me come in that direction where he was ambushing. He beat me harshly with an electric wire and managed to push me into a house where he raped me. According to

the custom in this area, no one attempts to interfere if a man is beating a woman. They don't say anything if he says she is his wife. At some point, I lost my consciousness and found myself soaked with blood when I regained consciousness. It was this same girl who assisted me to get first aid in a clinic after the incident. I stayed five days in the clinic. Having heard of the incident, it was my employer who settled the entire bill and discharged me from the clinic. My employer did her best to encourage me to tolerate the pain and the stress that I went through. My morale went so low and I couldn't gain the courage to continue my work. Later on, I learnt that the person who raped me did the same to many other girls who are newly arriving there. I couldn't claim my right, as I have not legally entered that country.

The threat from the person who abused me didn't stop there. I then phoned my sister who has already arrived to Djibouti and let her know that I want to leave Dikel immediately. Altogether, I lived in Dikel for eight months. I then left for Djibouti. I hope Allah will make him pay the price for what he did to me. While I was in Djibouti, I got married to a person who has come from Argobba. I did this not because I wanted to marry but to stop the pressure from other people who were bothering me. He left for Saudi and I stayed there for about a period of one year before I also left for Saudi myself.

Zebiba's journey to Saudi was not an easy one, though. She used much of what she had saved to pay individuals who smuggled migrants to Saudi via Yemen over the Red Sea. She almost lost her life while one of them forcefully tried to rape her during her journey over the Red Sea when he threw her out of the boat while they were reaching the shore. She was rescued by one of the other boys on board on the boat. Passing through the desert was challenging. While she was in Saudi, her brother also migrated to Djibouti and met their sister who was still living in Djibouti. However her sister was ill and passed away while she was trying to return to Argobba. At a later stage, Zebiba helped her brother migrate to Saudi.

In explaining how she decided to return to Argobba and her feeling about her migration journey as well as her present situation, Zebiba said,

It is now nine months since I got back here. One of the major reasons for me to decide to get back to Ethiopia is the death of my sister and due to the pressure put on me by my mother and my brothers. They were scared that I might lose my life, like that of my sister, due to my ill health and the workload that I had to bear while working as a domestic servant in Saudi. My brother who has come to Saudi was saying, 'Why would you continue to work while your health condition is deteriorating? Even if our elder sister has passed away, her body had rested in the place where she was born. What would happen if you die here? You don't even find a place to be buried; your body will be kept in a refrigerator until an opportunity is created to transport it back home'.

Concerning the benefits that she received from the entire experience of migrating to Saudi, Zebiba said,

I have been able to support my mother while I was there and helped her build a house here. I have also been able to buy a plot of land in the town of Medina where I have started to build a house for myself. But I am not sure whether my family is satisfied with what I have done for them. I mean, one is expected to get back with a good sum of money once he or she has gone out of your country in pursuit of better opportunities.

There are lots of things on which I have lost hope. My childhood had already been taken away due to my horrific experiences of getting married at an early age and the bad incident created during and after my first marriage. This bad experience has 'deleted' my childhood. I don't even want to remember it. During the time that I was leaving, nobody gave me any form of support to cope with the challenges that I was grappling with. I don't even see any future as my family is still obscuring my personal choices of, for instance, marrying a person of

my choice. I sometimes regret why I have come back. I never expect that I will be facing any problem of that scale again.

For Zebiba, getting into marriage was something that happened in the interest of her family. Zebiba's story signifies that accepting the offer for marriage was not a matter of choice but an obligation to adhere to the traditional values of the community that she was a part of but to prepare herself to face the challenges that her marriage might entail. The issue of gender inequality and violence against women can nowhere be illustrated better than what Zebiba had faced in her own village and in the course of her migration trajectories. Apart from what she encountered at the time of her marriage, she was also forced to tolerate the burden of shame and embarrassment until such time she decided to run away back to her mother's home. This resonates with what has been documented by different researchers about the lives and experiences of many young girls and female migrants from Africa in the precarious journeys they make to Europe and the Gulf states (Atnafu and Adamek 2016; Fernandez 2011; Minaye 2015).

The reason Zebiba did not run away back to her mother right after her horrifying experience of abuse was influenced by her thoughts and belief of not being considered as *yeset lij*, and due to the need to protect the honour of her mother from becoming a subject of gossip in their community. This issue is similar to what Heinonen (2011) discussed about *yilunta* in her book entitled *Youth Gangs and Street Children: Culture, Nature and Masculinity in Ethiopia*. While considering *yilunta* as a matter that is deep rooted among many societies in Ethiopia, Heinonen referred to *yilunta* as

having a heightened perception of what others may say or even think about what one does in private or public. Most importantly, *yilunta* means having a deeper sense of shame in personally knowing that one has done something shameful regardless of what people may think or say or even whether anyone knows about it. (2011, p. 32)

This notion of shame affects women more than men as a man can leave a marriage after two days and would not experience the same level of shame that a woman would experience. The burden is on the woman to suffer and to take responsibility for honour and shame. Many of these practices are so ingrained in the African culture that they may not be perceived as violations of children's rights (ACPF, 2005).

In the same way as Ansha, the changes that occurred in Zebiba's parents' house involving stepparents had further complicated the situation of members of the household, which resulted in the migration of her older sister to Djibouti, her brother joining the army and herself to be married off. Hence, motivating factors for children to migrate are dependent on the context, and such decisions might not be shared with other family members before their departure.

5.2.4 Pen Portrait 4: Cardboard box children

One of the things I found strange during my fieldwork was hearing people talk about *cardboard box children*. I asked what this meant and was told that these children are born from a migrant person who is still living abroad but who would send his or her baby back home under custodianship of someone (often a woman) who is travelling from Saudi to Ethiopia, for instance, to visit their family. Such individuals are paid for their services by the biological parents, who are not yet ready to return to Ethiopia due to their status of residency that might not enable them to enter back into Saudi legally. The term 'cardboard box child' simply symbolises the process by which an item is sent via carriage in a similar way to a parcel being sent through the post office. The role of the person who takes care of the child is simply a matter of providing a facilitation service to make sure that the infant is transported safely and handed over to their grandparents or siblings who are waiting to receive the child on the other end.

I also had an experience, where I met a woman who was carrying a baby to be handed onto her grandmother that I eventually learnt she was not her biological mother. As the woman was sitting next to me, I was trying to assist

her while she was taking care of the child that gave me the chance to ask about herself and the child. I summarised my conversation with the woman as follows.

An: How old is your daughter?

Wo: She is two months old.

An: Where do you live? In Addis or in Dessie?

Wo: I live in Saudi. But I occasionally come to Ethiopia just to visit my family.

An: How frequent do you come back home to visit your families?

Wo: Once every few years.

An: Are your parents waiting for you here as you are bringing them their granddaughter too this time? I hope they will be happy.

Wo: No. She is not my daughter. She is the daughter of my friend.

An: Oh! Where is her mum? How come you managed to carry such a small child all the way from Saudi? Why is that?

Wo: Her mother didn't want to get back home this time. As she still is interested to stay there, she didn't want to come. She won't find it easy to get back there, as she doesn't have all her papers/permits in good shape. She rather wanted to send her child and decided to stay for a while to be able to generate some more money. The father of the child is also working there. In the context of a migrant person, it won't be easy to handle a child and work at the same time.

An: Isn't it difficult to get through the immigration at the airport?

Wo: No.

An: Do you know the person who is going to receive the child at your destination? Do you know where their house is?

Wo: They will be waiting for me at the airport. They have already been informed about everything.

Upon our arrival at the airport, she handed over the child to a woman [the grandmother of the child] who was waiting outside the terminal and left for her home with her own relatives. This encounter motivated me to further inquire about 'cardboard box children' in my study area.

While looking for households who had such experiences, I learnt that one of the children who participated in the small-group discussions had come from such a family. His name was Adem, an 8-year-old Grade 2 student. His teachers also knew him as one of the good performers in his studies. Along his regular school, he also attended Qoranic studies and handled household chores, especially in looking after his grandfather's cows. Adem was growing up with his grandparents, as his father and mother were not currently living in Saudi. While there were quite a few children who are identified as cardboard box children in the community, Adem's case was an exception in that it was his biological mother who brought him back to his grandparents' house when he was two years old. As we shall see later, his parents are living abroad as migrants but were not able to provide him with necessary parental love and support due to the nature of their work and as they have divorced but still wanted to continue their lives as migrants to acquire some fortune there. Although he was aware that they were not his biological parents, Adem identified his grandfather as his father and his grandmother as his mother.

Getting an idea of what Adem thought about his situation was a bit challenging in that care was to be made not to harm his feelings while raising issues concerning his biological parents as he already considered his grandparents as his father and mother. Hence, my discussions with him were very informal and conducted at different times and places while he was herding the cattle and by accompanying him along his way to and from school. Hence, I did not want to raise sensitive issues with Adem but focused on obtaining details about him from his grandfather, Nuru. Making discussions with Nuru was

intended to establish understandings of how taking on the responsibility of raising children whose parents had migrated impacts on members of the households, especially the grandparents as they were taking on new roles of caring for a child, on the one hand, and finding out about the nature of relationships that existed between the parents who were sending the children and the grandparents themselves, on the other.

I went to Nuru's home with my field assistant. We walked through the farms where sorghum had recently been planted. Due to the unexpected rains over the past couple of weeks, the farmers were obliged to re-plant the sorghum. Like his fellow farmers, Nuru was working on his plot doing the re-planting. Before getting into my subject of discussion, I wanted to start with issues of general nature—that is, the farm, how good or bad were this planting season and how and when he had started living there. Nuru had built two ponds for harvesting rainwater and laid a geomembrane material (a wide plastic sheet) for protecting the water from leakages. He used the water for his mango, orange and lemon trees and other root plants in his farm. Having welcomed us, he took us around his plot and showed us how he took care of the trees and plants while at the same time complaining about shortage of water that reduced the productivity of the fruit trees.

Nuru started his discussion after giving me a brief background about how and when he settled in this place and went on to tell me how his son (Adem's father), migrated to Djibouti and then to Saudi. He explained to me about his current relationships with his son, and daughter who had also migrated to Saudi.

I was living up on that hilly place [pointing to a small hamlet on top of a hill], although this plot was still at my disposal. It is now about five years since I have come down and settled here. I have put a lot of effort to improve the productivity of this land.

Before the time he settled in Saudi, my son migrated to Djibouti. In the beginning, I didn't know why he decided to migrate. He was only 15 years old. Having stayed for some time, he got back to Argobba as the

government forced foreign nationals who have entered into the country illegally to leave. However, he got back to Djibouti very soon and made his way to Saudi Arabia. It is now about four years since he entered Saudi. Adem was born in Djibouti but my son has been divorced from Adem's mother. After the divorce, she brought the child back here and handed him over to us. I met her while she was wandering to locate my house. As I was around the farm I asked her what she was looking for. While I get closer, I was able to see that she has carried a child on her back. She then told me that the child is my grandson. I was really touched by the situation and wept. At that moment, I had a mixed feeling. On one hand, I was wondering about her decision to bring the child to us, not to her own parents. But I also felt good in seeing my grandchild at an unexpected moment. She stayed with us for about two months and made sure that the child feels comfortable with us. Adem was 2 years old only. She got back to Djibouti and then went ahead to Saudi. She occasionally sends us some money. She has now built a house in Medina, a modern house—what they call L-shape.

One of my daughters has also gone to Saudi. She is doing very well there. She stayed in Djibouti for two years before she headed for Saudi. She didn't face significant challenges to travel to Saudi as I have made payments to the brokers for her safe transit through the Red Sea and Yemen. Her brother [Adem's father who is already in Saudi] has also helped her to get established there. She has recently sent us about 40,000 Birr and I bought her land for setting up a house in Medina. She again has sent 10,000 Birr and another 4,000 Birr. I believe she is doing well. Like my son, she has also given birth to a baby girl and sent her over to us. She paid 40,000 Birr for the lady who brought the child to Ethiopia. Her mother-in-law received the child from Addis Ababa airport. I was happy to receive and take care of my granddaughter too.

In my opinion, it is okay for the young persons to go and work abroad. But they should get back home at a later stage. There is a saying in

our community that justifies going and working abroad when a person is young. It says, 'With black hair abroad, with a grey hair back to fatherland'. Hence, I expect my son and daughter to get back home at some point.

Nuru believed that parents had a significant role to play in shaping the future of their children. For him, what he did for his grandchildren was crucial in helping them to become responsible individuals in their adult lives, on the one hand, and in supporting his migrant children to generate income without the hustle of caring for children in another country where they had not settled for good, on the other. In explaining the role of parents in providing support for children, he noted,

I believe that parents have the prime responsibility in the provision of care and support that are necessary for their growth and future lives. Children are like seedlings, which need to be nurtured and assisted to grow in the right direction, like a plant. It is the responsibility of parents and adults to guide children to differentiate the good from the bad. Children should also work and assist in household chores. A person cannot be considered as a child once he or she understands the direction where the sun rises and sets and needs to get to work. This is a time when they might be punished and become responsible for their action.

In the case of Adem, I'm not sure whether he misses his biological parents. I feel like I'm playing the role of his father while his grandmother covers the role of a mother. Whether or not he is missing them, in our part, we are trying to discharge our responsibilities as parents anyways. For now he doesn't look like he is missing them. I am aware of the existence of a generally held belief that children who have been brought up by grandparents tend to be spoiled. For instance, there is a saying that 'A child who is brought up by grandparents does not often have conduct which is good enough to exchange him/her for a donkey'. This is to mean that the grandparents

may fail to pay the attention that is necessary to make children behave in a proper and acceptable manner. Bringing up a child does not only mean to feed them. But we have to help them learn to work, educate, etc. For instance, Adem is now looking after the animals but he has to assist in the house when he is back home.

On my part I would like Adem to continue his education. I want him to have a very good knowledge of the religious studies as well. I believe that education is important.

The focus of this case was trying to understand how the formation of new transnational families was affecting households back in the villages in both positive and negative ways. Was this scenario altering the situation of households and affecting the way such children grow up in families and communities? What can be understood from members of the community is that children who are sent back in such a way are already labelled and given names such as ‘cardboard box children’ that might negatively affect their personality and interactions with other children in the community both in the present and foreseeable future. Given the level of financial support given by migrants to their households, such as Nuru, it seems there were not any complaints from the grandparents, and raising their grandchildren was not considered to be a burden. The imaginings of the grandparents were focused on the level of success that their children would bring as migrant persons in another country now, but they looked to the future that the migrants would come home to take charge of their children at some point in time.

5.2.5 Pen Portrait 5: Deciding to stay—migration as an option and a risk

Amid was among the first group of children with whom I conducted small-group interviews in one of my study villages. At the time of the study, he was 18 years old and lived with his parents in the village of Afesso. He was among the participants who had never been to school. Unlike some other young persons in his community, he had never left his village and migrated to other places, neither within nor out of Ethiopia. Like other young people in the kebele, he

believes that staying in one's community was better than migration. Around the time when I was starting my visit to their village, and when I was conducting the small-group interviews, Amid was busy in harvesting the crops. Hence, the in-depth interview that I was planning was postponed until he completed harvesting of the crops. I chose to conduct one of the in-depth interviews with Amid, mainly to capture the process of transition from childhood into adulthood in the context of Argobba. His case also reflected the situation of other boys who decided to stay and pass through the processes set by the cultural values and traditions of the Argobba community. I also learnt that his parents were planning a wedding for him. Hence, I was interested to document how the process of his marriage would progress before the conclusion of my fieldwork.

I managed to spend a reasonable amount of time with him on different occasions—for instance, while he was working in the fields, in the setting up of the house where he is going to live after the wedding took place and so on—from the time when I started my fieldwork. Among the key issues I discussed with Amid was the reason underlying his decision to stay rather than migrate.

He narrated his view towards migration, focusing on the details about how the arrangement for his marriage progressed over time.

For me, I don't have the interest to leave my village in the first place. I had a feeling that the reason behind children's decisions to migrate is motivated by challenges that young people face within their families, for instance, clashing with their parents which might push them to leave. Some of them might become successful in getting money by migrating and working in other countries while others not. For me, I am in good terms with my family and there is no reason for me to migrate. What I believe is that my parents have an obligation to support me and/or provide me with my necessities so long as I am not yet an adult. Until now, I am contributing my share in supporting my father by working in the field. But once I get married, I may need to fend for my own family and myself. Some young boys may decide to migrate if their parents are not ready to get them married. Having a sense of

boredom could also be a cause for migration of young people from our community. Hence, they want to migrate and make some fortune to be able to set up their own family up on their return. I know of some young persons who migrated and married at their place of destination while others marry when they get back here. But this does not mean that parents are not making any contributions.

It is upon the interest of my parents that an arrangement was made for me to marry. I was having an interest to marry too. This does not mean, however, that there are no instances where some young boys ask their parents to help them to get married. However, there are also instances where some parents decide to marry off their son due to his behaviour, for instance, if he is someone who creates trouble in the family. In the case of the latter, the parents think that the boys will begin to behave in a better way if they are given the responsibility of managing their own family.

Concerning the processes that took place in preparation for his marriage, Amid said,

In my case, for instance, it was my father who chose the girl that I married. I even don't know her as she is from Gobera [some 20 kilometres from Amid's village]. Once I knew about the plan, I was keen to see my marriage partner. My father talked to the parents of the bride and made arrangements for us meet her and her friends at the market in Harewa [the nearest market place for the bride]. I then got my friends, about eight of us, and travelled to Harewa market. Harewa market is located in Oromiya Zone, but adjacent to Gobera Kebele of Argobba.

I presumed that this is going to be exciting and a time when I am going to see and meet my wife-to-be face-to-face for the first time. I made plans to buy her some clothes as well as take some pictures with her. We had to get in contact with my father, who is contacting her parents to let us know the exact place we are going to meet. She

arrived at the proposed place with her friends and her brother. Following an exchange of words of greetings, we then proceeded to the market. It was her brother's friend who let her know which one of us is her husband-to-be and did the same to let me know which one of the girls is my wife-to-be. We went to a tailor's shop and she chose a dress to be made. We had lunch together. She first mistook my friend as her future husband until such a point when we were about to get photographed. After having group pictures, we have to have a photograph of two of us only. It was at this moment that she got closer to me. And then we sat together to have *khat*¹⁸ together and continued talking to each other.

I believe that the underlying reason for getting married has to do with ensuring one's freedom. As we get mature and when we are no more considered to be a child, we should get married and use the opportunity to have freedom. In our community, it is normal for parents to continue to extend support to the newly wed couple, most often, up to a period of one year. The father may give his son a plot of land, some grain and money to get started with his new life. From this time onwards, it is the responsibility of the individual to be able to support himself, his own family and assist his parents at all times they need his support. In my opinion, the issue of migration won't become a concern for many young persons who have got married. They tend to stay than migrate, as they will be having responsibility to the welfare of their own family.

The case of Amid provided a broad understanding of how children who decide to stay conceptualise migration. Amid's case reflects the scenario of children who stay in their communities and prepare themselves for their transitions into adulthood. Such children have accepted their way of life and are anticipating leading a family life just as that of their parents. Though he regretted not having the opportunity to be enrolled in school and was unable to read and

¹⁸ *Khat* is a stimulant green leaf that is chewed by young persons and adults alike in many parts of Ethiopia.

write, he did not put the blame on his parents, as there were no schools in his locality when he was of age to be enrolled.

5.2.6 Pen Portrait 6: Challenges of balancing work and education

This is the story of Kamil. At the time of the study, Kamil was attending school but had migrated to Djibouti and Saudi at different points during his school years. According to Kamil, it was down to his strong intentions to get educated that he went back to school after being away from the school environment and exposure to what was out there in the countries where he had migrated. He said the encouragement that he received from his teachers had been instrumental in him continuing his education, even if he had to sit in the classroom with children who were younger than he. Nonetheless, he maintained a very good relationship with the students and his teachers. The following is what Kamil said during the interview.

I was born here in the village of Siya. I am the third born child in the family. There are five children who were born after me. I was enrolled in school when this school was opened here. The school then was not in its present shape. A proper school structure was established later on. When I reached Grade 3, my father wanted me to stop going to school and help in household activities, mainly to work in the farm fields of our family. When I work in the farm, I began to miss my classes. I then decided to migrate and went to Djibouti. I was about 13 years of age when I left. I hadn't consulted anyone in my own family about my plan to leave. I worked there for about two years. It was with my friend that we left here when I migrated for the first time. We were having 300 Birr only when we leave. We paid it for transport from here up to a place called Asaita in the Afar region before we leave the Ethiopian territory. We had to stay there and work on the private farms as daily labourers to get some money for our survival and savings to continue our journey to Djibouti. Each of us paid Birr 600 (equivalent to 16 GBP) for the brokers who facilitate our journey to Djibouti and helped us to land in a place called Yiboki in Djibouti. We still had to work there for some time to make some savings to continue to our

next destination. We reached a place called Dikel and then proceeded to the city after walking on foot for three days. It took me some time to get work as a shopkeeper. After I arrived in Djibouti, I was employed in a small shop as a shopkeeper. They were paying me about 1,000 Birr per month in wages. As they were providing me food and shelter, I was able to make some savings. I brought about 6,000 Birr when I returned from Djibouti two years later.

As I was keen to pursue my education, I continued my classes while at the same time working on the family's farm. But the challenge continued. I often miss my classes due to work. But I kept on coming to school whenever I can. My parents didn't have any interest in letting me go to school. They are not educated and don't understand what advantages could be drawn from education. They often say, 'If you are not working in the farm, what else would you be doing here in this house?'

I often clash with my parents as I miss my classes from time to time. I was really disappointed by the situation. I am convinced that I am not going to bring about any change in my life by staying in the rural area and keeping on working on the farm. Two years later I went back to Djibouti again. This time I was destined to reach Saudi. When I went for the second time, it took me only 11 days. This is because I am now acquainted with the travel routes and the challenges therein. I travelled alone and used means of transport and reduced the risks associated with travelling by foot. I did not have to make any payments to brokers this time, as I already knew the route. It took me three months before I find a job in Djibouti. After I worked for about one month, I began to find out how I can get to Saudi, the place of my dreams. I then identified someone who does a job of facilitating such border crossings over the sea. He asked me to pay 25,000 Djiboutian Franc (125 GBP). We paid the required amount and crossed over the sea. There were about 40 people on the boat. Fortunately, we haven't encountered the robbers who demand money to allow you to pass to your next destination.

The migration process is facilitated by many brokers who are based and operating from the different towns and transit points all the way from here through Ethiopia, Djibouti and Yemen to the final destination in Saudi Arabia. However, they take all the necessary care not to be identified by regulatory bodies and they operate in secret. They leave us on the seashore of Yemen, and we break into smaller groups and walk. When we reached Aden, we obtained some food, toiletries, etc. that were being provided by the Red Cross. Having crossed many checkpoints, I somehow managed to get to Saudi. I walked for about six hours before I was caught within Saudi. If you don't stop, they will shoot and hit your legs with live bullets. I have seen some guys who have been shot on their legs. While travelling with them, they also managed to catch more migrants who were on their way to the urban centres of Saudi numbering 54. They reported to their colleagues to send them a truck to take us to the nearest police station. We then were detained. I didn't even get a chance to see the city. We stayed there for eight days and were moved to a place called Gizan. We stayed there for two days and our photograph was taken before we were transferred to the jail in Jeddah. At this stage, the Ethiopian Embassy got involved and we were deported to Addis Ababa by air. Upon reaching Addis, some of the deportees who have money continued their journey to the places where their families are found. As I had nothing, I had to wait for the money to be issued by the Ethiopian Red Cross to cover my transport cost to back to Argobba. My journey to Saudi didn't work out.

Upon my return, my parents complained that I shouldn't have attempted to go to Saudi in the first place. As I have told you, many children won't share their decision to migrate with their parents in the first place. My parents were happy anyway. The only problem that I had with my parents is the fact that they don't support the idea of going to school in general. I feel that they wouldn't mind if I went to a religious studies rather. But my mother is not against formal education. There are my younger brothers who are currently attending school. It's

me, who should find the money to cover all costs related to their education, for example buying them school materials. As you can see, I have gotten back to school for the third time. I really want to continue my education up to the highest level. The interruption is really creating a problem on my schooling. If I pass the national exam, I will go ahead to Medina to continue my secondary level education. Even if I leave, my parents will find some way to obtain support from the community who would help them in the farm activities. I want to change my lifestyle through education.

The reason why many children are not succeeding in their education is due to lack of awareness and support from their parents, while for the girls, they tend to marry early rather than pursuing their education. Girls who managed to continue their secondary level education are few in number. We know them, for example, like Iman. Even if there are many girls in school, they will begin losing interest towards their education once a request is made to their parents for their hands. This is what the culture demands of children and young people. I don't have any plan to marry. But I'm aware that my parents want me to get married and stay here forever.

Kamil's experience of childhood had been dominated by challenges of balancing schooling and work and the low value attached to modern education by his parents. His decisions and experiences of migration indicate variation in the factors that motivate children to migrate. That he had information and knowledge about other members of his community who had migrated to Djibouti and Saudi did not make his decision something strange. He was cognisant of the challenges and risks involved in the migration process, the gains and missed opportunities—for instance missing out on his studies—from migration. In his case, poverty and a demanding workload in the household were found to be hindrances to his education. His case was exemplary in that it showed the effort that some children make to pursue their education despite the challenges of balancing work, education and economic constraints.

In summary, what can be inferred from the pen portraits is how childhood is constructed and reconstructed as a result of interactions and influences posed by people around children, including members of their households and peers, as well as prevailing social and cultural attitudes and discriminatory gender norms and practices.

My principal aim here was to illuminate the depth and breadth of the challenges that girls and boys have to go through for the realisation of their imagined ways of life through education and migration and in their attempt to overcome the challenges by demonstrating resilience and exercising their agency. It also shows us how poverty and gender norms, as well as sociocultural practices and religious beliefs, invariably impacted the day-to-day lives of children in the study area, particularly girls, as they navigated through the changing socioeconomic and political conditions that were taking place at local and national levels and in their transitions into adulthood.

In the following section, I look into how the day-to-day lives of children in Argobba were shaped by a range of factors, including work and play, education and migration, as well as socioeconomic and cultural factors and aspects of globalisation.

5.3 Small-group discussions with children

This section of the thesis presents the outcome of the small-group discussions held with children from different age groups. The small-group discussions were held in two rural and one urban site during the fieldwork. I divided participants into three categories. The first group consisted of children in the younger age group (8 to 10 years) while the other two groups comprised of children in the middle age group (11 to 15 years) and upper age group (16 to 18 years). The methods I applied in gathering the opinions of children from the younger age group were different in that I followed a participatory approach, using visual methods and encouraging children to draw and write their thoughts on flip charts. They found this entertaining and it helped to reduce the sense of power imbalance between the children and me, an adult researcher. As

indicated in Chapter 4, I formed separate groups for girls and boys, and each group had no more than eight participants.

Based on the major themes that the analysis of the study focused on, this section is further divided into three sub-sections. The first section focuses on how children conceptualised childhood and constructed their childhood in their day-to-day lives through interactions with adults, peers and other members of the community, followed by presenting children's perceptions and experiences towards education and migration.

5.3.1 Growing up in Argobba: Construction of childhood and children's roles in households

Childhood and children's work

Children's views about what it meant to be a child varied across the different age groups. Children in the younger age group (8–10) believed that being a child was determined by their physical ability to perform certain tasks and their inability to survive without the support of adults, while children in the middle age groups (11–15) and upper age groups (16–18) believed that what made children distinct from adults lay not only on their physical features but also on the level of knowledge they had been able to acquire, be it through education or life experiences they passed through.

In line with this, one of the participants of the small-group discussions in the boy's group suggested,

A child is someone who is not yet matured and who cannot take responsibility about things. The major features of a child are related to age and knowledge. Normally, a child is a person who is too young to differentiate the right from the wrong. This makes him or her different from adults. (Ali, M, 13, Gobera)

Nonetheless, most of the children who participated in the small-group discussions believed that even if children did not make decisions by themselves until they reached a certain age of maturity and needed close guidance from

adults. On the other hand, among the participants of the small-group discussions, those who had been drawn from school (as participants were recruited from in and out of school) defined a child as a person who was under the age of 18. They indicated that they learnt this from their civic education lessons.

The following excerpt by one of the participants of the small-group discussions illustrates this:

We have been thought that any person that is under the age of 18 is considered to be a child. This means that such a person should not be considered to take responsibility for him/herself, for instance to live by himself/herself. However, from what we are seeing in our community, children under this age might decide to migrate and try to earn an income, which I believe is a risky action. (Zehara, F, 14, Gobera)

In general, children from the middle and upper age groups indicated that coming of age for work marked the time that childhood ended. In this regard, they confirmed that children in Argobba started work at an early age. Although they were not able to agree on the age when children would start working, most of them indicated that children started doing easier jobs from the age of 5 onwards, but the age of 7 was the most common starting point for children to fully engage in undertaking tasks, light or labour intensive, depending on their physical strength and their gender. For instance, a child aged 5 or 6 years would start learning work by escorting their older brothers or sisters, for instance, to keep goats in places not too far from their house and by going to the nearest water point or stream to fetch water.

Regarding the nature of work that children were expected to perform, a 15-year-old boy who participated in the small-group discussions said,

The nature of work that children are expected to undertake are largely dependent on their physical strength and gendered expectations. The younger ones are given tasks that do not require physical strength, for example, looking after the goats and carrying out small household

tasks. We [the boys], for instance, are working in the field, ploughing and taking care of other activities that have to do with planting, threshing and harvesting of the crops. Many of the children in our community are expected to undertake these activities starting from the age of 14. (Ibrahim, M, 15, Afesso)

According to the outcomes of the discussion held with children and the observational data that I gathered during my fieldwork, the everyday lives of girls and boys in Argobba were characterised by undertaking different tasks with the exception of some space given to them for play and to mingle with their peers while carrying out other activities. Figure 11 depicts the types of activities that children performed during an ordinary day as part of their routine. Children who participated in the small-group interviews made the list presented.

Table 4. Types of activities performed by school-going girls and boys (aged 8–14 years).

Time	Activity	
	Boys	Girls
6:00–6:10	Get up from bed	Get up from bed
6:10–6:20	Arrive at Qoran School	Arrive at Qoran School
7:15–7:30	Get back home and eat breakfast	Get back home and eat breakfast
7:30–8:30	Go to school or to the field with cows and goats	Go to school or to the field
12:30–1:30	Get back home and eat lunch	Get back home and eat lunch
1:30–2:00	Take some rest	Fetch water
2:00–6:30	Stay in the field keeping the cattle	Collect firewood/assist mother
6:30–7:00	Play with friends	Take care of younger siblings
7:00–7:30	Tie up the cows	Take part in preparing dinner
8:00–8:30	Eat dinner	Eat dinner
8:45–9:30	Study (sometimes)	Study (sometimes)
9:30	Sleep	Sleep

Table 5. Types of activities performed by school-going girls (aged 15+ years).

Time	Activity
5:00	Get up from bed
5:10–6:30	Go to fetch water
5:10–6:30	Clean the house, wash dishes, personal hygiene and prepare breakfast
7:30–7:45	Eat breakfast
7:30–7:45	Go to school
7:30–7:45	Get back home and prepare/eat lunch
7:30–7:45	Prayer/take care of younger siblings/make coffee/wash clothes and dishes
2:00–6:30	Collect firewood/assist mother/make <i>injera</i> ¹⁹ /fetch water
6:30–7:00	Prepare dinner
7:00–8:30	Tie up the cows/personal hygiene
8:30–9:30	Serve/eat dinner
9:45–10:30	Study (sometimes)
10:30	Sleep

One of the major features of children’s work, especially for the younger ones (8–12) was the task of keeping the animals (for both boys and girls) and taking care of the household chores (for girls). Figure 11 above depicts that there was little time for the children to play or study. In the case of families who were not living too far from the school, the mothers kept the animals while the children were in school, put them in a designated fenced space and returned home to give food to their children who had been in school during the morning shift. Having eaten their lunch, the children would run back to the farm to take care of the cattle until the evening. But there were times when the children did not go directly to their homes as the mothers might send their lunch with another child who would be attending their classes in the afternoon shift. In most places,

¹⁹ ‘Injera’ is like a big soft pan bread often made from locally grown ‘teff’, ‘barley’ or ‘sorghum’ flour after the sourdough is rested for two or three days and made to rise shortly before it is baked.

there was no common grazing ground that was good enough for all members of the community. Hence, each family would reserve a small place for grazing its own cattle.

The role of the children was, therefore, to make sure the cattle were not entering somebody else's plot. Upon getting back home, the cattle would be given some grass and tied before the children got their supper and went to bed. They may be given a snack if supper was not ready. Some children might study in the evenings if they wanted to. They used solar power or a hand torch as a source of light. Some parents might encourage their children to study while others might not push them to study. Most often, the children went to bed around 10:00 pm.

Fetching water was one of the demanding tasks assigned to girls. In families where there was no girl, the boys would cover this task. Many households would need at least two jerry cans (plastic containers with a capacity of 20 litres each) of water for household purposes on a daily basis. Depending on the size of the family, they may need twice as much. They used donkeys for transporting the water from the river or a water point. The time when most girls got a chance to play with their friends was when they went to and from the river, while waiting in the queue and when they went to the hills to collect firewood.

As we can see from types of work and time use presented in Tables 4 and 5, there are key distinctions in terms of time use and the type of work each does depending on their age and sex. Girls had no rest time or playtime, unlike the boys who had some time for play with friends and rest. Girls would collect firewood and water, and look after siblings and prepare food/work in the home. As elaborated further in this chapter, the gendered division of work for boys and girls was visible in that boys would do the agricultural tasks while girls were expected to handle the household chores, even from a younger age.

It was not common to see children playing football. Younger children sometimes used balls made out of pieces of worn-out fabrics both in school and

around their house. I asked children about the games they often liked to play, as I could not draw meanings from some of the games they were playing. The most common type of game was called *ganna* or *inqult*. The rule of the game was to take turns to hit a piece of stick to a friend and the other one would try to hit it back using a similar stick. Points were counted based on the number of scores that one gained. They would still need to keep their eyes on their cattle, though.

The older children who took part in the study said the games they used to play were different from the ones that being played by children now. They described some of these games as follows.

The boys hang robes on the branches of trees to use it as a swing especially during public holidays. This is locally known as *zillo*. The girls collect small pieces of smooth stones from the riverbed and use to play a game called *kilbosh*. Another type of game that was used to be played by young boys is a game known as *tuz*, where they make holes on the ground or on a piece of wood and put small pieces of stones and take rounds to play the game. Girls and boys used to play *dibibikosh*, where they hide in and around the house while the other friend tries to find the one who is hiding. We sometimes see children making wheels out of some wires and tie it on a piece of stick and ride it like a car. (Ahmed, M, 18, Gobera)

I saw young girls listening to music on their mobile while they were going to and from fetching water. According to the children who participated in the study, as well as my own observation, many young boys and girls and a large number of others spend a considerable amount of time chewing *khat* rather than playing games. Beyond its growing importance as a cash income for farmers and a major foreign currency earner, the production and use of *khat* is showing an expanding trend geographically across the country and affecting different social groups. I return to this point in Chapter 6, the discussion chapter.

Issue of gender

In the small-group discussions with children, it was indicated that visible differences were not often observed in the treatment of boys and girls within a family setting in Argobba. Some of the children said that parents might pay more attention to a girl or a boy if they were the only female or male in the family, depending on the context. However, there was much influence on girls to be quiet and submissive and to be responsible for taking on family and household responsibilities. Much of the difference between boys and girls lay in the nature of work allocated to them. Boys carried out the tasks in the field, while girls were expected to do the household chores. Males were not expected to carry out activities that were traditionally allocated to females. This was explained by one of the participants of the small-group interviews as follows.

The nature of work that is assigned to girls and boys is different. Girls are expected to carry out tasks that are meant to be carried out by women, such as cooking and cleaning the house. Boys are not generally expected to do things that are traditionally assigned for girls.
(Lia, F, 13, Afesso)

As a way of provoking discussions among the participating children, I posed a question to them, saying, 'What if boys do jobs that are assigned to girls? Can't you cook or clean the house?' I told them that I was preparing my own food while I was in the field there, but they did not seem to believe that. In response to this, one of the participants said,

Males are not supposed to get into the kitchen. At times when the women are not around, for instance, if the wife goes to Saudi, the male members of the family will be obliged to undertake household tasks. In our area males are expected to work on the field, for instance farming, planting and harvesting, while girls are expected to fetch water, clean the house, prepare food, wash cloths etc. We cannot carry out jobs allocated for girls and our parents know this and they do not assign jobs for boys that are meant to be for girls. Although girls

could also work on the farm, most often, boys and males take on the tough jobs. We know that in the urban areas the boys can do jobs that are often done by girls but this can't work in the rural setting. This could even cause conflict between couples if males attempt to do things that are culturally assigned to females. (Ahmed, M, 14, Afesso)

A participant in the boys' group discussion expressed his fear of how switching roles between men and women could create a problem:

It is not normal and culturally acceptable for boys to carry out tasks that are assigned to girls. They can help each other. However, if I attempt to do some jobs that are assigned to women, even my wife would not appreciate it. She might even undermine you and might not want to sleep with you. Women are also not expected to do men's jobs. (Ahmed, M, 17, Afesso)

I asked the participants if this attitude and practice could be changed: 'Can't we change this?' A participant responded, 'We don't think this will work in our area' (Seid, M, 14, Afesso).

Intergenerational relations and children's participation

In the small-group discussions and in-depth interviews conducted with children, participants were asked about their expectations from parents and/or caregivers, what their parents expected from them and factors that governed these relations. Participants of the discussions were encouraged to spell out what they regarded as their rights and duties and their emotions about issues they considered were taken for granted in their relationships with their parents.

All the children who participated in the small-group discussions indicated that their parents had a duty to care for them and provide them with food, education and other necessities while they were growing up. However, they also indicated that their parents expected them to assist in almost every activity that was taking place in and around their households.

While expressing the expectations that existed to each other, one of the boys who participated in the small-group discussions said,

As our rural livelihoods are reliant on agriculture, our parents expect us to actively engage in the various activities that need to be carried out in the field. These include, for instance, work in the fields during ploughing, planting, weeding and harvesting the crops; bringing firewood on the way back from our day's work and looking after the goats and the cattle as well as looking after our younger siblings and supporting ourselves once we come of age to marry. In any case, parents would like to make sure that their children are ready for an adult life, —that is i.e. to set up their own family and build wealth. On our part, we expect them to find us a wife and facilitate the process of marriage on our behalf. (Zeinu, M, 15, Afesso)

Most of the children suggested that their relationships with their parents were instrumental for them to acquire life and work skills that would be useful when they became adults. They also emphasised that their parents should facilitate their safe transitions into adulthood by availing land from which they could earn their living. That children were expected to spend much of their time in work, they noted, left little or no time for them to go to school.

Children who took part in the research were also asked about the level at which they were allowed to participate in making decisions regarding matters that may affect their lives, such as their education, marriage or migration. Almost all of the children confirmed that they had limited space to participate in decision-making processes in their households. Some of them believed it is a clear fact that parents were the ones who should make any decision regarding their children. However, variations were observed among children of different age groups about who had the decision-making power in households. The younger groups of children (aged 8–10) said that their parents were expected to make such decisions, believing that children did not have the capacity to make decisions. They cited the case of education and said their parents had the

power to decide whether a child should go to school, which demonstrates their inability to have a say on such things.

Most of the children suggested that their fathers, with a limited level of involvement from mothers, made most decisions in their households. Only a few of them suggested that they might be consulted to a limited extent about certain issues—for example, plans being made for marriage, especially for girls. However, even if some children got such an opportunity, it did not mean their ideas were going to be accepted. If their opinion is found to be different from what the parents thought or believed, it would not work:

Irrespective of the nature of the decision, it is expected that children should abide by the decision made by parents. Not obeying decisions of one's parents could result in a curse. Children don't want to be cursed by going against the decision of their parents. (Lubaba, F, 15, Afesso)

However, other groups of children indicated with confidence that children also had the capacity to express their opinions and participate in making decisions if they were given the chance. The following excerpt from a participant of the group discussions illustrates this:

Most often, it is the parents who decide on everything. We cannot change the decisions of our parents. Many parents think that children lack the capacity to participate in decision-making. If we are given the chance, we can even convince them to change their decisions. (Siraj, M, 15, Afesso)

On the issue of what needed to be done to improve their level of participation in decision-making and whether they thought this needed to be changed, some of the children suggested that they still believed their parents knew what was better for their children (varying by the age groups of the children; that is, the younger ones thought it was still okay if their parents decided on matters about their children), while the rest suggested that children

should be given more opportunity to make choices on matters that affected them—for example, concerning their education or marriage, as portrayed by one of the girls who participated in the small-group interviews:

Yes, we believe this should be changed. There is nothing that cannot be changed. In our community, children should also be allowed to express their opinion especially on education or marriage. The community needs to be educated about the importance of letting children participate in decision-making. (Nejat, F, 14, Gobera)

As seen from the previous discussions, children were expected to respect the decisions made by parents, especially fathers. It was noted during the discussions that there was interdependency and reciprocity among children and parents and how children should contribute their labour to the household economy while at the same time learning skills and competencies that were needed for their lives as adults at a later stage. As we will see in sections 5.3.2 and 5.3.3 of this thesis that show the perspectives of children regarding their education, marriage and migration, there were instances where these relationships and expectations shown changes and negotiated as a result of external influences such as peer pressure and impacts of globalisation.

Impact of marriage

Like many other communities in the Amhara Regional State, child marriage was an observable phenomenon and a practice embedded in the Argobba culture. The societal expectations and practices around gender norms and marriage had direct relationship with the marriageability of girls and occupied a particular space in determining whether a girl might not be wanted for marriage once she passed the desired and socially acceptable age of marriage. This, by and large, was closely tied with the high level of expectations held by both parents and adolescent girls about marriage and the period of time when they should be getting married (Boyden et.al 2013; Erulkar et al. 2006, 2013).

There was a generally held belief that the period of completion of primary level education was the right time of marriage for girls among the Argobbas. At

this stage, both the girls and parents made choices between marriage and whether girls should continue to secondary level education. When girls completed or were about to complete their primary level education, parents as well as the girls themselves started thinking about the choices to be made. The dilemma was that if they chose to continue their education, they had to move to a nearby town with a secondary school such as Kemissie, Harbu or Kombolcha, most of which were located outside Argobba Woreda. This, in turn, entailed whether the parents were able to provide the necessary support for the girl, on the one hand, and the girls' own interest to pursue her education on the other. Girls and boys who had been attending their primary education in schools that were not very far from Medina might join the recently established secondary school in the town of Medina.

Participants of the small-group discussions reflected conflicting ideas regarding decisions made by children and parents about marriage (especially for those who were under the age of 18 years). With a belief that their parents held primary responsibility for the destiny of their children, some of them indicated that it was up to their parents to decide when a girl child should marry. Other groups of participants, on the other hand, argued that marriage of girls did not necessarily entail coercion and was becoming less rigid in Argobba. Those who argued that parents would not push their daughters into marriage, if they did not wish to, indicated that even if the marriage proposal were to be made by parents, the girls needed to be convinced first before the marriage took place. Hence, the parents would not force their daughters to marry someone whom they did not know or like. However, they indicated that there was a tendency among mothers who wanted their daughters to marry once they reached Grade 7 or 8. According to the opinion of some, boys and the girls needed to like each other before the proposal was presented to the parents. As pointed out by one of the participants of the group interviews,

Marriage among the Argobbas gives room for the couple to first like each other although it does not rule out the interest of parents in the

creation of alliance between families that may involve economic transactions and the exchange of dowry and bride price. However, the part being played by parents in making such decisions on the person whom their daughter should marry have been minimised in due course of time. (Ansha, F, 15, Gobera)

Those groups of children who did not support the opinion that marriage arrangements had become less rigid argued that many children were still forced into marriage. They went on to argue that those girls did not have any options other than to accept their parents' decisions.

The children argued further that many girls had been affected by such decisions and were not able to continue their secondary level of education once they were married. Hence, they considered marriage as one of the obstacles that hampered girls' education in Argobba. One of the girls who participated in the group interviews said,

Marriage affects the education of girls especially. For instance, my sister was educated up to Grade 10 but my parents decided that she should marry. They didn't even give her a chance to know the results of her national exams. (Zeineb, F, 12, Gobera)

On the other hand, children expressed their opinion that, once married, it would be difficult for most girls to go back to school even if the marriage did not last. Among the participants in the small-group discussions, I came across two girls who were married but who made a breakthrough by going back to school to continue their secondary education in Medina. One of the girls narrated their story as follows:

My friend and I got back to school after we were divorced from our husbands. I, for instance, was married at the age of 14. After the divorce, I convinced my parents to let me continue my education. It is not common for most girls to get back to school once they are married. Some members of the community thought that the reason why we returned to school was due to our inability to find another person

whom to marry. To the best of our knowledge, this is the first experience in our community. Most of the marriages often end up in divorce mainly because parents arranged most of these marriages. Even the process of the divorce has not been an easy one. I had to return all the gifts that my ex-husband provided me at the time of our marriage. Even though we have gone through a difficult exercise in concluding the divorce, we are now happy, as we have been able to continue our education. It is with the belief that education is rewarding that we are here. The large majority of parents do not believe that education is important. We believe that this is mainly due to the fact that they are not educated. My father has a health problem and cannot provide me with the support that is necessary for me to stay in school. However, I was determined not to give up my education; I am currently trying to face all the challenges and trying to support myself. I support myself by collecting and selling firewood. (Hawa, F, 17, Medina)

Most of these girls were attending their secondary level education away from home, covering costs related to house rent and struggling to maintain their subsistence. I asked the girls about what helped them to travel to Medina to continue their education. Hawa said,

For most of us, it is not due to the support that we are getting from our families. It is mainly due to our own commitment to achieve something important after we completed our education. (Hawa, F, 17, Medina)

I conclude this section by relaying what one of the girls who participated in the small-group interviews said: 'There are three options for children in Argobba. Complete your education and get employed, marry or migrate to Saudi' (Hawa, F, 17, Medina).

5.3.2 Perspectives of children regarding education

Exploring the state of education and understanding the different views that children had towards modern education gave insight into how education was conceptualised and practised in the study areas. In this section, I look at the

sociocultural and economic challenges that influenced the educational performance of children and the mechanisms that children adopted to overcome these challenges to pursue their education. We also see the interplay between children's work, gender considerations and the influence of external factors such as globalisation on shaping their imaginings about their futures and out of the rural way of life.

As we saw in Chapter 2, in line with the ESDP, there have been efforts to create access to education for children in Ethiopia over the past four decades. The ESDP has especially emphasised the expansion of primary education among marginalised communities in the country, of which Argobba was one. In the course of identification of children who would participate in this study, I included children both in and out of school. I also explored the state of the schools as well as students enrolled in the schools within the villages where this study was conducted.

As shown in Chapter 3, there were 29 schools in Argobba that were serving children coming from the different sub-villages, locally known as *got*. Some of these schools had a better physical structure and relatively decent office space for the school principal and staff, classrooms and other service-rendering facilities, such as volleyball pitches and playgrounds for students, while others had no or poorly equipped libraries (with very few books). Some of the schools may have pit latrines in a corner of the school compound for use by teachers, but none for students. I saw only a few boys often playing on the sandy playgrounds, where I occasionally participated, with their balls made out of pieces of worn-out clothes. Unlike what was common in the urban areas, the schools and classrooms in the study area were not overcrowded with students, as the number of students was already low.

Most of the children who were enrolled in the rural schools were not required to wear uniforms. Most of the boys wore skirts (with the exception of the secondary level school where students wore uniforms) often worn by a male member of the community. The teachers assigned in the rural schools lived in

the small rooms that were constructed by the community residing around the school, while some of the teachers stayed in nearby towns, like Medina, and commuted between the school and the town on daily basis. Water was scarce in the schools that were located in the rural sites where I conducted my study, and the teachers were challenged by a lack of clean water. To alleviate this problem, the Woreda Education Office bought and deployed three donkeys and hired an individual to fetch water from a nearby water point and distribute it daily to the teachers, at least for the school located in Gobera village. By the time I concluded my fieldwork, two of the donkeys had died and made the problem of getting water more severe.

One of the research questions that this study intended to address was to understand the factors that might influence the perceptions and practices of girls and boys in Argobba towards their education. By talking directly to the children, I attempted to understand children's views about education and reasons underpinning these conceptualisations—for instance, if they considered education as something that would contribute to improve their lives in the future and if their parents shared these views; identifying factors that could help them to become successful in their education; common barriers for children's education and how best these barriers could be overcome. Furthermore, the research attempted to explore the reasons children decided to quit their studies and migrate, if peers, families and other members of the community influenced this decision. It also asked whether young persons who already had attained a certain level of education or qualification are not able to get into the labour market.

According to the data generated from the small-group discussions, a large majority of children indicated that they believed education important in that it would enable individuals to differentiate the right from the wrong and could serve as a means to move to towns and cities where they could lead a better life—that is, to generate a good income and lead a 'modern' style of living, such as having better housing and a decent family life. As one participant from the boys' group said,

We believe that education is important. Like you, we could have lived a better life if we were educated. Although limited in number, we have seen some individuals in our community who have been educated, such as Sofia, who have become a health extension worker. We believe that education could serve to get out of the rural way of life. Some of us here have been in school but left school to work in the field and assist our parents. Parents don't often let the children who have already been in school but prefer to send the younger ones, especially girls to school. The main reason for this is they want us to work in the field. (Seid, M, 14, Afesso)

In a similar way, one of the girls who participated in the small group discussions said,

I believe that education is important. If one is educated, he or she can go to the towns and cities. You can also identify which is which, for instance to identify service rendering facilities such as restaurants, clinics, etc. If a person is educated, he/she won't get involved in things that are *hosa* [taboo]. If you know something is *hosa*, you won't jump into it. (Lubaba, F, 15, Afesso)

When asked if their parents shared these ideas, they admitted that many parents were not much convinced about the advantages that could be drawn from education. The children suggested that unless there was a commitment on the part of their parents, children's ambitions to achieve a certain level of education would not be attained. The following excerpt from a participant of the small-group interviews illustrates this:

Our parents were not educated and they don't think much about education. The only thing they know is about their daily routine, their cattle, farm, etc. As they don't have any experience about what it means to be educated, they can't care about their children's education even if the schools are opened in our backyards. (Seid, M, 14, Afesso)

They posed a question to me, saying,

Is it not your father who helped you to get educated? What helped your father to think like that? It might be due to the fact that your father has not been a farmer in a remote village like ours. We don't have any other means of generating income other than our farmlands; we don't have a shop or a truck. If my brother and I go to school from our family, how would we sustain our family? We don't have any other means of income. We don't have a shop or a truck. What are we going to eat or drink? (Abdu, M, 12, Afesso)

Other groups of boys who took part in the small-group discussions emphasised,

Education is something important to change the lives of children in the future. Once you are literate, your capacity to resolve problems would be improved. It will help you to get money and you can use the money as you like. You can transform the knowledge into money. This could be seen from other educated people who are living in towns and cities, not in the rural areas. If our parents get a chance to see how people live in urban areas, they will understand the importance of education. People in towns wear clean clothes and live in good houses. There is no shortage of water in towns. You can build a house in Medina and anywhere else. (Hassan, M, 11, Gobera)

I asked the children if they would send their child to school when the time came for them to get married and have children. One of the participants replied,

Even if I wish to send them all to school, I might not do this as our lifestyle demands us to use the labour of children to sustain our lives here. To be honest, I don't think I can send all my children to school. If I am going to have three or four children, how can I send them all to school? Until they are physically strong they eat whatever I bring. But when they grow up some of them should stay at home and help us in the farm and household activities. The limitations of our economic resources prevent us from doing so. (Ahmed, M, 17, Afesso)

Some of the participants expressed regret for missing the opportunity for an education. In explaining the opportunities that he had lost, and the impact of a limited level awareness about modern education on the part of his parents, one of the participants said,

Our parents want us to follow the same path that they have gone through. This is the way they have gone through when they were growing up. They don't know much about the importance of modern education. Some parents have now begun sending children to school, but we have missed out that opportunity. Even if they wish to send us to school, there were no schools in our surroundings when we were of age to be enrolled in school. The establishment of schools is a recent phenomenon in this area. I feel that you have been through the school system and hope you are also sending your child to school. Any person will lead his child the same route that she or he has been through. You also need resources to be able to pursue your education. For instance, you might be having a regular income to support yourself. As you can see here, our livelihood is based on whatever we produce from the land, which is hand to mouth. Neither my father nor me have salaries. (Amid, M, 18, Afesso)

A few of them, though, said education might not bring significant changes when seen from the context of Argobba. In other words, modern education might not be required as such for a person whose livelihood is based on agriculture, an occupation that does not necessarily require knowledge obtained from schools. Hence, acquiring a certain level of knowledge—that is, reading and writing—would suffice to lead life in a rural area like Argobba.

A boy who participated in the small-group discussions argued that one should not always believe that attending regular education would work for all children in determining their future lives. He said,

I preferred to go to a religious school while two of my sisters were enrolled into a regular school. One of them is already in a high school while the other one is in Grade 7. For me, I would like to further

continue my Qoranic studies to the highest level possible and would like to become a religious leader than getting into the regular education system. (Kamil, 13, Afesso)

On the other hand, some participants indicated that there were instances where children themselves, especially girls, might not show any interest in going to school and pursuing an education. In such cases, parents would not force the children to go to school. The following quotation from one of the girls who participated in the small-group interviews illustrates this:

I have attended school up to Grade 6. I think the knowledge that I have acquired to date is sufficient to sustain life in the rural setting where I am living now. Why would I suffer in the sun while I travel back and forth to school every day? (Emebet, F, 15, Afesso)

As I thought that the low level of motivation and interest to education might have been caused by the limited opportunities available to young people even if they completed high school or college, I asked participants if they knew about individuals who are not able to secure jobs in their communities. The following excerpt from a girl addresses this:

We know of some individuals from the Argobba community, like Sofia, who is currently working at the Health Center in Senkele. We know that she is making use of her education. We do not know of any person who have been through secondary school or collage who is not able to secure jobs like that of Sofia. But, for us, we feel that what have known thus far is good enough to sustain ourselves in the rural setting. (Emebet, F, 15, Afesso)

5.3.3 Conceptualisations and experiences of children towards migration

Exploring how children conceptualised and experienced migration, and identifying the factors that influenced children's decisions to migrate, are among the key issues that this study intended to explore. By going beyond the rhetoric of pull-and-push factors, this study attempted to understand why some children

had different propensities to migrate or stay and examined the roles of individuals, family members and peers as well as the diverse connections between child migration and education. Through examining the spatial and temporal contexts of children's migration, the study established an understanding of the current state of social networks and ties between the child migrants and their families to illuminate the role of economic and environmental factors and the dynamics that could encourage migration in Argobba at present and in the future. It also explored the prevailing familial and generational relations and examined whether migration had an influence over household and familial relations and if it has shown changes over time. In the following section, I present the children's perspectives on what they thought were the opportunities, challenges and dynamics of migration that influenced their personal experiences in light of both family authority and the wider impact of migration on their lives now and in the future in their communities.

In general, children who participated in the study were aware of the fact that there are many boys and girls in their community who have migrated to Djibouti and Saudi. They also knew that some of the migrants had returned home and continued to live in the villages, while others had re-migrated. Djibouti, and Yemen were indicated to be transit centres, and Saudi was singled out as the major destination for migrants from Argobba. The children indicated that a family member, close relative and/or a person whom they know have migrated to these places. Regarding the routes of travel and means of transport to reach their destinations, the children indicated that most of the migrants went via Djibouti and had information about the risks involved in migration, even to the level of losing one's life. One of the participants with experience of migration explained this as follows:

Most of the migrants are girls. They stay in Djibouti and Yemen rather than going directly to Saudi. There are instances where they could get stranded in Yemen. We have seen some returned migrants who are using crutches due to the injuries they encountered during their journey. For instance, I worked in Djibouti for some time to save some

money and went on to Yemen via the Red Sea. However, I was repatriated soon after I reached Saudi. (Kamil, M, 18, Gobera)

Most of the children who participated in the study indicated that migration had both positive and negative sides. Those who claimed it had advantages argued that migrants who had been able to settle in Arab countries were sending back money to their families. On the negative side, they indicated that the migrants were not always successful and may become bankrupt and at times they may put their lives at risk while crossing the sea and the desert.

The children revealed motivating factors behind decisions to migrate and how such decisions were made. Most of the children believed that the key motivator for children's migration was to look for a better opportunity to earn money and improve one's livelihood and that of their parents. It was also suggested that cultural values and attitudes, especially child marriage, was a push factor for many girls' decisions to leave. Others believed that children migrated to avoid the hardships of a heavy workload on them in the rural areas. They argued that children would not leave their village unless they were unhappy with the situation they were in. Few children said there were some children and young people who left without having any good reason. The following excerpt from one of the participants of the group interviews illustrates this:

If children are not happy with the situation they are found in, they might decide to leave. But if they are comfortable, they might not be interested to leave. For instance, if I am overburdened by too much work, I may decide to leave as I can change myself by working for myself than working for the entire family. (Kamil, M, 18, Gobera)

Another participant of the small-group discussions emphasised as follows:

Life for girls in the rural area is not an easy one. Girls spend a lot of time in fetching water. Collecting firewood is also another demanding job in our area. Girls have to go up the hill to get it. Had it been in

town, it is possible to get water from a tap without a need to travel long distances. Life in the rural area is not easy. All forms of work in the rural area are always tough for both boys and girls. However, our parents do not want us to leave or migrate. It is not because they are worried very much about our well-being or the risks involved in migration processes but they want us for our labour. (Abdu, M, 13, Afesso)

During the small-group interviews, I asked children about who, among the people close to them such as parents, peers and siblings, had a role in their decisions to migrate. Most of the participants indicated that more often than not, a decision to migrate was a personal matter and was kept confidential up to a certain level. The key concern for a potential migrant is to form a clearer picture of where to go, making logistical preparations such as money and ensuring safety en-route and at her/his places of destination. Making these clear helps the individual to reduce the risk of any intervention that might constrain her/his migration plans:

Most of the children do not share their intentions to leave with other individuals in the households. They keep it confidential until they leave the area. But this does not mean that few children are not sharing their thoughts and plans to migrate to their peers. Sometimes, they may discuss it with their friends. Depending on their assessment of the feelings and attitudes of their parents, a few of them might share their plan with their parents, especially girls if they need financial support from their parents. In certain circumstances, some parents might even encourage their children to migrate by seeing the success story of other children who have already migrated. (Kamil, M, 18, Gobera)

One of the participants from the girls' group said,

In most of the cases, the boys would leave without the consent of their parents while girls usually wouldn't leave without getting approval from their parents. In most cases, the parents themselves give some money for transport of their daughters. While successful migrants

might manage to send money to their family, there is also a risk that unsuccessful migrants may come back empty handed. Obtaining the approval of parents before departure will, therefore, help to smoothen their relations with the parents later. (Zeineb, 12, Gobera)

With the younger groups of children, I used a portrait of a girl standing between a rural and an urban setting (see Figure 12). I used this image to prompt discussions among participants of what they thought the girl was thinking about and about the choices she should make between migrating to the city and staying in their home village. This helped participants to have control of the discussion process. They indicated that this was a picture of a rural girl carrying a pot of water on her back but thinking about whether she should go back to her village or migrate to the city. Almost all the children agreed that she should choose to go to the city rather than return to her village. When asked why she should go to the city, they said,

Even with hard work [working on the field], the lives people in the rural areas do not show significant changes over time. The urban areas are better. There is better food and clean water in the city. (Adem, M, 8, Afesso)

I asked the children if they had been to town or had experience and exposure to city life and their understanding about what it implied. Only a few of them had experienced travelling to the nearest urban centre, the town of Medina, but imagined life in the cities was better. As a way of provoking discussion, I suggested that the rural area was good in that it was clean and had good scenery with the mountains, the trees, the cattle and so on. One of the participants responded,

It's because you are not living here. You have not yet become bored with life in the rural areas. For us, whether we like it or not, we are living here. The ones who have gone to the cities have better opportunity to work and get money that may change their lives. To give you one example, the place where we fetch water is far and is

difficult to walk through. But in the city, one can get water from the tap right there. (Lia, F, 13, Afesso)

Those groups of children who were of the opinion that migration had an advantage argued there were young boys and girls who had migrated to Saudi and had returned with some fortune that had helped to acquire some fixed assets in their home villages and in the town of Medina:

There are some individuals from our community who have come back and set up houses and businesses in Medina. For example, persons who have migrated and returned own most of the shops and houses in Medina. (Nuru, M, 15, Afesso)

Figures 12 and 13 show visuals I used during the small-group interviews.



Figure 12. Young girl carrying water with a pot, standing between her village and the city, contemplating whether to migrate to the city or stay in the village.



Figure 13. A young collage graduate in her gown.

We have seen in the foregoing discussions that growing up in Argobba is characterised by work and dictated by gendered division of labour. While most children who participated in the research considered education as a vehicle to get out of the rural life and some children thought that getting a certain level of education, such as reading and writing skills, would suffice to lead life in the rural area. Differing ideas were reflected on the issue of marriage. While some considered it as a practice through which they express their respect to Argobba traditional values while others believed that it is an option available for young people, especially girls. For both girls and boys, migration was considered as a viable choice to bring about changes in the situation of their future livelihoods and that of their households.

5.4 Small-group discussions with adults

Having gathered the views of children around the research questions that this study attempted to address, I carried out small-group discussions and interviews with adults including parents, teachers, community and religious leaders and key informants to capture their perspectives. I intentionally included the parents of the children with whom I conducted in-depth interviews in the small-group interviews held with adults. Obtaining adults' views on issues that were dealt with children was useful to establishing an understanding of similarities and/or differences between the two. In the following section, I

present a summary of adults' views with regard to childhood and intergenerational relations, education and migration, as well as some aspects of the impacts of sociocultural features and globalisation on the lives of children and young people in the study area.

5.4.1 Views of adults towards childhood and intergenerational relations

In my discussions with adults, I first wanted to understand the feelings and values that parents among the Argobba community attached to having children. Parents and community leaders who participated in the small-group discussions confirmed that they attach a high value to having children. As explained by one of the participants,

Having children is given a big value among our community. It is with an intention of having children that marriage is made between couples in the first place. While they are young, children are meant to be seen and bring satisfaction and happiness to their parents and families. Parents are expected to nurture their children and provide them the necessary care while they are growing up. Having children would ensure security on the continuation of generational relations. Parents believe that it is their children who are going to inherit all resources, for example, the land and cattle and whatever is available to the family. If parents do not have children, the land will be abandoned after they pass away. Of course, parents believe that children would support them in old age. (Hussien, M, 65, Afesso)

In general, most of the adults explained that childhood was a time when children were not expected to take responsibility. Although there were variations in opinion among participants of the group interviews on when childhood is supposed to end, the large majority of the adults agreed that, depending on their physical ability and sex, children should be starting to work from the age of 7 years. Hence, they believed this was the time when childhood ended for most children in Argobba. They further noted that work marked children's progression to making valued contributions to the household economy:

Until they reach well into their teens, children are expected to stay with their parents and learn farming and other life skills and religious beliefs from their parents within the family setting. At the age of 5, for instance, they will begin to give a hand in picking and handing in things to their parents and/or older siblings within the house. When they reach 7, they are expected to look after the cattle. Starting from the age of 7, boys are expected to start accompanying their elder brothers and siblings to herd goats and cows and for the girls to be with their mothers and learn some skills of household activities. (Mussa M, 50, Afesso)

Concerning any differences in the handling and upbringing of girls and boys in households and communities, adults who participated in the discussions indicated that there was no major difference in the level of attention paid to either sex, with the exception that girls would not be expected to engage in undertaking heavy work. A participant of the small-group discussions elaborated this:

Most of what boys and girls are expected to do is somehow similar to what men and women are doing or expected to do in our communities. For instance, men are expected to undertake tasks in the field while women are responsible in handling all household tasks. But this doesn't mean that we do not support the idea of women to take other tasks out of the house, such as getting employed and earn some income to support the family. This would even reduce the burden on men. Upon the death of the father, women are expected to take on the role of the head of the house. In other words, we are supporting the fact that girls should be treated as equals with boys and they should get the privileges that are normally given for boys. (Jama, M, 56, Afesso)

The key issue this study addressed pertaining to intergenerational relations was understanding how such relationships were maintained between mothers, fathers and children and exploring if there were any changes that had been

observed over time. My questions particularly focused on finding out about how the power dynamics and reciprocities between parents and children were expressed and the level of children's participation in matters that may affect their lives in households and communities.

Regarding the nature of relationships that existed between parents and children, participants in the adults' discussion groups indicated that such relationships were based on the principle of reciprocity in that parents expected their children to pay respect to their parents and help with household activities to sustain the family's economy.

When asked what children should expect from their parents, one of the participants of the group discussions said,

Our children expect us to send them to school. Their interest to go to school increases especially when they see other children who are going to school from their neighbourhood. Children wouldn't mind if it is a regular or a religious school, so long as we let them go. Apart from what is required for their basic necessities such as food, clothing and the like, the boys would also expect their fathers to get them a wife and provide the necessary materials and resources such as a house, some cattle and some amount of grain for their sons to be able to support themselves until they start to generate their own resources.
(Hussien, M, 65, Afesso)

The adults emphasised the significance of the parental role in the provision of guidance and care for their children. They considered themselves as having a duty to raise their children with discipline and to guide them to become good citizens. One of the parents said, 'Parents should first assist their children to be able to support themselves before they think that their children would support them at a later stage' (Ibrahim, M, 50, Afesso).

Nonetheless, the parents who took part in the group discussions admitted that some changes were being observed in the treatment of children and in the relations that children had with their parents, which they believed, is attributable

to influences of external factors such as peer pressure and interactions that were brought about by the influence of urbanisation and globalisation. This is seen in the following excerpt:

Where there is a strict control over children within the family settings, it is likely that children would respect what their parents say. Hence, they do not attempt to take their own decisions on anything without the prior approval of their parents. However, children might start making decisions by themselves if they are not happy about the way they are treated by their parents. For instance, there are some children, within the age range of 15 and 16, who migrate to Djibouti and Saudi without the consent of their parents. (Hussien, M, 65, Afesso)

On issues related to children's participation in decisions that parents made regarding their children, including those related to their education, most of the participants of the group discussions were of the opinion that children should not be expected to take part in such decision-making processes. They gave two reasons as justification. First, children did not have the capability, as they were not yet a mature person. Second, their tradition and culture did not encourage children's participation to such a level, as it would be considered as spoiling the children to go against the established values of obeying their parents. Some of the participants of the discussions even wondered how children could be expected to participate in the decision-making processes in the first place. As expressed by one of the parents,

Many parents in Argobba do not think that children should participate in decision-making or consider children as one who are able to express their views in a proper manner. They are too young to make reasonable arguments about issues that may require critical thinking. They may only ask for the provision of some basic needs such as shoes, or clothing. Why should I consult my son, who is not even 15 years old, about my plan to sell my cow? How can they understand the advantage that could be drawn from selling the cow and using the

money for covering other costs in the household or for the benefit of the family in general? (Jama, M, 56, Afesso)

Issue of marriage

In the small-group interviews held with children, marriage was reported to be one of the major constraints that interfered with their education, especially girls' education. While recognising that marriage before the age of 18 was a common practice in Argobba, adults who participated in small-group interviews argued that marrying off girls at younger age was partly influenced by the attitude held by parents that the physical transformations wrought by puberty may expose young girls to the risk of premarital sex and pregnancy. Other factors believed to influence such decisions were peer pressure and low academic performance.

Apart from the issue related to physical maturity and the risks therein, participants in the women's group also noted there were many girls who would choose to marry rather than continuing their education beyond the primary level. One of the participants who did get the chance to be enrolled in school when she was young shared her own experience:

As there are children who are anxious to be enrolled in school, there are others who are not willing to go to school as well. Those of us who got a chance to be enrolled in school earlier didn't give the right value for education at that time. For instance, I was enrolled in school but quit from Grade 3 to marry. In my case, I got married upon my own choice. I am aware of the fact that not all children here are forced to marry. Some of them are really interested to pursue their education while others are keen to marry. My own daughter has discontinued her education and got married. But the marriage didn't work for her either (Alemitu, F, 48, Gobera)

In relation to this, it was noted during the group discussions where mothers participated that fathers had a significant role to play to ensure that girls were

not forced into marriage if they wished to pursue their education. In this regard, another participant shared her own experience:

My husband is very much supportive of our children's education. He often says, 'We have missed our opportunity to go to school in our times. We need to support our children's education by any means'. I believe that education is important for children. But I sometimes complain about letting all the children go to school, especially girls, as I had to take care of many tasks including taking care of their younger siblings, preparing food and grazing the cattle at same time. Their father says, 'I will take care of the cattle until the kids get back from school. I can even go to the grain mill too. We should not keep them at home. A time has now come for them to go to school. This plot of land is good enough for both of us. The children need to get educated and they have to leave this place'.

Whenever I raise the issue of marriage, my daughter Chuna, who is now in Grade 8, will often get offended. When I tell her that her friends have already got married, she says, 'It is their right, but I don't want to marry. On my part, I want to complete my education. My father is supporting me. I may marry only when I decide that I'm done with my education. If you keep on nagging me, I will move out of this house and I can stay with my grandmother until I complete my studies; nobody should be bothered whether I get married or not.' (Shita, F, 45, Gobera)

The lengthy quotation above provides the context under which both children and parents were caught in trying to balance their livelihood and their children's education. They needed a mechanism whereby children could have the opportunity to get an education while not compromising the context of the livelihoods of their respective households. I describe in more detail the relations between children's work and education in my discussion of children's work and education in section 6.3 of Chapter 6.

5.4.2 Views of parents, teachers and members of parent–teacher associations on education

To gain a broader view of how efforts to expand education were perceived and practised among the Argobba community, discussions were held with parents, teachers and members of PTAs. Furthermore, I gathered data from key informants, including elders, key figures from the community and individuals from government institutions and academia. I arranged separate sessions for men and women to participate in small group discussions such that they could express their views freely.

In the discussions held with the parents' group, almost all participants expressed their view that education was important for improving the lives of individuals and families. In emphasising the importance of education, one of the participants said,

I believe that education could change the lives of people. I'm also aware of the fact that educated people are capable of inventing airplanes and mobile phones. I am an illiterate person. For instance, I cannot differentiate restaurants that serve Muslims or Christians. While I was travelling, I entered into a restaurant and the waiter brought me food that was supposed to be served for Christians. When I knew that I'm in a Christian restaurant, I had to pay for the food and leave the restaurant, even though I haven't eaten it. (Jama, M, 56, Afesso)

Despite that schools were established in their localities, and even though they believed that education was important, discussion participants admitted that many parents were unable to send their children to school due to different reasons. The major challenge identified by participants was the difficulty in balancing the time needed for children to work in households and the time to go to school. Another issue raised as a challenge was the economic burden on families that sending children to school entailed. This became problematic

especially during children's transition from the primary to secondary level of education.

As we saw in Section 5.2 ('Pen Portraits'), however, there were variations in the level of support that parents provided their children. For instance, In the case of Iman (Pen Portrait 2), her mother was exceptionally committed to supporting her daughter's education, while her father was reluctant to do so. To get a better view of the challenges involved and to understand the factors that motivated Iman's mother to make sacrifices for the cause of her daughter's education, I went to Koye, the village where Iman's parents live. Going to Koye took about an hour's walk through a steep valley and up a hill before reaching the homesteads where the house is located. In making this visit, I was able to see for myself how challenging it was for children to commute between their home and school through the difficult terrain under inhospitable climatic conditions, let alone becoming successful in their education.

My key question that I presented to W/ro²⁰ Kerim [Iman's mother] was how she managed to build the courage to support her children's education despite her household's economic conditions, which was more or less similar to many other families in her village. I also asked her if someone in her community had inspired her choice and decision to think that education was important. Iman's mother illustrated her view as follows:

I don't know of anyone in my own community who had attained a certain level of education. However, I have experienced that being unable to read letters sent from my own relatives and asking others to read it for me is humiliating. I had to go from one house to the other in my neighbourhood to find someone who can read the letter. At that time, my own children were not yet in school. Now my children, even the youngest one, could read anything and write down addresses and telephone numbers for me. I'm regretting that I didn't get the chance to go to school when I was young. Nonetheless, I have an economic

²⁰ W/ro, in the Amharic language is the English equivalent of 'Mrs'.

problem in providing the scholastic materials that they need, but I'm striving to help them pursue their education. It is the local government leaders and the school who, for instance, assisted my daughter [referring to Iman] to continue her secondary education. (Kerim, F, 45, Koye)

Based on the data generated from the discussions with children, parents and other adults in the community, and with a view to gathering the perspectives of other groups of people who were directly and indirectly involved in children's education, I also conducted discussions with teachers (including school principals) and leaders of PTAs in the study area. PTAs were associations established to play a facilitation role through working closely with the school administration, parents and students such that the teaching and learning processes would be executed smoothly.

Most members of the PTA expressed their view that the major reason for many parents not sending their children to school was linked to the low value attached to education in general.

In explaining the challenges that he had observed around the challenges of low level of enrolment and retention of students in school, a member of PTA in Gobera Primary School said,

I'm aware that many parents raise the issue of economic burden as a major factor for not being able to send their children to school. ... But, I feel that many families are not yet convinced to accept education as something important to change the lives of people. We need to do something about changing the attitude of parents first. For instance, I have come across a person who reported that his eldest son is mentally impaired and cannot attend school simply because he wanted him to keep the cattle rather than going to school. But the child eventually learnt why his father didn't want him to go to school. He told his father that he denied him his chance of getting educated. (Abdu, M, 47, Gobera)

Ato ²¹ Hussien, another member of the PTA in the same school, said there were many children who went to school irregularly and many others dropping out of school permanently. Their role, according Ato Hussien, was to track those children and, where possible and depending on the willingness of the parents, attempt to get them back to school. In this regard, he said,

Many parents are sending their children to school only in fear of penalty. Had it not been for the efforts that are being made by the government, teachers and us [leaders of the community] to influence parents to send their children to school and tracking those groups of children who are often absent, there would have been a significant decrease in the number of students who were currently attending school. In general, many parents don't think that education is important. (Hussien, M, 57, Gobera)

Even when working closely with the school administration to bring children back to school, Ato Hussien shared with me his personal experience regarding the challenges involved in sending the children to school, which, of course, was encountered by many parents in his communities:

I have four children in school. I am trying to do my best in ensuring that they continue their education. My eldest son, for instance, has completed his education and managed to secure a job at the department of agriculture of Argobba Woreda. He encourages me to continue supporting the rest of my children to pursue their education. He also makes some contributions towards this as well. The younger ones are trying to follow in his footsteps. Even if I have a positive attitude towards education, I'm afraid that I may not be able to continue my support when the time comes for them to join secondary school. This requires them to move to another town, such as Medina, Kemissie or Harbu. It is not easy to fulfil all their school materials. I have to spend about 360 Birr to buy them exercise books, pens and pencils at the beginning of the year. They often lose their pens and

²¹ Ato, in the Amharic language is the English equivalent of 'Mr'.

pencils and I have to buy and replace it for them. This is really beyond my capacity. Currently I feel like I'm being 'milked like a cow'. (Hussien, M, 57, Gobera)

On the issue of the need to enhance parent's involvement in their children's education, Ato Hussien said,

Even if some parents seem to be convinced that education is important, they are not yet ready to provide the desired level of support due to other needs that require the labour of the children at household level. Those groups of parents who are sending their children to school won't mind much about the quality of education that is being delivered in school but they only want not be identified as a person who is not sending his/her child to school. (Hussien, M, 57, Gobera)

The teachers, on their part, indicated that the level of interest among parents about education was very low in general. They emphasised the need for a much better level of parental involvement in their children's education if children in Argobba were to succeed in their education. One of the teachers explained,

Parents do not often come to school when we invite them for consultations. For example, among 50 parents who were invited to a meeting with teachers, only four parents showed up. When they are asked about their reason, they say, 'Why do you need to talk to us; we have already given you our children?'. Most parents are sending their children to school only in fear of the penalty that is imposed on those who are not letting their children go to school. However, the penalty is not enforced in a strict manner anyways. (Yalew, M, 32, Gobera)

Yalew further noted that the ever-decreasing interest in modern education could be seen from the number of children who were not continuing their secondary education. He said,

For instance, during the year before last year, there were 21 students who sat for the national exam at Grade 8 of whom 18 passed. However, there were only two students who joined secondary school of whom one dropped out. This shows that much needs to be done to enhance the awareness of the community about the advantages that could be drawn from education. (Yalew, M, 32, Gobera)

Along the same line of argument, the principal of the school said some parents who were not interested to send the boys to regular schools would arrange for them to go to religious schools and claimed they were going to become *deresa* (a religious leader) and send the girls somewhere out of the kebele until registration was over and regular classes started. But they would bring them back home once the deadline for registration was over.

Children's work was also noted to be one of the major obstacles in the enrolment and retention of children in schools. In explaining the contesting choices that parents had to make between their children's education and work, a teacher explained her own experiences and encounters:

When some students ask permission to stay home for a day or two, it is likely that they might not show up for a period of a week. I have come across a case where a girl asked me permission for two days but didn't get back to school for about a week. However, when I asked her friends who were coming to school from her neighbourhood, I learnt that she was herding cows in her village. Even if the children wish to come to school, the parents won't let them go to school because of their labour contribution in households. (Fantu, F, 25, Gobera)

Fantu noted further that, in the context of the school where she was teaching, there was better attendance by girls than boys:

In the context of our school, it is the girls who tend to regularly come to school than the boys. The girls seem to be more industrious in focusing on their education than the boys. They score better grades

than the boys. The boys tend to be engaged on the farm work than coming to school. The girls are among the high-ranking students. But most of the girls think they should attend school only up to Grade 8. Then after, they tend to get married but there are a few who would like to continue their education. (Fantu, F, 25, Gobera)

5.4.3 Perspectives of key informants regarding children's education

The data generated from girls, boys and adults showed the low level of enrolment and retention of students and the slow level of expansion of educational services over the past four decades in Argobba. While children attributed these to the low level of interest that their parents had towards modern education and to workload, parents argued that even if they wished to send their children to school, they still needed their children to contribute to the household economy, which, in turn, would not let them send their children to school. To establish a clearer understanding of the factors that might negatively affect children's education in the area, this study further explored how modern education was initiated and expanded in Argobba in the first place and gathered information about the feelings, attitudes, excitement or embarrassment that the establishment of such an institution had created among the community from the start. I believed that this would be beneficial to better understand the factors that persisted to the present time and to examine the problems therein in context. Hence, I wanted to pay a visit to the first school established in Argobba in 1974. Although the locality of this school was within the same kebele where one of my study villages was located, I had to drive for about 15 kilometres along the gravel road that connected the town of Medina to Harbu and walk for about an hour along a dry riverbed and towards the hill before reaching Sidager Primary School. Accompanied by the leader of the kebele, Ato Kedir, we walked for about 45 minutes before we saw the roofs of the school glittering from the rays of the morning sun coming from the opposite direction. I felt some sense of the hope that was formed in the minds of people who contributed to the school's establishment, realising that the school opened its gates for children in Argobba

to benefit from what other children were privileged to have in different parts of the country.

Upon our arrival at the school, we met Ato Worku, a teacher in the school, who took us around the classrooms and showed us the compound while I was waiting for my key informant Ato Mohamed to arrive. The school was built with best-quality materials, and it was still intact with no signs of cracks with the exception of some broken windowpanes. From my own observations, similar types of schools were built in different parts of the country with the support that the MoE obtained from the government of Sweden. The Elementary School Building Unit (known as the ESBU) was set up within the Ministry, the task of which was to set up and furnish primary schools in selected sites of remote areas of the country.

Ato Mohamed was an elderly person aged in his seventies. We sat around the corner from the school compound so as not to attract the attention of teachers and students. According to the accounts of Ato Mohamed, this school was the first of its kind to be established in Sidager in 1974, a period just before the downfall of the Imperial State in Ethiopia. Two influential individuals made its establishment possible, liaising with the government and lobbying officials based in Kalu Awraja,²² giving the opportunity to the community in Argobba for the establishment of a clinic and a school. The individuals coordinating the task of selecting the sites, however, swapped the places around and had the clinic set up on the hilly place where most of the villagers have settled and the school was established in the lowland, where there was less human settlement. The place is also infested with malaria. In this regard, Ato Mohamed said,

Even if a call was made to the people to send their children to school, many people were not interested to send their children. There were few children who were enrolled during the first two years. Children from places as far as Ayn-amba, Medina, Amoye Sertie and Afesso

²² Kalu Awraja used to be one of the administrative units within the then Wollo province where the present day Argobba is located.

were meant to come here. However, it takes them a long time to reach here and get back home. The land was not how it looks like now. It was a forest. Even the monkeys were bothering the children on their way to and from school. As the number of students reduced, the principal of school was making lots of efforts to convince the community to send their kids to school. He and the other teachers were ideal most of the time. He eventually married a girl from this community and in due course of time, the number of students began to pick up slowly. (Ato Mohamed, M, 70, Sidager)

I asked the teacher who was showing us around about students who had managed to get to a higher level of education from this school. He commented,

Many children are often enrolled in September, when schools are opening. However, they will slowly begin to drop out soon after classes have begun. The attendance of children up to Grade 4 is relatively better. It gets worse when it comes to children in the upper grades. At times all the children in a class might not show up except one or two. There is a huge gap between the awareness about modern education and what is practically seen here. To the best of my knowledge, there were only three students who have managed to complete Grade 8 and were able to move to the next level since I started teaching in this school five years ago. Two of them have come from the same family. The girl is now working in the health post here and her brother in Aynamba Kebele as an agricultural extension worker.²³ The reason why they have become successful is due to the support of their father, who is really committed to his children's education. He was not willing to marry off his daughter. Such decisions require a great deal of determination on the part of the parents. (Worku, M, 30, Sidager)

²³ Agricultural extension workers are government employees hired to work closely with farmers at kebele level in transferring improved ways of agricultural methods and livestock.

As could be seen from the foregoing discussions, improvement had not been observed in the sphere of enrolment and retention of students in the area over a long period. Although the school's structure and facilities were the best when compared to the other schools I visited in the study area, children were not yet benefiting at the desired level. I thought, 'This is a school without students'.

My discussion with the members of staff at the level of the woreda administration also confirmed the challenge that was being faced in the enrolment and retention of children in the entire woreda. Low level of awareness of the community about modern education, child marriage and inaccessibility of schools were indicated as major constraints for the enrolment and retention of children in school. In emphasising the great level of influence posed by child marriage, it was noted that some parents made arrangements during the summer vacation for the girls to be engaged or marry such that they would not show up when schools were opened in September. The husbands, too, did not let their wives go back to school once they were married. One member of the office of education in Argobba woreda suggested that a lot of work was needed if education was to be expanded in this woreda:

Much needs to be done to convince parents to develop a positive attitude towards education and to consider the impact of child marriage on the lives of young girls. Many think that girls are expected to marry and lead a family life rather than going through the education system. (Kemal, M, 35, Medina)

Having gathered the opinions of key informants from the community, I interviewed a scholar from Wollo University, Dr Tilahun Adem, who had previously led the Department of Education of South Wollo Administrative Zone. This helped me to gain a better understanding of the role that the government had played in the growth of modern education and to obtain the perspective of an academic about the prospects and challenges in obtaining the desired results from modern education.

Some of the key issues to come out of my interview with Dr Tilahun emphasised the contradictions within the approaches and policies that were being followed to expand education in the country. In this regard, despite the growth observed in the development of new educational structures and infrastructure in the country over the past decades, he believed that the attention paid for the introduction and expansion of programmes relevant to communities who are living in rural areas was very limited. Furthermore, he emphasised that the preparation of the policy has been non-participatory in that it did not take into account the realities of the communities and stakeholders it was supposed to serve. He cited the literacy programme and Adult Skills Training and Basic Development Education as good examples that were put in place in the earlier times. These programs focused on the identification of local needs and development of relevant training programmes for addressing them.

Concerning quality of education, Dr Tilahun emphasised the importance of maintaining quality while trying to expand education. He noted,

It is important that the effort to expand education should not compromise its quality. It would be crucial, therefore, to be aware of the nature and type of input that needs to be put in place and identify the nature of education, which the end users are interested on. Furthermore, while appreciating the good lessons learnt in the course of implementation of the ESDP [Education Sector Development Program], it would also be important to assess the potential challenges and opportunities before executing any new educational policies. (Dr Tilahun, M, 53, Dessie)

While recognising the tremendous growth observed in the educational infrastructure at primary, secondary and higher education levels, however, Dr Tilahun expressed his concern about the incompatibility between the growth in the number of young people completing their studies and the very limited absorption capacity of the employment sector in the country in general. He believed that this situation could result in a reduction of interest among parents

and families to send their children to school. This made families question if education was a good thing for their children at all. In other words, the expansion of education should be viewed in light of what the development sector and the economy requires. This would be more challenging for the community living in rural areas than in urban areas as the majority of the population resided in the rural areas.

Finally, Dr Tilahun suggested that the success of the ESDP needed to be evaluated based on the success and challenges encountered in the course of implementation. This, he suggested, would help to make improvements at the planning stage of the next phase of ESDP. He also emphasised the need for having capable individuals at all levels of educational service-rendering institutions to coordinate efforts to improve the quality of education at different levels. In connection to this, he noted that the quality of education had gone below the desired level due partly to a shortage of teachers and, in some instances, teachers giving up teaching and engaging in the business of driving *bajaj* [three-wheeled taxi] or migrating to Saudi and other Gulf states themselves.

In connection to this, Dr Tilahun recalled an experience he had encountered with young girls who had just returned from the Gulf countries who said, 'Why would we bother about education while some of our teachers are also migrating to the Gulf countries like us for a better pay to carry out jobs such as herding goats', while justifying the reason why they did not need to complete their secondary education.

Another key informant from the office of Argobba Woreda, Kemal, indicated that his administration was working to resolve problems related to the location of some of the schools in the woreda. In this regard, he noted that efforts were underway to reorganise the villages through moving the schools to relatively convenient locations in the lowlands and along areas that were easily accessible. According to Kemal, changes were being observed on the part of the community to leave the old settlement villages that were previously established at the top of the mountains across the woreda and to move to new

settlement villages emerging along the main transport route that connected Medina to the main highway in the Addis Ababa–Dessie road. According to Kemal, this was partly dictated by the interests of the community to move into a relatively better landscape that would allow the construction of houses and the rendering of services such as schools and clinics. In elaborating further, he noted,

The local government is in the process of reorganising some of the villages with an aim of creating access to basic services such as electricity, water and health. Hence, the places that were serving as centres of government administration are being moved to better sites. The inconvenience of the previous sites where schools were established could be seen from the fact that the roofs of some of the schools are often taken away by wind during the rainy seasons of July and August and the community has to keep on maintaining and replacing the roofs when schools are opening in September. These locations were not conducive for both students and teachers in that they don't have water in the vicinity. The places that used to serve as administrative centres of the local kebeles are no more found to be a centre. Hence, with the cooperation of the community, we had to demolish the existing primary schools and set them up in new sites. Meanwhile, the local government is making preparations to develop master plans for the new settlements that are believed to grow into satellite towns within the woreda. (Kemal, M, 35, Medina)

The local government representative also expressed the commitment of his office to support and encourage the expansion of education and retention of students to succeed in their transitions to the next level. In this regard, he cited the effort that his office had made to financially support 37 students who had completed primary school to continue their secondary education in the nearest high school out of Argobba.

To conclude, given the insights gathered from children, and from was suggested by teachers and some members of the PTAs, there continued to be a

gap between what the government was trying to achieve with regard to the enrolment and retention of children and the context on the ground. While many children thought they were missing the opportunity to enrol in school because of the lack of willingness on the part of their parents, most parents and adults in the community attributed this largely to the need for children's labour to assist their parents in household activities and, to some extent, to the economic burden that covering costs related to schooling entails. However, it would also be entirely mistaken to believe that all parents supported the idea of sending their children to school and their endeavour to become best achievers in their education. This required a high level of commitment on the part of parents, like Iman's mother, as presented in the pen portraits.

5.4.4 Views of adults regarding migration

Parents and adults who participated in the small-group interviews acknowledged that many children migrated from Argobba. Most of them agreed that poverty was the underlying reason that motivated children and young people to migrate. Low productivity of the land and underemployment within the agricultural sector was also mentioned as a contributory factor for many young boys and girls leaving their villages.

As a way of establishing an understanding of whether a decision to migrate was a matter shared and discussed in households, adults who participated in the study were asked if girls and boys needed parental consent if they wished to migrate. In this regard, most participants suggested that children, especially girls, were expected to convince their parents before they left and did not often want to violate their parents' will. When asked the reason why girls, more than boys, were expected to obtain their parents' consent, participants indicated that girls tended to ask for money for their transport more than their male counterparts, and they did not often go against their parents' will. Many parents believed that the children would not be successful if they migrated without their parents' approval. According to the views of adults, some children may try to convince their parents by appreciating what their families had done for them thus far and

by letting their parents understand that they did not have any options if they stay in the rural area. It was noted during the discussion that if children manage to obtain their father's consent, he could be generous and give them money for transport and other necessities. This could extend to the level of selling his cow. Even if some parents do not seem to be convinced, however, they refrained from blocking what their children wanted to do as this may expose them to another form of risk. The parents could even pray for them. Even if there are some children who left without their parents' consent, however, many parents tended to forgive. Concerning how migrant children and young persons maintained their relationships with their parents, one of the participants of the group discussions said,

Nonetheless, the relationships between parents and children who left without the consent of the parents will somehow continue. The migrants will find some way to talk to their parents through using their neighbour's phone or may start sending money. The parents will then stop complaining once they begin to receive money. (Sani, M, 37, Afesso)

On the negative side, most participants indicated that they were aware of the risks involved with migration. Issues that were mentioned as risks related to migration included the danger of travelling by sea and the threat posed by gangs who might hijack the migrants in Yemen and demand that their parents should send more money, among others:

We are aware that migrants encounter hardships on their way. It is like walking through a fire. They could face problems even before they leave the country, let alone their final destination. Those who may become successful could get back or send money to their parents or build a house in the town of Medina. (Ibrahim, M, 40, Afesso)

With a view to gaining a better understanding of the perspectives of parents who had experience of a family member's migration, I interviewed Hawa, the mother of Zebiba, one of the migrant girls whose case I presented in the pen

portraits in Section 5.2.3 (Pen Portrait 3). I asked her views regarding children who decided to migrate without their parents' consent and her experience regarding the migration of her own daughters and son to Saudi. She explained,

Zebiba's father passed away at a time when our family needed his support badly. This was a time when both of us were striving to support each other to raise our children. Whatever we get from our farm was hand to mouth. I had to carry the child whom I breastfed on my front and the older one on my back while at the same time undertaking other household tasks and supporting my husband on the farm field. At that time, Zebiba was too young to realise what it means to lose a father. Following his death, I was forced to shoulder the entire responsibility of caring for our children. The oldest child was only 14 years old. This was stressful. I was carrying a branch of *Woiba*²⁴ tree on my back to sell it in the market, which demands walking for hours.

I'm well aware that migration is a serious and dangerous risk to be taken by children. I have already lost one of my daughters. My son, who has attended school up to Grade 8 but who has migrated to Saudi is telling me the bad situation that he is in. He coined the following poem and read it to me over the phone:

Temire Temire eske semintegna
Saudi wosedegn lefiyel iregna. (Hawa, F, 57, Gobera)

Translated in plain terms, this means, 'Having attended my studies up to Grade 8 [which is not an easy thing to achieve], I ended up in becoming a shepherd of goats in Saudi'. This signifies that he had not been able to achieve his aspirations yet. Hawa argued that she did not endorse the migration her

²⁴ *Woiba* is believed to be a medicinal plant and is often used by women, especially after delivery, in a form of steam and is believed to cleanse unnecessary fluids out of the body. It is also used to decorate hands and feet, giving them a black colour for occasions such as weddings.

daughters to Djibouti and Saudi. She felt bad about children who had and were still migrating by recalling the bad experience that she had encountered. She attributed the decision to migrate to children and young person's desire to change their lives through getting a better income.

On the other hand, most participants of this study considered migration as one of the key strategies to getting out of poverty. They emphasised that lack of employment opportunity and the decreasing size of family farmlands due to the increasing number of children influenced the choice to migrate made by children and young persons. One of the participants of the group interviews expressed this as follows:

We have been tilling the land for generations, but our children are not willing to stay here. The size of the land to be cultivated is getting smaller and smaller; they don't have any other option than going.
(Jama, M, 56, Afesso)

Strengthening this point of argument, another participant suggested,

The major reason why many young persons decide to migrate is to get money. When they see others who have managed to support their families, for instance, in sending money back home [some children send up to 20,000 Birr for their parents at any given time, at least once a year], which is much more than an average income that a farmer could make per annum. Some migrants manage to improve the condition of their parents' house or set up a new house for themselves in town. Such instances motivate many other children in the village to migrate, irrespective of the risks. Parents are also aware of the risks involved in migration, such as being drowned in the sea or being abused by gangs who demand money from the migrants' families back home. This is matter luck. Those who succeed might change their lives. (Hamid, M, 57, Gobera)

The views gathered from parents and adults who participated in the small-group interviews regarding reasons that influenced the decisions to migrate

were further confirmed by the key informants who took part in this study, including religious and community leaders and teachers and government representatives. An exception to this was what some participants indicated as how migration could be motivated as a consequence of certain cultural practices such as marriage. According to a religious leader I talked to, migration was not always motivated by a lack of money or resources to survive. For him, a decision to migrate from Argobba, especially girls, might also be influenced by expectations and cultural norms around marriage. He explained,

If a request for marriage is not made to the parents of a girl who has reached the age of 15 or 16, it is likely that the girls would leave the area just to avoid stigma attached to the notion of *kuma-ker*. There is no way for the girl or her family to ask for a marriage partner. She should at least have a fiancée. If they don't get a husband up to the age of 18, they might decide to leave their village. This does not mean, however, that they don't have chances to marry. They could still get married anyways, in other places. (Sheik Yassin, M, 58, Medina)

However, despite the risks involved in the process of migration, Sheik Yassin suggested that the advantages would outweigh the disadvantages once the migrants reached their destinations. He argued that many people would support migration because they had seen some of the outcomes:

For example, it is individuals who have migrated to the Gulf countries that own most of the houses built here in town of Medina. Some of them have sent back the money that is required to cover the construction cost to their relatives or they have come back and settled here after setting up their own houses. Most of them go to Djibouti. They work there and they cross to Saudi when they are not satisfied with what they get in Djibouti. Other children and young persons will be motivated to migrate when they see the success of others who have migrated. The boys give up farming and go. But girls are also leaving. Even those who are not able to construct houses, in the rural context, they buy an ox and send money to alleviate the basic needs

of their families. Many parents have benefited from the migration of their children. Even if parents do not often push their children to leave, much pressure is not made to prevent the migration so long as the child is ready to leave. Seeing what other migrants from their neighbourhood have managed to do influences many other children and young persons to leave. Even if there is a hardship and risks in it, parents believe that the migrants would manage to survive the challenges and be able to support themselves and their families after a while. The opportunity for most young people to support themselves within the country is limited. Unless one is well educated and secures a job, it is difficult to survive. For instance, I have facilitated the construction of a house for one of my relatives with the money she is sending back. The migrants keep communicating with their parents through using mobile phones and applications such as WhatsApp and Viber. They buy and send smartphones to their families here. Those who are not educated are also able to use this. (Sheik Yassin, M, 58, Medina)

While maintaining similar views to those of the parents and other individuals drawn from the community, key informants from the government offices in Argobba held a different view regarding the risks and advantages that could be drawn from migration. By not emphasising the limitations in the lack of availability of options for children and young people in the rural areas, key informants from government agencies amplified the risks involved in migration and suggested that what migrants lost outweighs what they may gain:

According to what we have heard from the returnees, migrants are often exposed to physical and/or sexual abuse. Although some of the migrants may succeed in arriving at their destinations, especially to the Gulf states, with or without facing challenges, most parents are not aware about the difficulties that their children are going through. (Awel, M, 31, Department of Labour and Social Affairs, South Wello)

The key informant from Argobba Woreda Administrative Council emphasised that the local government was aware of the problem, stating that migration was a manifestation of the economic problem that was being observed in the community—that is, a lack of opportunities locally and the wish by young people to improve their lifestyles. He reiterated that this was not peculiar to Argobba but part of the national and global trends. On what the local government was doing to address the problem, the government representative said,

We are creating opportunities for the young people to get into small businesses, supported by skills training. But the young people here have job preferences. For example, many don't show interest to be trained in the fields of carpentry and building. But there are some who are benefiting from engaging in these fields. But mass migration and illegal trafficking has reduced due to action by government and the cooperation of communities. (Seid, M, 35, Medina)

5.5 Influence of globalisation

As seen in Chapter 2, the way globalisation could affect the lives of children and young people as well as communities varies across time and place and depends on the different facets of globalisation—that is, whether it is economic, cultural, technological, etc. In the context of Argobba, the growing changes that were occurring as a result of improvements in transport and communications were contributing to the increased movement of people, especially young girls, to migrate out of Argobba. Furthermore, the increased demand for labour in the Gulf States, along with a looser immigration process, had influenced much of the migration. However, some of the migrants were taking the risk of entering those countries illegally, which posed a great deal of threat to their lives. This was seen in the cases of Zebiba and Kamil in the pen portraits in Section 5.2 of this chapter. The increased trend of the migration of girls was also creating a new household composition where parents were taking care of their grandchildren who were sent home by the migrant mothers.

Among the many features of globalisation, there is an increasing trend in the use of media and communications such as mobile phones and watching television programmes like the British Premier League football matches that are broadcast by different sports, news and entertainment channels. Some of the participants of this study expressed their concern over some programmes, such as *Kana*, which they feared influenced the behaviour of children and young people, as most of such programmes conveyed messages about, for instance, conspiracy to injure other people, or programme series that involved multiple sexual partners, which were against the ethos of the Argobba community.

According to my discussions with young persons and key informants during the fieldwork, the first thing migrants did was buy and send a smartphone to their parents. This has made possible the instantaneous transmission of information between the migrants and the family back at the village. The use of mobile phones by the migrants, beyond serving as a means of communication, served to showcase the features of the house where they lived and the roads and buildings of the city, which, of course, was exciting for motivating others to migrate. According to some informants, this situation tended to initiate the interest of those who remained in the villages to consider migration as a means to leave the rural way of life.

5.6 Conclusion

As seen thus far, there were similarities and differences in the conceptualisations and experiences of childhood, education and migration among children and adults. Despite the great level of value attached to having children among the Argobba community, parents found it difficult to fulfil the needs of their children, especially in sending them to school. They mainly attributed this to the nature of their livelihood where children were required to contribute their labour to the household economy. I also noted the variations in how children maintained their relationships with their parents and navigated their transitions into adulthood through education, migration and marriage. The

availability of easy means of transport and communication devices such as mobile phones were facilitating the process of migration.

In general, the views of children and adults highlighted the differences in the way children and young people imagined their futures—that is, geared towards challenging the long-standing sociocultural practices and navigating their way towards adulthood through education and migration—while most adults wished to maintain the traditions and values handed down by past generations.

I present a detailed analysis of these themes in Chapter 6.

Chapter 6.

Discussion

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I review the findings in the context of the theoretical and explanatory frameworks that I have presented in section 2.9 of chapter 2. It is clear from the research how childhood, education migration and globalisation were perceived and practised by communities and different actors within them, but a further context emerged, that of the inhospitable environment the Argobbas were positioned within. This chapter shows how children and young people navigated their life trajectories through education and migration and reimagined their futures through overcoming the challenges of the inhospitable environment, the changing social, economic and political environment and globalisation.

Furthermore, it shows the complex nature of childhood in Argobba by presenting an analysis of the views of three different key groups—that is, children, parents/adults and key informants—and demonstrating the causal and close associations of poverty and gender issues. In doing so, it illuminates key issues that underpinned the similarities and differences in how children and adults conceptualised childhood, education and migration and other factors that influenced decisions as to whether children should pursue their education, migrate or stay in their communities.

The major point of departure for this study, therefore, lies in the claims made by the Argobbas about their ethnic identity, which enabled them to claim a right to self-administration, whether this structural change impacted how

communities constituted themselves and its relevance in shaping children's lives at present and in the future. Following Anderson's (1983) concept of 'imagined communities', the study attempted to identify how adults imagined the future of their community and that of their children, and how children and young people were reimagining and reconstructing their futures through education, migration and globalised culture. This has created a situation whereby some children continued to contest the long-standing sociocultural values of the community, leading them to use their agency and resilience to realise their aspirations. Hence, the analysis intends to build an understanding of the prevailing tensions between the views of adults, whose imaginings were still linked to 'the past', characterised by maintaining their traditions but coping with the challenges of the present, while children and young people attempted to reconstruct their childhoods through education and migration as they navigated through rapid political and economic changes and the opportunities created by globalisation. These included, but were not limited to, their desire to leave the rural way of life, valuing education and, at times, contesting some of the long-standing social and cultural values, such as child marriage and gender inequality.

Figure 14 depicts the factors shaping children's and adults' imaginings at present and in the future and the issues underpinning that often cause tensions between children and adults.

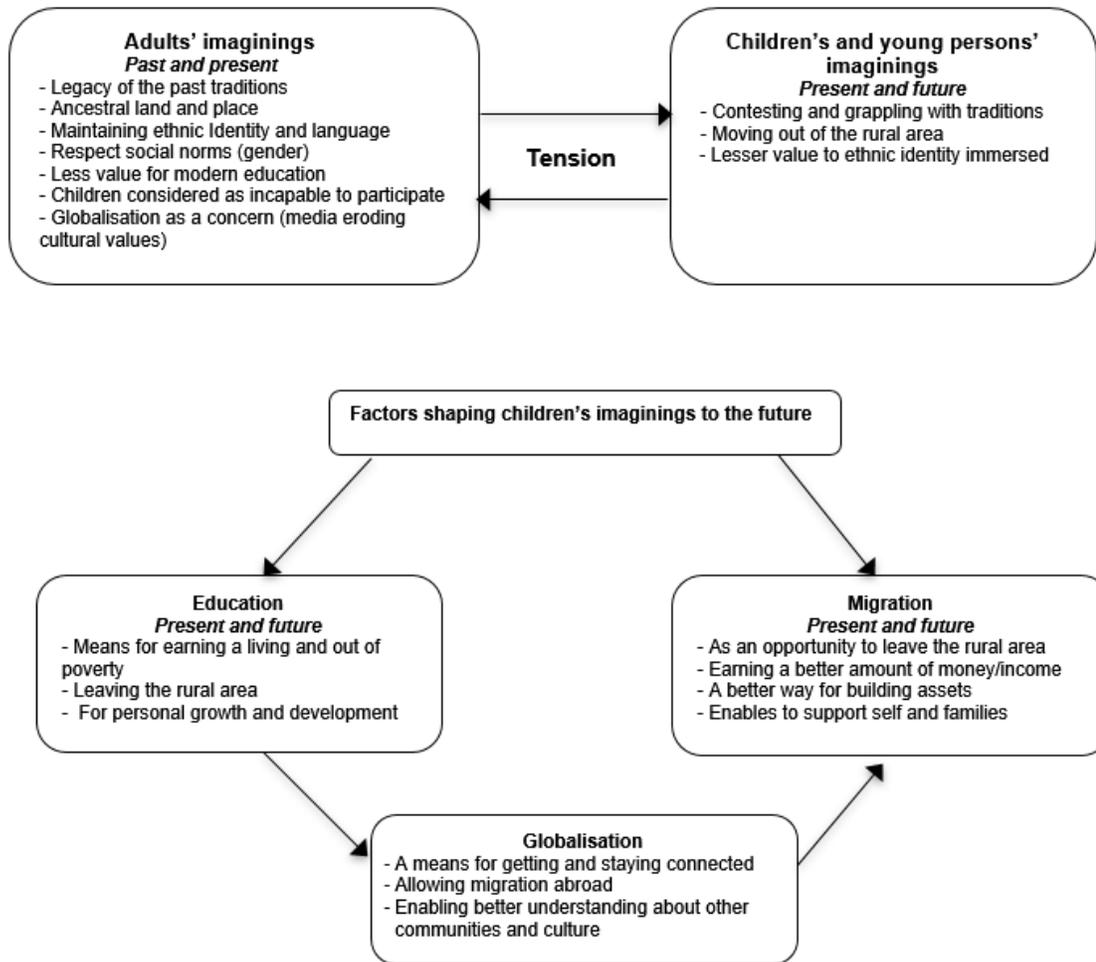


Figure 14. Children’s and adult’s imaginings about education, migration and globalisation.

6.2 Growing up in Argobba

6.2.1 Conceptualisations and experiences of childhood

As noted by scholars, how childhood is constructed and interpreted, and even determining the period when childhood ends, is a challenging task (Ansell and van Blerk 2004; James and Prout 1990; Froerer 2009; Lindon 2005). We saw in Chapter 2 that definitions of children and childhood vary across cultures, as different milestones such as commencement of work, end of schooling and the age of menarche (for girls) are used to denote the time when childhood ends (Boyden 1985; Boyden and Levison 2000; Christiansen et al. 2006; Cregan and

Cuthbert 2014; Hammersley 2017; Johnson and West 2018; Penn 2008; Tafere et al. 2009; Thomas 2002).

In the context of Argobba, work took up a significant proportion of children's time and took centre stage in shaping childhoods. Although children began to perform easier jobs starting from the age of 5 onwards, the age of 7 was indicated to be the most common starting point for children to fully engage in undertaking tasks, light or labour intensive, depending on their physical strength and gender, while at the same time marking the period when childhood ended. Other studies conducted in Ethiopia have also indicated that work marks the time, often from the age of 7, when a person is no longer considered a child (Abebe 2008; Heinonen 2011).

Adults in Argobba believed that engaging children in work from an early age had a significant role to play in enabling them to learn skills for their later lives and in becoming competent adults who would lead a decent family life. This has similarities with the contexts of children in Konso²⁵ where the transmission of local knowledge from adults to children is expressed through work in particular (Watson 2009) and correlates with other studies conducted elsewhere in the global south in general. Morrow (2010, 2014) and Punch (2003), for instance, emphasised that growing up in the global south is linked with work, undertaking household responsibilities and going to school, rather than just school and play. Despite debates over children's participation in work as a means to learn skills and/or as an impediment to their play and formal education, other scholars have emphasised that through engagement in work, children shape not only their own daily lives and future life chances but also the conditions of other members of their families (Abebe 2008; Aitken 2001; Bequele and Boyden 1988; Bourdillon et al. 2010; Heinonen 2011; Morrow 2010; Mulugeta 2015; Boyden 1985; Nieuwenhuys 2013; Pankhurst et al. 2015; Tafere and Pankhurst 2015; Thomas 2002; Woldehanna and Jones 2015).

²⁵ The Konso are an ethnic group living in southern Ethiopia widely known for their skills in making terraces over sloped landscapes for the cultivation of crops.

Work was shared out among children along gender lines and was associated with stereotypes in that boys believed that they must not perform duties that were traditionally designated to girls and women, and vice versa. In this regard, boys believed that their female counterparts might undermine them if they indulged in activities that were traditionally performed by women. The attitude of not getting involved in tasks meant to be carried out by women, such as preparing *wot* (stew), was observed in one of the studies carried out by Young Lives in Ethiopia (Boyden 2009). The gendered division of labour and the fact that girls worked longer on domestic chores than boys have also been documented by other Young Lives studies conducted in Ethiopia (e.g. Morrow et al. 2014; Tafere and Pankhurst 2015; Woldehanna and Gebremedhin 2015).

6.2.2 Peer relations and play

As we saw in Chapter 2, childhood studies have emphasised that peer relations and play could shape childhood and provide an opportunity for children to acquire skills that may positively or negatively affect their behaviour (Buckingham and Bragg 2005; Nicolson et.al. 2006). However, in a rural context like Argobba where children's labour was much needed in the household economy, children found it difficult to make time to play and interact with peers. Children's play was often linked with work and whenever they got the opportunity—for instance, on their way to and from school, while keeping their cattle in the field (mainly boys), on their way to and from fetching water and while going out to collect firewood (mainly girls). Thus, it could be generalised that boys and girls shared a common pattern of integrating work and play, learning about work through playing, and vice versa. Other studies that have explored the realities of children in the context of the global south have also shown that children tend to play while working and learn about work while playing (Punch 2000, 2001; Reynolds 1991).

Trends in the patterns of play, however, have shown changes over time in Argobba. This was partly attributed to many young boys (and occasionally girls) spent their spare time consuming *khat*, and this was reported as a contributory

factor for young people having less interest in play. Although *khat* is not widely grown in Argobba, the trading and use of *khat* was gaining momentum and had become one of the trading items being transported to Argobba from the neighbouring woredas on a daily basis.

When compared with the situation in Western countries where children spend little time in work that requires physical activity, this study shows the burden of work and its influence on children's play in Argobba. As shown by other studies undertaken elsewhere in the global south, where work extends to preventing children from fulfilling their desire to go to school (e.g. Mulvihill et al. 2000), children in the West spend their leisure time playing, using the internet, watching television and playing computer games.

6.2.3 Children's agency and changes in intergenerational relations

There is a growing academic interest in documenting children's agency, which is influenced largely by the principle that it considers children as social actors. Hence, the importance of scrutinising the question of agency with respect to the age of children, and the extent to which they are able to make effective choices related to experience and maturity is gaining momentum (Huijsmans 2011, pp. 1308–1311). However, there is also an emerging debate that is critical of the question of agency in the sense that such agency should not only be seen in a celebratory, uncritical, non-relational, locally bound and non-reflective manner Abebe (2019). Abebe emphasises further that it is important not to focus on the social, cultural, material and political contexts only, but also on the relational processes that might constrain or allow children to demonstrate their agency (p.2). Hence, children's and young people's agency should certainly be a contested and scrutinised concept rather than one that is taken for granted, unproblematised or assumed inherently to be positive and desired by all children and young people (Tisdall and Punch 2012, p. 256).

Recent childhood studies have, therefore, brought the importance of considering a generational perspective into debates on children's agency (Hammersley 2016). Hence, exploring the actions and agency of children,

necessitates adopting a relational approach and considering their social context. A relational approach in the 'actor' and 'agency' discourse shows shifts in household dynamics regarding children's position and changing intergenerational relationships (Huijsmans 2015, p. 16; Oswell 2013). In explaining the distinction that needs to be made between the notions of 'actor' and 'agency' and the importance of relationality in children's agency, Mayall and Zeiher (2003) argued,

An actor is someone who does something whereas the agent is someone who does something in relation with other people and, in doing so, makes things happen. This distinction implies that actor is about performativity (i.e., accomplishment) whereas agent is about relationality, including intergenerational relationships within which processes of social and cultural reproduction are embedded. (p. 6)

As the subsequent discussions demonstrate, the level and nature of agency that both children and adults demonstrated, as well as power dynamics and the issue of vulnerability, were reflected in some of the pen portraits presented in Chapter 5 of this thesis. In this regard, it has shown variations in the characteristics of agency that children demonstrated, for instance, in the course of their migration and in overcoming the challenges that they encountered in their day-to-day lives within their communities. This is seen in the fact that most of the children were significantly younger when they first migrated (13 to 15 years) and their agency was structured and constrained by different factors in the migratory process. While using their own means to cross the border to Djibouti and over the Red Sea to Saudi through, to use Huijsmans (2012) terms—a fluid or non-institutional form of migration—most of them needed to be tactical to overcome the challenges they encountered along their migratory trajectories, which, gradually created a greater scope for them to exercise their agency. Hence, as suggested by Huijsmans (2015), young migrants are not inherently vulnerable but become vulnerable if, among other

factors, through their relational position in the migration process where their agency is constrained.

The analysis of the ethnographic data in this research has reflected the different forms of agency that children demonstrated, i.e. where they have been agentic and at times their agency was constrained, which in turn made them vulnerable. This can be seen, for instance, from the case of Ansha (Pen Portrait 1). While being tactical in accepting an offer from a person to marry her to overcome the challenges that were created in her family after the death of her father, her agency was constrained when she was forced to pass through a lengthy divorce process that was much more challenging. Zebiba (Pen Portrait 3), on the other hand, was tactical in marrying someone to prevent the sexual abuse and assault she was encountering in the course of her migratory journey, even though the marriage did not last. The case of Iman (Pen Portrait 2) demonstrates the interdependent nature of agency between children and adults in that her mother showed strain in assisting her daughter not to give up her education, while Iman was determined to overcome the challenges and realise her aspiration of completing her secondary education rather than getting married. These cases demonstrate the interdependent nature of children's agency and reflect the notions of care, obligations and reciprocities between generations to theorise agency (Abebe 2008; Mayall and Zeiher 2003; Nieuwenhuys 2013; Punch and Tisdall 2012). The interdependent nature of children's relationships with their households, and the influence of structures such as the family and the wider social and cultural contexts in shaping and/or constraining children's agency, has further been emphasised by Mayall and Zeiher (2003).

This research demonstrates concern around the changing nature of agency by taking into account the broader questions of power, structure and sociocultural contexts, within which agency unfolds rather than being a universal phenomenon that departs from viewing children as passive objects in migration flows. Addressing the issue of vulnerability and agency—necessitates a further

analytical depth to the theorisation of children's agency — especially in context of the global south.

Despite what has been stipulated in most literature in Ethiopia regarding generational relations that are embedded in patron–client relations, the migration of children and young persons and their changing financial positions are bringing about shifts in their generational relations that give children more autonomy from adults. When seen from a relational perspective, as Huijsmans (2015, p. 16) suggested, such children gain a new and powerful position in the relationships with their parents. Despite the influence that structures, such as the family, the school and other societal institutions might pose over children's agency, researchers have noted that children as agents are also constantly interacting and reproducing these structures (Alderson and Yoshida 2016).

Drawing from the empirical findings, this thesis highlights important relational dimensions that reflect both tensions and reciprocal relationships between generations. This could be seen from the fact that some of the migrants relied on the support extended by members of their households to migrate or pursue their education while others were challenged by the tensions within their households—for example, around issues of marriage and family formations. As several studies have demonstrated, there are also shifts in decisions that some migrants are making regarding continuities in demographic patterns, such as marriage and family formation, in that transnational families are being formed and parents taking on new roles of caring for their grandchildren (e.g. Parreñas 2005, 2010).

6.3 Education

The literature review showed that contemporary discourses regarding education are aimed at expanding education on the premise that it will reduce poverty, improve quality of life and facilitate economic and social development independent of where individuals are (Boyden and Levison 2000; Kabeer 2000; Kjørholt 2013; Tarabini 2010). Similarly, there were increasing influences of neoliberalism and globalisation on national governments towards standardising

their educational systems (Torres 2009). We also saw that governments have made international commitments for expanding education. This study attempted to understand how education is conceptualised and practised among children and adults in Argobba. In this regard, the study revealed that while some progress has been made in the expansion of education since modern education was introduced in Argobba, the growth in enrolment and the retention of students thus far is limited. Despite the government's commitment to ensure that all school-aged children were enrolled, it had not borne the desired results as many children often dropped out even if many children show up at the beginning of every academic year as a consequence of mobilisation campaigns.

Jensen (2006) suggests that such commitments such as Education For All fail to consider the contexts of children and socioeconomic conditions and cultural values, as well as limitations in the capacity of governments to deliver education in different parts of the world. Following the same line of argument, and emphasising the need to take culture and context into account, Stephens (2007) suggest,

we need more effective ways of 'fitting' the macro policy intentions into the complex and 'messy' worlds of teachers, pupils and communities in which they reside. A better 'fit' will only come when we take both culture and context more seriously in the implementation of policy. (p. 222).

6.3.1 Children's perspectives on modern education

Most children who participated in this research viewed education as a means to help them to leave the rural way of life. This is largely underpinned by their portrayal of the rural way of life as one characterised by hard work in the fields (mainly for the boys) and household chores (mainly for the girls), which, in their thinking, was 'undesirable'. Children considered education as a vehicle to leave the rural area and towards a better and 'modern' style of living—that is, living in towns/cities where access to basic services such as water and electricity is easily accessible.

As expressed by a group of students who were currently living away from their parents attending their secondary school education in the town of Medina, they were 'paying the price' of receiving education with a hope that a time would come for them to enjoy their achievements from completing their education. As we saw in Chapter 5, these children considered education as one of the options available to them to shape their future lives. The high level of commitment shown by girls and boys who are currently attending their secondary education demonstrates the intrinsic value that they have given to education and their aspirations to advance in life.

In connection to this, similar findings have been documented by studies undertaken in the global south. A study undertaken by Crivello and Gaag (2016) and Camfield and Tafere (2009) in Ethiopia, for instance, confirmed that children and young people believed formal schooling was essential for their future lives, associating being educated with social worth, while being uneducated was a source of shame (p. 17). Similarly, in a study conducted in Peru (Boyden 2013, p. 586), young people believed that school education offered an escape from a rural way of life and a means of releasing future generations from the hardship and suffering that they had endured.

However, a wealth of scholarship has also documented that higher educational aspirations contribute to better educational achievements. In his assessment of children's educational aspirations in other parts of Ethiopia, Tafere (2015) observed that children believed education was something that would contribute to improving the lives of individuals and could serve as a pathway to greater earning potential. Based on her study in Peru on youth transitions through education and migration, Crivello (2009) has also suggested that young people's aspirations were central in influencing their thoughts towards the future but required certain practices and resources if they were to be achieved (p.2).

The research has found out that educational aspirations differed among children in Argobba. While many children regretted they were not enrolled or

had withdrawn from school, a few children argued that they were not yet convinced if modern education could bring any significant change in their lives. Some children believed, for instance, that acquiring a certain level of education, for instance, reading and writing might suffice for a person who lived in a rural village. As discussed in Chapter 5, a participant reported certain instances where some children might lose interest or feel bored to commute between home and school on a daily basis even if their parents were willing to support their education. But, we have also noted that those groups of children who managed to continue their secondary education had a higher educational aspiration than the ones in the lower grades. This could be contrasted with the case of a Peruvian girl who wished to leave her village to study, rather than stay in the rural area and continue to work on her parents' farm, who said, 'We are not going to suffer like this in the mud ... it's better to go and study' (Boyden 2013, p. 586). While the former complained about the harshness of the weather to attend her education, the later did not want to stay in her village due to the hardship of working in the farm fields. This confirms the existence of variations in how children in Argobba conceptualised education in the first place, but also indicates the inhospitable climatic conditions that children faced in their attempt to attend school.

6.3.2 Challenges and prospects of education in Argobba

When seen from the perspectives of the provisions made in the UNCRC, children have the right to have access and receive education (Quennerstedt and Quennerstedt 2014). While education is often assumed critical to social mobility and for improving opportunities for nations, there is often a tension between how education is perceived by governments and development agencies and the reality among children and communities, especially in the developing nations. As we have seen in section 5.3.2 of chapter 5, in Argobba, the context under which children were growing up did not allow many children to realise their dreams of access to education. Based on children's perspectives and analysis of the views gathered from adults and key informants, I identified four major factors that impede children's education in the context of Argobba: (1) children's

work, (2) parental attitude towards modern education, (3) sociocultural practices and (4) religious education. I now present a brief explanation of each.

Children's work

There are two competing views held by children and parents, confirming quite different ways in which work was perceived and practised. While children argued they were unable to enrol or were withdrawn from school to contribute their labour to the household economy, parents indicated they could not sustain their family's livelihood unless children participated in household activities. Given the level of poverty and household livelihood circumstances, I by no means argue that children should not engage in work. As established by research undertaken in the global south (e.g. Boyden 2009), and as indicated in the earlier sections of this chapter, work provided an opportunity for children to learn skills and to enable their transitions into adulthood. However, there is a considerable body of literature, even in the Ethiopian context, which documents the need for children to work but suggests balancing school and work (Boyden 2013; Pankhurst et al. 2016; Woldehanna and Jones 2009). Given that most of the children who participated in this study dedicate considerable amount of time for work but managed to combine it with schooling, the issue here is those group of children who had given up their education altogether and engaged in household activities. Hence, this calls for further research and work with communities through adopting an approach that gives space for the voices of children to be heard and by taking into account the context. Woldehanna and Gebremedhin (2015), for instance, suggested that combining school and work is one of the common features in children's pathways but indicated that parents have the discretion over the allocation of their children's time to different activities.

Parental attitude towards modern education

Children thought that it was their parents' attitude towards education that determined whether a child should or should not go to school. Although parents attributed their inability to support their children's secondary education to the

economic burden on households, the children rejected the arguments made by parents and suggested that the problem lay with a lack of awareness about the advantages that could be drawn from education and their parents' attitude towards modern education. Although not showing a negative attitude towards education in general, in practice, many parents did not seem keen to assist their children's enrolment in schools and to become successful in their education. An implicit factor was that adults feared modern education as something that may influence children to move away from respecting traditional and religious values that the Argobbas would like to maintain as a way of reflecting their identity into the future. This analysis confirms the accounts of some key informants in that the introduction of modern education was not welcomed as much as modern health services, and there were suspicions among some members of the community who conceptualised that modern education had something to do with the faith of Christianity. Masuda (2000) documented similar forms of thought towards modern education in his study among the Banna community in southern Ethiopia where continuing education, especially for girls, was considered as converting to Christianity. Other studies have linked low enrolment of children among pastoralists and marginalised areas to the irrelevance of the Ethiopian curriculum to the lives of young people (Camfield 2011). The young people who participated in this study did not hold such opinions, and this again shows that younger Argobbas imagined their community and their futures in different ways from older generations.

Sociocultural practices

Conservative sociocultural norms related to the practices of marriage among the Argobbas, which often considered the age of 15 as a desirable period for marriage, continued to influence girls' decisions whether to pursue their education beyond primary level. Boyden et al. (2013) and Tafere and Chuta (2016) attest that this had a crucial influence on girls' education trajectories even though the legal age of marriage was 18 in the country's constitution (FDRE 1995), the revised family law (FDRE – 2000), and the Family Code issued by the Amhara National Regional State (ANRS – 2003).

Religious education

Religious education was seen as a competing factor with modern education. While most Argobbas wished their children to acquire the basic teachings of the Islamic faith, most children would not pursue their religious education to a level where they could become a religious figure within or outside their community. As most of these children placed in such institutions at the beginning of the academic year would slowly be withdrawn, it was argued by government education representatives that the religious schools were used only as a pretext to escape from being questioned by the government and PTAs for not sending their children to regular schools. Some children who participated in this study confirmed that it was still possible to learn both religious and modern education hand in hand.

6.4 Gender, migration and changing familial norms

Gender

Gender norms are broadly understood as those qualities of femaleness and maleness that develop as a result of socialisation rather than biological predisposition by members of a given community (Boles & Hoeverler 2004; Fleming et al. 2013). Ouattara et al. (1998), for example, suggested that gender roles are usually centred on conceptions of femininity and masculinity and behaviours that are generally considered acceptable, appropriate, or desirable for people based on their actual or perceived sex or sexuality, although there are exceptions and variations regarding gender expectations across cultures. In the context of international development, there has been a growing recognition of a gender equality agenda and for empowering women such as those articulated in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the MDGs, and empowering women by removing barriers to their access to economic, social and political opportunities (Levtov et al. 2014, p. 468).

Gender norms are transmitted from generation to generation and are often replicated by social observation of behaviour, particularly as children and youth

observe their elders. As such, norms influence behaviour, and behaviour influence norms (Farré & Vella 2007, p. 9). Often, children learn from their parents the appropriate behaviour for boys and girls, men and women, and these lessons can impact their behaviour and attitudes throughout their lifetime. Throughout childhood, children typically receive positive consequences for conforming to the way that their parents believe a boy or girl should act, and negative consequences for any deviation (p. 9)

In Ethiopia, too, there are a number of broadly understood constructions around what it means to be a man or a woman, a girl or a boy. Hence, children are socialised into gender-appropriate adult roles while growing up. Masculinity and femininity are powerful social-control mechanisms, whereby masculine identity is seen as superior to feminine identity in the context of Ethiopia (Heinonen 2011, p. 30). Gender also entails power differences within childhood, with major consequences for survival, wellbeing, competencies and susceptibilities (Boyden and Levison 2000, p. 30). Hence, the male head of the household often takes the responsibility of managing the household and making major decisions, but where he might share some of the decisions to be made with his wife, sisters are expected to serve their brothers, and within genders, authority is dispersed across age hierarchies (Bevan and Pankhurst 2007). The norm is for households to be organised along patriarchal principles, with hierarchies based on gender and age although there are exceptions due to age, class, location and personal status (Poluha 2004, p. 122). Being a boy or a girl, therefore, entails active and constant navigation by children of such powerful social mores as *yilugnta* and other gendered social expectations, as well as of their material environments (Bevan and Pankhurst 2007, p. 17). It is widely recognised that there is a link between poverty and gender inequality due to fewer resources and power that women have, which in turn, puts them in a relatively lower economic position than men (Crivello and Gaag 2016). Despite advances in gender equality, women and girls still face disadvantages and limits on their ability to make choices for themselves (Fleming et al. 2013, p. 5). Many

of the new goals set in the SDGs are meant to contribute to achieving the goal of gender equality and empowerment for all women and girls.

This research explored how gender disparity was reproduced over the course of children's lives and the influence of gender roles, especially with regard to work, schooling and marriage and the norms that circumscribe expectations and aspirations about their future lives. Furthermore, it stipulated how gender inequality disproportionately affected girls and women in Argobba.

Migration

Literature emphasises motivators for migration of children and young people as, for instance, escaping poverty or forced marriage, or pursuing education (Adepoju 2000; ChildHope UK and CHADET 2012; Tegegne and Penker 2016; Whitehead et al. 2007). Even if there is a tendency in the literature to view migration as something that poses risks in the lives of children, some studies have argued that it could enable young people to realise their potential, although they, at times, might put themselves at risk in the course of their migration (Hashim 2007). Boyden (2013), for instance, critiqued the fixed notion of associating children within the context of the family setting and essential for the wellbeing of the child, as a number of studies have demonstrated how children, especially from dysfunctional and poor families that fail to meet children's needs, show aspirations for social mobility is increasing in different parts of the world. Crivello (2009) indicated that young Peruvians migrate out of their localities to continue their education to urban areas in search of good quality education, especially secondary school, considering that education would serve as a means to escape from poverty. In the context of Ethiopia, most studies that assessed if children were successful in their pursuit of education following their migration to cities indicated that they failed to realise their dreams of continuing their education. For instance, Gebre's (2012) study indicated that the large majority of the migrant girls who participated in his study expressed their view that they had lost the opportunity to pursue their education. While for some, migration offers better opportunities; others consider it one full of risks.

Other studies provide evidence that labour mobility, and specifically that some rural young people move to seek work both within the country and abroad, can contribute to local development of their home area, at the same time alleviating the pressure on scarce local resources such as land and water (Pankhurst and Dom 2018, p. 112) The same study showed that, despite real risks, migration abroad can and does in some cases lead to greater prosperity—for the migrants themselves, their families at home and the community—as remittances and savings are invested in the local economy (p. 25).

This research found three main drivers behind young people's decisions to migrate: (1) looking for better economic opportunities, (2) getting out of the rural way of life (3) social and cultural practices. I present these briefly below.

Looking for better economic opportunities

In the context of the study area, the search for better economic opportunity was found to be a major factor for the migration of children and young persons from Argobba. The limited options available for young boys and girls in obtaining an alternative means of income other than from agriculture, and the pressure on families to split their small land holdings among children while they transitioned into adulthood, motivated young people to abandon agriculture and migrate. However, other studies undertaken in Ethiopia have found that, in general, poverty is the underlying motivator for children and young people migrating (Tadele and Ayalew 2012).

Getting out of the rural way of life

Escaping from the hardship and heavy workload in the rural areas was also a reason for children to leave their villages. From my observations in the discussions held with children who belonged to different age groups, there was a tendency among many to choose to leave the rural areas and favour the urban way of life. I found similar opinions from another group of children (aged 6 to 8 years) in a study that I conducted in the Amhara region in 2014. Even if the children who participated in the study had not been to towns and cities before, they indicated that the towns and cities were better than the rural areas by many

standards (e.g. people are clean), and they indicated that they preferred to live in the urban areas if they had the opportunity (Admassu 2014). Hence, children imagined their futures and destinies to be in towns and cities, not in the rural villages where they were born and brought up. Given the material goods and the improvements that migrants make to themselves and that of their families and siblings who stay behind in the village, as suggested by Punch (2000), migration will continue to attract the interest of others back at their places of origin. Due to current land ownership rights enforced by the government, which provide only for user's rights, there is an imbalance between the limited size of arable land and increasing family size. Coupled with less productivity, as well as the inhospitable climatic conditions, migration seems to remain an option and a major means by which children and young people can get out of rural areas and out of poverty.

Social and cultural practices motivating migration

In contrast to the pressure that it imposed on children who were caught making a choice between education and marriage, in the context of Argobba, marriage had a different role in motivating migration. An important insight that emerged from this study is that while young girls migrated to escape from marriage, some girls decided to migrate if they were not approached for marriage around the time when they were completing their primary level education. For instance, a study conducted in the Amhara region of Ethiopia confirmed that harmful traditional practices such as child marriage pushes many children out of their villages (Gebre 2012). On the contrary, due to the high level of value accorded to marriage among the Argobbas, not to get married from the age of 15 onwards (unless the girl wanted to continue her education) may jeopardise the moral standing of both girls and parents. In Ethiopian law, the Revised Family Code (FDRE 2000) and the Criminal Code (FDRE 2005) specify 18 as the age limit for marriage. Hence, girls who do not want to stay in either the school or their village are likely to migrate eventually. This is similar to what is termed *yilugnta* as demonstrated in the case of Zebiba in Chapter 5—that is, being bothered by what others might say about a certain phenomenon. This

reflects the fact that girls are considered a means to preserve family honour rather than their pursuit of other options, such as education, that might bring lasting changes in the future.

As we have seen from the empirical evidence, the motivation to migrate have their theoretical roots to migration systems and network theories (Massey et al. 1993) where young people move to places where they can rely on others who have already settled at their intended places of destinations. However, the research recognises the existence of groups of migrants who are using institutional forms of migration (Massey et al. 1998) where recruitment agencies and smugglers are involved once they have managed to make part of their journeys up to Djibouti.

Changing familial norms

Studies conducted on the continued female labour migration from Ethiopia to Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states and its impact on the structure and familial norms indicate the existence of varying forms of agency, resistance and changing livelihood strategies at individual, family and community level (Mengiste 2017; Zewdu 2017a, 2017b). Despite the negative repercussions that female migrants face in their migratory trajectories, assessments of how migration changes women's positions in familial and household economies and shapes intergenerational relations has been documented by researchers (e.g. Fleming 2013; Parreñas 2005, 2010). These include, but are not limited to, alterations and disruptions in gender roles and existing forms of gender relations, including the relative authority that they may have in household decision-making processes (Parreñas 2010; Slany 2018, p. 121). Many studies have suggested that women who migrate have a considerable degree of agency and satisfaction in their financial independence and ability to share material resources with family members. The increasing opportunities for youth and especially young women to find employment allow them more freedom from parental control, affecting their outlook on marriage, pre-marital sex, choice of marriage partner and age of marriage (Boyden et al. 2013, p. 4).

The empirical data generated in this research found that the migration of girls and women had particular gains and losses in the context of Argobba. As described by other researchers, the remittances that migrants make towards their family and caretakers of their children, where it involves caring for children left behind, contributes as a safety net for the family (Cohen 2011; Graham et al. 2012; Sara and Abigail 2001). Using an anthropological frame, Cohen (2011) considered remittances as the outcomes of cultural traditions and social practices that link movers and non-movers and sending and receiving communities through complex social and cultural ties. Hence, females are emerging as breadwinners, a role that has been typically performed by men, and becoming agents of social change in their communities and countries of origin—for instance, in South East Asia, although family roles in terms of a patriarchal breadwinning model remains dominant (Graham et al. 2012). Furthermore, the relationships between migrants and their family members are constituted through continuously negotiated relationships despite their geographical separation (p. 794).

Fleming (2013) asserted further that some successful migrants are returning with not only some level of financial and economic independence but also higher self-esteem. Hence, this could be seen through a gender lens and migration-development nexus, reinforcing the fact that labour migration could lead to positive impacts at the individual, familial and societal levels (Bachan 2018). Changes in familial norms are also occurring where traditional forms of expectations are being challenged, as young girls who have migrated are delaying marriage and, in the case of Argobba, sending children back to their country/villages, where parents take on the role of caregiving. Members of transnational families attempt to still maintain relationships with their families though they are physically co-present for extended periods of time (Baldassar et al. 2014, p. 157).

6.5 Globalisation

6.5.1 Globalisation, change and transformation

Globalisation has economic, cultural and political impacts on nation states and communities on a worldwide scale (Williams et al. 2013) and has created an increased movement of labour, capital, finance, goods and services between countries (de Block and Buckingham 2007; Erickson et al. 2009). Giddens (1990) and Taylor (2005), for instance, noted that the lives of people throughout the world are being transformed by globalisation, giving way to new and emerging social, economic and political relations that transcend territorial borders manifested in a form of flow of capital and trade, commodities, production systems, cultural images, global financial transactions and migration, among others. While economic and other forms of globalisation are valid, Ray (2007) suggested important social dimensions are constrained and shaped by the influences of globalisation (pp. 69–70). A number of other studies have documented that globalisation has influenced the material and non-material cultures of communities, family structures such as kinship, where sociocultural organisations bind members together among many African societies (e.g. Yankuzo 2014).

Among the many facets of the globalisation, this research found, as suggested by Giddens (1990), Robertson (1992) and Stunner and Khondker (2010), Erickson et al. (2009) and Williams et al. (2013), how improvements in transport and communication have paved the way for intensification of the migration of children and young persons in search of job opportunities, particularly to the oil-rich countries and created consciousness among communities in distant locations such as the Argobbas. The impact of the expansion, of improved and reasonably cheaper transport and cross-border flows of people, has created an opportunity to create links between local level experiences and global processes and to transform the lives of migrants and communities (Bauman 1998; Castles 2010; Erickson et al. 2009; Thompson 2012).

Social transformation could be defined as a fundamental shift in the way society is organised that goes beyond the continual processes of incremental social change that are always at work (Castles 2010, p. 1576). According to Castles (2001), studies of social transformation are concerned with global connectedness and the way it links existing communities and national societies into an incipient global society. The social transformation observed in Argobba was influenced by a combination of factors such as migration, the growing interest in the shifting of existing settlements towards emerging urban centres and closer to transport routes within the woreda and the use of media and communication technologies. New forms of social relations and transnational social bonds among members of households who had migrated or remained is on the rise. Maintenance of such relations that transcend territorial borders challenges the classical sociological idea of society as contained within national borders (Giddens 2003; Ray 2007).

6.5.2 Improvements in the use of media and technology

As discussed in Chapter 3, the Argobba communities lived in relatively isolated enclaves where there was no road transport, telephone and basic amenities. The rural social system was characterised by a high degree of egalitarianism and community solidarity, with little differentiation among households and limited interaction and bonding with the larger economic systems both at regional and national levels. The traditional subsistence-oriented agricultural system still needed time to be transformed. In section 2.7 of chapter 2 and in section 6.5 of chapter 3, we saw how globalised communication networks and new media technologies have impacted the day-to-day lives of children, young persons and communities, including Argobba. Following the creation of new settlements that are evolving into satellite towns along major transport routes and in relatively non-mountainous parts of the woreda, there has been a growing interest in the establishment of basic amenities such as electricity, health facilities and communication infrastructures such as telephone and television. Most recently, four rural villages were

transforming into rural towns along the main road that connected Medina to Harbu. These are the villages of Sedeta, Alite, Ehudit and Loko.

In terms of developments around media, notable changes have occurred in Argobba. As noted by Livingstone and Drotner (2008), children are keen to adopt new media technologies that link them to the globalised network, which could positively or negatively impact their lives. Complaints had begun to emerge about a movie series that, in the eyes of the elders and religious leaders, was feared to influence the behaviour of children and young people in the area. They particularly singled out a series in which individuals or groups of people conspired to take somebody's life and other scenarios where women and men had multiple sexual partners, which was seen to be totally against the morality of the Argobbas. Members of the community indicated that this posed a risk in that children and young people may believe this was the right thing to do. In this sense, new media was considered to affect the long-standing cultural values of the Argobba community. The fact that mobile phones were used widely among the community in general and young persons in particular had enhanced communication with each other and members of their families who had migrated to Djibouti and the Gulf states. As we saw in Chapter 5, the first thing that migrants did was buy and send smartphones to their families in the villages where they could keep connected and updated on what was happening back at home and for displaying images of the big cities where they lived and worked. This enhanced the consciousness of children and young persons and the community global ideas of a good life (Pankhurst and Dom 2018), at least about the places where the migrants lived, and motivated others to migrate. According to Huijsmans (2006), the unprecedented growth in the migration of people is attributed partly to increased access to modern means of transport and modern media. For example, displaying images via smartphones enhances the level of knowledge that communities have about other cultures, and they see how their family members have managed to fit into other communities. This, in turn, changes the imagination and consciousness of children and young people and communities about other cultures with the consequence of comparing and

contrasting with their own situation at the local level (de Block and Buckingham 2007, p. 4).

Among the most visible outcomes of the impact of globalisation in Argobba is the interconnectedness of the community with other parts of the world, mainly as a result of better access in terms of surface and air transport that facilitates the movement of people, especially children and young persons, to the Gulf states. In connection to this, Williams et al. (2013) suggested that globalisation has opened a way for economic migrants to move to economically better off nations. In general, it could be argued that Ethiopia has been connected to some aspects of economic globalisation that has created both push and pull factors regarding migrants from Ethiopia in that local youth unemployment is meeting the demands for domestic and other forms of low-wage employment in the Gulf states (Minaye 2015).

6.5.3 Impact of globalisation on the development of better transport

While many forms of social transformation elsewhere are linked in complex ways to globalising forces and transnational processes, Castle (2001, p. 15) suggested research that does not consider cross-border linkages is hardly ever likely to reveal the whole picture. By way of explaining how improvements made in the transport sector have contributed to better connectivity of the Argobba community with its neighbouring communities and beyond, in what follows, I briefly discuss the activities taking place in the country with a potential impact on the lives of children and young persons who would be interested to migrate from Argobba.

Recent developments in Ethiopia around the construction of railways and improvements to the existing transport infrastructure are part of the government's ambitions to improve transport networks within the country, but it is part of the global influence, particularly China, which has availed the much-needed resource for the construction of infrastructure in the developing nations, among which Africa has a significant share. The most popular, in this regard, is the recent Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) that is intended to improve overland

and maritime transport to Central Asia and Europe and to the Middle East. In explaining the implementation of BRI infrastructure projects in Africa, Dollar (2019) emphasised that the BRI is considered important in Africa as almost all countries on the continent face infrastructure deficiencies and a shortage of resources to overcome them. Ethiopia is among such African countries that receive large amounts of technical and financial resources from China. Dollar argued further that this would give China an opportunity to expand trade and consolidate economic and diplomatic relations with participating countries, and diversify China's import of energy and other resources to have alternate routes to transport natural resources through economic corridors that circumvent routes controlled by the United States and its allies (p. 1).

Despite criticisms from the advanced industrial economies about the lack of clarity on loan terms, Ethiopia, for instance, borrowed US\$1.3 billion for the Addis Ababa–Djibouti Railway; the terms are 15 years with six years' grace period (p. 4). Another railway that extends between the towns of Awash in the Afar region and Woldia in the northern part of Wello, which is nearly completed, will be in close distance to Argobba and will provide public transport and transportation of goods to and from the port city of Djibouti.

These developments in infrastructure projects would create an opportunity for children and young persons and communities to access better transport and reduce the risks that migrants are taking while walking in harsh weather conditions through the Afar desert to reach Djibouti and to their final destinations in Saudi Arabia. In this regard, the remoteness of Argobba will be reduced to a significant level enhancing the dynamism of social transformations and becoming part of the continued influences that globalisation might pose on the worldview of an ordinary Argobba.

6.6 Inhospitable climatic conditions and limited opportunities in rural areas

One of the characteristic features of Argobba is its harsh climate, which impacts significantly on the livelihoods of the community in general and the

situation of children and young people in particular. The consequences of the environmental conditions are thus visible in that agricultural productivity is very low, meaning that the supply of food aid is a necessity. The shortage of rains in the region in general contributes to the scarcity of water across the woreda. It is common to see no or little water flowing in the middle or one side of the huge riverbeds during the dry seasons. This makes access to water a real challenge for both humans and animals in the area. Elders in the community have said this situation shows a worsening trend from one season to the next. The scarcity of water and the inhospitable climate creates a situation where civil service workers, such as teachers and agricultural outreach workers, lose interest in being assigned to the schools and health posts located in rural villages where the majority of the population lives.

The shortage of arable land in the relatively flat fields is increasing and, along with the growth in the population, pushes farmers to cultivate the hilly and sloped parts of the land causing more land degradation and the withering away of the bushes and trees that were controlling soil erosion. Given that the livelihoods of the large majority of the community in Argobba is based on agriculture, and their reliance on rain-fed agriculture has always put households at risk of crop failures resulting in shortages of food. Hence, many families combine agriculture with keeping some cattle to compensate for any deficit in crop production. Keeping animals is related largely to a demand for children's labour, which in turn influences their education. The situation of poverty is, therefore, severe among communities living in Argobba. In Ethiopia, the poverty ratio is particularly high for most of the country's population that live in rural areas where agriculture is the main economic activity (Diao and Pratt 2007). In the context of Argobba, young people in rural areas, therefore, tend to opt for finding other means of income among which migration is one. In their study about the livelihood choices that rural youth had in southern Ethiopia, Bezu and Holden (2014) suggested that the majority of youth in rural areas were finding it difficult to access land as the population density increased and farm sizes

became smaller, which in turn forced the youth to abandon agriculture and adopt their own employment strategy, including migration.

The government has developed and implemented different poverty reduction strategies such as the Sustainable Development and Poverty Reduction Programme with a focus on poverty reduction and human capital investment in education and health services, followed by two Growth and Transformation Plans (GTP I and II). The GTPs gave due consideration to the protection of the rights of children in terms of budget allocations and investments in children, although effectiveness and impacts have not yet been evaluated. In addition to these, through establishing a social protection framework, attempts are being made to address the basic needs of food for insecure households in the rural parts of the country (Cochrane and Tamiru 2016). Despite the recent reports issued by the World Bank, which classified Ethiopia among the fastest growing economies in Africa (World Bank 2016), the challenges and impediments to reduce poverty is formidable in countries where poverty is widespread, income is extremely low and its distribution is uneven (Moges 2007).

6.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, I discussed conceptualisations and experiences of childhood and the key factors that shaped children's lives, such as work and play, while growing up in Argobba. I also explored how intergenerational relations were built and maintained between children and parents, as well as the changing features of such relations and the factors underpinning them. In general, I reflected on how children and young people were constructing their childhood by reimagining their futures through challenging the traditional beliefs and practices and by demonstrating their agency in shaping their own and adults' lives using education and migration as a vehicle out of the rural areas and out of poverty.

As seen throughout this chapter, there is a gap between policies and practices in the idealised rights-based approach and how childhood is

conceptualised and how children are treated in communities such as Argobba. I showed that in the context of Argobba, work marked the end of childhood and contributed to the learning of skills, reinforcing intergenerational relationships and collaboration. An analysis of the pen portraits showed the diverse life trajectories of children and the complex nature of young people's pathways into adulthood.

Concerning issues related to children's education, I showed the efforts made to create access to schools. In this regard, the challenges related to enrolment and retention of students was indicated to be one of the challenges for government agencies. It was noted that poverty and the persistence of some sociocultural practices were contributing to the ever-increasing numbers of school dropouts among children. There continued to be a lack of awareness on the part of the community about the advantages that could be drawn from education. This was attached largely to a belief held by communities that modern education might influence children's behaviour, leading to a loss of traditional, cultural and religious values of the Argobbas. However, changes expected to help children realise their desire to gain access to quality education and better livelihoods are unlikely to succeed unless, as suggested by Abebe (2008) and Froerer (2009), the broad macro-scale, structure-based political, economic and sociocultural contexts that shape childhood are tackled.

Migration seemed to remain an option and major means by which children and young people could leave rural areas and get out of poverty. Given the material goods and the improvements that migrants made for themselves and their families and siblings staying in the village, as suggested by Punch (2000), migration will continue to attract the interest of others. Unless opportunities are created for youth-targeted non-farm employment generating schemes, as suggested by Bezu and Holden (2014), migration will remain a viable option for children and young people in Argobba at present and in the foreseeable future.

As noted by the global discourses of cultural and economic globalisation (Bauman 1998; Erickson et al. 2009; Orozco and Hilliard 2004; Robinson 2007;

Turner and Khondker 2010), children and young people and communities are incorporating aspects of Western knowledge and practice into their traditions as part of the ongoing process of globalisation. Children and young people's imaginings of the urban way of life and the advantages that could be drawn from migration have been influenced by the growth and use of global media.

The Argobbas have only recently gained access to political, economic and better social services. Although the Argobbas might not be considered the most inaccessible of groups, lack of infrastructure and ruggedness of its physical features and the inhospitable climate have hampered the growth of commerce and relationships with their neighbouring woredas and communities. The political changes that have taken place over the past four decades have created some opportunities for the establishment of institutions that provided health and educational services. The establishment of the Argobba Liyu Woreda, however, as a self-administered entity, was however, the most significant all.

Adults' thinking about the issue of identity (being an Argobba) are founded on their ancestral origins, the values of their glorious past and religious beliefs. These could easily be seen from the continued effort they are making in maintaining their ethnic identity, educating the young about their traditions and Islamic religious beliefs as well as in playing a leading role in the political, economic, social and cultural affairs of the ethnic group. Examples included that all political and administrative positions in the Liyu Woreda should be filled with native Argobbas, the effort being made to by the woreda administration to rescue the native Argobba language from disappearance and develop symbols for integrating it into the school curriculum.

At the other end of the spectrum, however, children and young persons were constructing and reconstructing their childhoods and shaping their life worlds through challenging some of the cultural values and imagining their futures to leave the rural way of life through education and migration. For most children and young persons, education and migration were the means by which they could achieve their aspirations and imaginings of the future, as opposed to

adults' imaginings, which focused on maintaining the past and the present. As discussed throughout Chapter 5, while some children expressed their agency, others were caught between making choices about their aspirations and meeting the cultural expectations of adults and their communities, especially in the areas of marriage and intergenerational relationships. However, when seen from children's perspectives, they did not want to break away fully from their cultural traditions and practices, especially girls, in respecting the expectations of their communities that were highly gendered, but to take advantage of what they could get by pursuing their education and through migration. These, they believed, would lead to the realisation of their imaginings of a good way of life in towns and urban centres.

Nonetheless, the changes that have taken place in Argobba should also be seen in light of the changes that are occurring in the political and socioeconomic spheres both at local and national levels.

In the following and concluding chapter, Chapter 7, I revisit how the research questions addressed the overarching aims of the study, show how this study makes an original contribution to knowledge and consider implications for future research and scholarship.

Chapter 7.

Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

This concluding chapter draws together the main ideas presented in the thesis. It begins with a presentation of the research questions, followed by a summary of the key findings drawn from the previous chapters. It then highlights implications for policy, practice and future research.

The research set out to understand how childhood is constructed and the processes and influences underlying conceptualisations and practices associated with education and migration in Argobba. The overarching research question was ‘How do cultural context and globalisation influence perceptions and practices of childhood, migration and education among the Argobba communities in Northeast Ethiopia?’ The research also addressed the following sub-questions:

- a) What are children’s perspectives with regard to their roles in households and communities?
- b) What influences the perceptions and practices of girls and boys with regard to their agency, migration and education?
- c) What are the adult perspectives on the issues above, and how have children’s roles, agency, migration and education changed over time in the Argobba community?
- d) How do children and adults perceive the influence of the changing cultural context and globalisation? And how have local practices been affected?

This chapter revisits these questions by drawing upon the analysis conducted in Chapter 6 and referring to the theories and concepts discussed in Chapter 2.

I began the thesis with a review of the literature on childhood, education, migration and globalisation and an examination of the theoretical and methodological frameworks informing this literature. As I conducted the research among an ethnic group that identified as having unique traditional values and practices, and in light of recent developments and uncertainties around the issues of ethnic federalism, I also reviewed literature about ethnicity and nationality both within Ethiopia and beyond.

The theoretical focus drew key concepts from the social study of childhood and sought to understand socioeconomic, cultural and other factors that shaped children's motivations and actions. Furthermore, it undertook a critical analysis of structures and mechanisms that affected children and young persons in the area where I conducted this research. I addressed the research questions by analysing the various constructs of childhood and by studying how these constructs related to issues such as children's participation, their agency and decisions related to their education and migration. To document children's perspectives and how childhood was constructed, the research employed a child-centred approach that considered children as social actors and childhood as a social construction.

The second dimension of the theoretical approach drew on Anderson's (1983) concept of 'imagined communities' and Smith's (2009) approach to ethnosymbolism and nationalism for highlighting how the Argobbas tended to strengthen their sense of community, especially under ethnic federalism that was adopted in Ethiopia in the 1990s, creating an opportunity for the Argobbas to self-administration. Following Smith's (2009) framework of a cultural approach of ethnosymbolism, the research explored how the imagined communities of adult Argobbas were formed, influenced and maintained through common symbols, ancestral past and collective memory, as well as children's

and young person's imaginings about their futures, which was essentially different from adults' imaginings and challenged some of the current sociocultural values such as marriage and gender inequality, as they navigated their transitions into adulthood through education and migration. The research also explored the way the impacts of globalisation, gender and poverty influenced the imaginings of children and young persons in shaping their life worlds and those of adults in their communities.

Drawing from the data gathered through small-group and in-depth interviews and observations, this chapter presents the key findings, along with implications for policy and practice and for future research.

7.2 Key findings

The findings related to the roles of children in households and communities (Sub-question a) show a range of economic and sociocultural factors that influenced their roles and shaped their childhoods. Among these are children's work, gender roles and intergenerational relations.

In the context of Argobba, work marked the period when a person was no longer considered a child. A child learns and starts work from a young age, and is characterised by gendered division of labour. While recognising the importance of learning skills from engagement in work, many children considered work an impediment to their education. The children who participated in the research emphasised that many children were unable to enrol in, or were withdrawn from, school due to work in their households. Those who obtained the opportunity to be enrolled, as depicted in Table 4 and 5 about children's time use in Chapter 5, had to combine schooling with work. Hence, growing up in Argobba was largely characterised by work and the poor socioeconomic condition in households narrowed the time for school and play. Despite the dichotomy between harmful and non-harmful work (Bourdillon et al. 2010; Pankhurst et al. 2015), researchers have suggested that participation in work serves as a means to learn skills (e.g. Punch 2003; Watson 2009) and to shape not only their own daily lives and future life chances but also the

conditions of other members of their families (Abebe 2008; Abebe and Kusi 2016; Aitken 2001; Bequele and Boyden 1988; Bourdillon et al. 2010; Morrow 2010; Mulugeta 2015; Tafere and Pankhurst 2015; Woldehanna and Gebremedhin 2015). The empirical data gathered from children also confirmed the importance of work but emphasised that it should not compromise their education.

Gender norms and changing household structures/compositions were found to have significant influence on not only how childhood was constructed, but also children's educational aspirations and achievement and decisions related to migration. Although there were no visible differences in the treatment of boys and girls at earlier ages, there was more control of girls as they grew up, and this is characterised by gender stereotypes. This research is particularly useful for explaining the discriminatory gender norms where girls were considered a financial burden on families where family honour relied on marrying girls off. The concern that orphaned girls were more vulnerable to losing their honour entails the need to place more emphasis on such groups of children to reduce the violence and gender discrimination they were experiencing. This research found that, in the context of Argobba, children's roles in households and communities were also shaped by cultural values and intergenerational relations, which left limited space for children's voices to be heard and allow them to participate in decisions in households and communities. This is a manifestation of an authoritarian and unidimensional nature of relations that is prevalent among other ethnic groups in Ethiopia (Husain 1996; Poluha 2004; Wondimu 1995) and was embedded in the ethos of the Argobbas, too.

The data generated from this research has similarities with other studies conducted in Ethiopia that have found changes in relational processes between children and parents as a result of children's exposure to education, migration and changing social contexts (Abebe 2008; Abebe and Kusi 2016; Kabeer 2000; Kassa 2016; Punch 2007; Tafere 2013). A case in point is that some migrants who were in a better financial position than other children who were still

dependent on their parents had better negotiating power with their parents and opportunities to express their agency.

Although the family is a central repository that reflects the values of the Argobbas in general and contributes to the imagined communities of all the Argobbas in particular, we can see strong challenges to this in that there were significant intergenerational conflicts on display, particularly with regard to education, and these conflicts concerning value were unresolved in many families and in the Argobba community. This sense of power imbalance shows a changing trend as a new form of transnational family and relationship is being formed and as the income-earning capability of some children increases, largely due to migration. We can see this breaking of the Argobba's imagined community largely along generational lines as children and young persons attempted to express their agency and as children and young persons strive to achieve their aspirations of their imagined futures out of the rural area through education and migration. This finding has some similarity with other studies that have documented changing relational processes between children and parents in the global south (Abebe 2008; Kabeer 2000, Tisdall and Punch 2007; Whyte et. al. 2008).

Regarding the influences on the perceptions and practices of girls and boys concerning their education (Sub-question 2), children who participated in the research believed that education could serve as a means to open up an opportunity to leave the rural way of life and to realise their imaginings about a 'modern' way of life that an educated person might be able to attain. Most of the children equated an educated person to someone who had the opportunity to live in towns and cities where access to basic necessities such as water and electricity would not be a problem. Even if they asserted that education was essential for improving their lives, however, they did not consider it as a valuable right that they were entitled to.

This research identified three issues as key factors that influenced children's and young person's perceptions and practices towards education and the low level of enrolment and retention of children in school.

First, children who participated in this research realised they were expected to work to contribute their labour towards the livelihood of their households. As discussed in Chapter 5, while children who were enrolled in school combined work with education, those who did not get the chance to enrol or who withdrew from school due to work blamed their parents for not letting them go to school. Second, the study revealed that certain sociocultural practices, particularly marriage, placed many girls who were enrolled in school in a difficult position of whether they should pursue their education beyond primary level. Reasons for this, as explained in Chapter 5, were related to the notions of *kuma-ker* and *yilugnta*, which may jeopardise their imaginings of having a decent family life at a later stage. Third, while empirical evidence is scant regarding parental attitude towards modern education, the accounts of children indicated that many parents were not yet convinced that education was something important for their children and that of their families in the long run. These factors combined created a situation where some children lost interest in education.

Given the context in which they were living (a rural area where people's lifestyle did not demand an attainment of a certain level of education beyond literacy and numeracy), some children did not see any justification for commuting to and from school under inhospitable climatic conditions. Further, the limitations in not having educated individuals within their community who might be considered as role models was also believed to have contributed to a limited level of interest towards education, especially on the part of adults.

Focusing more on children who managed to pursue their education amidst all the challenges, this research documented cases of children who were more resilient than others. In this regard, it was noted that some children had started to challenge and put pressure on their parents to support their education and, at

times, sought assistance from people around them, such as teachers and community leaders. The case of Iman demonstrates her agency and the level of commitment that she had for her education. This reflected, by and large, the relational nature of the agency of both children and adults, on the one hand, and the role other members of the community could play in supporting her effort to realise her imaginings, on the other. Contextualising the findings of this research to the extant literature, which emphasises the contribution of education to the economic and social development of nations, reduction of poverty and improvement of quality of life (Boyden and Levison 2000; Kabeer 2000; Kjørholt 2013; Tarabini 2010) demonstrates that there is still a gap between what the government plans to achieve and what has been attained thus far in the sphere of education in Argobba.

To understand how children in Argobba conceptualised and experienced migration (Sub-question b), this research identified major factors believed to influence children's decisions and motivations to migrate.

In line with what was discussed in Chapter 2 regarding factors that motivate children and young person's migration at international, regional, national and local levels, this research identified three major issues that influenced children's decisions to migrate. First, many children were lured towards urban areas and cities, which they imagined were better places than their rural village and was a way of escaping the hard work in the rural area. Second, a lack of other opportunities, such as employment or availability of land in the rural areas, motivated many children and young persons to migrate. Third, successful migrants who had been able to acquire assets in a relatively short period of time, for instance, in setting up houses and starting businesses in nearby and emerging towns such as Medina and in giving financial support to their parents, motivated others to migrate. In general, underpinning children's and young person's decisions to migrate was the intention of better economic opportunities that would help them to lead a better way of life away from the rural areas.

According to the outcome of discussions with the research participants, many more girls than boys were migrating out of Argobba. Other studies have confirmed an increasing trend in the migration of women, mainly due to a need to supplement household income (Adepoju 1995). According to the reports of the International Labour Organisation (ILO; 2015), there is an increasing trend in the migration of women and girls from Ethiopia who are heading to middle- and high-income countries. In his study about the trends, patterns and determinants of Ethiopian female domestic labour migration to Arab countries, Zewdu (2017b) indicated that females from the Amhara and Oromia regions are increasingly migrating to Arab countries, and rural villages become significant sources of low-skilled labour. Reasons behind the trend in the migration of more females than males is partly due to the types of jobs that the migrants take in the host countries, such as food preparation and child care, while males are engaged in agricultural work, driving and as security guards (De Regt 2007). The cases presented in Chapter 5 about migrant males who are herding goats in Saudi Arabia exemplify the aforementioned discussion.

Despite the tendency to view migration as a risk for children, recent studies have argued that it can also create opportunities for some children, especially those from poor and dysfunctional families (Boyden 2013; Hashim 2007). In this regard, we saw in Chapter 5 that children followed diverse pathways that demonstrate risks as well as better opportunities for some of the migrants. According to the views of children who participated in this study, and given the level of poverty, the influence of successful migrants and the unavailability of land and employment, the trend of migration of children and young persons might continue in Argobba. The scenario in Argobba is part of the challenges that the country is facing owing to various socioeconomic and political factors that have prevailed over a number of decades (Aduugna 2019).

The diverse and complex outcomes of migratory experiences of children and young persons presented in this research cannot be explained from the standpoint of single theory of migration (Massey et al. 1998). Based on the experiences and factors that motivated migration among the participants, this

research drew from theories that present various perspectives, including migration systems and network theory (Boyd 1989; Haug 2008) whereby the process involves the reliance of migrants on other people who have previously migrated and institutional theory (Massey et al. 1993), where the creation of a migration economy and market has created travel and recruitment agencies and smugglers. That the large majority of migrants from Argobba tended to migrate to Saudi Arabia, for instance, denotes the importance of previous or existing networks and social ties through bonds of friendship (and in the case of Argobba ethnicity), which gives advantages to adjusting to a new location (Massey et al. 1998).

So far, I have considered childhood, children's education and migration from the perspective of children. I now highlight some of the key issues identified by adults on the issues above and how these have changed over time in the Argobba community (Sub-question c).

Among the key findings regarding the perception of adults towards children and childhood is that the adults considered children 'becomings', who needed the guidance and care of their parents, not 'beings' (James and James 2008). Hence, adults did not expect children to take responsibility for their acts until they reached well into their teens. This also implies that adults did not expect children to participate in decision-making processes in households, even if the decision was going to affect them. Reasons underlying this were influenced by thinking of children as incapable, largely due on the one hand to their physical immaturity, and on the other, the traditions of the Argobbas, which, according to adults' accounts, did not encourage children's participation in decision-making processes. Allowing children to engage in decision-making processes was considered an act of spoiling them.

Although many parents seemed to recognise the advantages that could be drawn from education, they attributed their inability to send their children to school to poor socioeconomic circumstances in their households that demanded the labour of all members of the family, including children, to participate in work.

From the perspective of adults, the engagement of children in work was a normal phenomenon, believed to significantly contribute to household livelihoods and enabled children to learn skills and become competent adults. Questions arising, however, were how parents/adults could come to believe that education was important, and how children could balance school and work. Another reason for not sending their children to school was the economic burden that schooling required, especially during children's transition from primary to secondary level education. Nonetheless, this research found variations in the level of support provided by parents given that some parents showed a better level of commitment to their children's education than others in their communities.

The discussions held with PTAs and key informants provided valuable data for establishing an understanding of the perceptions and practices of adults towards children's education. In this regard, members of the PTAs emphasised that the low level of value that parents attached to modern education was the major reason for not sending their children to school. Hence, members of PTAs needed to coordinate between the school and the community in tracking children who dropped out or attended school intermittently and attempt to convince their parents to send them to school. They also had a responsibility to impose a penalty on parents who did not send their children to school. Looking back at the reactions of the informal community leaders during the beginnings of modern education in Argobba, and according to the accounts of some key informants, the notion of linking modern education to the faith of Christianity might still be resonating in the minds of some members of the community.

As seen in the discussions thus far, children and young persons considered modern education as a means by which they could leave rural areas. However, countering this argument was that the curriculum, as practised at that time, was not motivating young persons to become farmers and was creating a gap between their aspirations and the opportunities available to them in rural areas (White 2012). This, in turn, could influence them to migrate to urban centres or abroad (Schewel and Fransen 2018).

Concerning migration, adults believed poverty to be the underlying reason for motivating children and young people to migrate. Low productivity of the land and underemployment within the agricultural sector was a contributory factor for many young boys and girls leaving their villages. Some parents were supportive of the migration of a family member and could go to the level of selling their cow to cover costs related to transport and accommodation. Even if they were well aware of the risks associated with migration, such as being drowned at sea or being abused by gangs who demanded money from the migrants' families back home, they believed that the advantages outweighed the risks if the migrants managed to make the journey safely to their destinations. Such thoughts were influenced largely by the fact that they, too, benefited from the resources being generated by the migrant member of their household. Despite the benefits that might be gained or the challenges to be encountered in the migratory trajectories of children and young persons, the process should be considered beyond pull–push factors and must be examined in light of the overall economic situation of the country. The migration of more females than males is, for instance, part of a global phenomenon where demand has shifted from Asian domestic workers who seek higher wages to cheap labour force countries such as Ethiopia (Zewdu 2017a, p. 11).

By way of addressing how children and adults perceived the influence of the changing cultural context and globalisation, and understanding how local practices had been affected (Sub-question d), this research considered the different explanatory frameworks related to globalisation. Despite the range of positive and negative arguments about globalisation, this research focused on the economic and cultural aspects of globalisation, with particular emphasis on the impact of new communication and media technologies and improvement and access to transport services.

Although communities in Argobba have remained isolated in terms of access to transport, communications and social services, the improvements that have been made in recent decades have stimulated the increased movement of people and migration of children and young persons to Saudi and the Gulf

states. Similarly, the reduction of barriers on the part of the countries that receive labour migrants, together with availability of affordable means of air transport and better connectivity between the Argobbas and the countries of destination for the migrants, has contributed to the increased number of migrants. Recent developments in the expansion of cheap air and land transport, as suggested by researchers, are part of the most significant features of globalisation (e.g. Erickson et al. 2009; Williams et al. 2013; Giddens 1990; Hooper 2007; Orozco and Hilliard 2004). For instance, the creation of access to and wide use of mobile phones has impacted both maintaining close communication between migrants and their families back home and motivating others who had stayed in the villages to migrate (Madianou 2012; Vertovec 2004). In light of the emerging trend in the formation of transnational families (Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2003; Parreñas 2001), the role of modern means of communication, such as mobile phones, is helping migrants from Argobba to maintain long-distance relationships with their children and families back home. Furthermore, it is enabling migrants to manage their assets, such as houses and businesses, from a distance (Chacko and Gebre 2009).

That movies and other programmes transmitted through various television channels were attracting the interest of children and young persons was becoming a concern for elders and religious leaders in Argobba. In this regard, adults worried about the penetration of Western culture into the traditional values and religious beliefs of the Argobbas. Beyond what the introduction of modern media and communication has brought to the day-to-day lives of children and young persons, there were also changes in styles of dress and food habits as a result of growth in the transportation of industrial products and commercial transactions and trading with other communities. Communities in the rural areas were also able to use this in their local context, whereby they made business transactions, buying and selling items using applications such as WhatsApp and Viber that, in turn, show the expansion and use of global media in remote locations like that of Argobba.

7.3 Scope of research

With particular focus on education and migration, this research explored how childhood was conceptualised and shaped among the Argobba community in north-eastern Ethiopia. Having reviewed the literature that was relevant to address the research questions, I grounded the research on the social study of childhood, which argues that childhood is a social construct and considers children to have agency and the ability to shape their futures and those of others in their households (James and Prout 1997). The research also took into account the framework employed by Anderson (1983) on 'imagined communities' and contextualised it to the situation in Argobba to establish an understanding of how children and adults in Argobba formed their identity and shaped their present and future imaginings.

In the sections that follow, I present the scope of the research and show how both frameworks were relevant to the analysis of the empirical findings gathered during the fieldwork. Furthermore, I highlight the contributions that the research makes to the field of the social study of childhood and to existing literature on how different generations of communities are imagined.

7.3.1 Contributions towards the social study of childhood

One of the key aspects this research adopted from the social study of childhood is the sociocultural framework that emphasises variations in the influences of social and cultural practices on conceptualisations, interpretations and practices of childhood across cultures and places. In this regard, determining what should be the defining factor of childhood and the period when childhood ends was found of particular significance. As stipulated by various researchers, there is a distinction between the Western conception of a child, where children are considered dependent on adults, and the practices of childhood in Africa and elsewhere in the global south, where they are expected to perform different tasks, including supporting their households (Abebe 2008; Boyden 1985; Boyden and Myers 1998; James and James 2008; Johnson and West 2018; Katz 2004; Nieuwenhuys 2013; Punch 2003). The findings of this

research, therefore, build on emerging literature on the social study of childhood that emphasises the need to take sociocultural contexts into account while exploring the situation of children in the global south (e.g. Abebe 2008; Nieuwenhuys 1994; Tisdall and Punch 2012). Furthermore, the findings show the tensions between the rights-based approach, as provided in international instruments such as the UNCRC, and the sociocultural approach widely practised among communities, especially in the global south.

As suggested by Alanen (2003), this research used a relational approach to show similarities and differences in expectations and practices between the generations of children and adults. In this regard, the findings of the research emphasise, as suggested by (Kabeer 2000; Whyte et al. 2008), how conceptualisations related to reciprocity, interdependency, position in the generational hierarchy and the wider kinship structure constitute a system of social organisation that influences the forms and nature of relations between children and adults. Mayall and Zeiher's (2003) approach of 'generational contracts' or 'generationing', which employs an epistemological frame of relational thinking, was particularly relevant to this research in that there were marked differences in the way children and adults perceived and addressed some of the research questions. The empirical data gathered from the field concerning education, for instance, shows significant differences between the perspectives of children and adults. There were some exceptions, however, regarding issues such as marriage or migration, where both children and adults had similar standpoints. I return to the issue of differences in ideas and perceptions that impacted the day-to-day lives of succeeding generations when I look into children's and adults' imaginings in the subsequent sections.

A discussion of intergenerational relations, as suggested by researchers (e.g. Abebe 2008, 2015; Huijsmans 2015; Kabeer 2000; Kjørholt 2004), necessitates a review of the extent to which such relations were negotiated and/or constrained and examination of the nature of interdependencies—for instance, whether they showed change over the life course. Various scholars have documented the fluid and changing nature of generational relations and

children's agency (e.g. Huijsmans 2011; Oswell 2013) and the different forms of intergenerational relations that might influence children to demonstrate their agency, although such an agency might be negotiated and constrained (Alanen and Mayall 2001; Mayall and Zeiher 2003; Punch 2002; Whitehead et al. 2007).

As revealed by the limited research undertaken around generational relations and children's agency in Ethiopia (Kassa 2016; Tafere 2013), is reflected in this research has shown the existence of changing generational relations. These changes are largely characterised by tensions that exist between children and parents regarding decisions to be made on children's education and migration. Changes in generational relations have, therefore, started to impact on household structures where the formation of transnational families influences the decision-making processes within the family circle—for instance, as a result of the better financial position of migrant children.

Based on the argument that children are not inherently vulnerable (Huijsmans 2015), this research shows how children managed to demonstrate their agency in overcoming some challenges—for example, arranged marriages. The interdependent or relational nature of children's agency and its different forms can be seen in the actions children took, depending on the different circumstances they had to go through. In line with what other researchers in the social study of childhood have suggested, I argue that children's agency should not be considered as taken for granted, unproblematised and positive and desired by all children and young people (Abebe 2019; Tisdall and Punch 2012).

Hence, this research observed that, while attempting to demonstrate their agency, children also took risks. As seen from some of the cases presented in the pen portraits in Chapter 5, the risks encountered by the migrant girls had an exorbitant impact on their present and future situations. Recent studies conducted among marginalised youth, however, came up with the concept of 'positive uncertainty' to depict some risks that young persons might take in the course of migration are not necessarily negative but a potential pathway out of

poverty and something that might shape their rights (Johnson and West, forthcoming).

A review of the literature on children's agency and making linkages between the notion of aspirations and risks was useful in this research in that it helped to surface, on the one hand, the nature of agency that children who participated in this study demonstrated, and on the other, to show the circumstances that facilitated or constrained their agency. Hence, I observed variations in the level of aspirations that children had towards their education and what they expected to gain from migrating out of Argobba. In this regard, this research found high and low educational aspirations among the children who participated in the research and observed that high educational aspirations were not constrained by poverty. Although there were instances where children were not able to achieve their aspirations, the findings of this research largely align with the social support model of Berzin (2010), which suggests that social support provided by families, friends and peers has a positive influence on educational aspirations and the positive outcomes of children. The Young Lives research undertaken in four countries also documented the contributions made by caregivers towards the realisation of children's educational aspirations, although this depended on where children were living (Boyden 2013; Camfield and Tafere 2009; Crivello 2015; Tafere 2015, 2017).

The discussions regarding childhood, intergenerational relations and children's agency in this research contribute to existing knowledge in the social study of childhood and further theorisation of children's agency.

7.3.2 Ethnicity and imagined communities of the Argobbas

Anderson (1983) used the notion of 'imagined communities' to depict the sense of belongingness that a community might have towards their fellow members and to show how a community is imagined in the minds of its members even if they never know or meet all their fellow members (p. 6). He particularly used the concept to emphasise the importance of symbols for political identity and in relation to nationalism, kinship and religion.

Contextualising Anderson's sense of imagination which, he believed, was expanded through print media, and by adopting Smith's (2009) framework of ethnosymbolism, this research explored how the imaginings of the Argobbas were formed to create a sense of belongingness to a certain community that has its own unique cultural features and history. Like that of print media, Smith's (1991) work emphasised the significance of historical landmarks—such as landscapes, housing styles and the sharing of common myths of origin and ancestors—as markers of ethnic identity. This research analysed the concept of imagined community in light of ethnic identity, which implemented a federal model and formed territorial boundaries in Ethiopia along ethnic lines by providing constitutional rights to a level of secession (Abbink 2011). This in turn created the notion of an Argobba social identity. Against this backdrop, I examined whether the imaginings of children and adults were similar and/or different from each other regarding childhood, children's education and migration. The research found distinctions between the imaginings held by children and those of adults around the key themes explored. Major distinctions, however, lie in how these imaginings were formed. For instance, children and young people's imaginings were often influenced by the circumstances that impacted their present situation and were largely directed towards what they aspired to achieve in the future. Adult imaginings, on the other hand, were mainly based on the legacy of the past and were predominantly oriented towards maintaining their culture, religion and identity. The level of weight that children and young people give to identity, based on ethnicity, is not significant when compared to the position held by adults. Some of the findings presented below exemplify these explanations.

As seen from the outcomes of the small-group discussions held with children of different age groups discussed in Chapter 5, education and migration were considered as a tool to get out of poverty and a means to leave the rural areas. Despite the large amount of time that children spent in handling household chores or engaged in work on the agricultural fields in their day-to-day life experiences, however, their imagined futures were located in the towns

and urban centres where access to basic services such as water and electricity was not a problem. Similarly, due to improved access and use of media and technology, as well as access to better and easy transport to travel from Argobba and leave the country to migrate elsewhere, children and young person's imaginings were not limited to their present living environment in Argobba or tied to their cultural and ethnic identity of being an Argobba. Hence, their imaginings were formed within the wider context of the globalised world that could be realised through education and migration. Hence, while challenging and, at times, grappling with traditional and cultural values, children and young persons tended to shape their futures and navigated their transitions to adulthood. As shown in the empirical data analysis, this created tensions with adults' imagined communities, which were focused on the past and tended to maintain the legacy of their ancestral traditions, and their ethnic identity and language.

The complexities and tensions between children and adults could, for instance, be seen in certain sociocultural values and practices, such as gender discrimination and child marriage where some children were not only breaking the stigma attached to the notion of *yilugnta* (meaning a sense of shame) and reconstructing their childhoods through migration and education, but also taking the opportunities created by rapid political and economic changes of globalisation. These circumstances strengthen the argument this research makes about the tensions between children and adults, as children had begun to consider themselves a part of the wider society outside Argobba and how the influences of globalisation unfold in their lives.

Concerning issues related to ethnicity, another focus of this research was to obtain the views of adults, rather than those of children, to understand how the current policy of self-administration provided an opportunity for the Argobbas to realise the envisioned future for their ethnic group and whether such changes would create better livelihoods for children and young persons in Argobba. However, the 'self-administration' to which the Argobbas were entitled had not yet brought fundamental improvement to the day-to-day lives of ordinary people,

as the woreda continued to rely on budgetary support from the Amhara Regional State Council, and was challenged by the harsh climatic conditions and shortage of rains and water that exposed a portion of the population to rely on food aid. Nevertheless, it was apparent that the local government structure had created an opportunity for adults to take advantage of being an Argobba to access and assume government positions at woreda level. The efforts being made by the woreda administration to save the Argobba language from extinction reflects the interest of the Argobbas to maintain their ethnic identity.

7.4 Implications for policy and practice

Whilst the section above provides a summary of the main conceptual contribution of this doctoral research, as a practitioner for many years, the implications of the research for policy and practice remain critical and central to me. The section below therefore draws on the different perspectives of children and adults in the research to provide the following insights.

7.4.1 On children's wellbeing

Listening to children's perspectives provides a strong account of the opportunities and constraints shaping their childhoods and reveals understandings about their rights, motivations and actions.

The children's accounts also suggest that challenges related to child marriage and gender issues influence their lives greatly. The Ethiopian Government, in line with international and regional conventions on the rights of the child, have stressed the responsibility of the state to provide special protection for different categories of children, including victims of violence, abuse, trafficking, child labour and harmful practices, as well as children with disabilities (FDRE-MoE 1994). Despite international and regional policy instruments, constitutional provisions, legislations and policy directives, this research found a gap between promises and reality. Hence, the general wellbeing of children and their access to basic services remained grim. Given the complexities of the challenges that children encountered in Argobba, interventions by government are crucial to educate community leaders to widen

the space for children's voices to be heard and their rights protected from violence.

7.4.2 *On children's education*

The findings from this research show conceptualisations and practices around children's education and demonstrate the imagined accounts of children about what it is like to be an educated person. Findings also show the variations between contemporary discourses that describe the contribution of education to development, alleviation of poverty and social mobility (Quennerstedt and Quennerstedt 2014) and the limited progress made in the enrolment and retention of children in school in Argobba to date. Studies conducted by Young Lives in four countries, including Ethiopia, indicate that the poorest children living in rural areas, whose parents are the least educated and belong to ethnic, language or religious minority groups, perform less well in their education than do their peers in urban areas (Boyden et al. 2019). Hence, a supportive environment is necessary for children to succeed in their education.

This research suggests that children's educational aspirations can only be realised through employing an approach that encourages dialogue, as suggested by Johnson (2015), by engaging adults in a position of power to allow a co-construction that can inform transformational change at individual, organisational and societal levels. Such an approach encourages dialogue rather than expects families and other community members to play a passive role, and allows them to reflect on the complex issues that underpin the challenges of children's education with the possibility of recalibrating it towards ways that children can benefit from it. Moreover, this approach creates an opportunity for communities to explore social and other forms of realities associated with the changing socioeconomic and political landscape. This is particularly useful, as it would bring together policymakers and implementers to help communities explore and deepen their critical awareness and ownership of their realities and to act together by assuming reciprocal duties and responsibilities.

7.5 Areas for future research

7.5.1 Quality of education

Regarding children's education, this research focused on establishing an understanding of how education was perceived and practised among children and adults in Argobba and of the features of enrolment and retention. Along with exploring the challenges and prospects of the expansion of education and transitions of children to the next level of education, it also examined the extent to which attempts had been made to create 'globalised solutions' (Crivello and Morrow 2019). However, further research needs to be undertaken on the aspects of quality of education and the extent to which the national curriculum addresses aspirations of marginalised communities such as the Argobbas.

7.5.2 Transnational families

This research highlights the increase in the formation of transnational families and the situation of 'cardboard box' children. An interesting and additional layer of observation made in this research was how children, locally identified as cardboard box children, might in due course be stigmatised if current trends of sending back infant children who are born abroad continue. Hence, further research could usefully focus on how the social bonds between children and their parents work and the extent to which these family relationships are maintained over time and distant places. Cognisant of the challenges of researching transnational childhoods, as suggested by Zeitlyn and Mand (2012), a multi-sited research would contribute to document the perspectives of the migrant parents and assess the situation of children growing up without closer attachments to their biological parents.

7.5.3 Alternative means of livelihood for young persons

Inhospitable climatic conditions and limited opportunities for young persons in rural areas emerged as key issues in this research that force children and young persons to abandon agriculture and consider migration as an alternative means of livelihood. This was exacerbated by a shortage of water and

unavailability of arable land. Given the increasing emphasis placed on creating better opportunities for young persons, as stipulated in the Youth Policy of the government of Ethiopia, further research into alternative means of livelihood and into the ways that young persons could get access to the government's Youth Development Scheme is necessary. Access to such resources may lead to opportunities to enhance their participation in decision-making processes.

7.6 A final thought

Finally, while it has not been the intention of this thesis to make judgements about the young people or adults of the Argobba community, it is worth noting the considerable resilience and resourcefulness that community members have shown. Even though it is difficult for social scientists to make predictions about the future, it is my hope that a common understanding can be established between communities, government and religious institutions in mapping out the challenges and contribute to realising children's educational aspirations, without compromising their contribution to the livelihoods of their families, and for children to learn work skills to become important citizens of the nation.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. CHADET's Child Safeguarding policy

1. Introduction

In recent years, there has been an increasing recognition of the global nature of child abuse, and growing acceptance of the potential risks (for children) and adults working in positions of trust. Greater attention has been paid to how development agencies ensure that children with whom they are in contact with are kept safe from harm.

CHADET, as a child-focused organization, works largely with street and street connected working children, children in urban areas involved in and/or exposed to sexual abuse and exploitation, rural girls exposed to early marriage, domestic labour, street involvement and risky migration, leading to sexual abuse and exploitation and other vulnerable children. The organization is aware that all these children under the care of its various projects could be vulnerable to different forms of intentional unintentional harm.

Hence, CHADET's Board and senior management decided to develop a Child Safeguarding policy (CSP) to ensure that all children who are accessing various of programs rendered by CHADET are assured of the safest possible environment and organizational practices which promote their protection. CHADET's approach to create an environment within the organization where staffs are comfortable to openly voice their concerns as well as to foster an atmosphere to encourage reflection and learning. Staffs are encouraged to treat children with the level of concern and respect they would treat members of their own family whilst maintaining a professional relationship with children at all times. These children have a wide range of experiences, many having suffered loss of family members, whilst others have left their homes and communities and spent long periods working on the street with little family contact and been exposed to abuse and exploitation. Some children, such as those with physical and/or disability are particularly vulnerable.

CHADET's cross-cutting approach throughout all its programs is to empower children to build on their strength, overcome their problems and enhance the skills and resources they need to be able to develop to their full potential. CHADET can only do this efficiently if it ensures a child-safe environment where children are aware of the treatment they can expect from CHADET staff/representatives and from one another. This policy document, therefore, aims to set out the principles,

standards and guidelines for individual and organizational practice required to safeguard children from intentional and unintentional harm.

The following are the key areas that all staffs, consultants, visitors and contractors should observe in all their encounters with program participant children across all its areas of operations.

2. Interactions with children

DO

- Be aware of the power imbalance between adult and child as well as gender and avoid actions which exploit this,
- Explain clearly what you intend to do at the start of any activity and explain exactly what you plan to do with any information shared,
- Give children the opportunity to talk at their own pace,
- Treat all children equally without discrimination on the basis of age, gender, disability, faith, sexuality, etc.,
- Ensure that children are aware of their right NOT to participate or to withdraw from the activity any time.

AVOID

- Encouraging close attachments with individual children- your visit is temporary and you cannot maintain contact beyond the visit,
- Offer gifts to individual children. If providing a gift is appropriate, it should be given to the group and with prior arrangement of the partner organization.

3. Personal use of social networks

DO

- Remember that you are personally responsible for the content that you share. Always think twice about what you post/share and what implications this will have for CHADET,
- If you use social networks or blogs, for personal use and you have indicated in any way your place of work you must add a disclaimer stating that your opinion on this site are your own. i.e. 'My tweets are my own and not of the organization I am connected with'.
- Inform the Designated Safeguarding Officer or Executive Director if you observe or read uploaded content from another staff member/volunteer which breaches the safeguarding policy.

AVOID

- **Never** post images or stories about beneficiaries via personal social media accounts. Consent is given to CHADET as an organization and not to any individual for personal use.

4. Informed consent

Ensuring informed consent involves providing children with the facts, implications and future consequences of any action affecting them. This should be done in a manner appropriate to the child's age, ability and understanding.

" I, _____ have read and understood the standards and guidelines outlined in this safeguarding policy. I agree with the principles contained therein and accept the importance of implementing child safeguarding policies and practice while associated with CHADET".

Name: _____
Job title: _____
Signature: _____
Date: _____

Appendix 2 Participation information sheet

Title of Study: Perceptions of childhood migration and education among communities in Northeastern Ethiopia.

Invitation paragraph

We would like to invite you to take part in our research. Before you decide, we would like you to understand why the research is being conducted and what it would involve for you. One of our team members will go through the information sheet with you and answer any questions you may have. This should take about 15 minutes. You can talk to others about the study if you wish, and ask us if there is anything that is not clear. You will be given time to think about whether you wish to take part before making a decision, and may take this sheet away with you.

What is the purpose of the study/project?

The purpose of this research is to explore how childhood migration and education is perceived and practiced by children, families and other members of the community in this area. The outcome of the research is believed to generate data that would contribute for policy and practice in improving the situation of children in the case study areas.

Why have I been invited to participate?

Your participation in this research is vital in that, along other participants, it would contribute in the identification of perceptions and practices on child migration and education in your community and how intergenerational relations are expressed and/or changed over time and place. You are selected based on the criteria that individuals who are knowledgeable about the values and cultural practices of the community would contribute better than others. There will be children, parents, teachers and other members of the community who would be taking part in this research.

Do I have to take part?

Your participation in this research is purely based on your willingness to take part. You are free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason. This will have no negative consequences on you.

What is expected from participants?

In participating in the research, you will be taking part in small group discussions and/or answer questions during individual interviews. The small group discussion sessions could take up to one hour while the individual interviews could take up to an hour and half. We will conduct the discussions or the interviews at a time that is convenient for you and in a way that does not affect your work. We may take some photographs and record the discussions on an audio or video. However, this will be based on your willingness to be photographed or recorded. The photographs and or interviews will only be used for the purpose of the research. At any point, you can ask for clarification of the questions.

Will I be paid for taking part?

There is no financial incentive for participating in this research. However, if it incurs any transportation or other costs related to the research, it will be reimbursed. Refreshments will be provided during small group discussion sessions.

What are the potential disadvantages or risks of taking part?

There is no risk attached to your involvement in this research.

What are the potential benefits of taking part?

We would value your participation as it contributes to generate data for policy and practice towards improving the situation of children in the community.

Will my taking part in the study/project be kept confidential?

All the information you provide will remain strictly confidential and under no circumstances will we link your name to the answers you give. The recordings will be kept carefully and only be used for the purpose of the research. It is only the researcher and the University of Brighton who would have access to the data. However, we would like to bring to your attention that the data may be archived or for possible re-use by other researchers.

What will happen if I don't want to carry on with the study?

You are free to withdraw from the research at any time without giving a reason. There will be no negative consequence because of your decision to withdraw. However, It may not be possible or desirable for data already provided to be removed or destroyed.

What will happen to the results of the project?

The results of this research will be made available to the University of Brighton in a form of dissertation and could also be published. Furthermore, it could be shared with concerned government and non-governmental institutions to use it as an input to improve their work. You will also have the opportunity to see the results of the study.

Who is organising and funding the research?

This research is organized by the University of Brighton (UK) and is partially supported by charities in and out of Ethiopia.

What if there is a problem?

Any concerns and/or complaints that may arise in connection to this research could be directed to the supervisor of the researcher and/or the head of School of Education at the University of Brighton.

Any concerns or complaints could be addressed and referred to the contact details below.

Contact details

Anannia Admassu

or

Dr Vicky Johnson

Who has reviewed the study?

This research proposal has been reviewed and approved by the ethics and governance committee of the University of Brighton and the Ministry of Science and technology of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.

Appendix 3. Participant consent form

Title of Proposal: Perceptions of Childhood Migration and Education Among Communities in Northeastern Ethiopia.

Please
initial or
tick box

I agree to take part in this research, which is to explore how childhood migration and education is perceived and practiced by children, families and other members of the community.

The researcher has explained to my satisfaction the purpose, principles and procedures of the study.

I have read the information sheet and I understand the principles, procedures and activities involved.

I agree to the researcher taking photographs/making audio/video recordings during the project.

I understand how the data collected will be used, and that any confidential information will normally be seen only by the researchers and will not be revealed to anyone else.

I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason and without incurring consequences from doing so.

I agree that should I withdraw from the study, the data collected up to that point may be used by the researcher for the purposes described in the information sheet.

I agree that data collected may subsequently be archived and used by other bona fide researchers. ***[where there is a possibility that data may be reused or shared – please see the University’s Data Management Policy]***

Name (please print)

Signed Date

Appendix 4. Parent's consent form for child's participation in the research

I, _____ (insert name of parent or guardian) agree to the use of my child's story by Anannia Admassu in publications, reports and website for the purposes of an academic research that he is currently undertaking as a student of the University of Brighton. I have been briefed about the purpose of the research and my contribution to it.

He will not pass this information onto a third party, except his research supervisors and the University, who wish to use the information without seeking further approval from me.

Signed (on behalf of the child) _____

Print name _____

Date _____

Location _____

Appendix 5. Interview guides for gathering data from children

In order to avoid the power imbalances between me, as researcher, and the children, I will be using different methods of data gathering tools that make the process more varied, fun and interesting for the participants. These will include visual methods, story and story telling and group interviews. Before undertaking each activity, children will be informed about the purpose of the research and will be taken through the information sheet to outline the major issues related to the research and answer any questions they may have. The data gathering tools that are going to be employed include visual methods, tasks-based activities such as story and story telling, group interviews and in-depth interviews with individual children. Following on the basic steps in engaging children in research, I will be working towards building trust and use an appropriate form of communication. The issues around which data is to be gathered from children are the following:

A) Children's understanding about childhoods

- What makes children distinct from adults?
- When should children start to take responsibility, for instance for work or making decisions on matters concerning their education and/or migration?

B) Role expectations and intergenerational relations

- What are the expectations of children from their parents and what their parents expect from them?
- Are there differences in how boys and girls are treated within families?

C) Participation in decision-making

- Do you participate in decisions that are made by your parents concerning matters that may affect you?
- What are the major issues hindering or facilitating children's participation in decision-making?
- What would the reaction of parents be if children make decisions without their consent (for instance decisions regarding their education and/or migration)
- Would it be possible to build the support of parents and other adults in the community to ensure children's participation?

E) Education

- Do you believe that education is something that could bring about changes in children's lives?
- Do you think that your parents share this thought too?
- Who do you think has the dominant influence over decisions regarding your education?
- Do you feel that you get the level of support that you need to get from your parents for your education?
- What are the major challenges that may facilitate or hinder your education?
- What measures do you think should be taken by children, parents and communities to help children stay in school?

F) Migration

- What do you think are the reasons why children migrate?
- Who do you think has the dominant influence in the decisions made by children to migrate; do parents negotiate this?

G) Peer relations and Social/cultural practices

- When and how do you mix and socialize with your peers?

- Are there practices that you know which may hamper the education of children in your community? e.g. violence, child marriage, corporal punishment, maltreatment, family discourse.

Appendix 6. Interview schedule for gathering data from parents

My name is Anannia and I would like to invite you to take part in this research. Before you decide, I would like you to understand why the research is being conducted and what it would involve for you. I will go through the information sheet to outline the major issues related to the research and answer any questions you may have. The interview should take about one hour. I have a tape recorder with me to record these interviews as a back up to my notes. The information that you may give will be kept confidential in that no individual will be named in the report corresponding to these interviews.

Do you have any questions you'd like to ask me about the research before we begin?

1. What is the core value that you attach to your children?

Probes:

- Reasons for having and not having children in the
- Are there social and cultural contexts that may have an influence on this?

2. When do you think should children take responsibility, for instance to work, fend for themselves or take decisions regarding their education or migration?

3. How are intergenerational relations expressed in your family/community?

Probes:

- What are the major expectations (reciprocities) that you have from your children and their expectations from you?
- How would you express the power relations between parents and children?
- Do you think children have the capacity/ability/agency or lack competencies to make decisions and/or choices about matters that may affect them?
- Do you let your children participate in dialogue and decisions on matters affecting their lives? e.g. taking their points of views seriously
- Do you think that the interest and behavior of children has changed over time and is affecting their relationships with their parents? Especially when compared to the time when you were a child? What contributed to these changes?
- How are boys and girls treated in your family?

4. Do you believe that education is something, which could contribute towards improving the lives of your children and that of yourself?

Probes:

- What influenced your decisions to send (or not to send) your children to school?
- Does family size has any influence over decisions to be made to support children's education?
- If you are sending your child to school, how do you support his/her education?
- What do you think are the major factors that are facilitating or hindering children to continue their education?
- Do you meet with teachers and members of the school management to discuss your child's education?

5. What do you think has a dominant influence for children's migration?

Probes:

- Has any child migrated from your family or your neighborhood in the recent past?
 - If a child/ren has/have migrated from your family, was the decision negotiated between you and the child/ren?
 - Do you think that children could face difficulties/challenges and are at risk while en-route or at the places of their destinations?
 - Do children who have migrated maintain their relations with their siblings/peers/families while they are away? If yes, how?
6. What steps do you think should be taken by children, parents, communities as well as other stakeholders to help children stay in school and pursue their education?

That was all I really wanted to ask you. I will review what you have said to me so that we can make sure that I have understood you correctly. ((Main points discussed to be summarized for the interviewee). Is there any thing you would like to add to what you have said? Or you would like to ask me any further questions about the research work?

Thank you very much for your help with this research.

Appendix 7. Guide for focus group interviews (Adults)

Opening

My name is Anannia Admassu and I would like to invite you to take part in this research. Before you decide, I would like you to understand why the research is being conducted and what it would involve for you. I will go through the information sheet to outline the major issues related to the research and answer any questions you may have. The interview should take about one hour. I have a tape recorder with me to record these interviews as a back up to my notes. The information that you may give will be kept confidential in that no individual will be named in the report corresponding to these interviews.

Transition question

1. Let me begin by asking you some questions about how parents in your community see **childhood**, for instance, in terms of when they should take responsibility to work or take decisions regarding their education or migration.

Introductory questions

2. Tell me about the **intergenerational relations** between parents and children in your community.

Probes:

- How are the relationships between parents and children being expressed in your community? (e.g. power/reciprocities)
- Do you think children have the capacity/ability/agency or lack competencies to make decisions and/or choices about matters that may affect them?
- Do you let your children participate in dialogue and decisions on matters affecting their lives? (e.g. taking their points of views seriously)
- Have you observed any changes over time regarding the roles that children are expected to play in your communities? (e.g. when compared to the time when you were a child? What contributed to these changes?)
- Are there differences in the treatment of boys and girls within the family setting?
- What do you think are the opportunities or challenges that are influencing the existing intergenerational relations?

Key questions

3. Do families in your community believe that **education** is something, which could contribute towards improving the lives of their children and that of themselves?

Probes:

- What factors have the potential to influence decisions by families to send or not to send their children to school?
- What do you think are the key factors that could positively and /or negatively influence the education of children in your community?
- How do parents support their children's education? (e.g. meet teachers or members of the school management to discuss about their children's education?)

4. In your opinion, what are the key factors that may have an influence over the decisions for children to **migrate** or to stay in their communities?

Probes:

- What do you think would children gain or lose from migrating to other places?
- Is the decision to migrate a matter that is negotiated by parents and children?
- Do you think that parents are aware of the risks associated with the migration of children?
- Are there any distinctions on how parents might encourage or discourage the migration of boys and girls?

5. Do you know of children who have migrated and still maintaining relationships with their parents; siblings and peers back home once they leave their villages?

Probes:

- What are the mutual expectations between the migrant child and his/her parents? e.g. inheritance, remittance, etc.
- What does the relationships between children and parents look like if children migrate without the consent of their parents?
- If migrant children are maintaining their relationships with their parents or siblings, what is the major means of communication (i.e. telephone, mail, post, etc.)
- Have there been instances whereby migrant children give-up city life and return to their villages?

Ending questions

- Is there any thing you would like to add to what we have discussed thus far? Or you would like to ask me any further questions about the research work?
- What can each one of us can do to change the situation?

That was all I really wanted to ask you. I will review for you what you have discussed today so that we can make sure I have understood you correctly (Main points discussed to be summarized for participants). Would it be all right to get back to you if I have any more questions?

Thanks again for the time and your help with this research.

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