

**The traditional practice of *Mingi* among the
Hamer, Bena and Kara Tribes in Ethiopia: A
theological perspective on a bio-ethical
challenge**

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DECLARATION

I declare that The traditional practice of Mingi among the Hamar, Bena and Kara Tribes in Ethiopia – A theological perspective on a bio-ethical challenge; is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references and that this work has not been submitted before for any other degree at any other institution.

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ABSTRACT

Globally, there are diverse societies with multiple cultures, traditions, customs and lifestyles. Every society has its own pattern of interaction among its members. In every culture there are several important practices and customs. These elements celebrate life-cycle transitions, enhance the community's cohesion, or transmit useful traditional values to the following generations (Assefa, et.al. 2005). The traditions or culture forms reflect norms of care and behavior based on age, life-stages, gender, and social classes. Through these types of practices, the elder generation transmits a rich inheritance to the following one. Numerous traditions promote social cohesion and unity or useful practices and important traditions. However, other incidences, especially harmful traditional practices (HTPs), have detrimental effects. These HTPs erode the physical, mental, social and psychological health and integrity of individuals and communities. This applies especially to women and children (UN, 2009). These practices differ from place to place and country to country.

The present study explored how an HTP, especially that of *mingi*, has been affecting the holistic development of children and the human rights of women in Hamar, Bena and Kara tribes of Southern Ethiopia. A thorough investigation was undertaken into appropriate ways to change the attitudes of the particular people groups on the mentioned phenomenon. Finally, this study demonstrated how the *mingi* practice will continue to impact current and future generations of the area, unless strategic interventions can take place.

Key words

Bull jumping, tribal kings, tradition, cultural ceremonies, witchdoctors, tribal elders, cultural heritage, identity focus, vulnerable, mingi practitioners, human rights, child sacrifice, mistreatment, taboos, cultural practices, traditional beliefs, peers, excommunication, fortune tellers, evil spirit, ancestral spirit, beliefs.

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AARCCH	Authority for Research and Conservation of Cultural Heritage
ATR	African Traditional Religion
BLS	Base-line survey
BSP	Bureau of Statistics and Population
CRLP	Center for Reproductive Law and Policy
CSA	Central Statistical Agency
Edir	Volunteer society where members make monthly financial contributions that will be paid out after their death
EKHC	Ethiopian Kale Heywet Church
EPDRF	Ethiopian People's Democratic Republic Front
Equb	Ten to twenty members gather together to collect money that are paid out to its members based on their sequential order for the purpose of establishing small businesses
Evangadi	Midnight cultural youth dance among the Hamar, Bena and Kara Tribes
FGM	Female genital mutilation
Gilo	Cultural ceremony that individuals have to undergo to be accepted in the community
HTP	Harmful traditional practice
Mehiber	Volunteer members gather monthly to eat and drink communally
Mingi	Taboo (forbidden act or detrimental label) that transfers a curse on the community
NGO	Non-governmental organization
OAU	Organization of African Union

SIM	Sudan Interior Mission
SNNPR	Southern Nations, Nationalities and People Region
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund

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CHAPTER 1:

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background, clarification and problem statement

This section provides the background to the study, leading to the problem statement.

1.1.1 Background

According to (Worldometers info, 2020), Ethiopia is the twelve largest country in Africa and has diverse ethnic and linguistic backgrounds. Based on the above source, the country comprises more than 80 different ethnic groups, each with its own language, culture, custom and tradition. The diversity of the ethnic groups and the various traditional practices have led to distinct cultural differences among its population. It can be observed generally how Ethiopian peoples strive for the common good of their communities. Examples of outstanding traditional practices, are *mehiber*, *edir*, *equb*,¹ visiting relatives and family, obeying and taking care of the elderly, or rendering hospitality. Besides the important and beneficial cultural practices in Ethiopia, there are harmful ones, which are transferred between generations as well. These HTPs still impact women and children negatively in several ways. In numerous regions of the country, especially in the South Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Region (SNNPR), local inhabitants are involved in various HTPs. These are practices such as female genital mutilation, early marriage, work and food taboos, milk-teeth extraction or leaving bed to the guests, (allowing his wife to have sex with the guest). Other practices include high dowry payment, neglecting female children and awarding high positions to males, whipping the bride until bleeding, and fear of witchcraft by considering the witchcrafts as gods (Assefa, et.al. 2005).

Ethiopia, along with other countries, has signed the Convention on the Elimination of 'All Forms of Discrimination' against Women and Children. This signing demonstrated the government's commitment to address the plight of women and children in developing areas of the country. However, it is recognized that the Ethiopian culture through its regular practices directly contradicts the rights of these most vulnerable people. For instance, Article 16: b and 16:2 states that women have "... the same right freely to choose a spouse and to enter into marriage only with their free and full consent" (UN WOMEN,1979).

However, in several Ethiopian regions, parents propose marriage without the consent of their children. A youth betrothed in marriage will not know the spouse until the wedding day, or at

¹ Explained in the list of acronyms and abbreviations.

times even the wedding night. No legal action occurs in these situations even though the convention states “the betrothal and the marriage of a child shall have no legal effect, and all necessary action, including legislation, and shall be taken to specify a minimum age for marriage and to make the registration of marriages in an official registry is compulsory” (Assefa, et al. 2005). Instead, the following practices are rife: marriage by abduction or marriage covenants, entailing agreements between parents about unborn children, “I will give my daughter to your son when my wife gives birth.” These common harmful practices include early marriage for girls under 15, particularly in rural Ethiopia. The mentioned practices need wise, remedial interventions.

1.1.2 Concept clarification

The present study focused on the cultural practice of *mingi* within Ethiopia. It is difficult to define the term “mingi” appropriately in a dictionary from English or other languages. The term is well known in Hamar, Bena and Kara languages where it is used frequently. Nevertheless, though this term has no explicit definition, in practice, *mingi* has been harming women and children for numerous years. Based on Wharton’s report, the tradition of *mingi* has caused the murder of uncountable infants and young children. The practice also led to the suffering of the women from the Kara, Hamar and Bena tribes. Although not statistically accurate, it is estimated, as Wharton (2018) said, 300 children a year still die because of the ‘curse’.

According to Grant (2003), one of the most remote regions in Africa is the valley of the lower Omo river situated in Ethiopia’s far south-west. This valley is the home of the Hamar, Bena and Kara people. Grant describes the regions as follows:

“Isolated by mountains to the north, swamps to the west and deserts to the south, this area is the world’s last great tribal stronghold. Untouched by colonialism, largely ungoverned and only tenuously connected to the rest of Ethiopia, the valley is a vast elongated basin occupied by 16 tribes” (2003)

The Hamar, Bana and Kara are the most influential tribes in the valley. These tribes are warriors, attacking not only outside invaders, but battle among themselves as well. Since the source of their economy is cattle, it is common practice that the winner of an altercation loots all the cattle of the loser and crosses the Omo river, which has great significance to the tribes. Due to the climate, these tribes do not cultivate extensive crops. The responsibility of farming, building houses, taking care of the children and other domestic plights, reside with the women. Almost all the tribes are pastoral societies led by traditional leaders and are found to withstand modernisation.

As an overarching definition, the cultural practice of *mingi* entails a negative classification given or placed on a person – in the sense of a taboo. Such negative labelling detrimentally affects the value and identity of the person within the community. The most vulnerable group who are considered *mingi* are women and children. *Mingi* has different meanings relating to children and women. Thus for clarity, the focus is first on *mingi* which is ascribed to children, thereafter, the study investigates those forms targeting women.

Mingi ascribed to children

Teeth position: Children are considered *mingi* if their first two milk teeth on the upper jaw show before those on the lower jaw. People believe that if the upper teeth erupt before the lower ones, the child was not conceived from a human being, rather an evil spirit. If they let that child live, it will have disastrous consequences. These may include introducing a curse to the community, drought to the environment and death to every living being. The belief is further that the curse will stop the rain and dry up the largest river, Omo. The tribes depend on this river for their various needs and consider it as their life source, being the living and dwelling place of their ancestral dead spirits.

Mingi children identified only by the position of their teeth's position, are left exposed to die. However, this practice occurs infrequently since a premature growth of upper teeth is highly unusual. The Better Health Channel, in its latest (October) edition, explains, "The two front teeth (central incisors) in the lower jaw are usually the first to erupt. This occurs somewhere between the ages of six and 10 months. The two front teeth (central incisors) in the upper jaw erupt between the ages of eight and 13 months" (Better Health Organization, 2018). Nevertheless, *mingi* culture attempts to turn incidental issues into primary ones. In the process, scores of innocent children are killed. Wharton (2018), points out that despite the absence of an official count, it is estimated that 300 children die annually due to this 'curse'.

Conceived while breastfeeding: Unborn children are considered *mingi* if they are conceived while the mother is still breastfeeding the older sibling. The traditional community believes that unless an evil spirit is involved, it is impossible to conceive while breastfeeding in this way. This belief can impact the woman and family for three to five years, depending on the situation. Therefore, a husband decides to stay away with his other wives until the born child can walk and reach the mother's waist. If the mother conceives and gives birth to a child considered *mingi*, family and community members will not allow the new-born to live. They may cast these babies off a steep cliff, suffocate them until they die by stuffing their mouth and nose with soil or dust, or throw them into the river to drown or be eaten by crocodiles (Grant, 2012).

Conceived before blessed: Another way that children can be declared *mingi* is by being conceived before elders bless the marriage. When the mother stops breastfeeding, it is expected, based on societal norms, of her and her husband to prepare a cultural ceremony where they receive a blessing by the elders of the area. At times parents fail to obtain the blessing, due to economic problems or other reasons. Thus, if the woman conceives then, all society members wait until she gives birth. As soon as she bears the child, the baby is confiscated, taken into the wild and killed brutally, for being *mingi*.

Jumping the bull: Culturally it is expected that young boys should jump bulls (7-14 bulls) to become a man. This practice involves in the presence of their family, relatives and their close friends. The young men should pass over seven to fourteen bulls for four times without failing down. It is not acceptable for young men to consider marriage before having achieved this cultural milestone. Thus, if a young man marries and has a child before 'jumping the bull', society members will kill the child for being *mingi* (Tafese, 2018).

King's firstborn son: The firstborn of the king's sons is considered *mingi*. It would give a bad sign to the father if the baby is allowed to live. Thus, to ensure the position of the father king, community members must kill this first son of the king.

Carrying disability: The final type of *mingi* under discussion is the presence of a child with a disability. According to societal belief, bearing a disabled child clearly indicates a curse. Parents have the responsibility to expose of the disabled child before someone else informs the elders about the situation. If that does not occur, the penalty would be double, that they will lose their child and being excommunicated from the society. Tradition dictates that disabled persons are not welcome since they introduce wrath, curse and death to the community (Petros, 2000).

Women considered mingi

Women can be labelled *mingi* for various reasons, which are explained in more detail below.

Pre-marital abstention: A woman is considered *mingi* if she abstains from sexual relations with men before marriage. To have a good or wealthy husband, it is expected of a woman to conceive three or four times before marriage to guarantee her fertility. After each time, the conceived child should be aborted in a cultural way (i. e. her boyfriend takes her in to the bush and hit where the conceived fetus is located). A woman who does not comply to this cultural practice is considered *mingi*.

Conceiving while breastfeeding: A woman is also labelled *mingi* if she conceives another child while she is breastfeeding. As explained above, the new-born is considered *mingi* as such

and disposed of. In such a situation, the community excommunicates the woman until her husband pays the penalty the elders have decided on. Until that time, the woman must hide herself.

Goat passing: A woman is considered *mingi* if a goat passes between her legs while she walks or talks with another person. In such a case, the woman and her husband have to perform cultural ceremonies to cleanse her. Often, people believe that certain animals such as goats become messengers of an evil spirit. To protect themselves from such incidents, women should always take care while walking to fetch water from the river.

Married to ‘unqualified’ boy: A woman is also considered *mingi* if she marries a young boy who did not ‘jump the bulls’. As explained above, the jumping of bulls is one of the qualifications for a man to marry a woman. Otherwise, the woman and the new-born child is considered *mingi*. As the result, the born child will be killed and his parents will be excommunicated from their society until they finish cultural mandatories (Grant, 2003).

1.1.3 Problem statement

To summarise the exposition above: various ways have been discussed above to indicate the extent to which *mingi* (or detrimental labelling) as practice has been affecting children and women, violating their right to life and protection from harm. Under Article 6 in the Rights of Children, UNICEF, Article 6 states, “Children have the right to live, and it is the responsibility of the government to take care of them” (Viveiers, 2014). However, it is clear that in the identified Ethiopian cultures, the rights of children and women are being violated through these traditional practices.

Children: Disabled ones are discarded because they are considered as *mingi*. Thus, it is assumed their presence brings drought, disease and death onto the people of Hamar, Bena and Kara tribes, and to their precious property, cattle.

Women: They have been suffering due to various reasons:

- moral integrity – abstaining from sexual relations before marriage;
- succumbing to natural phenomena – conceiving another child while breastfeeding the former;
- abandonment – left by their husbands for four to five years in fear of sexual relations, while the husbands have access to dozens of women away from home.

In the mentioned regions within Ethiopia, the practice of *mingi* is as old as the communities. Nevertheless, it is disconcerting that such practices are still harming countless women and children. Furthermore, to date, this phenomenon has not been researched effectively in academic disciplines, particularly from a theological point of departure. Therefore, one of the challenges facing the present research is finding scholarly articles that address this problem of cultural *mingi*.

Since the mid-19th century an evangelical community has been present in Ethiopia (Billa, et.al. 2005). However, few scholars have focused on the issue, except a number of evangelists. Educational researchers have been conducting studies for nearly a century in the country. Again, except for limited articles in journals, it is extremely difficult to locate reliable sources within the known universities of Ethiopia. Although this is a challenge, it also indicates a research gap (lacuna), which underlines the need for the present study. Tourists, researchers in anthropology and a number of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) have been working within the Ethiopian society since the 1970s. However, instead of critically evaluating this indigenous culture, these approaches seem to encourage the perpetuation of such harmful, inhumane practices. A limited number of people have exposed the depth of the *mingi* problem.

Numerous Ethiopians are unaware that such a practice is one of the HTPs involving their people. Recently, a certain Lale Labuko among the Kara tribe, initiated a hope-providing action by saving *mingi* children under the organisation called the Omo Child Project (Davis, 2012, to be dealt with later). Therefore, the aim of this study is to demonstrate that the *mingi* problem is real. It is therefore vital that the government, church and individuals join forces to help minimize this HTP.

1.2 Research question

The main question to be answered in this thesis was: How can Christian ethics contribute to the struggle against *mingi* in the Hamar, Bena and Kara tribes within Ethiopia by establishing applicable moral standards for the relevant stakeholders? This main question translated into the following specific research questions:

1. How should one understand the HTPs in Ethiopia, especially the *mingi* practice related to children and women?
2. How should one understand the meaning and types of *mingi* in relation to women and children?

3. What are the rights of women and children according to the legal law of Ethiopia, NGO's and religious organisations, with regard to the *mingi* practice?
4. What negative impacts do the *mingi* practice have on women and children within the Hamer, Bena and Karo tribes?
5. Which hopeful indications are there of resistance against the practice by the indigenous charity organisations, government and churches aiming to eradicate this HTP from the inhabitants of the Hamer, Bena and Kara tribes?
6. What roles can the government, church and citizens of Ethiopia play to help eradicate the practice among the mentioned groups in Ethiopia?
7. What recommendations can be made for a possible elimination of *mingi* as HTP among these people, thereby ensuring the human rights of the typical victims?

1.3 Aim and objectives of the study

The present study followed a main aim, which was unpacked into specific objectives.

1.3.1 Aim

The main aim of this study was to explore and create awareness about the negative effects of the *mingi* practice on children and women. The aim further was to provide sufficient and reliable information to demonstrate how *mingi* harms the family, community, country and churches – thus, urging zero tolerance toward continuing this HTP.

1.3.2 Objectives

To reach the above-mentioned aim, this study had the following objectives:

1. Study the HTPs in Ethiopia, focusing on *mingi*, which has been affecting the right to life of children and the human rights of women.
2. Study the meaning and types of *mingi* in relation to women and children in the Hamer, Bena and Kara tribes.
3. Explore *mingi* practices in light of the rights of women and children, as viewed by various religions, the law of Ethiopia and international regulations of the human rights and the Holy Bible.
4. Study and evaluate the negative outcomes of *mingi* within the particular communities.

5. Discern hopeful indications of resistance against the practice by the indigenous charity organisations, the government and certain churches.
6. Evaluate the role the government, church and individuals play in a concerted effort to eradicate the practice among the mentioned groups.
7. Recommend an appropriate way to change the attitudes of the inhabitants from the mentioned tribes, based on the teachings of the Bible and regulations of the country's legal constitution as well as international human rights.

1.4 Central theoretical argument

The present study is based on the central theoretical idea that children have the right to live. Similarly, women have the right to choose a life of moral or ethical purity, and have their emotional needs met fairly as human beings, in terms of the law and teachings of the Scripture. A theological-ethical approach can help solve the problem of *mingi* among the Hamar, Bena and Kara tribes of Ethiopia. This could be achieved by defining the ethical standards that the government can implement and Christian society can follow.

Darby (1996) points out that the involvement of the family, community, church and government could be vital to deal with the HTP of *mingi*. In addition, Christian ethical standards exert positive influence in changing the world, from a logical basis and with a practical focus. Therefore, it is evident that the community, church and the government should combine forces and pool resources to fight against such harmful, inhumane practices, which are contrary to both the Christian living law and the constitution of the government.

Human rights are regarded as inseparable and apply for as long as the person lives. Therefore, no one can deprive a person from such rights, contrary to that individual's decision. Similarly, no one has the right to kill a person who is made in the image of God, according to the teaching of Scriptures and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights' (UDHR, Article 5).

1.5 Research methodology

The methods preferred in the present study was to review literature and study various types of documents on the topic. Information have been obtained from manuals, documents, books, reports, online sources and relevant materials. To integrate the research with the investigated materials, the method was used of philosophical analysis, as well as expository and constructive criticism regarding the practice of *mingi*. The literature analysis of this study was analytical, comparative and evaluative.

The research evaluated the following sources: ethical code of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2005), the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC, 1979), and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR, 1948). The Ethiopian Constitution, Criminal Law and Family Law (1994) were also evaluated against the practice.

Finally, the *mingi* practice was evaluated in light of the guidelines from Scripture to emphasise the practice's contradiction to the teachings of both Testaments. Various publications in systematic theology and publications on human rights were consulted (esp. Grudem, 1995; Vorster, 2004). The data from the document review were processed to indicate that *mingi* practice is contrary to the Evangelical and Reformed tradition. The materials mentioned above were used to answer the main research question as stated previously. Each stake holders' involvement in the activity is discussed in more detail in specific research question 6 and the linked sixth specific objective of the study (to be dealt with later).

The researcher was aware that this study involves real people and cultural practices that form part of their identity. The inhabitants have been following these practices for an extensive period, as their exceptional cultural custom. This custom brought blessings throughout their history, therefore they would wish to continue it according to their belief. When they encounter opposition to their valued indigenous culture, inevitably such quests make the elders and the practitioners of witchcraft uncomfortable. This process takes place when these mentioned groups recognise common ethical norms, but interpret, apply, and balance these differently. In the process, they consider their own values and life experience as their unique custom.

The researcher respects the dignity of all people. Therefore, the analysis was undertaken sensitive to the danger of stigmatising any indigenous group or infringe on their human dignity in any way. Therefore, this study followed a rigorous scientific approach, which gives prevalence to human dignity.

1.6 Use of literature

In this study, data were gathered from the literature through the method of philosophical analysis and by an expository and constructive criticism to reveal the *mingi* practice as contrary to universally accepted human rights. Argumentative and perspective approaches were used to help understand the concepts and ideas that informed this study. Finally, the results of this study were utilised to develop a diagnostic model that indicates how the cultural and customary practices violate the human rights of women and children from the Hamar, Bena and Kara tribes in South-West Ethiopia. This model clearly exposes the challenges of harmful traditional

engagement in the *mingi* practice and the resulting impact on human rights of women and children within the community.

1.7 Biblical epistemology and hermeneutics

This study on *mingi* was conducted from the perspective of the Reformed tradition. According to the belief of the Reformed Church, the Bible is the authoritative Word of God. Thus, the Bible contains the necessary information that people from all generations require for their salvation. The belief is that, by the power of the Holy Spirit, God speaks to believers through the Holy Scriptures. Since the Scripture is inspired by God, prominence is given to the Word alone “as an objective standard of truth and source of authority” (Cartwright, 2006). Furthermore, Vorster (2004) points out that individuals and societies at large commit them to the belief that the Gospel is God’s Word proclaimed with a divine authority.

Thus, the present study examined the practice of *mingi* in terms of the guidelines from the Old Testament in the light of the moral Law (The Ten Commandments) and the teachings of Jesus, particularly in His Sermon on the Mount in the New Testament. Most of the technical systems are based on the classical tradition of the Reformed Church. The reason is that the traditional Reformed view of Scripture with applicable ethical principles and norms, are still considered relevant to deal with contemporary moral and social issues (Vorster, 2004).

As was explained previously, *mingi* is a practice endemic to a few tribes of Ethiopia. However, this practice results in serious and grave harm to the health of women and children in various ways. Thus this could be termed a bio-ethical problem. The present study investigated this problem according to the authoritative principle of God’s Word, and the sound teaching of the Reformed tradition. As a result, the findings of the study could be applied to help mitigate and even eradicate the mentioned problem of *mingi*. This could be done through the active participation of the relevant stakeholders in the region. Such stakeholders include the government of South Omo, the evangelical community and other interested parties in the region.

1.8 Division of chapters

The chapters for the thesis are outlined as follows:

Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter 2: Definition of *mingi*

- Chapter 3:** The rights of children and women
- Chapter 4:** The negative outcomes of *mingi* in the community
- Chapter 5:** The current situation regarding *mingi* and hopeful indications of resistance
- Chapter 6:** The Role of the government, church and Individuals in eradicating the practice
- Chapter 7:** Conclusion and recommendations

1.9 Schematic presentation

RESEARCH QUESTIONS	AIM AND OBJECTIVES	RESEARCH METHOD	CHAPTER TITLE
How should one understand the HTP called <i>mingi</i> relating to women and children?	To study the HTPs in Ethiopia and to introduce the HTP called <i>mingi</i> which has been affecting the right to life of women and children.	Bio-ethical study done from the perspective of the Reformed tradition.	Chapter 1
How should one understand the meaning and types of <i>mingi</i> in relation to women and children?	To study the meaning and types of <i>mingi</i> in relation to women and children around Hamar, Bena and Kara tribes;	Compare and contrast the types of <i>mingi</i> involving women and children	Chapter 2
What are the rights of women and children according to the legal law of Ethiopia, NGO's and global beliefs in relation to <i>mingi</i> practice?	To study and evaluate <i>mingi</i> practice in the light of the rights of women and children in terms of different religions, the law of Ethiopia and international regulations of the human rights and the Holy Bible.	Evaluate the <i>mingi</i> practice in terms of international, national and regional legal frameworks championing the rights of women and children based on bio-ethical guidelines.	Chapter 3
What are the negative influences of <i>mingi</i> practice in relation to women and children around Hamar, Bena and Karo tribes?	To study and evaluate the negative outcomes of the <i>Mingi</i> in the community.	Evaluate the negative influences of <i>mingi</i> on physical, psychological, spiritual... lives of the affected women and children.	Chapter 4
What are the hopeful	To see some hopeful glimpses	Present the current	Chapter 5

RESEARCH QUESTIONS	AIM AND OBJECTIVES	RESEARCH METHOD	CHAPTER TITLE
glimpses of the struggle against the practice by the indigenous charity organizations, government and some churches in eradicating this HTP from the people of Hamer, Bena and Kara tribes?	in the eradication of the practice and to recommend the appropriate way of changing the attitudes of these people groups according to the teachings of the Bible and regulations of the country's legal constitution and human rights;	indications of hope from efforts aimed at eradicating such a harmful practice, by involving the relevant individuals, the church and Government.	
What are the roles of the Government, Church and Individuals in eradicating the practice around the mentioned groups in Ethiopia?	To evaluate the role of the government, church and individuals in eradicating the practice among the mentioned people group;	Assess the moral obligation of individuals, churches and government to eradicate the mentioned HTP.	Chapter 6
What are the recommendations for possible elimination of the HTP called mingi among these people groups and continued upliftment of the human rights of the victims?	To recommend the appropriate way of changing the attitudes of these people groups according to the teachings of the Bible and regulations of the country's legal constitution and human right.	Encourage individuals, churches and the government to implement ways and create opportunities to eradicate this practice among the Hamer, Bena and Kara tribes.	Chapter 7

CHAPTER 2:

BACKGROUND OF HARMFUL TRADITIONAL PRACTICES AND THE DEFINITION OF *MINGI*

2.1 Introduction

The exact time and place from which the practice of mingi originated is unknown. When questioned about the origin of this practice, the responsibility is transferred back from generation to generation, until the great-great grandfathers. It could rightly be argued that mingi is as old as these communities.

Nevertheless, for numerous years, mingi was practised in the communities of the Hamar, Bena and Kara tribes as well as the surrounding areas. This practice has been affecting children and women to the present day. Lale, the founder of the Omo Child Project² from the Kara tribe, explains:

“Many, hundreds of years ago there was a child born and the top teeth came first. The community thought ‘oh this is weird; it might be a curse’. As the child grew up there was a drought and a famine and people died. So, the elders of the village related this back to the child. The kings of the three tribes – Kara, Hamar and Bena - came together and the Mingi curse was born” (as cited by Wharton, 2018).

The explanation above is the generally accepted belief about the origin of mingi. This belief and the practice of mingi is transferred from generation to generation.

The mentioned practice can be classified in terms of child mingi and women mingi. These two categories can be broken down into various types, each relating to its impact on women and children. After a brief description of harmful traditional practices (HTPs) nationally and globally, this chapter presents a thorough exposition of the mingi practice within the Hamar, Bena and Kara tribes with particular emphasis on children and women. The main aim of this chapter is to study the meaning and types of mingi in relation to women and children within the mentioned tribes. This is done by comparing and contrasting the practice with known HTPs regionally, nationally, continent-wide and globally. To achieve these objectives, this chapter attempts to answer the question: How should one understand the meaning and types of mingi in relation to women and children?

² The only indigenous project, established by Lale Labuko, to oppose the mingi practice within the Karo tribes.

The concept of HTP is investigated from both historical and religious points of view held by certain ancient traditional practices globally. Thereafter the focus of the study shifts locally. Thus, first the historical background of HTPs is traced, focusing on the Ancient Middle East, ancient and modern Africa, Ethiopia, the Southern Nations, Nationalities and People Region (SNNPR) and particularly the mentioned people groups. Thereafter, a brief explanation follows of the types of mingi labelling children and women. The chapter concludes by examining the main reasons why Ethiopian cultures have provided fertile ground for the expansion of the practice among the Hamar, Bena and Kara tribes.

2.2 Historical background of HTPs

The discussion provides a broad framework for the investigation of mingi, by focusing on the cultural and historic context of HTPs.

2.2.1 Children in the Ancient Near East

The cultures of the Ancient Near East, surrounded by the land of Palestine, were known for practicing several types of HTPs, which impacted children. These practices stemmed from the peoples' cultural beliefs and idolatry. According to Geisler & Holden (2013), well-known archaeological authors, extensive evidences in ancient biblical histories detail the burnt offerings of children in ancient Canaan and Israel. Based on their evidence, this practice can be considered as an inhumanely act in the history of humankind.

The practice within the context of the Ancient Middle East

Regarding the archaeological findings, it is evident that peoples from the Ancient Middle East sacrificed infants through religious ceremonies. These practices were performed mostly to bestow material blessings on parents while innocent babies were incinerated. The mentioned scholars indicated, "... charred skeletons of children have been discovered together at Gezer, Ta'anach, and Megiddo of Palestine" (Geisler & Holden, 2013). These findings confirm the historical evidence regarding the biblical accounts of child sacrifice and reports about the degenerate practices of these ancient peoples.

Particularly, the findings showed that child sacrificing was practiced from the 10th to the 7th century B.C. This sacrificing was done to worship the Canaanite god, Had ad. In similar ways, ancient Syrians burnt children to appease their gods, namely Adrammelech and Anammelech. In Carthage, North Africa, archaeologists found evidence of a large pile of infant remains burnt on the same spot, thus indicating a form of group child sacrifice. According to Stager & Wolff

(1984), there is a consensus among scholars that Carthaginian children were sacrificed by their parents. These parents would make a vow to kill the next child if the gods would grant them a favour, for instance, that their shipment of goods were to arrive safely in a foreign port.

This theory on Carthage is confirmed by Harden (1962) who states that this practice was also common in North Africa and was transferred through direct contact to South Asia. The author points out:

“In 1921 the largest cemetery of sacrificed infants in the ancient Near East was discovered at Carthage. It is well established that this rite of child sacrifice originated in Phoenicia, ancient Israel's northern neighbour, and was brought to Carthage by its Phoenician colonizers. Hundreds of burial urns filled with the cremated bones of infants, mostly new born but even some children up to age six years old ...” (Harden, 1962).

Through close contact and colonisation, the practice expanded into North Africa.

Child sacrifice practiced in ancient Israel

Regarding child sacrifice in Israel, seemingly the practice was common from the time of Abraham. Abraham attempted to give his only son Isaac as burnt offering when God tested his obedience (Genesis 22). The question remains whether Abraham attempted to burn Isaac alive or after he had killed and sacrificed his son. From the context in this Scripture passage, it is evident that Abraham took a knife to kill Isaac before attempting the burnt offering (Genesis 22:10).

Similarly, according to Judges 11:19-40, the judge Jephthah made a foolish vow and was forced to sacrifice his only daughter. There is no further biblical explanation on this episode since the text remains silent about the response. Historically, God forbid the Israelites from commit such evil practices. Instead the Lord warned the Israelites to avoid the evil practices of their neighbours before inheriting the land of Canaan in the time of Moses. God emphasised to Moses, “Say to the Israelites; ‘Any Israelite or any alien living in Israel who gives any of his children to Molech must be put to death. The people of the community are to stone him’” (Lev. 20:2).

However, after the Israelites had inherited the land and became prosperous, they did not heed God's warning. Thus, according to biblical testimony, God sent a messenger to repeat a similar message to the new generation (Deut 12:31). With a deep anguish and a bitter warning, the angel of the Lord rebuked the Israelites for their disobedience in Judg. 2:2: “... and you shall not

make a covenant with the people of this land, but you shall break down their altars. Yet you have disobeyed me. Why have you done this?"

The reported ungodly relationship between Israel and the Canaanites brought about major catastrophes in the coming years. The Israelites participated in the practice of idol worship (Jud 3:6) and ignored God's law, thereby acting as godless people themselves (Judg. 21:25).

After the death of king Solomon, the kingdom divided into the north and south realms. The Old Testament testimony emphasises that practices transgressing God's law was common in the north. However, certain kings from the southern government also followed similar practices around the Holy City, Jerusalem. Besides worshiping idols, some of these rulers even sacrificed their own children, following the practice of other nations. For example, the apostate king Manasseh offered his own son as a sacrifice (2 King.21:6), as did King Ahaz (2 Chron. 28:1-4). The people of Judah participated in this crime against their own sons. According to the prophetic witness, this sin was viewed as so 'detestable' that God did not even consider it within the Godly realm (Jer 32:35).

Thus, according to the prophetic books, this practice was one of the serious sins which led the people of Judah into captivity. The Scripture records that the state of Judah learnt such practices from their neighbours. In this regard, Jeremiah 32:35 confirms: "... they built high places for Baal in the Valley of Ben Hinnom to sacrifice their sons and daughters to Molech, though I never commanded, nor I did it enter my mind, that they should do such a detestable thing and so make Judah sin."

From the examples above, it is evident that child sacrifice was practiced by ancient Palestinian people as well as the Israelites who are known as the people of the Covenant. Child sacrifice was considered a serious sin before God, which led the Israelites into seasons of intense suffering.

2.2.2 The experience of child sacrifice within African countries

Child sacrifice was and is a practice that takes place within certain African countries. Such harmful traditional practices (HTPs) are usually followed in order to ensure wealth or fame, or to prevent natural catastrophes from impacting people's land. As was mentioned previously, the people around Carthage in Egypt practiced child sacrifice. Due to its geographical connection, the practice was transferred to North Africa. Archaeological evidence supports this view. According to Ngugi (2017), even at present, the culture of human sacrifice is reported to be rampant in numerous African countries, including Nigeria, Zambia, Malawi, Tanzania, Uganda, Zimbabwe, Namibia, Swaziland and South Africa. Based on Ngugi's information, such practices

involve the hunting down, mutilation, and murdering of the most vulnerable members of society, particularly children, people with albinism (a genetic skin disorder), the handicapped, and women.

The present discussion focuses on Uganda, since the practice of child sacrifice is still active in the country. In Uganda, children and women are sacrificed to appease witches and bring prosperity to individuals. According to Ajambo, writer for Religion News Service (RNS), Uganda police inspector general Kale Kayihura reported that one suspect confessed to killing eight women. More than 21 women were killed between 3 May and 4 September 2017. Ritual sacrifice was reported as the main reason for these murders. Based on Ajambo's interview, a traditional healer called Mugova testified, "There is no food due to the ongoing drought, and some believe that this has been brought by ancestral spirits; So there is a high desire for people to conduct sacrifices so that they come out of this problem" (Ajambo, 2017). Taken from the context, it is evident that this traditional healer is referring to the human sacrifices of either women or children.

Pastor Peter Sewakiryanga of Kyampisi Childcare Ministries, who opposed the practice of human sacrifice testified, "When they get the child, most times they cut the neck, they take the blood out, they take the tissue, they cut the genitals or any other body organs that they wish that the spirits want" (Ajambo, 2017). From the testimonies above, it seems clear that even during the modern era, children and women are exposed to such inhumane practices. In effect, influential people kill others, in order to live a presumed wealthy, prosperous life.

2.3 Mistreatment and killing of women

2.3.1 In the ancient and modern world

In the ancient world, women were killed either for ritual purposes or when their husbands passed away. It was customary to kill the wives when their husbands died. Based on the findings of Conrad (2000), relates such an incidence, "At a place called Cahokia, near St. Louis, the body of a ruler was found surrounded by 53 women who had been sacrificed when he died and it is believed that most of these women were his wives." Furthermore, there is reports confirming inhuman treatment of women worldwide within the ancient era. Even if women were not killed, people in the ancient world treated women as less than a full human being.

Ancient Greeks: in his writing, *Politics*, Aristotle maintained that men are by nature superior to women; thus the man should rule and the woman should be ruled. In another document

Athenian Menander from the 4th Century B.C. asserted, "A man who teaches a woman to write should know that he is providing poison to an asp." The early Greek philosophers viewed women as objects created for the pleasure of men. Thus, women's responsibility is sitting at home, bearing and raising children and pleasing their husbands through sexual relations. According to Hawkins (2012), Hipponax, whose writing is naturally abusive, made the following statement about women in *Andromache, speaking in Euripides, Andromache*: "There are two days on which a woman is most pleasing – when someone marries her and when he carries out her dead body."

Early Jews: In this history, women were considered as reproductive units for the sole purpose of providing children and ensuring descendants. Throughout the ancient world it was considered as a significant fortune to boast a large number of children. Society could not survive without a new generation to take over, and individuals did not wish to face old age or ill health without descendants to provide care and support. In addition, gender preference was widely evident in the life of ancient Jews. According to James Thompson, (2010), sons were preferred for two major reasons: Firstly, males had control of the wealth; secondly, in a patrilocal society where the bride moved to the husband's home, sons expanded the family, while daughters were dispersed into society at large. For these and similar reasons, peoples from the ancient era tended to commiserate with families without children and favour families with large offspring, especially sons.

In order to have a child, a childless woman who was wealthy enough to own a maid-servant had an interesting option. She could hand her maid to her husband and claim any resulting offspring as her own. According to the biblical narrative, this practice took place in Abraham's family. Considering that she was unable to give birth, Sarai gave her maidservant Hagar to Abraham (Gen 16:1-3). The reason was to conceive a child on her behalf since she did not want to be known as a barren woman. Childless women without maid-servants were likely to find themselves divorced. This example from the biblical testimony, confirms that women in the early Jewish culture were expected to produce children rather than have an intimate relationship with their spouse.

Indian culture: In India women face discrimination and mistreatment through other inhumane practices, which include being burnt or buried alive. These practices occur in Indian culture until the present. Even though such practices are legally outlawed in current India, these atrocities still exist. Moreover, certain Hindus view these HTPs as the ultimate form of womanly devotion and sacrifice. According to Heaphy, (2017), the first type of female murder targets a recently

widowed woman where she either voluntarily or through force or coercion commits suicide, following her husband's death. This practice is called *sati*. By classifying the types, Heaphy explains, "The best known form of sati is when a woman burns to death on her husband's funeral pyre. However other forms of sati exist, including being buried alive with the husband's corpse and drowning" (Heaphy, 2017). Despite the existence of state and country-wide laws prohibiting the act and its glorification, incidents continue to occur annually and may be on the increase according to Heaphy's belief. He concludes by referring to an Indian feminist who notes that these occurrences confirm that deeply held and deeply cherished norms cannot be changed simply by enacting laws.

The second form of killing women in India concerns a dowry death. In India it is common that brides pay a dowry to the husband's family. After a couple gets married, it is common to ask that the woman bring money and other important materials to the husband's family from her parent's house. The reason is often, "The husband's family believes they have not received enough money for their son at the time of the wedding, perhaps because they are of a higher caste or some such reason, and that's when the harassment starts" (Koutsoukis, 2015). According to Koutsoukis, at least one woman is killed every hour in India – more than 8 000 women a year would be killed due to dowry cases. "Official figures from India's National Crime Records Bureau revealed that 8 233 young women, many of them new brides, were killed in so-called dowry deaths in 2012. National crime records for 2013 indicated that 8 083 had died in this way" (Koutsoukis, 2015).

2.3.2 Women in African culture

In the earliest histories of Africa, women were considered as the property of their husbands and enjoyed no right to life. According to Spencer (1982), "In the ancient Egyptian town of Abydos, for example, the body of a ruler named Djer was discovered, surrounded by the bodies of women who were likely his wives, concubines, or maids." These women had no chance of living after their husband was deceased. Furthermore, it is disconcerting for the present research to discover that in certain African countries, women are still being killed due to witchcraft and sorcery in order for influential individuals to elicit health and wealth from the gods.

news Voice of America, (VOA) 5 Dec, 2015) has the following report: "Between May 3 and September 4, the bodies of 21 women have been found in two Ugandan towns – Katabi and Nansana – not far from the capital, Kampala. Officials say many of the victims had been raped, strangled and mutilated." Based on the source above, 18 of those women were killed due to religious activities.

Similar to the culture of ancient Israel, patriarchy forms an integral part of African life. This custom is entrenched deeply in the norms, values and customs of numerous African countries. The notion that the husband owns his wife is symbolised in various ways. For example, Lere (1998) points out: "In most parts of Nigeria, the act of payment of bride price is perceived as an outright act of transfer of woman's rights in source family to spouse's family." Furthermore, in most communities in Africa after the wedding, the woman is compelled by tradition to bear her husband's name as her surname. Although this custom is common in the Western world, in these African contexts, the surname indicates that the wife is officially the husband's property. If the wife loses her husband through death, she retains no right over the marriage property.

Although it is morally unacceptable by many, men in certain African cultures have the full right of sexual relations with multiple wives and concubines. However, it is morally prohibited for a woman to have more than one husband. For example, in certain West African countries, even a female single parent is disallowed the right to have relations with men, other than the one with whom she had the offspring. In effect, the tradition prohibits a woman from keeping two men simultaneously (Oyeronke, 1998). In contrast, a man is free to have a second wife or a concubine if he so wishes; whilst the woman, a concubine or second wife, is expected to be faithful to a single man throughout.

Discrimination against women is also seen in the traditional injunction on young women to abstain from sexual intercourse before marriage. In contrast, there is no such restriction on young men, or on older men from marrying younger girls. Before marriage, men could have hundreds of girlfriends and have numerous children, however, women should be kept as virgins until they marry. It is true that enforced abstinence from sex before marriage reflects the African value of virginity, but its focus singles out the feminine gender.

Africa has numerous rules and regulations particularly for women, but which do not apply similarly to men in their culture. Judy M. (2019), in her book, *How does culture affect the roles of women and men in ministry*, provides examples of how culture restricts women and discriminates against them:

"Chicken wings – In Uganda, women cannot eat chicken wings. Otherwise they would fly like a chicken and not be submissive, especially in bed. Physical Abuse – In some cultures in West Africa, women are to be beaten at least once in three months in order to remain disciplined. If they are not beaten, the women ask for it! In addition to this, some cultures say that a woman needs to go through FGM [Female Genital Mutilation] to be tamed, so that she does not become sexually

promiscuous. This primitive practice is still active. The Kenya Demographic Health Survey of 1998 indicated that 50% of women aged 35 years and above are circumcised!”

2.4 Overview of HTPs in Ethiopia

According to nationsonline .org (2000), Ethiopia is the tenth largest country in Africa, with a total area of 1 138 512 km² and is the major constituent of the landmass known as the Horn of Africa. It is bordered on the north and northeast by Eritrea, on the east by Djibouti and Somalia, on the south by Kenya and on the southwest by Sudan and South Sudan. Ethiopia as country has a diversity of ethnic and linguistic backgrounds. This is a country with more than 80 different ethnic groups, each with its own language, culture, custom and tradition. The widespread ethnic groups and the difference of traditional practices has brought about a stark cultural diversity among its population.

Although there are other significant cultural practices within Ethiopia’s diversity, the focus of the present study is on HTPs within in this country. In Ethiopia, there are numerous of these HTPs, which are transferred across generations and are still influencing the present and the future generations, especially women and children. These HTPs are discussed below.

2.4.1 Food and work taboos

Food taboos: These are known from virtually all human societies and may be found in various forms all over the world. This also applies to the Ethiopian way of living which follows certain cultural food taboos. Distinct food types are allowed for men to eat but are prohibited for women. During pregnancy women should be selective, regarding fat and sweet foods because, according to their belief, it affects the baby’s eyes after it stops breast feeding. The same is true among children and adults. Often children are encouraged to drink milk, but discouraged from eating meat or any other food types such as fruits and vegetables. As a result, women and children suffer from malnutrition in numerous parts of the country.

According to the Bureau of Statistics and Population (BoSP, 2014), researchers identify food taboos as a cause of insufficient nutrition among women and children. These taboos are notorious for limiting food options where children need proper nutrients for growth and women need nutrition during pregnancy. In most zones and districts, it has been reported that malnutrition is one of the major health problems among children and women. Despite the shortage of available sustenance, other food taboos which limit diets, contributed to malnutrition among different communities. Several experts suggest that a comprehensive nutritional guideline should be prepared and the community taught how to prepare a balanced meal by

using locally available materials. Education is also needed to remove the restrictions applied in the name of taboo.

Work taboos: Individuals who participate in local handcrafts are considered as the degraded and lowest class in the community. In numerous social affairs, these 'lowly' people are excluded. They are not allowed to sit together with others and participate in several social customs. No one allows them to eat together since the pot makers or tanners are considered as impure. Therefore, instead of training for what are considered 'degrading works', young people tend to prefer begging, poverty or illegal immigration, where they are anonymous.

Ethiopians believe that men were created to be in the field and women to be in the kitchen. Men are therefore not allowed to work in the kitchen, however women are forced from the kitchen to work in the field as well. Modernisation may be influencing certain city dwellers to share home responsibilities. However, women as such do not allow their husbands to enter the kitchen. This is due to fears of being insulted because as a married woman she should work in the kitchen alone. In addition, in the northern part of the country, where the Ethiopian Orthodox religion is dominant, people are not allowed to work eleven days in a month, excluding Sundays. According to the Ethiopian calendar, days 1, 5, 7, 12, 16, 19, 21, 23, 24, 27, 29 in a month, are considered Holy Days where different angels and Mary are being worshipped, in which days 1, 16 and 21 are set aside as the holiest days of the Virgin Mary.

2.4.2 Marriage-related harmful traditional practices

Extensive research has been conducted in the country, especially on early-child marriages. According to findings from the Centre for Reproductive Law and Policy (CRLP, 2001), Ethiopia has one of the most severe crises of child marriages in the world at present. The legal age of marriage is 18 years for both males and females, but this is widely ignored. In addition, Ethiopian society is the context for certain of the most abusive marital practices, such as marriage by abduction and forced union between cousins. According to UNICEF (2017), Ethiopia has the 15th highest rate of child marriage in the world and the fifth highest absolute number of child brides, namely 2 104 000. As many as 40% of the girls in Ethiopia are married before the age of 18, and 14% are married before their 15th birthday.

Furthermore, the rates of child marriage vary significantly across regions and are often higher than the national figures. An example is the Amhara region in northern Ethiopia, where almost 50% of the girls are married by the age 15 (CRLP, 2001). Erulkar (2009), points out that the Ethiopian constitution states explicitly that marriage must be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending spouse and the minimum legal age for marriage is 18 for both boys

and girls. However, these laws are not enforced continuously. Early marriage remains a deeply rooted tradition in Ethiopian communities. This practice is perpetuated further by poverty, a lack of education and economic opportunities, as well as social customs that limit the rights of women and girls. Numerous rural inhabitants believe that girls become rude after they attend school or university. Therefore, most men prefer young girls who have not yet ventured 'outside' their home, believing they will turn into a faithful wife.

The problem is not limited to early marriage. According to custom, girls who are ready to marry should be circumcised early or at the time of marriage. Certain ethnic groups, for instance the Hirbora tribes in south Ethiopia, circumcise their children and tie their legs together until the wound heals. After a few weeks, the girl has to run a long distance to demonstrate sufficient strength and readiness to bear the burden of marriage. If the girl fails this test, the community gives her a low evaluation and she would lose the opportunity of marriage. On her wedding day, such girls will suffer having sexual relations since her sexual organ is closed by a bloody scar during circumcision. The husband's inability to perform proper sexual intercourse causes humiliation in his society, his peers mock him. It should be evident that girls within such societies suffer from this custom.

In addition to circumcision, there are numerous HTPs related to marriage. These include abduction of girls without their permission, remarriage to the husband's relatives after the husband is deceased, polygamy, leaving a bed to a guest (i.e. allowing guests to enjoy the wife sexually – in certain Borena tribes). These mentioned issues are among numerous practices that violate women and children.

2.4.3 Physical body-related harmful practices

According to BSP (Bureau of Statistics and Population, 2005), among the widely occurrence of HTPs, are skin-cutting uvulectomy (a small fleshy "V"-shaped extension of the soft palate that hangs above the tongue at the entrance to the throat), milk-teeth extraction and tonsillectomy. These HTPs take place in most parts of southern Ethiopia, affecting children. Parents partake in these harmful practices due to the belief that they have their children's welfare at heart, or in fear of their cultural taboos or ancestral spirits that would kill their children unless they perform such practices.

For example, in the Mursi tribe, women who pierce their lips and carry clay-made discs under their lips are considered as faithful and as beautiful. The neighbouring tribes are of the opinion that the Mursi men want to guard their women by making them look unattractive. Nevertheless, according to Steinbach, (2019), a girl must still undergo an extended, painful procedure to get

the identity mark characteristic of the tribe. With the lip disc, they have a better chance to find a good husband. In addition, possible suitors are willing to give 30-50 cows to her father with a modern rifle as a dowry.

In the culture of the Afar people in the north-eastern part of Ethiopia, the family sew the private parts of a girl together after genital mutilation in order to preserve her virginity. This practice is as old as the Afar people and is currently still practiced in the rural areas. According to the United Nations Population Fund (UNPF, 2010), sewing together the private part of a girl is called infibulation. Based on this source, the operation involves the entire removal of the clitoris, the labia minora and labia majora, followed by sealing the wound. This leaves only a small hole for the passage of urine and menses.

UNPE's research shows that 63.2% of women in the Afar region have undergone infibulation (currently some are practicing a less extreme form). The practice leaves the girls with severe pain and trauma, shock, haemorrhage, sepsis, urine retention, ulceration of the genital region. Often urinary infection occurs among other complications (UNPF, 2010). Obstruction and tearing during sexual intercourse or childbirth is common. The main reason for this practice is to keep a girl 'pure' until her marriage.

2.5 Gender Issues in Ethiopia

2.5.1 Male superiority

Ethiopia has a well-known constitution that protects women's rights. However, Alemayehu (2001: P.45) in his book *Speaking truth on behalf of Ethiopian women*, points out that written documents are not practical in the country. He explains:

"Article 35 of the Ethiopian Constitution (1995) guarantees women not only full equality but also preferential treatment 'in the political, economic and social fields both within public and private organizations.' Women are provided sweeping constitutional protections from 'all laws, stereotyped ideas and customs which oppress women or otherwise adversely affect their physical and mental well-being.' They have guaranteed property rights and 'the right of access to education and information on family planning' to 'prevent health hazards resulting from child birth.'"

Alemayehu (2001) explains that the stipulated guarantees are not applied practically. According to his findings, 81% of Ethiopian women believe that men are superior to them. In certain rural areas women are not allowed to call their husband by his name. Instead they must just use the term equivalent to 'lord'. In the Hamar, Bena and Kara tribes, women have no right to marry another husband if their husband passes away, seeing that she is considered the property of

that family. If a woman's husband dies, her father in law is free to marry her and bear children in the name of his deceased son. If the father in law is not alive, the husband's brother could take her as his fourth or fifth wife. If there is no male in the family, she would be obliged to marry one of the husband's relatives. In all these instances, the woman has no right to inherit his property.

In certain rural areas, when husband and wife walk together, he is the one who leads. If she walks in front of him, this is considered shameful, and the others degrade this gesture as 'two women living together'. By observing such and other inequalities, the 2000 USA State Department Human Rights Country Report on Ethiopia states:

"The Constitution provides for the equality of women; however, these provisions often are not applied in practice. Furthermore, these provisions often conflict with the 1960 Civil Code and the 1957 Penal Code, both of which still are in force. The 1960 Civil Code is based on a monarchical constitution that treated women as if they were children or disabled."

The question may be posed why the attitude of the people on these transgressions has remained stagnant up to the present.

2.5.2 Gender preference

In several parts of Ethiopia, the male child gets preference. In certain areas, if a wife bears only daughters, community members believe she is barren, and it is embarrassing to be left alone without an heir. On their article on Gender Preference, Pauline Rossi and Léa Rouanet, (2015), summarised what most north Africans believe about gender preferences. These authors report the following:

"The most important motive put forward by the literature on gender preferences is the traditional structure of family systems. In patrilineal (Main assets are passed on through the male line whereas daughters are given movable goods) and patrilocal (Upon marriage, wives move to their husbands' abode), family systems, men are the fixed points in the social order, so that investment in daughters is considered as investment in another family's daughters-in-law."

Ethiopia is typified as one of the countries where male preference is over-stressed. The SIDA (Swedish International Development Agency) research of 2003 explain Ethiopian gender preference. After stating the belief of most Ethiopians, the research mentions how parents exclude a girl child from all household activities. Such girl-children experience discrimination from the earliest life-stages, throughout their childhood and into adulthood (SIDA,2003). This tendency continues throughout the girl's life in that tribe.

In several parts of the country, there is a custom when a woman bears a child. After the woman gives birth, to the knowledge of the researcher, the immediate and most important task is to identify the child's sex. If the baby is male, the attending women shout four times by jumping and clapping their hands. However, for a female baby they shout only twice. Though the mother is exhausted from the pain of birth, she gets empowered when she hears four shouts, seeing that she has born a son. The primary concern of the father is not about the wife's pain or suffering; instead he enquires, "Is it a boy or a girl?" If the baby is a girl, the women reply, "It is a human being!" Certain husbands will leave their wives alone after hearing such 'bad news'.

Culturally, slaughtering a sheep or a goat is common when women give birth. However, in certain cases, husbands will refuse to slaughter a good goat after the birth of a girl. Instead, they will purchase meat from the market, which is a sign of undermining the baby girl. Therefore, a girl in certain areas is a victim of preference for a son. Girls are also subjected to harmful traditional practices (HTPs) and suffer from unequal division of labour, while sons enjoy full freedom.

Regarding the Hamar, Bena and Kara tribes, girls are considered as an asset or a means of income for their family. Parents (excluding the mother) are free to give her to someone while she is breastfeeding. A 50-year old man has full right to propose to a one-year old baby if and when he has sufficient cattle as a dowry, plus money and weapons, especially an AK47 rifle. Later during the child's youth, the husband in waiting will follow up on whether she participates in *evangadi* (a night dance of young) and becomes pregnant and aborts. Premarital sex is one of the ways of proving a girl's ability to bear children before she marries the old man. If she proves her fertility, the old man arrives to take home his bride, even though she is equal age to his granddaughters. From that day onwards, the girl becomes the property of that family. If her old husband dies the following day for example, she has to marry his son, nephew, uncle or any male who is a blood relation within that family.

These major HTPs within Ethiopia and all over Africa form the background for the main focus of the discussion, namely the practice of mingi.

2.6 Understanding the Hamar, Bena and Kara people

To understand the practices of the mentioned tribes, it is first necessary to outline their context and culture.

2.6.1 Location

The Omotic people zone (including Hamer, Bena and Kara tribes) is located in the Southern Nations, Nationalities and People Region (SNNPR), which is the southern and south-western part of Ethiopia. The SNNPR is bordered by Kenya in the south, South Sudan in the south west, and the Gambella region in the north west. This area is also surrounded by the Oromiya region in the north and east. According to National Office Statistics (1998), the total area of the region is estimated to be 110 931.9 km², which comprises 10% of the country. Based on the 1998 census, this area is inhabited by a population size of 15 760 743 inhabitants, thus accounting for approximately 20% of the total population of the country (Baseline Survey in SNNPR, 1998). Based on the source above, the population density of the region is 142 persons per km², which makes it one of the most populous parts of the country.

The region takes the form of a multi-nation, which consists of approximately 56 ethnic groups with their own distinct geographical location, language, cultures, and social identities, living adjacent to each other. Furthermore, according to the Baseline Survey, "These varied ethnic groups are classified into the Omotic, Cushitic, Nilo-Sahara and Semitic super language families. Among which, Omotic and Cushitic are the most populous and diversified ones with the largest area coverage in the region respectively" (cited in NOS, 1998).

Regarding the specific groups of the Hamer, Bena and Kara people, Grant (2003) identifies their region as the most remote one in Africa, namely the valley of the lower Omo River in the far south-west of Ethiopia. Grant (2003) sketches the remoteness:

"Isolated by mountains to the north, swamps to the west and deserts to the south, the lower Omo is the world's last great tribal stronghold. Untouched by colonialism, largely ungoverned and only tenuously connected to the rest of Ethiopia, the valley is a vast elongated basin occupied by 16 tribes, totalling some 220 000 people."

The peoples from the lower Omo Valley are consistently involved in warring, not only with outside invaders, but amongst themselves as well. Since the main source of their economy is cattle, it is common to see the winner of a tribal war take all the cattle and cross the Omo River on either side, since they believe this river is their ultimate boundary and source. Except for maize and sorghum, these tribes do not cultivate a variety of crops. The responsibility of farming, building house, taking care of children and other activities lies with the women.

The responsibility of the men is carrying a small, carved wooden stool, which doubles as a pillow at night and a bench during the day, a snuff pouch, a long knife and an AK-47 gun, the

only modern product they accept. Most of the men are shirtless, wearing beaded headbands and necklaces and a rectangle of cloth tied around their hips. They do not wear pants, but a short rag covering their private parts when they walk, but not when they sit. They like having a small stick in their mouth which they use to brush their teeth. Members of these tribes watch strangers suspiciously, and will ask a guide in their language to provide more information about the stranger: where he is going, when he will return and why he came there. Loyal guides will not tell the truth since they know the question has two motives: either to ask for something, or to kill the stranger.

If the guest shows disrespect, the men of the tribe will kill him mercilessly. Men are well trained in fighting from an early age. Whenever conflicts arise and these tribes oppose the state, government soldiers are unable to face them on an equal footing. At times the ratio would be one tribal member to six or seven trained government fighters. Grant, (2003), describes these inhabitants strikingly: “Decorated by unique mud, many wear animal skins and adorn themselves with mud, paint, goat fat, ostrich feathers, lip plates, elaborate hairstyles, piercings and scarification patterns.”

This description depicts the physical appearance of the tribal members accurately. Based on individuals’ decorations, it is evident which animals they have killed; a lion, an elephant or a human being (not a woman) from among their enemies. Killing a woman amounts to nothing.

In the past, tribal members have also killed a guest after feeding him, merely to save their preferred ox. It was common practice when their best ox was sick, that it must smell human blood. As soon as the ox smelt the blood, it would be healed miraculously. The culture of these tribes encourages members to murder their relative rather than allowing him to be killed by other people. Their aim is to kill the relatives and, as the result, pierce their ear as a confirmation of killing someone which is a sign of patriotism and gain respect from the community. Currently this practice has been declining due to the influence of the government and the church, except for certain of the remotest areas.

2.6.2 Different cultural practices

The southern Omo zone may be considered the proverbial ‘living museum’, where the inhabitants seem intent on following ancient rituals and decorations. The Epic Road Transformative Newspaper (2012 – 2019), describes this area strikingly:

“One of the most remote places on the planet, Ethiopia’s Omo Valley is home to stunning lakes and some of the most untouched ancient tribal civilizations on the planet. Marvel at their animal skin

loin cloths, beaded headdresses, lip plates, brutal fighting exhibitions, and ancient scarification ceremonies, that will make you feel like you have travelled back in time thousands of years.”

Practices such as body scarring, lip plates, bull jumping and other unique cultural ceremonies in different parts of the South-Omo region all form part of a certain way of life.

Among the inhabitants, the Hamer, Bena and Kara tribes are influential people in their political organisations and economic activities. These communities have their own leadership style to the present day. Although government leadership is welcomed mainly on political issues, their own kings (*balabats*) rule the tribes. The words or decisions of their kings is considered ultimate. Alongside kings, those who practice various forms of witchcraft have the power to make decisions on certain issues. People fear these sorcerers since most view them as gods or the only representatives of invisible spirits.

Whenever being asked why a person will not deny the earthly gods and believe in a heavenly God, their answer is clear, “...Who will rescue us from these gods if we believe in your God?” They would destroy our cattle, send a plague upon our children and dry up our river’. In spite of their cultural beauty and interesting practices, these people are exposed to significant spiritual slavery and HTPs, resulting from their beliefs and customs and due to their fear of evil spirits. These traditional beliefs have an extended history and have been in place for as long as these tribes have existed.

The people of the Hamer, Bena and Kara tribes have certain cultural differences from the other ethnic groups that live in close proximity to them. Among many, the main cultural practices which distinguish this tribe from the others are discussed below.

2.6.2.1 The Bull jumping and *Evangadi*

The diverse ethnic groups in Ethiopia have different methods of initiating boys into manhood. For the Hamer, Bena and Kara community, these rite of passage involves bull jumping. Bull jumping is an ancient ritual in the Hamer, Bena and Kara tribes that proves whether a man is ready to build a family of his own. According to their belief, boys are not considered full-blown men until they perform a unique cultural ceremony. The tribe members term this ritual *Ukuli Bula*, meaning, jumping of the bulls. The ritual represents the passage of a young man into adulthood. This ceremony determines whether a young man is ready to be incorporated into society and whether he has grown from immaturity to a mature adult. The practice also tests whether the young man will be able to carry the burden of marriage for the rest of his life.

This ceremony is held mainly after the harvest since then preparations could be made to perform the ceremony. After the necessary preparations, the boy's father informs him of the exact date when he will jump seven to 14 oxen at least four times. According to Mbamula (2017), most of the people do not use calendars. Therefore, the boy gives each relative a coil of rope carefully marked to show the number of days leading up to the ceremony. Every day, the relatives cut a piece from the rope to keep track of the number of days left before the ritual takes place. The boy keeps one rope for himself and does the same. When he cuts the final piece, this indicates the day has arrived.

From the early morning until 16:00, the boy prepares himself by gaining experience from *maza* (one who had a recent experience of jumping). His mother and her relatives prepare food and alcoholic drinks for at least 100 to 300 people, depending on the standard of the family's wealth. Those who jumped the bull recently are included in the group called the *mazas* or 'full men', and would advise the boy about jumping the bulls without falling. It is considered shameful to fall in front of one's peers. Therefore, the *maza* is present to help the initiate during the rituals of preparation prior to jumping. In addition, they are mandated to participate with him in various ways in the initiation ceremony as such.

Before jumping the bulls, the boy must perform certain duties. He has to be rubbed with sand to wash away his wrongdoings and smeared with dung for strength. Thereafter, strips of tree barks are strapped around his chest. This serves as spiritual protection (Socrates, 2017) since members believe the evil spirit could cause the boy to stumble during the initiation. An early task, for which only the *mazas* are ritually qualified, involves whipping the young female relatives of the boy about to jump. The female relatives accept this beating as 'best practice', a family blessing and culturally adored experience in their life. This action shows that they have a strong relative who jumped the bull and became their hero and defender for the rest of his life.

The women arrive at the ceremony highly decorated, their hair and bodies covered with butter. They are dancing, singing, whistling, and blowing horns in circles, begging for the whip from the *mazas*. The women seek this ritual since it is their guarantee of future support from their brother. By showing their whipped back they will remind him of his responsibility toward them: "Look at this, don't forget!" At times, the *mazas* break a number of sticks by whipping women until blood gushes out. If a *maza* whips lightly, these women would insult him for being a weakling.

After these procedures are completed, the boy jumps from either side at least four times and finishes all the bulls without stopping on their backs. It is difficult for the jumper to be successful since the backs of the oxen are slippery. People anoint the backs of the bulls with dung and

butter to assess the young man's strength. If he falls, this is disgraceful to him and his family. His peers mock him and no girl wants to marry him. Failure to jump over the bulls successfully brings shame to the initiate and his family. If he fails, the initiate then would have to wait until the following year. However, if the initiate succeeds, he is set to marry a girl that his family chooses for him, have children and possess cattle. This is considered as the most important day in the life of a young man. If a man marries a woman without having jumped the bulls, it is considered mingi and the consequences are significantly detrimental.

After jumping the bulls, a large celebration follows. *Evangadi* is the night dance, which follows jumping the bulls in order to celebrate the ceremony. Roasted meat and strong alcoholic drink play its role in this dance. If the young man succeeds in the jumping test, a number of men and women (both groups young), gather together to celebrate throughout the night by dancing. Excessive alcoholic drinking and the tradition of the community leads the young to have sexual intercourse there, not far from the dancing area. It is not unusual to see a boy and a girl lying near a bush coupling to test the girl's fertility or to satisfy sexual desires.

The couple is not concerned about pregnancy. If the girl gets pregnant later, they follow the cultural way of abortion. Her boyfriend takes her into the wild and hits the place where the head of the conceived baby is located. Soon, blood gushes out and she will prepare herself for another pregnancy since most women are physically strong enough to resist the pain. However, if the girl failed to abort and gives birth, the baby is considered mingi.

At times, visitors from abroad, especially those coming to observe such a ceremony also test Hamar girls by overpaying them. Recently, Hamar and Bena girls are asking to be paid for sexual intercourse with anyone who are able to better the amount. This is a degenerative practice that exposes numerous women to HIV and Aids. *Evangadi* is an important celebration with rich cultural symbolism, however, underlying this ritual, there is darkness and a cultural curse.

Based on the evaluation of Richard Grant (2012), the jumping-the-bulls' ceremony ultimately opens a significant opportunity for the new maza. After undergoing these ceremonies, as a Hamar, Bena and Kara man and a mature member of his tribe, the participant has the freedom to marry. The *ukuli*, (young initiated man), once he has jumped the bulls, becomes *cherkari* (a social stage in which he remains only for eight days). He stays with his best man away from home, mainly in the wild, having milk, honey and drinking fresh goat blood. He drinks blood mixed with butter and fresh milk and honey. Due to this drinking, it is impossible to eat rough food for eight days. After eight days the initiate transfers to the stage of *maza*, and retains this status until he marries and become *danza*, the name for married Hamar, Kara and Bena men. If

any young man performs marriage without properly passing through all these stages to reach maturity, they will be sentencing their young bride and the conceived child to mingi.

2.6.2.2 Gilo

A further cultural concept distinguishing the Hamar, Bena and Kara people from other people groups is called *gilo*. In brief terms, the word *gilo* means 'debit'. This practice does not imply a normal debit where one individual takes from the other and must pay back. This is a cultural debit or obligation that every member of the society should perform in order to become a full member of the society. Below, specific *gilos* are listed in order to explain their meaning and how they relate to mingi (based on the informal discussion with Muga Bezabehi, 2005).

2.6.2.2.1 Funeral *gilo*

Most Hamar, Bena and Kara tribes believe that after they lose a family member, his/her soul will remain above their house until they perform *gilo*. The soul has no chance to join with the ancestors until the day of *gilo*. Most of the inhabitants believe that the final destination of the dead would be in the deepest part of the Omo River. However, the spirit of the deceased hovers above their home until they perform the *gilo*.

Therefore, family members prepare different types of food and drink for the elders from the area and community members, and participate in ceremonial witchcraft as well. If the deceased is young and unmarried, they destroy all his goods or possessions. Thereafter, they eat and drink together believing that the evil spirit will keep on returning if they leave any of the deceased young boy's property standing. The portion for the death of an elderly member, including the payment for the witchcraft, should always be double. Based on the economic capacity of the family, the *gilo* ceremony lasts two to three days. Until the family members perform this ritual, they would have no full right to participate in the community matters.

Whenever evangelists invite people to believe in Jesus, their answer could be as follows; I have *gilo*. Let me finish it and I will think about what you are telling me. If I believe before that, everyone will mock me and would excommunicate me until I die ... I don't want my generation to be a disgraceful generation!

To avoid the mentioned disgrace, it is mandatory to slaughter several bulls, prepare strong alcoholic drinks and perform cultural ceremonies on those days of *gilo* after a family member passes away. Until this funeral *gilo* is performed, according to their belief, the spirit of the dead frequently will visit the family members and warn them to finish the ceremony soon. After the

gilo is completed, people believe that the dead person's soul leaves the roof of their house and cohabits with the ancestral spirits that rest in the deepest part of the Omo River. It is amazing to hear that some of these inhabitants believe in reincarnation, which is beyond their knowledge. Unless there is a critical case, the spirit of the dead will not return to the family after *gilo*, according to their belief.

2.6.2.2.2 Marriage *gilo*

Most men in these tribes will marry after the age of 30, especially in the second half of their lives. One of the reasons for delaying marriage is *gilo*. According to the marriage *gilo* the man is expected to prepare a large feast after he is married. Before the man decides to marry, he has to jump bulls. As was explained above, this ceremony entails several expenses. Thereafter, the man must possess enough cows, 30 to 60, and a modern AK47 rifle as dowry offered to his wife's parents. Such a dowry is not an insignificant expense. At times, men attack other tribes to bring back the amount of cows and bulls as dowry to satisfy the girl's family. Finally, after the man marries, he has to prepare a large feast for the community elders, sometimes including the witchdoctors and peers, before being allowed to have sexual relations with his wife. Though he married a woman, he has no right to have sexual relations or have a child until this marriage *gilo* is performed. If the woman conceives before *gilo*, the child would be considered mingi and killed. Other mingi adults would be excommunicated from society.

Thus to avoid mingi brought on the family by the man not completing the marriage *gilo*, a young married man's mother will lie every night in the entrance of their small hut, wielding a large beating stick to prevent her son from visiting his bride. Meanwhile while the family is waiting for the marriage *gilo*, they feed the bride with special food and anoint her with a mixture of red ash and butter to make her body smooth and soft. Mixing goats blood with fresh milk, honey and butter, they take care of her in order to prepare a strong wife for their son.

The researcher personally encountered a bride before 20 years when doing evangelism. She sat on a special bed. When the researcher attempted conversation, the girl remained silent. When enquiring about the reason, the researcher learnt that it is forbidden for her to talk with guests until she marries.

At times, in order to speed up the *gilo* ceremony, the young man would be obliged to borrow money, called *balabats*, from the richest community members or from their cultural leaders. If he fails to collect the money, he has to go to war. There is an example of a man from the Bena tribe, a group residing to the north of the Hamar, who remarked:

“I used to go to kill people. I killed people in order to be famous. It was part of [our] belief that a man should not marry until he has killed either another man, or an elephant, a lion or a buffalo; and it is much easier to kill a man than a lion” (Krutak, 2009).

In certain cases, the warring men are successful and able to bring enough cattle to their marriage ceremony. However, in other cases, in the process of attacking other tribes they lose their lives being slain by their foes. This is the cost of *gilo* on the community.

After a man completes the *gilo*, the elders will bless the married couple so that they may have numerous children. Finally, the elders will allow him to have sexual relations with his bride, from that night onward. His mother removes her bedding from the entrance to her son’s hut, allowing him to visit his wife. Sadly, however, if the man does not complete the *gilo* and the couple conceived a child without this ceremony, both the mother and child are declared mingi. The result is death to the child and excommunication for the mother.

2.6.2.2.3 Social gilo

An impressive, attractive aspect of Ethiopian culture is experiencing their affinity to socialise among each other and even with foreigners. Most Ethiopians are welcoming, friendly, generous and respectful individuals and expect the same in return. In certain cases, Ethiopians will go out of their way to please or entertain others, including strangers (Lectures, 2018). They enjoy living together, sharing their possessions, assisting each other, especially during times of trial. In the previous chapter (ch 1) it was noted that Ethiopians have special social organisations such as *mehiber*, *edir*, *equb* and others, which no other countries share in a similar way.

Regarding the people of Hamer, Bena and Kara, their lifestyle is unique. In the present day, in most parts of the country, Ethiopian culture is amalgamating with Western culture. For example, most people residing in large urban areas such as Addis Ababa are following a Westernised lifestyle. They are embracing a more private, unshared and self-centred form of life. This individualistic way of thinking is considered shameful amongst the Hamer, Bena and Kara communities. They will share a loaf of bread with ten people. Therefore, there are numerous social activities, especially incorporating food and drink, where members will gather from home to home each end of the month.

The Hamer, Bena and Kara tribes form a group comprising a certain number of people numbering 30, 40, even 50, which is termed *mehiber*, (unity, fellowship). Every month, especially at the end, the members prepare themselves to eat and drink together in this group. The meeting provides a forum to deal with social issues, correct their community’s ways,

allowing them to continue their forefathers' legacy and plan strategies to protect them from outside attack. Since the programme is held every month, it takes years for a member to receive guests at his house. This practice is common among the Ethiopian Orthodox Christian members in several parts of the country as well. If a person from the *mehiber* left that fellowship without inviting the other members or paying back the hospitality, that situation is considered *mingi* since he did not finish his social *gilo*.

A group member has no choice. Participation in the feasting is mandatory. Therefore, he has to prepare by depositing his income annually until his turn arrives. Women are not allowed to participate in *mehiber* with men, except by cooking and providing food from the kitchen. In northern Ethiopian, women have their own *mehiber*, which excludes men.

2.6.2.3 Tribal kings

In certain countries worldwide, a king is accepted as the head of a state. This entails a form of government in which a state is ruled by an individual, normally for life or until his death and who typically inherits the throne by birth. Monarchs may be autocratic rulers (with full authority) or may be head of the state, exercising only limited or no power at all (Pine, 1992). Pine (1992) explains that in several cases, a monarch will also be linked to the dominant religion in the country, as the case was with the Ethiopian monarch and the Ethiopian Orthodox Church as two sides of the single coin for more than 1500 years. These kings are distinguished by their titles and styles such as king or queen, prince or princess, emperor or empress (Pine, 1992).

In Ethiopia, the monarchy uses unique titles as recognition for royalty. For example, the Ethiopian monarch uses a title of "Lion of Judah" since it is believed that he derives from the direct family line of king Solomon, the son of David (1 King.10:1-13). Ethiopians believe that the Queen of Sheba was the ruler of Ethiopia in king Solomon's time. When the queen returned to her country after visiting Solomon's court in Israel, she conceived a child who became the ancestor of the Ethiopian monarchs.

The Ethiopian New Year begins on 11 September; when it is believed that the Queen of Sheba arrived in Ethiopia after visiting Solomon. She arrived with extensive riches (having much precious stone (granny)) on her camels and a child in her womb. Considering her pregnancy, Ethiopians call this day *Enqutatash*, meaning, "the problem is behind your precious stones". Therefore, since the beginning of the 10th century B.C., Ethiopian tradition relates that their country was ruled by this royal line. Historically it has been proven that the same dynasty has ruled Ethiopia from 1270 – 1974 A.D. The military government overthrew the final king of this

dynasty, emperor Haile Selassie in 1974 (Adamu, 2009). Currently, it is believed that 40 countries are still being governed by kings globally (Pine, 1992).

Regarding the specific groups of the Hamar, Bena and Kara tribes, the former two are ruled by cultural kings called *balabats*. Authority is transferred from father to son. These rulers govern unopposed since they are considered as the final authorities of their tribes. Every member of the community is obliged to bring items to the king. These include cattle, different types of crops (esp. maize and sorghum), honey, butter and numerous important food items. In addition, they also plough the king's farm and provide their children as servants to the king.

At times the mentioned tribes oppose the government and are involved in frequent battles with the government soldiers. Unless the *balabat* orders the tribe members to cease fighting, they will carry on until they all perish. These groups are experienced in using guns since childhood, thus, they are difficult to subdue. Therefore, in order to stop the war, the government officials have to forge a diplomatic agreement with the *balabats*, allowing these leaders to order their people to cease fighting. Otherwise, the government may find it difficult to make progress with these tribes.

The *balabats* of the Hamar and Bena tribes, in comparison with other community members, are more educated than their people. Most of these rulers speak the Ethiopian national language, Amharic, fluently. They wear typical national clothes, live in well-established homes and eat normal and good quality food. These rulers desire to introduce their people to modern civilisation. However due to selfishness, fear of ancestral spirits, and the desire to remain faithful to their ancestor's legacy, they do not encourage education and a modern lifestyle. The rulers are fearful of educated people who would not subject them to their authority.

However, certain young *balabats* are embracing modern thought and are attempting to stop harmful traditional practices (HTPs) such as mingi.

Beliefs

Humans have their own belief system, although it differs from place to place or individual to individual. According to Chopra (2019), most people are guided by belief in the work they do, their religion, loyalty to their family, and various values they adhere to. Belief has its positive and negative sides. While appreciating the constructive sides of belief, Chopra, (2019), highlights the negative side,

"There's a problem when your beliefs start to gain the upper hand and get into the driver's seat. Much of the violent or crazy behaviour in the world is associated with a deeply held belief (in

tribalism, religious fundamentalism, and 'us versus them' thinking), that is actually imprisoning the people who are trapped in their beliefs.”

This assessment by Chopra of the way beliefs tend to entrap people, can be observed in certain African countries. In Rwanda, for instance, the beliefs of the people led to self-righteousness and hate speech against fellow citizens with whom they had previously lived together for centuries. One of the tribes claimed them as superior and went on a killing spree against others who were different. According to Patricia (2013), over the course of approximately 100 days, between 500 000 and 1 million Tutsi and moderate Hutu members were slaughtered during the Rwandan genocide.

There are deeply concerning similarities to the situation of current Ethiopia. Thus, one of the strongest challenges of the current government will be similar to what was observed in Rwanda. There remains a strong underlying belief of ethno-centrism, and an “us-versus-them” thinking between tribes. People moves within the boundary of their tribal circle and believe that their tribe is superior.

In this regard, a contradiction becomes clear. On the one hand, these tribal members boast about their traditions and ability to defend themselves successfully for centuries. On the other hand, they manifest a deep-set fear of the spiritual world rather than the physical one. As stated above, the main reason why they kill their own children is due to their ingrained fear of evil spirits. In this regard, they credit the evil spirit as a being that is omnipotent (all powerful), omniscient (all knowing) and omnipresent (all around). Thus, in a sense, people in these communities are entrapped by their beliefs in the evil spirit world.

In the way the tribal members live, apparently people in these communities have actually afforded evil spirits the power to rule as their king in their day-to-day life. Members see manifestations of an early ancestor, visions of a large desert serpent, or at other times, a dead family member and, and even a government soldier. Therefore, all their belongings, from their children to their cattle, are impacted by this spiritual fear.

As mentioned above, after a family member passes away, the remaining members believe the soul hovers over their small hut until they perform the ceremony of *gilo*. After this ritual is performed, the soul will cohabit with its ancestors who reside in the deepest part of the Omo River. Therefore, waiting for the soul to pass through this river, the living members keep cultural medicines such as tobacco and other herbs to prevent the spirit from returning. This is due to their belief that the spirit is repelled by foul-smelling herbs.

These groups are deeply embedded in their traditional religion. Converting a Hamar or Bena into Christianity is one of the difficult tasks to achieve in the history of evangelical ministry around the Omo people. Their god is who their forefathers believed in and worshipped, who rewarded them with rich offspring, thousands of cattle and elongated life.

In 2002, the researcher encountered a rich man with 200 cows, a thousand goats, three wives and 21 children. He responded to evangelical prompts, "Why do I believe your God? My god gave me everything. Go and preach to the poor!" This was not a mere answer, rather a command with a veiled threat, "Leave me alone, go in peace! Otherwise ..."

If a missionary preaches about a heavenly God, these tribal members listen, but do not believe. If the preacher frequently asks them to believe, they will kill him when they encounter him alone. Numerous evangelists have lost their lives in the region of the Hamar, Bena and Kara, after preaching the Gospel. Thus, despite efforts of evangelisation, most people in this region still believe in ancestral spirits. Those who follow the Ethiopian Orthodox Church will integrate Christianity with cultural beliefs and appreciate a syncretic life. As Orthodox Christians, they may wear a cross around their neck, however, as believers in ancestral spirits, they also perform different forms of ceremonies to appease the gods.

2.6.2.4 Witchdoctors and fortune tellers

Witchcraft is a highly common belief in many cultures on the African continent. This belief involves the day-to-day activity of people who considers witchcraft to have power over their lives. When the colonialists arrived on the continent, they observed the practices of self-proclaimed doctors and the beliefs that individuals can alter the outcome of events only because of the supernatural powers they possess. The colonists labelled these practices as witchcraft (Radeska, 2017).

The involvement of witchcraft is evident in the election campaigns of certain countries in present-day Africa. Radeska (2017) reports: "In many parts of Africa, witchcraft has played a role in rebellions, fighting wars, gaining independence and is often recently seen at election time." An incidence of witchcraft was observed in Kenya during the election of 2019. David Kwalimwa, one of the candidates is quoted: "A candidate who lost in the August 8 General Elections has narrated a bizarre incident in a bid to convince a court that his opponent gained undue advantage by engaging the services of four witchdoctors." He continues to describe the incident by the following evidence: "The petitioner Letutut Ole Masikonde, in his affidavit filed before the Chief Magistrates court in Narok, claims his opponent had among other things 'slaughtered a colobus monkey and tied its skin on his waist to woo voters'" (David, Kwalimwa,

2017). Finally, the petitioner claims the witchcraft act was responsible for deleting all his phone contacts. Thus, he was unable to get in touch with his supporters ahead of the election date.

In certain areas, these traditional beliefs are stronger than organised religion. Certain practices may not fit the definition of witchcraft quoted above. However, no other term can translate the supernatural experiences that occur in Africa, particularly within the Hamar, Bena and Kara tribes. For numerous years in the desert of Omo there has been continuous strife between the witchdoctors of the Hamar, Bena and Kara people and evangelists. Witch doctors initiated and urged the people to kill or to chase out *Amhara*³ since they are defiling their organic belief. Many evangelists have been killed by the brutal actions of nomads (pastoralists), incited by witchdoctors since 1960.

Witchcraft practitioners are not overly aggressive, but attempt to deceive people by giving them endless yet unsubstantiated hope. These practitioners do not confront the evangelists face-to-face. Instead they influence the people covertly, instigating opposition and persecution behind the scenes. The practitioners do not want to lose their position since they are fully dependent on the inhabitants from the area – from receiving cattle to the gifts of their own daughters as wives. Due to the witchcraft practitioners' standing in society, they are considered an important social authority. If members plan to go hunting or attack neighbour tribes, it is mandatory to consult these practitioners in the Hamar, Bena and Kara territories. If the witchdoctor allows it, the members will go to war and enjoy the success as he predicted. If disallowed, they abort their actions and wait until they get permission.

In the case of mingi, before members kill the mingi children, they consult the practitioner by offering a fat goat. After they slaughter the goat, he reads the intestines, to determine the future of the poor child. In other instances, before members select their future wife, they consult the practitioners on whether she will be a good submissive spouse, or not. People consult these practitioners about their daily activities. For example, before they go to the market to sell or to buy goods, they approach these witchdoctors, fearing something may happen to them. Thus, evidently these tribe members are dominated strongly by the influence of the evil spirits in their day-to-day activities. Currently, there are churches in the region who oppose such practices, although the persecution is severe.

³ These people consider everyone who wear cloth as Amhara since they know that Amhara tribe clothes a nice cloth.

2.6.2.5 Traditional elders

People have been aging since the beginning of time. Although different cultures have separate attitudes and traditions regarding the aged, perspectives on aging differs globally (Larsen, 2016). In certain parts of the world, people consider the 65 as the beginning of old age. Certain countries from the Far East such Japan and China celebrate the day of the elders once a year, according to Larsen (2016). In contrast, according to the above source, Western countries do not attribute high value to the elderly in their society.

The attitude towards aging and the elderly seems different in Ethiopia. Within the Ethiopian context, aging points to the number of spent years, while elderly implies to the ability to solve problems within society by virtue of being older than others. In the Ethiopian culture, especially southern Ethiopia, it is not merely age that makes a person elderly. The focus is on the attitude of respect. For example, if there are three university students aged 23, 24 and 25, they will naturally give priority in all matters to the person aged 25, seeing that he is the oldest of all. If they visit a cafeteria, where there are only two seats, age 25 and 24 get priority to sit down, but age 23 will wait until he gets seated. Ethiopians respect older people in every situation as a natural implication of their culture.

The elders in the Hamar, Bena and Kara tribes are afforded more attention, not only in terms of honour; also in power. These elders have the authority to make decisions in several societal matters. For instance, if someone kills his friend unintentionally or accidentally, he flees to the elders to avoid being attacked by the deceased friends or relatives. If he arrives at the elders, he is safe. The elderly send back the angry mob. Thereafter, they deal with the two sides, the murderer and those representing the deceased. Finally, the elders decide that the murderer must pay numerous cattle, a sum of money, together with an Ak47 rifle. To ratify the decision, they slaughter a bull and the two sides pass over it exclaiming, "If I revenge someone from the murder's family, let me be as this bull!" Retaliation is forbidden after reconciliation.

It should be clear why the power of the elders impacts the practice of mingi within communities. These elderly are from the former generation who believe that the presence of mingi entails the absolute curse by the gods. Therefore, to teach others about mingi's evil is one of the responsibilities of the new generation rather than that of the elderly one. The reason is that the young generation has enjoyed improved opportunities for education and a modern lifestyle. It is, however, unfortunate that cultural beliefs in the wisdom of the elders prevails. As a result, community members do not pay attention to the teaching of the youth, unless the elders command the community that they should pay heed to the new generation.

Community members will obey the elderly even if they are commanded to kill their own child. To disobey elders is equal to disobeying their ancestral spirit. When the young person becomes older, he will continue the legacy of his fathers and perpetuate the mingi culture. The reason is the entrenched belief that avoiding mingi and obeying the elders brings peace and prosperity to the tribe. This fact is evident from the response of a young man from the Kara, "So yes, it is sad, but we are thinking about the village, the family, all the people. We tell the parents, don't cry for your baby, because you will save everyone. You can always make another baby" (LaPlante, 2011).

New elders also wish to be honoured by the following young generation as they themselves obeyed and honoured their elderly. If there was no obedience by the young, it was believed that all of society would be cursed. Therefore, the elderly in the Hamar, Bena and Kara enjoy a higher authority than government bodies regarding several social issues, from minor individual disagreements to the major conflict in country affairs.

2.6.2.6 Resistance to change

Change is difficult for people to accept. Thus, resistance to change at times may lead to rigidity. Len (6-227-232 (1983)) defines this concept as follows:

"Rigidity refers to an obstinate inability to yield or a refusal to appreciate another person's viewpoint or emotions characterized by a lack of empathy. It can also refer to the tendency to perseverate, which is the inability to change habits and the inability to modify concepts and attitudes once developed."

Verbally, numerous people outside the mentioned tribes believe that mingi is an outdated and obsolete practice, which has been harming and violating the most vulnerable members of society for years. However, in reality, most members within the tribes do not accept this form of modern thinking. By nature, most Ethiopians do not accept absolute change, seeing that they consider it similar to defeat.

Ethiopian history relates that king Tewodros committed suicide rather than surrendering to the British. The main reason for the war was the king's actions of jailing evangelical missionaries. Great Britain attempted to have the missionaries set free, but the king would not cooperate. Thereafter, the king imprisoned several British missionaries and envoys, accusing them of plotting against him. In response, Great Britain sent the Napier expedition (1867 – 1868) to rescue the prisoners. Aided by rebellious nobles along the way, the British force attacked Tewodros's forces at Magdela on 10 April 1868. The king, realising the hopelessness of his position, committed suicide three days later.

It is remarked in Ethiopia that it is a shame to say “I can’t!” This remark shows the determination of the Ethiopian people. Ethiopia was never colonised during its history except for five years as colony of Italy (1935 – 1940). Even during that period of occupation, the Ethiopians did not submit, rather participated in guerrilla warfare from all over the country. After a bitter war with the civilian Italian troops, the Ethiopians drove these soldiers from their territory in 1941.

This same determination holds true for the Hamar, Bena and Kara tribes. Being strong-willed and physically formidable people, they resisted the attack from the Sudan border and other Muslim invaders throughout their history. The Ethiopian government has no concern about the country’s south-western border. According to present knowledge, Ethiopia has not been attacked at this border. This historical fact would reflect the strength of these pastoral communities who have demonstrated self-sustainability and fortitude to protect themselves for centuries. At times, they even disobeyed the government in matters that seem irrelevant to them. On those occasions, the Ethiopian government preferred a diplomatic approach rather than forcing these tribes into submission or starting a war with them. In these processes, the elderly has a significant role either to help bring peace, or to initiate war.

The same resistant thinking applies to the belief of mingi. For numerous years, those who oppose this practice are not found from among the mentioned tribes. Tourists, certain government officials, research workers, missionaries and national evangelists attempted to stop this practice, but to avail. No members paid them any attention. The responses, “Who are you to oppose our culture?” “Be silent and go in peace!”, and related warnings were given first. If the confrontation does not stop, their following actions would become more threatening. However, if someone disagreeing with the practice resides among them or is a member, they may listen, tolerate and obey.

Lale Labuko is among the Kara people. He established an organisation, the Omo Child Project. To date, he has saved more than 30 child-related mingis and is working hard to save more. These afflicted children were given the opportunity to get education and be introduced to Christianity. The centre of this project is Jinka (a small village in the zone). However, Labuko gathers children labelled as mingi and brings them into his community. In the process he travels long distances, having difficulties with the lack of public communication systems. To date, there was no attempt on his life, even though the tribes oppose his interventions. From the activities of Labuko, it is evident that there is a strong, ingrained resistance to change, which may be countered should a member among themselves stir the proverbial pot.

2.7 Types of mingi

According to Grant (2013), mingi is not an ordinary word that people say loudly. It is an extreme taboo term that old people whisper to others whenever a bitter decision is necessary. Declaring someone as mingi, is condemning that one to death. It is not an ordinary word that is used in day-to-day life, but a horrific term that people honour but rarely use. Based on the report of Wharton, the tradition of mingi has seen countless babies and infants murdered by members of the Kara, Hamar and Bena tribes. Even though there is no official count, there are estimates that 300 children die annually as a result of this taboo or 'curse' (Wharton, 2018). Based on analysis, two types of mingi can be discerned: child and women mingi. These major types of mingi, occurring commonly among the tribes, are discussed below.

2.7.1 Child mingi

According to Omo Child Ethiopia (Grant, 2013), a child can be declared mingi for the following reasons: abnormal growth of teeth, inability, conceived while a sibling is breastfeeding, parents who do not fulfil cultural obligations, being one of a twin, or child born before wedlock. Being declared mingi almost inevitably implies the death of the child (Styles, 2014). The tribe will leave such a condemned child alone in the wild without food and water, or drown the child in the river to feed starved crocodiles.

Numerous tribe members believe that mingi is a curse and to avoid it, is considered one of their social responsibilities. A witness from the Kara tribes explains, "This is something that came down from generation to generation." Shoma, a witness from Kara people, points out, "If a baby comes with the top teeth before the bottom teeth, it must be killed. If it comes without the ceremony, it must be thrown away ... I didn't realise there was anything wrong with it" (cited by La Plante, 2010).

Below brief explanations are given on each type of mingi, by referring to responses about this harmful traditional practice (HTP).

2.7.1.1 Teeth mingi

Lale Labuko witnessed to Jane Wharton in 2018: "I saw the elders grab the two-year-old girl. The baby was crying and the mother was crying, but the elders were stronger. They took her and drowned her in the river." Labuko was a schoolboy when he watched his first tribal killing. Distraught by the murder he witnessed, he asked his mother about what was taking place. "Don't cry," she replied. "One day you will have to kill your own children too" (Wharton, 2018).

A two-year-old girl was killed by Kara elders due to her teeth position. A child becomes mingi because of the teeth position. If the first two teeth appear in the upper jaw, instead of the lower, the child is considered mingi. The tribes believe that an evil curse can manifest from a child's teeth unless they kill him/her. If the killing is not performed, the curse would strike the whole community, catastrophe to their cattle and lack of rain in their largest river. The Omo River is deemed significant since this is where people rest in this life and after death. A young man who kills mingi children by obeying the elders explained his actions, "If they have the mingi, there will be no water, no food, no cattle; But when they throw the baby away, everything is good again" (La Plante, 2011).

2.7.1.2 Gexxe mingi

The Hamar, Bena and Kara people have traditional leaders called *balabats* (kings). Authority is transferred from father to son and ensures the kingship continues. However, If the first child of a *balabat* is a male, the members consider him as a mingi, from the type which are termed *gexxe mingi*. It is considered a bad sign to the community and the living king if the first-born is a boy. The *babalats* prefer their first-born to be female. The reason is the belief that if the first-born is male, the father will die soon. In order to prevent the old father's death, the members kill the infant who is without his sin. This account is based on the testimony of Muga (informal discussion in Dec. 2015).

2.7.1.3 Disabled child

The Hamar, Bena and Kara tribes believe either that disabled children are not offspring from human beings, or are signs of a catastrophe to strike the people. Among the Kara and Hamar, physically deformed or *mingi* individuals have traditionally been considered to exert an evil influence on others. As a result, disabled infants traditionally have been disposed of without a proper burial (Petros, 2000). Throughout history, such children were killed by forced permanent separation from the tribe. They were left alone in the jungle or drowned in the river. Unless these children are killed, imminent punishment awaits the community.

In certain instances, these tribal views seemingly echo early Hebrew thought, where being disabled meant a manifestation of sin or a curse. Sticker (1999: P.86) comments on disability in the early Jewish culture, "The Hebrew Bible and rabbinic writings including the Talmud do sometimes single out persons who are deaf, unable to speak, or intellectually disabled and assign them lesser religious statuses." Even though these tribes from the Omo Valley was not in contact with teaching of the Jews, there are clear similarities. Thousands of innocent infants have been suffering in society due to their disability, where they could have been incorporated into society.

2.7.1.4 Twins born

Twin babies are considered mingi. One or both are killed, depending on the tribes' custom and whether they believe one of the children is conceived from an evil spirit (Omochild.org.). Often the female is saved since she is a means of income to the family. However, before deciding on such matters, the members consult the witchdoctors. If one of the twins dies after a brief while and is buried, members do not allow this corpse to rest in peace. La Plante observed among the Kara tribes:

“The tribe’s leaders were less certain of what they should do about the boy's twin brother, who had died of sickness shortly after birth. After some debate, including a pensive examination of a goat's intestines, they decided the dead child must have been mingi, too. So they dug up the corpse, bound it to the living boy, paddled a canoe into the centre of the Omo River and threw them both into the murky brown water” (LaPlante, 2011).

The example above clearly shows that the mingi practice is merciless to the dead, not only the living.

2.7.1.5 Child conceived while mother is still breastfeeding the older sibling

These people believe that conceiving the other child while feeding the former is culturally prohibited. Married couples must get permission from the elders to have another baby. Accidental pregnancies happen often in a tribal culture with no access to contraception. Such an incident is considered mingi as well and the parents are obliged to kill the baby (Jane Wharton, 2018). In order to protect the couple from such a situation, there is certain options that women can take. The traditional healer from the village may concoct a mixture of roots and herbs that will make her sick and may cause her body to reject the foetus. In this way the unborn child's life is taken before others can take the baby from her. However, many women are unwilling to attempt this option since this medicine has a 50/50 success rate and may cause death.

2.7.1.6 Parents marrying before performing cultural mandates

Previously, it was explained why young men must 'jump the bulls' in these cultures. If a couple gets married before that requirement is adhered to, a child born to the couple is considered mingi. In this regard, Labuko testified about an incidence where he saved a baby girl, later called Jessica. She was left without water or milk for three days after her mother gave birth. The mother was not allowed to breastfeed her because she was considered mingi. One of Labuko's friends, Shanko, called and told him that he found a baby girl that was supposed to die in the

wild. He urged Labuko to fetch the baby, thereby volunteering to watch over her since time is of the essence.

By the grace of God, Labuko saved the baby who currently has grown and is old enough to attend school. Regarding her situation, he testifies; “If someone feeds her, they will not be able to live in the village. No one will talk to them. No one will eat or drink sorghum beer with them. They cannot come into the ceremony house. They will be outcasts” (as related by Grant, 2001).

Labuko sketches the final outcome. After driving a long distance, they arrived at the place. Grant (2001) continues:

“No one challenges the nanny as she gets out of the vehicle and walks with calm, relaxed determination towards the baby. No one says a word as she gets out a plastic basin, fills it with water, and takes the baby from Shanko. The baby cries as she washes off dried blood, and continues to cry when Shanko takes her back. The nanny mixes up a bottle of formula and water. The faces in the crowd look somber, awed, and the only sound is the baby crying. The nanny takes her back, lowers the teat of the bottle, and the crying stops instantly as the baby feeds for the first time.”

For the next eight hours, the baby fell into a deep sleep. Though the tribe members were perplexed about what was happening, no one prevented Lale from rescuing the baby (Grant, 2001). This is one amongst many mingi babies who were exposed to death by being refused water and milk, seeing that they were born outside of wedlock. The baby Jessica was a fortunate case.

2.7.2 Women mingi

Next to the children, women are the most vulnerable group among the Hamar, Bena and Karo tribes. Besides having numerous responsibilities in society and the family, they also have cultural burdens which are transferred across generations. The women are responsible for building a house, cultivate the land and nurture a boy child until he becomes a shepherd together with his father. Generally, women are responsible for managing household tasks such as fetching water from a distant river, gathering firewood, feeding their children and at times even caring for the extended family. Besides these strenuous expectations, women are also exposed to the mingi culture. To demonstrate women's plight, the following examples are discussed below.

2.7.2.1 A girl abstaining from sexual relations and is a virgin until her marriage

There is an interesting paradox of two extremes in the same country: on the one side, virginity is highly valued; but on the flipside, the culture devalues virginity. In the culture of the Afar people from the north-eastern part of Ethiopia, the private parts of a girl are sewn together after genital mutilation in order to preserve her virginity. This practice, termed 'infibulation' by the United Nations Population Fund (UNPF, 2010) is explained explicitly above. The custom is as old as the Afar people and is currently still being practiced in the rural areas.

UNPE's research indicates that 63.2% of women in the Afar region have undergone infibulation (currently some are practicing a less extreme form).

Another practice takes place in the north-central part of the country, mainly in the Amhara region. According to custom, every girl should maintain her virginity until marriage. Her husband's main expectation from her is her purity. If she was found not a virgin, her husband sends her back to her family the following morning after the marriage. Her return to her family brings deep distress and shame to her parents and family. The only option left for this woman is being a bar lady away from that area. She begins a life of prostitution because of her 'lack' of virginity. It is common to see most bar ladies from the Amhara region working across the country (Asnake, 2007). Second to early marriage, virginity loss is one of the dominant cases that encourage divorce and prostitution in the region.

Regarding the Hamar, Bena and Kara tribes, the opposite applies to virginity, according to Muga Bezabehi. The tribe members encourage pre-marriage sex in order to prove the fertility of future wives. If the girl refuses, she is considered mingi. Certain community members even believe that a virgin has retained this status because an evil spirit dwelt in her; thus, she loses favour with the men and become despised. She can no longer be considered a good wife, seeing that she has not proved her fertility. Every girl, after passing the age of teenager, are obliged to attend the *evangadi* (night dance), where she has sexual relations with her peers. Parents encourage their daughters to participate in the practice since their culture appreciates such a 'fertility test'. If girls forgo such an opportunity, they remain at home for the rest of their lives.

2.7.2.2 Women conceiving another child while breastfeeding

It is not allowed for a woman to have sexual relations with her husband until the new-born child stops breastfeeding. This usually takes three to five years (LaPlante, 2011). The older child should first touch his mother's waist and assist her in household affairs before she may

conceive another child. At least the child has to be able to collect the firewood. In those years of waiting for the child to grow, the husband will stay with other concubines, enjoying another life while the poor woman takes care of the household responsibilities on her own. After the first child has grown sufficiently, the parents must receive the blessing from the elders to conceive another child. For such blessings, several expenses are expected of the family, as explained above (LaPlante, 2011). Thus, if the woman conceives prematurely, both the mother and baby are considered mingi. The husband is punished by slaughtering his preferred ox, providing a feast for the elderly and his friends.

2.7.2.3 Women conceiving without permission or blessings from the elders

After the mother stops breastfeeding, the husband and wife prepare a cultural invitation to the elders, seeking their permission and blessings to have another child. Though this ceremony depends on the economic level of each family, the costs are high. After eating and drinking, and receiving gifts from the husband and wife, the elders bless them. They are to conceive a warrior who protects their land from external invaders, a rich man who have thousands of heads of cattle, a fertile boy who will bear numerous children and fill their land. If they fail to perform the ceremony, the woman and her child become mingi and are excommunicated from the society, with the child often left to die in the wild.

Grant interviewed a Kara woman, Munko, on the loss of her children due to the practice of mingi. While he was interviewing her, she sat on a log and stared at the ground while explaining. Grant relates her story:

“In her life she has given birth to 16 children, but the first 12 were born before she and her husband were married. They wanted to get married but he couldn’t amass the necessary goats and cattle for the bride price. So she put those 12 babies out in the bush to die. ‘For a mother it is painful to kill her children,’ she says, ‘but I was more concerned about the community and my family’” (Grant, 2012).

On the day of their interview, she warned Lale Labuko not to save mingi children. According to Grant, “Then she looks up and stares right at Labuko: ‘I did the right thing. You will see. More curses and death will come because of these children you are rescuing. Is that what you want for your people?’” (Grant, 2012). Though the woman warned Labuko not to save the mingi children, he has not relented to date.

2.7.2.4 When a goat passes through a woman’s legs

Being a pastoral community, the members of the Hamar, Bena and Kara tribes have large herds of cattle. At times, men tend the cattle nearby the rivers. Women fetch water by travelling a long

distance. When meeting friends on the way, they pause for conversation while carrying their pot on their back. Unfortunately, if a goat from the herd passes through the woman's legs while she is conversing, she is immediately considered mingi. This day becomes her 'bad day'. The woman must wait until her husband returns and report her status. Tribe members believe that an evil spirit sent a goat. Thus, the husband must perform a cultural ceremony before the elders and witchdoctors. Until such a ceremony occurs, the woman remains at home, seeing she has no chance/right to meet with her neighbours while being considered impure.

2.7.2.5 Marring a man who failed to jump the bulls

As explained above, every young man should jump 7-14 bulls as a rite of passage to becoming a man (*maza*). If he fails, no one will allow him to marry. If he marries before the bulls' ceremony, the children conceived in the marriage are considered mingi and are killed brutally. An example from the Karo tribe: The writer of Mail Online, Styles, visited the Kara people in 2014. She interviewed a woman, Buko Balguda, who lost 15 children. Styles relates the incident as follows: "Buko Balguda, 45, from Duss, a Kara tribal village in southern Ethiopia's Omo Valley, is alone. The reason? Her seven sons and eight daughters were all killed at birth by village elders who decided that the children were cursed" (Styles, 2012). Buko explains the reason: "'I lost five plus five plus five babies – 15 in total,' she explains. 'I had seven males and eight females. During this time, our tribal traditions were very hard. I did not respect our traditions, so they killed my children'" (Styles, 2012).

Elaborating on Buko's testimony, Styles continues:

"For Ms. Balguda, the problems began before she even married, when her future husband failed to take part in her tribe's traditional bull jumping ceremony - an initiation rite for men which has to be completed before they can marry. When he married Ms. Balguda anyway, village elders declared that any children would be considered illegitimate and would be killed as soon as they were born" (Styles, 2012).

Fifteen children of Balguda were thrown into the Omo River, fed to the starved crocodiles. Sexual relations outside marriage is acceptable among the Kara members. However, if a woman becomes pregnant before taking part in a marriage ceremony, her child is considered *kumbaso*, which is another name for mingi in the Kara tribes. This mingi curse applies when parents fail to perform the appropriate series of rites before conceiving a child.

From the example above, it is evident to which extent these people are suffering due to the HTP of mingi. In certain impoverished families, performing such an expensive ceremony as jumping the bulls would be a definite problem. As a result, they would leave their own tribe and hide out

in a distant location, while generating sufficient finances that they can deposit to perform a legal marriage. If the people fail, their marriage is considered mingi. While hiding, a woman has no opportunity to meet with her family, relatives and peers.

And if a baby is born, this new-born is also considered mingi, with death the final fate. The documented mingi incident from the mentioned Kara tribe is clear evidence of such HTPs:

“If a mother was to give the baby her breast, she would also become mingi ... After the baby is born, we keep it alone in the house and we do not give it water or milk or we put sand in its mouth and he was still trying to cry but couldn't anymore. Soon, the child was dead, and we escorted a group of women away from the village to throw the tiny boy's body into the bush” (as cited by La Plante, 2011).

2.8 Reasons behind the mingi practice

Cause and effect entails a relationship between events or phenomena, where one is the result of the other. This relationship is a combination of action and reaction. According to the explanation of Singh (2019), in order to establish a cause-effect relationship, three criteria must be met. Firstly, the cause has to occur before the effect. This criterion is also known as “temporal precedencies”. Secondly, whenever the cause happens, the effect must also occur. The same applies vice versa, if the cause does not happen, then the effect should not take place. The final reason is that the strength of the cause also determines the strength of the effect. An effect will not be significant unless its cause is strong.

In the researcher's opinion, the underlying causes of mingi appear to be extremely strong by initiating and perpetuating the mingi practice. It is clear how the effects of mingi are transferred across generations, exhibiting tenacious longevity. Strong causes are resulting in a corresponding enhancing effect on the practice of mingi within Ethiopia. A lack of secondary sources limits investigation on the causes of mingi. Nevertheless, certain causes have been identified as playing a decisive role in the effects and expansion of mingi within the Hamar, Bena and Kara tribes to the present day. These causes are highlighted and explained below.

2.8.1 Cultural heritage

Every culture has its own customs and heritage, though it differs from place to place and people to people. According to the definition of ICOMOS,⁴ “Cultural heritage is an expression of the ways of living developed by a community and passed on from generation to generation,

⁴ *International Cultural Tourism Committee.*

including customs, practices, places, objects, artistic expressions and values” (ICOMOS, 2002). Cultural heritage is an expansive concept. At times, there such heritage has a logical explanation about the questions, How? Where? Why? When? Who? However, in certain instances, there is no logical answers to heritage. Heritage comprises broad and overarching ideas: Cultural heritage “... is something that someone or a collective considers to be worthy of being valued, preserved, catalogued, exhibited, restored, admired” (Kersel, et.al. 2015).

The heritage of mingi has no written documentation explaining the practice. Instead mingi stems from an intangible oral and traditional heritage which was transferred down the line of generations to the present. Certain fathers, especially those older than 60, focus on mingi’s importance. Their assumption is that retaining the mingi practice provides a special cultural strength which makes them a unique and strong people in the valley of Omo River.

After an in-depth discussion with the Kara elders, La Plante expounds on their belief about the mingi practice:

“Elders bitterly recall times in which their sympathy for mingi children prevailed over their fear. They believe that heedlessness cost the tribe most of its cattle and many of its members. Today, Kara leaders say, a more respectful adherence to the brutal obligations of their beliefs has allowed their tribe to thrive” (LaPlante, 2011).

La Plante also explains how the Kara tribe has been engaged in neighbouring ethnic conflict for numerous years. In all those years, the tribe members were convinced they had support from their ancestral spirit, due to their obedience to him by performing significant cultural rituals such as mingi and *gilo*. Kersel *et al.* (2015) point out, “Performing mingi is worthy of being valued and preserved among tribes to the good of their generation.” According to the elders, mingi should be maintained and admired in the current and in subsequent generations in order to retain their identity and strength as a tribe.

The Kara elders even discussed how letting Lale rescue mingi children has caused the tribe difficulties. An irate Kara mingi killer, Bona, argued, “If they have the mingi, there will be no water, no food, no cattle; But when they throw the baby away, everything is good again.” Seemingly the saying never turned out to be more true: It takes time to adapt to something, but it takes even longer to eradicate a rooted idea from someone’s mind.

Though there is no written evidence to document how mingi began in these societies, it is clear that the practice is well established withing the culture. Furthermore, due to the wide influence of mingi on tribe members, it remains difficult to eradicate this HTP from the cultural heritage of the Omo people. Individuals, churches and the government should be involved in combating

this degenerate cultural heritage in order to save hundreds of helpless children among these tribes.

2.8.2 Fear of evil

A phobia is a strong, persistent fear of situations, objects, activities, spirits or persons. The main symptom of such disorder is the excessive, unreasonable desire to avoid the feared subject. According to Bozman, (2007), "Phobias are believed to be developed by heredity, genetics and brain-chemistry combined with life-experiences." Daemon phobia (fearing demons) is common in several parts of the world, especially around Africa and Asia.

Throughout Africa, traditional beliefs are steeped in superstition and witchcraft. When family members pass away, there is a belief that their souls or spirits are still able to influence the present world. In particular, in the Omo Valley, there still are fertile ground and opened hearts for the belief in operations by ancestral spirits. The Omo people fear evil and will sacrifice numerous items to combat the evil and appease the evil spirit. Furthermore, within the mentioned region, it is prohibited to describe the spirit as "evil"; instead, members refer to "god" or "our father's god" or "ancestral spirit".

Different types of worship surrounding the ancestral spirit are common. Witchdoctors who have connection with the ancestral spirit, enjoy wide acceptance in society. They sit idly and prophesy to the community by helping members understand the spirit's intentions. People bring offerings: different types of domestic animals, first fruits of their harvest, honey, at times even their own daughters as wives to the witchdoctors.

Most people believe that these witchdoctors have the ability to send out or prevent the evil spirit from killing individuals. Thus, the witchdoctors have the power to save, cause or prevent rain; to bless or to curse. There are also rainmakers in the communities who allegedly are connected to the ancestral spirit. Rainmakers threaten the people by withholding rain. Witchdoctors threaten to destroy all, and fortune tellers warn about impending curses unless they are worshipped by the people. As a result, the people are compelled to submit them to these coercing diviners.

According to tradition, the ancestral spirit lives in the deepest part of the Omo River. Witchdoctors will immerse themselves in the deepest part of this river, relaying messages from the grandfathers or dead relatives to their children. At times, witchdoctors order children to go into the tombs of their parents and disclose their needs, expecting an answer from the dead. Due to these practices the witchdoctors are revered as demi-gods who have authority over the living and the dead. Based on this knowledge, witches will retort to those criticising them, "I met

with your grandfather. He sent an important message to you. If you want, come with ..., on Friday or Wednesday morning.”

In most parts of Ethiopia, people consider Wednesday and Friday as ‘dry days’ in which Ethiopian Orthodox people fast. The reason is that they believe these days are connected to the evil spirit. To overcome the curse on these days, everyone should fast from animal products, thus avoiding happiness. Due to this fasting, animal products are cheaper on Fridays and Wednesdays.

Regarding mingi as HTP: Killing mingi children and avoiding mingi women is based on self-preservation. People believe that unless they avoid mingis, the evil spirit will destroy the whole generation, cattle and all their possessions. Rather than losing their whole family, they prefer killing their own child to save other children, or excommunicating the mingi women to save the community as a whole. This is demonstrated by the response of Buko Balgudo, “I lost five plus five plus five babies – fifteen in total ... seven males and eight females. During this time, our tribal traditions were very hard. I did not respect our traditions, so they killed my children” (related by Styles, 2014). It is heart-breaking observing a parent who is forced to kill 15 children one after the other. Nevertheless, these people give priority to their community’s thinking rather than considering their own children. This is unusual to others (other parts of the country), to kill 15 children to protect the community from destruction by the evil spirit.

2.8.3 Obedience to the elders

Elders in the Omo valley exert absolute power over the younger generation. The elders are the final decision-makers on social affairs. It is forbidden to walk in front of an old man, sit down before the elderly have been seated, or eat before the elderly have finished their food.

The honouring of the elders may be a possible point of entry to reach these tribes with the Gospel. Among several Christian values, the Reformed Church pays strong attention to honouring parents and older people. According to Finn (2013), “Reformed Christians recognize that good and necessary consequences always arise from particular scriptural commands. The command to honour one’s father and mother, when applied more broadly, means that we also are to respect all individuals who exercise God-ordained authority over us.” Though his explanation relates to parents and church elders, it can be concluded that these people may be attempting to apply wrongly, values that could be aligned with the biblical testimony.

Around the Hamar, Bena and Kara tribes during cultural events, one can easily determine the age-order in the room by the way members are seated at the event. The seating is similar to the

sons of Jacob's seating in Joseph's palace when they were invited to feast: "The men had been seated before him in the order of their ages, from the first-born to the youngest; and they looked at each other in astonishment" (Gen 43:33). The words of the elderly are final in each decision. Even at present, some of the Hamar, Bena and Kara youth receive the opportunity to study or work with tourists and researchers. When exposed to external thinking, they begin understanding what is detrimental or constructive about their culture. However, they will not confront the community for fear of reprisals by the elderly. To be cursed is a bitter experience that no one in the area wants to endure. Therefore, they maintain their obedience to the culture of the society rather than following their conscience.

Lale Labuko, the founder of the Omo Child Project, faced a similar problem when his people gave him a final warning to cease saving mingis. His answer was unusual: "I obey everything that you command me, but I don't obey saving mingi. If you want to kill me, here I am" (cited by Wharton, 2018). His mother commanded him to accept his culture. The reporter from the Reporter Ethiopia Media & Communications Centre, Jane Wharton quotes Lale's mother's response indicating her reluctance to accept her son's action:

"She told her son his two oldest sisters were killed as soon as they were born because they were conceived out of wedlock. Their deaths had been decided before they were born and they didn't live long enough even to be given names. Explaining the superstitious sacrifice to a horrified Lale, his mother said: 'It is your culture and you must accept that'" (LaPlante, 2011).

However, Lale has committed him to save mingis until the tribe members kill him. This is unusual. Most Hamar, Bena and Kara youth consider the decision of the elders as final and obey whatever they have ordered. It would be exemplary if the youth from these tribes follow in the footsteps of this young leader.

2.8.4 Influence of certain foreign researchers

It is usual to see foreigners, especially Western tourists, in the Omo valley. Most tourists come to visit this organic culture because these experiences are not accessible to the outside world and untouched by modern thinking. Not only do visitors marvel at the "naked people", the traditional lifestyle has unique features that requires further study. Therefore, it is common to see tourists and their cars kicking up dust toward the sky of the Hamar land. At times anthropologists come to do research. Some of these researchers are Christians and attempt to teach the inhabitants a godly life. However, other, secular visitors, encourage the continuation of inhuman practices such as mingi, by convincing the tribe members that this is a unique cultural attribute. These misguided researchers seal the affirmation by giving gifts to the *balabats*, elderly and certain tribe members.

Narrative by the researcher himself

An apt example is taken from the researcher's own evangelism outreach in 1999.

During our graduation year, our college took us into this land to practise cross-cultural evangelism in Hamar and Bena. Among us, three of my colleagues went to the place called Shanko. These people were extremely cruel at that time. Two weeks before, they had killed an evangelist called Abel Gondalo without reason, just to avoid listening to him. They murdered him while he was collecting firewood. When our students went there, certain church leaders were reluctant. They were unwilling to accept responsibility for our safety since they were dealing with the government about Abel's death. The one who killed Abel was not arrested and matters were challenging. However, the students decided to go there, seeing that they were convinced no one would appreciate them if they decided against going.

According to my colleague's report, a woman anthropologist from Germany had been living in Shanko for numerous years and writing her anthropology research. In order to develop trust among the community, she married a Hamar young man and bore his child. All the tribe members viewed her as their hero since she married an uneducated, uncivilised, naked Hamar. Her actions honoured the young man and his family since marrying a foreign wife is unusual in the area, without having to pay a dowry. The young man was considered opportunistic by avoiding the dowry. People in the community knew how much a full Hamar dowry costs. When these students arrived there, they communicated with this woman and she welcomed them in the first day. She also gave them pots and other materials with which to cook.

After a day, she heard that the students had come for evangelism. She called her husband and told him to chase them away, or kill them forthwith. She told him that these students were from the church. They came to undermine their culture and bring a curse upon him, his son and family, including herself. She threatened to divorce him unless he chased them away or killed them as they did with Abel Gondalo two weeks ago. Finally, the man told all this to the elders. After they blessed him, they planned to kill these students at midnight. This rumour was passed to the students' guide and certain church leaders. Through the grace of God and a brilliant decision of the guide, they escaped death by walking several kilometres on foot.

The German researcher did not remain in the Omo valley. After she completed her research, she took her husband and the child to her home. However, the husband refused to live in the cool climate and culture of Germany; furthermore, there was no traditional alcoholic drink made from maize and sorghum. He had no one to talk to since he was uninformed about their language. Finally, he divorced his white wife and returned to his warm Hamar land.

2.8.5 Western influence

Many Westerners enjoy experiencing the cultural ceremonies of the Omo Valley. They travel long distances to watch bull jumping, the *evangadi* dance and different types of cultural involvement. Some Western anthropologists participate with the community rather than teaching them to dispense with the harmful practices. An example is Krutak's (2000), testimony based on his experiences. Interestingly, on his picture online he is receiving a tattoo from a Hamar woman. Krutak elaborates on his tribal experience:

"As the old saying goes 'anthropologists do it in the field,' so I decided that I couldn't leave Hamar territory without a permanent reminder of my time with these incredible people. I asked the local scar master Gadi if she could provide me with some beauty marks above my waist. The thorns that pull-up the epidermis before it's sliced off hurt much worse than the scarring tool itself, and they feel like a barbed 2-pronged fishhook going right under your skin! I was just happy that the one-hundred+ cut session lasted less than fifteen minutes. How's that for participant observation?"

Certain nonreligious Westerners encourage the Omo people to prevent their culture from being influenced by the teachings of Christian evangelists, as was indicated above. A number of Westerners also indulge in sexual relations with the Hamar girls, paying them large sums of money. They drink the alcoholic beverages and participate in the dance during the night ceremonies. Currently, certain girls are clothed in modern garments, prostituting themselves for money. Evidently, the influence of the secular visitors from the West has made its mark socially.

Naturally, one should not generalise. There are other visitors from the West, also religious ones, who instead invest their resources with the Omo Child Project. Thereby they focus on the protection of children from the degenerate mingi practice. According to O'Sullivan (2016), John Rowe, an American photographer, is a role-model in this regard. He invests his full resources in the Omo Child Project in order to save the condemned mingis. There are also evangelical missionaries who resided in these areas and worked to bring transformation and change by opening clinics and elementary schools. These missionaries lived a sacrificial life in the desert. It was usual to see the burnt faces of certain missionaries who were exposed to the high temperatures of the Omo valley. However, they committed them to save people from earthly suffering as well as give them hope for a spiritual future.

2.8.6 The government policy

The government policy enacted in Ethiopia has both benefitted and harmed the lives of the citizens. The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia's Constitution article 41(9) and article 91(3) stipulates clearly that the government's duties and responsibilities are to protect, preserve

and support the cultural heritages and arts. Those intangible heritages could be important for the tourism industry (Constitution of Ethiopia, 1994). In addition, the Constitution highlights the importance of the diversity of cultural expressions in Ethiopia since 1994, in accordance with the report of UNESCO's General Assembly 2017 (UNESCO, 2017).

Such reforming developments are encouraging. However, the focus of the current government is shifting direction to support the prior cultural practices, which were condemned by the previous governments and Christian belief. The military government which came to power in 1974, totally eradicated certain harmful traditional practices (HTPs) categorising these as superstition and misguided experiences of the previous generation. As a result, witchdoctors, fortune-tellers and those who lead such evil practices were avoided. Moreover, certain HTPs were declared unlawful and those engaging in those activities were sent to prison.

After the fall of the military government in 1991, the current government, spurred on by the philosophy of ethnic equality and democratic rights, paved the way for the obsolete cultural practices to be revived. As a result, ethnic groups began celebrating their own culture and its direct relationship with divination and sorcery. In public places, the sorcerers slaughtered sheep and publicly read its intestines, foretelling the future. At times, even well-educated government officials take part in such degenerative practices humiliating themselves by sprinkling the blood of a goat or a sheep on their face and body. This is done under the impression they are inducing protection from the evil spirit. Such engagements are taking place under the banner of democracy.

The practice of *mingi*, *evangadi*, *gilo* or jumping the bulls and other ceremonies of the Omo people have a double benefit for Ethiopia's current government.

Firstly, the government officials allocated to that zone are widely accepted by their managers, seeing that they have done well to preserve the indigenous culture, which supports the typical identity of the Omo people, the SNNPR and Ethiopia in the main. In the process, the suffering of the condemned women and children due to such traditional practices becomes a stepping stone for the officials. Naturally, the government officials do not explicitly promote the practice of *mingi*, however, their silence by implication condones it. These officials retain their positions in government by avoid being controversial.

Secondly, this practice is exploited as a means of income for that zone, region and for the country as a whole. As explained above, numerous tourists flock to this zone on regular outings. This practice offers job opportunities for graduates from higher education or provides a means of income to others. Rather than condemning and avoiding such inhumane practices, people

rather keep silent to protect their status and income. The researcher is also aware of numerous guides who lead tourists through the valley to showcase such practices and benefit from the extra income. During the past five years (since 2014), there were cases where those engaging in *mingi* were sent to prison. However, in general, the agony and death of children and women has become a means of living for others.

2.8.7 Re-emergence of the obsolete cultural practices

Being a nation made up of a wide range of cultures and languages, Ethiopia could be considered as one of the most culturally diverse countries in the world. During the 19th century, evangelical Christianity came and dramatically changed the beliefs of the people. Before that period, every nation and nationality in Ethiopia had their own gods to whom they gave priority in their lives. However, the evangelical missionaries introduced the belief of the one True God, the Creator of the heaven and the earth to this region.

Although its philosophy was based on atheistic communism, the military government also played a decisive role in outlawing evil traditional practices, as mentioned previously. That government rooted out witchcraft, fortune-tellers and sorcery in the land of Ethiopia, except for those who hid themselves in the countryside. The regime-change in 1991 led to the emergence of an ethnic coalition known as the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF). In the new dispensation, Ethiopia adopted ethnic federalism and secularism. This adoption created fertile ground for the accentuation of identity politics.

The increased visibility of religion as a strong political force in this highly inflated domain of identity politics has led the Ethiopian state to take various measures in managing religions. However, after the current government came to power, under the banner of democracy, numerous ethnic groups of Ethiopia, returned to their ancestral worship practices. Members began celebrating the dead ancestral spirits annually by investing finances, time and strength. Examples of revitalised cultural customs are practices of three ethnic groups in current Ethiopia highlighted below.

The goddess Atete

According to Jordan (2002), "Atete is an Oromo goddess with domain over reproduction and women." Jordan explains that, based on Oromo belief, Atete governs the fate of people on earth. "She is power of life, abundance, fortune, wealth, and Fridays are sacred to her" (Michael Jordan, 2002). The practice where Atete is worshipped can be described as follows:

“Women carry strings of specially colored beads (cäle) as a rosary consecrated to this goddess. Groups of women wear necklaces of Atete, hold a feast, and then go to gather herbs. Based on the belief of her followers, she controls fertility and can bestow or remove it. Atete is venerated by Muslims and Christians in Oromo as well as those who maintain their traditional religion” (Judica, 2009).

The Oromo people, comprising approximately 40% of the Ethiopian population, believe that Atete is the mother of Jesus who hears the prayer of women, especially when they are barren. They celebrate this goddess twice annually, in July corresponding to the season of volatile, and in September, a season of dangerous weather when she is petitioned for protection. The day set aside should be on Friday and only women are allowed to approach and present different forms of sacrifices to her. It is unfortunate to note that, attending this ceremony are regional or national leaders, especially representatives from the office of Women and Children Affairs. The ceremony is opened by thanking the current government who allowed this freedom to worship the ancestral spirit. The worship of Atete was forbidden during the period of the military government.

The festival of Fichee-Chambalaalla

Fichee-Chambalaalla is a New year’s festival celebrated among the Sidama people annually. According to Authority for Research and Conservation of Cultural Heritage, (AARCCH, 2013), each year, astrologers determine the correct date for the festival, which then is announced to the clans. Communal events take place throughout the festival, including singing traditional songs and attending dances. Interestingly, more than 98% of these people are followers/members of evangelical Christian churches. Based on the information of AARCCH, 2013, these church members believe the decision of astrologers that Fitché Chambelela is the identity mark of their culture. Certain members bow down at the feet of the sorcerers and hear their future fate after the witches read the intestines of a goat.

The Evangelical Church in the area has attempted to oppose the practice. However, the government officials did not pay due attention to the matter. Fiche Chamballala, New Year among the Sidama people of Ethiopia (UNESCO, 2013), has been registered as Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO. While numerous people are homeless and live on the streets of Awassa town every day, the government officials erected a high-cost fence around Lake Awassa, where there are no residents. The location is highly frequented by tourists to celebrate Fichee-Chambalaalla once a year in a very wide place where many important development affairs performed.

Celebrations of Gifata

Gifata⁵ is one of the currently revived dead cultures celebrated among the Wolayita people in southern Ethiopia. In this region, approximately 98% form an evangelical community with as much as 2 605 000 members (Joshua project, 2019). Until the first decades of the 20th century, according to Joshua project (2019), these inhabitants were the followers of the Ethiopian Orthodox religion. However, several decades later, protestant missionaries came from abroad to the Wolayita. They began preaching the Gospel as well as building schools and health centres. As a result, almost all the inhabitants were converted into the evangelical faith (Dalelo, 2012). Currently the majority of the people are Evangelical Protestant Christians, some are orthodox Christians and the rest are made up of Muslims and other Christian denominations.

Despite their predominantly Christian beliefs, the Wolayita began celebrating *Gifata* (New Year) in the valley of the Gibe River. During these celebrations the revellers slaughter 100 bulls as a sacrifice to appease their ancestral spirit. Accordingly, witchdoctors and fortune tellers read the intestines of goats and sheep to predict the future of the region and country. Christian government officials attend this festival and encourage people to participate by paying a high per diem. However, from their side, certain Evangelical Churches and their leaders initiated public opposition toward this degenerative practice and devised strategies to protect their members from participating in such practices in the region of the Wolayita.

The three examples above, involving 86 nationalities within the country, demonstrate the extent to which cultural practices are still playing a decisive role in the expansion of HTPs. It is surprising yet disconcerting when it is revealed how the mature Christians of Sidama and Wolayita tribes are showing a high tendency to relapse into old traditional practices. Furthermore, when these mentioned tribes are compared with the Hamar, Bena and Kara, who almost all follow traditional religion, the challenge becomes clear. It is extremely difficult to create lasting cultural change since those tribes have entrenched the practice of ancestral worship among their members. In addition, a secular cultural revolution has found fertile ground in the Omo Valley. Rather than opposing and discouraging the untenable practice of mingi and related HTPs, they are willingly encouraging such traditional customs against their better judgement.

⁵ A New Year celebration comprising various forms of cultural expressions.

2.8.8 Identity focus

Belonging to a group may be beneficial, as group membership enhances individuals' well-being and lead to further positive outcomes. However, people's self-assessment can fluctuate according to circumstances and their group participation, unless they understand the truth about themselves. Bruner et. al. (2010) explains, "A healthy identity comes from understanding the truth about ourselves. Our deepest yearning is to understand where we came from and the purpose for which we were made." It is important to determine people's identity generally.

After the fall of the military government in 1991, the current government focused on identity/racial politics rather than national solidarity. Ethiopia is known for its national unity since the beginning of the monarchy. There was no division between the south and the north, or east from the west. The citizens had a sense of unity when the threat of invasion from the outside emerged.

Among several, the battle of Adwa in 1896 is a typical example. Minelik II, the emperor of Ethiopia commandeered all Ethiopians to fight against the enemy who came to destroy their country, religion and family. In a single day, Ethiopian troops destroyed 70% of the Italian soldiers while they lost a mere 5 000 to 6 000 of their 100 000 soldiers (Marcus, 1995). This victory was a highly significant military feat in Africa and is considered as an important event in history. Uncivilised people with cultural weapons (spear, shield, stones) obliterated an army from a civilised nation carrying modernised weapons (Jonas, 2008). Strong unity implies continuous power. As was mentioned previously, history relates that Ethiopia was never colonised by outsiders, except for five years during World War 2.

Currently, this country is struggling with internal division between the tribes. Consisting of more than 80 diverse ethnic groups, each group exploits the policy of the current government. Each ethnic group is attempting to build a territorial wall around its own members. Rather than focusing on national affairs and unity, each group is concerned with its culture, identity, and ethnocentrism. Since the people of the Hamar, Bena and Kara tribes form part of this new Ethiopian dispensation, they also have welcomed this 'open' view and are attempting to insulate their traditional customs.

The former generations of these tribes saw civilization, education, hospitals and modern artefacts as an evil practice, from the devil to destroy their identity. The military government forced the traditional tribes to partake in education and use clinics and hospitals. They were forced to follow a modern method of raring cattle even though they were reluctant to leave their

traditional practice. Those who welcomed the modern ways, improved their lifestyle in several ways.

In the new Ethiopian dispensation, citizens are allowed to return to lifestyles according to their custom, culture and tradition, rather than encouraging them to internalise the modern way of life. The government encourages ethnic groups to focus on their identity, follow the customs according to their tradition. However, this open approach to diversity, actually strengthens the traditional tribes' use of HTPs such as mingi. Their justification is that this is, as the researcher informed, part of their tradition where the current government encourages them to develop their identity. Naturally, the government regulations do not explicitly condone the practice of mingi. However, there is also no official condemnation. Thus, the members who practice mingi, claim that the government's policy supports them to continue this HTP, which seems an exclusive heritage of their tribes.

From the discussion above, there is clearly a strong need for Government to provide leadership in the area of HTPs. It is important to focus on the specific HTPs and teach the people about the destructive effects. Thus, a major priority of government would be to help the various cultures embrace *healthy* cultural practices; however, this focus seemingly lacks official attention.

2.8.9 Lack of attention by certain government officials

In an overall evaluation, the members of the Hamar, Bena and Kara tribes would be categorised as part of the less-educated groups in Ethiopia. According to the South Omo Zone Educational Office 2007, only 13% of Hamar children attend schools, both primary and secondary (Sewunet, 2014). The first-born Hamar boys are deemed indispensable for their ritual and socio-economic roles in the Hamar community, therefore they do not attend school. Furthermore, girls are not sent to school due to the danger of being kidnapped for forced marriages by Hamar men, when these girls live in the towns unprotected. Girls are viewed as equally responsible for continuing the Hamar culture. Should they attend school, they could not be trained to become a competent Hamar woman (Jean, 2010). However, those girls attending school and become leaders are better educated than others. Khimm (2012) points out that better educated people will demand improved government since, "It doesn't matter whether it's a dictatorship or a democracy: better-educated citizens tend to have a better government."

The characteristics of policy-makers matter because they will be held responsible for policy outcomes. The growth of knowledge has a positive result, especially in the arena of leadership. The current situation in Ethiopia seems characterised by the mentality of, 'Let every citizen participate in the leadership of his people without prerequisites'. According to the policy, there

has to be a representative from the pastoral society in order to lead them, irrespective of educational background and formation. When the representatives begin their leadership, some focus on personal interests rather than dealing with the issues of their society. They have the chance to live the so-called 'civilised life' by sitting in parliament and partaking in formal proceedings of decision-making.

In the process, these representatives fail to deal with the harmful effects of certain traditional practices. Seemingly they are more interested in affirming themselves as a unique people in the country with the right to build their traditional customs in practice. The result is that self-interest seem to take preference to the plight of the poor and ritually 'condemned' people in the area (e.g. due to the mingi practice).

However, recently there was developments in the situation that gave hope. Certain educated people in the area have begun opposing the untenable practices even though it is root deeply in the community. Change from the bottom up, makes the process difficult to stop or suppress. As evidence it can be noted that certain government officials recently began imprison mingi killers, identifying and accusing them as murders. Reporter LaPlante (2011) visited a mother who was jailed due to a mingi case in the South-Omo zone, Jinka. LaPlante (2011) relates the incident as follows:

"They have taken her tribal clothes. Her beads, her animal skins and her jewellery have been replaced by a tattered shirt and loose-fitting skirt. In that and most other visible regards, Mashi Lamo is indistinguishable from the other inmates at the Jinka Prison Institute. Yet everyone in this ragtag penitentiary knows who she is. 'The mingi mother,' says one guard, a woman who's crisply pressed khaki uniform seems to stand out in defiance of this dirty, dilapidated jail, cut into a hillside in the South Omo region's administrative capital. 'Yes, we all know what happened to her. It is very sad.'"

These and similar developments within official circles are encouraging news.

2.8.10 Lack of involvement by the Evangelical community

Throughout its extended history, the church has been a major source of social services such as schooling, health centres and other important organisations in different parts of the world. Several universities were founded by the church. Historians of science (Lindberg, 2003) have argued that the church had a significant, positive influence on the development of science and technology. Other historians also testify that the church's priests have contributed to science and technology (Jonathan, 2004).

In various ways the church has sought to promote Western attitudes 'through vice and virtue' in diverse fields. Lindberg (2003: P.3001) explains, "It has, over many centuries, promulgated the teachings of Jesus within the Western World and remains a source of continuity linking modern Western culture to classical Western culture)." It is believed that Christian theology has also strongly influenced Western philosophers and political activists. The teachings of Jesus, and the parables He used have a strong influence on modern activities in people's daily lives and in organised humanitarian services. It would not be an exaggeration to claim that the church is interconnected with this world: economics, politics, education, science and technology ... all these fields and practices have a direct or indirect relation with the activities of the church.

Since 331 A.D., Christianity was introduced to Ethiopia Leo (1974). According to other views, the actual introduction could have been during the first century, around 35 A.D. (Acts 8:26-40 and Philip's missionary work). Nevertheless, since this introduction, many historical events relate directly to activities of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. According to a known historian Pankhurst, it was the church that began formal education before the government in Ethiopia (Pankhurst,1968). In the early 20th century, evangelical Christianity was spread widely by SIM (Sudan Interior Mission), mainly in the southern and central part of the country. This was an area of which the ruling class has lost sight for a long period (Gospel fellowship Association, 2019). The beneficiaries of education before the 20th century were the ruling class (Pankhurst, 1968). However, in response, the SIM mission established a large number of schools in the country for those who were undermined by the ruling elites. This mission organisation did not only spread the Christian religion. According to Dalelo (2012), their input included education, health, technology and community based services. Positive influences by the Western church have helped address the social problems of Ethiopia since its establishment. Schools, clinics, roads and several other important infra-structures are the outcome of the spreading of evangelical Christianity in Ethiopia.

In Southern Ethiopia, the Hamar, Bena and Kara tribes were the beneficiaries of SIM's investment for the past 60 years (since the 1960s), (Mata 2014). Numerous SIM members made personal financial contributions to help plant churches and provide community services in Alduba, the centre of these tribes. Hundreds of churches were planted, clinics built, and schools opened. The SIM evangelists trained numerous inhabitants among these tribes, both vocationally and spiritually. However, the outcome was not as expected. Certain evangelists did oppose mingi and related HTPs. However, since these practices were culturally entrenched, the local converts were not supportive or active participants in this opposition (Mata, 2014). The majority who battled the mingi practices were evangelists sent by northern churches (other tribes were evangelised earlier). However, the indigenous converts played a limited role. These

evangelists paid a high cost, including their lives. As stated above, a number of evangelists were killed while struggling to civilise this community.

At present, lone individuals, not evangelical movements, are attempting to eradicate the mingi practice in the area. Clearly the churches servicing the Hamar, Bena and Kara tribes should be involved in the eradication campaign (as will be discussed in more detail later). Nevertheless, certain local individuals who have begun to oppose the mingi practice from their own initiative. Thus there is the stirrings of social justice in these cases. However, the role of the churches at present is lacking in impetus (Rowe, 2019).

2.9 Summary

This part of the study outlined several HTPs in Africa and as well as in Ethiopia that have impacted the human rights of women and children's right to life. Among the examined tribal customs, the focus was on mingi, one of the HTPs in south Ethiopia, particularly within the Hamar, Bena and Kara tribes. The study explored the unique cultural features that distinguish these Omo tribes from the other ethnic groups within Ethiopia. The process of mingi classification was explained in terms of the different applications to women and children. Finally, the main reasons behind the mingi practice were investigated, focusing on social, cultural, political and religious dimensions.

The following chapter (ch 3) will consider the human rights of women and the right to life of children. The chapter will attempt to answer the following question: What are the rights of women and children according to the law of Ethiopia, NGOs and global beliefs in relation to mingi practice? This question will be answered comprehensively from various angles in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 3:

RIGHTS OF CHILDREN AND WOMEN ACCORDING TO SELECTED ORGANISATIONS AND RELIGIOUS GROUPS

3.1 Introduction

Human rights are not ascribed by anybody, given as a gift, or achieved by personal effort. Human rights are inherent to all human beings. Such rights do not exclude any individual due to his or her geographic location, gender, age or race.

The Universal Declaration of Bioethics and Human Rights (2005, DBHR) by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), was developed as a global human rights instrument to protect the health of all humans. This declaration states that, regardless of gender, language or religion, everyone has the right to a life of dignity and freedom. The declaration explains, “The fundamental equality of all human beings in dignity and rights is to be respected so that they are treated justly and equitably” (Durham World Heritage Site, 2010-2019). This declaration includes every human being regardless of age and gender, or location. The rights apply to all humanity since all are equally entitled to human rights without discrimination. According to UNESCO, (2005) article 26, these rights are all interrelated, interdependent and indivisible. One of the aims of UDBHR under article 2 is “to promote respect for human dignity and protect human rights, by ensuring respect for the life of human beings, and fundamental freedoms, consistent with international human rights law” (UDBHR, 2005). Thus, these fundamental, inalienable rights provide dignity, respect, protection and priority to human beings and secure them from any forms of inhumane activities including harmful traditional practices (HTPs).

However, in contrast to this universal declaration, in numerous parts of the world, inhumane activities are taking place in the name of traditional beliefs, cultural practices and tribal diversity. On the one hand, the right to be identified with a culture is part of people’s basic human rights. On the other hand, such inhumane practices leave a conundrum. This raises the question: Which should take precedence, culture or rights? UNESCO (2005), article 12 clearly provides the answer, “The importance of cultural diversity and pluralism should be given due regard. However, such considerations are not to be invoked to infringe upon human dignity, human rights, and fundamental freedoms, nor upon the principles set out in this Declaration, not to limit their scope.” This declaration gives priority to human dignity and human rights over cultural

diversity, seeing that human dignity is the core principal and criterion against which every cultural practice should be measured.

Ethiopia is one of the countries worldwide that has a clear and well-known Constitution protecting human rights of all. Furthermore, the government has signed numerous global, continental and national agreements advocating for the human rights of women and children. Although this country has well-known democratic laws and regulations, all are not enforced. As a result, many women and children are suffering due to HTPs, which are transferred from generation to generation. When government departments do enforce the laws, there is a lack of professionalism when dealing with such sensitive cultural issues.

On the one hand, certain government and non-governmental offices focus only on the problem using harsh methods to expose the practices and eradicate them, leading to shame and embarrassment in the community. On the other hand, the actions of religious groups are focused strongly on religious matters and pay limited attention to the rights of individuals in the process. Vorster (2007:101), explains the situation vividly:

“Religion played and still plays a huge role in the establishment and continuation of this inferior position of women in society, the focus of religious organizations is not as it expected in the area of fighting against HTPs though both divine regulation and human constitution has clear rules and regulations regarding the rights of the children and women.”

The definition which the UN (2005) established for human rights provides the best framework for understanding the meaning of human rights: “Human rights are rights inherent to all human beings, regardless of race, sex, nationality, ethnicity, language, religion, or any other status.” Furthermore, the UN (2005) also describes the different categories of human rights: “... the right to life and liberty, freedom from slavery and torture, freedom of opinion and expression, the right to work and education, and many more”. The declaration stipulates that all individuals are entitled to these rights, without being discriminated against. Based on this definition and its content, the UN has for many years been a champion for human rights for all people regardless of their geographical location and ethnic background. The UN’s work has focused especially on the area of women, children and disabled people, who tend to be the most marginalised groups throughout the world.

The battle for human rights worldwide is a complex one. Numerous obstacles to these rights are recognised due to civil war, xenophobia, power and corruption, HTPs, certain religious practices and other social, economic, or cultural issues. People, especially women and children, are exposed to multi-dimensional problems, which leave them victimised and subject them to

various inflictions throughout the world. Among those problems, the cultural practice of mingi in Ethiopia, stands out as a major violation of human rights for women and children. Mingi is one among several HTPs that can be observed in the Hamar, Bena and Kara tribes of Southern Ethiopia and on which the present study is focused.

The main aim of this chapter is to study mingi practice in the light of the rights of women and children in terms of different religions, the law of Ethiopia and international regulations of the human rights and the Holy Bible. The focus is on different religions, non-governmental organisations, the Ethiopian law, selected international human rights regulations and the Scriptural message. Thus, this chapter attempts to answer the question: What are the rights of women and children according to the law of Ethiopia, NGO's and religious beliefs in relation to the mingi practice?

To answer this question, the study focused on the rights of women and children according to non-governmental organisations, selected religious groups and their teachings globally. A selection of African human rights agreements, the Ethiopian Constitution, Ethiopian criminal and family law have been given due attention. Considering the perspective of religious groups, the teaching of Islam, Judaism and Christianity were assessed briefly. Finally, the chapter examines the teachings of Jesus in the Gospels and the apostolic messages in the Epistles on the rights of women and children according to the New Testament testimony.

3.2 UDBHR OF UNESCO

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), came into being in 1946, in the aftermath of World War 2. The main aim of the UN in establishing this organisation was centred on the following belief: "A peace based exclusively on the economic and political arrangements of governments could not secure the lasting support of the peoples of the world; it had to be founded on the intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind, and advanced through educational, scientific, and cultural relations" (UNESCO, 1946). Since its foundation, UNESCO has taken a strong stand for the rights of children. In addition to this advocacy, UNESCO's involvement has been in tangible and intangible cultural areas, including cultural heritage and related health issues throughout the world.

In article 12 of the UDBHR in particular, UNESCO deals with the fine line between respect for cultural diversity and pluralism, contrasted with human rights, dignity and freedom. Although article 12 emphasises cultural diversity and pluralism, it also gives priority to human dignity: "The importance of cultural diversity and pluralism should be given due regard. However, such considerations are not to be invoked to infringe upon human dignity, human rights and

fundamental freedoms, nor upon the principles set out in this Declaration, nor to limit their scope” (UNESCO, article 12).

Article 12 is criticised by Lunstroth, (2017, p.31) as: troubling on its face value. “It begins, in the title, by announcing that it addresses ‘respect for cultural diversity and pluralism,’ suggesting it will be open and respectful of them.” Thus, the scholar argues that respecting all cultures could include even the HTPs, all in the name of ‘culture’. The implication of this ‘respect’ could extend to where those practices injure people if ‘respect for cultural diversity’ has been given priority. Lunstroth adds, “However, in its first sentence, it says merely that states ought to give multiculturalism and pluralism ‘due regard.’ Giving something ‘due regard’ is certainly less than giving it ‘respect’” (Lunstroth, 2017, P.31).

Thus, considered thoroughly, article 12 clearly places human rights before taking care of any other tangible or intangible cultural heritage or practice. It affirms that human rights and the dignity of all people matter before considering cultural heritage. Article 12 totally opposes any type of discrimination in every society by stating: “No individual or group should be discriminated against or stigmatized on any grounds, in violation of human dignity, human rights and fundamental freedoms” (UNESCO, Ar.11). Regarding equality, justice and the equity of every citizen, the article also has a clear stance where every person, regardless of age and sex, is regarded equal in nature. Finally, article 12 states: “The fundamental equality of all human beings in dignity and rights is to be respected so that they are treated justly and equitably” (UNESCO, Ar.10). There are similar themes in article 3, which also deals with human dignity and human rights.

Based on the arguments above, it can be accepted that a human being is equal before the law and his or her right has to be honoured first before considering the particular culture and its practices, regardless of age and gender. Honouring humanity proceeds from honouring the particular culture. Therefore, according to this view of the sanctity of human rights, the practice of mingi can be considered contrary to the UNESCO declaration since it dehumanises women and leads to the death of numerous children. Mingi is practiced in the name of honouring and giving priority to traditional cultural practices rather than caring for the human beings involved. Women in the Hamar, Bena and Kara tribes have been treated as secondary citizens, at times tertiary (Men, children, women), while having dozens of responsibilities but enjoying almost no rights, including their own.

In addition, children are also not recognised as full human beings, seeing that infanticide is part of a societal ritual to revere and pacify ancestral spirits in the name of culture. Children’s right to living is violated on behalf of others’ living right. Adults are killing infants and children who may

have a bright future for their family and country. Thus, children's right to live is placed under the authority of the elders and witch doctors who rule their society according to egocentric desires and uninformed cultural mandates.

If mingi is an appropriate expression of culture for these groups, this practice should impact and affect all members, including the aged, witch doctors, men and even kings. Instead, mingi is celebrated culturally at the expense of women and children. Therefore, these rituals cannot be considered culture, seeing that no culture suffers some and delights others. Culture should be practiced for the benefit of everyone. In reality with mingi still practiced currently, what is designated as 'culture' is an operation that benefits a section and hurts several members. Such expressions of culture should be avoided unless it assists all members equally. Mingi has to be avoided since it opposes the international declaration of UNESCO, which is approved globally, accepted nationally, and appreciated by citizens in almost all nations of the world.

3.3 The Universal Declaration of Human Rights or Global Agreements

According to the UN (1948), "The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, is a milestone document in the history of human rights." The declaration has been accepted internationally, approved by numerous countries and translated into multiple languages since World War 2. Drafted by representatives with different legal and cultural backgrounds from all regions of the world, the declaration was proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in Paris on 10 December 1948 (UN, 1948). This document consists of 30 articles, of which almost all focus on human rights and equality without discrimination due to sex, age, race, colour, et cetera. Vorster, (2004) divides the 30 articles into two categories: ethical principles and fundamental rights. Below are crucial articles that focus on human rights in general.

Article 1: "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights ..." – confirms the equality of each individual.

Article 2: "Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be independent, trust, non-self-governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty." This article indicates no discrimination due to age, colour, religion, opinion or sex.

Article 3: "Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person." The article implies that no one should be put to death for the sake of others or to adorn cultural practices.

In light of the encompassing dignity, all human beings are, therefore, equal before the law regardless of gender, age or other discriminating factors. Furthermore, humans are given full freedom to exercise their naturally given rights, endowed by the Creator. No one should be subjected to inhumane practices, to be killed in order to fulfil the desire of evil spirits or ancestral deity. There cannot be joy at the expense of 'condemned' children. Therefore, if the issue of mingi is evaluated in light of the UDHR, it should be considered illegal, inhumane, and an anti-human rights activity, which, currently is, however, practiced widely within the Valley of Omo in South-West Ethiopia. Nevertheless, mingi has no legal foundation according to the UDHR stipulations.

3.4 Agreements of African Nations

Africa has its own continental agreements and declarations about the rights of children and women besides those international laws and agreements discussed above.

Regarding children, Africa has created the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) to defend children and safeguard their innate rights. This charter has 42 articles concerning children's rights. Among those, article 21, Protection against Harmful Social and Cultural Practices, explains these rights:

"Parties to the present Charter shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate harmful social and cultural practices affecting the welfare, dignity, normal growth and development of the child and in particular: those customs and practices prejudicial to the health or life of the child; and those customs and practices discriminatory to the child on the grounds of sex or other status" (ACRWC, Ar.21).

This mentioned charter also serves as major legal instrument within the African human rights system, which clarifies the rights and privileges that African nations must guarantee their children.

In addition to this charter, Africa has its own cultural tenet termed *Ubuntu*, which promotes that one should need the other to survive. According to Chuwa, (2014), *Ubuntu* declares, "I am because we are, and we are because I am." In addition, *Ubuntu* recognises: "The functional differentiation in the roles of men and women are to be for the best of the community" (Vorster, 2004). Nevertheless, the actual adherence to a charter of rights or the cultural practice of *Ubuntu* fall short in reality, in the following instance: "The primary function of the Commission is 'to promote human and peoples' rights and ensure their protection in Africa, however, its capacity and effectiveness in doing so has been questioned" (Anno, 2014). According to

anonymous writer (2014), the OAU was pre-occupied with “more pressing” issues, such as unity, non-interference and liberation, border issues, ethnic conflicts, civil war, instead of paying serious attention to the rights of women and children. These non-human rights and other issues have occupied the African countries. As a result, time was lost to focus on protecting those who are the most vulnerable, according to Anno (2014).

Africa has a declaration on Protection against Harmful Social and Cultural Practices (University of Minnesota, Human Rights 1999). However, it is ironic that a harmful cultural practice such as mingi takes place in the exact location where the OAU main office is located. Frankly speaking, the OAU seemingly are in arrears or unwilling to eradicate mingi, and lack knowledge of the problem. Most African countries place a low priority on human rights, seeing that “Human rights in Africa were to be peoples’ rights; freedom, for example, was seen as national freedom, not individual freedom” (University of Minnesota, Human Rights, 1999). The University made the following assessment:

“The class struggle was to be between the ‘developed’ and ‘developing’ nations; the widening gap between the emerging political elite and the nouveaux riches, on the one hand, and ordinary citizens, on the other, was overlooked. The OAU’s commitment to human rights was, therefore, vague and weak. This situation influenced the human-rights provisions of the subsequent African Charter.”

As stated above, the rights of women and children in Africa has not been the primary issue for most countries. The reason is clear. Governments prefer to prioritise political issues rather than the so-called harmful cultural practices (HTPs).

In many ways, Africa experienced multi-dimensional fluctuations from the beginning of the existence of the continent to the present day. Africa seems to follow the rest of the world as the last runner in a race, who attempts to complete the race, only to be commended for running instead of getting a place on the podium. In the view of the researcher, it is not clear why Africa’s performance as a continent is that weak. In reality, this is a continent that struggles merely to survive.

Different people give several reasons for Africa’s backwardness stating that most of the violations can be attributed to political instability, mostly as a consequence of civil war. In addition to political factors, several other factors are mentioned such as racial discrimination, corruption, economic scarcity, ignorance and illness. The factors include religious bigotry, HTPs, debt and inefficient financial management. These are further reasons that cause the continent to perform globally as a ‘last runner’ Annon, (2014).

After independence from colonial powers, as the writer believes, most of the countries failed through power monopolies that sought to seize power for an individual or the elites who claimed the leadership. Those who battled colonialism and brought about freedom for their people, felt entitled to a life of wealth and influence even at the expense of their citizens.

Nevertheless, it is the researcher's opinion that some of the corrupted African leaders ignored the oppression they brought to their people, which seemed worse than the ignorance displayed by the colonisers.

In addition to this power hungry mind set among certain African leaders, numerous border conflicts aroused protectionist attitudes to maintain countries' territorial sovereignty. Seemingly dissatisfied with their current land, Africans battle others to enlarge their territories and increase their wealth. African leaders nationalised numerous mining sites from the so-called 'colonisers', but turned these into an investment for only a small number of individuals or elites. From those mining productions, the leaders export gold and diamonds, and import modern weapons to war among each other (Murori, 2016).

African money seems to leave the continent constantly. Leaders in power deposit their money in well-known European banks rather than invest in local economic ventures where they are located. Business leaders and foreign investors develop mining sites and employ hundreds of people. Their companies extract gold and diamonds which hardworking people provided. Anderson (2008) wrote to the New York times under the title "The Destroyer; Robert Mugabe and the destruction of Zimbabwe":

"Zimbabwe has the world's second-largest platinum reserves and is relatively rich in other minerals. The country's mining industry accounts for some forty per cent of its export income. In 2006, Robert Mugabe threatened to nationalize the mines by assigning Zimbabwe a controlling fifty-one-per-cent stake in them. ... A mining-company official I met with, a white man and a prominent figure in Zimbabwe, spoke of fending off direct requests for bribes from a senior cabinet minister, whom he described as "especially rapacious." He confided that the executives of several mining companies had, under pressure, given large sums of money to government officials that were used to help fund the ZANU-P*. *F*. * election campaign. He added that Mugabe and his cronies would probably continue to use the threat of expropriation of the mines as a "political bludgeon" to extract bribes from mining companies. Meanwhile, he expected to see "more Chinese take over more dubious concessions."

Instead of maintaining sound business relationships with the governments, African leaders alienate these business leaders by considering them as oppressors. Numerous highly schooled White people are leaving where they resided for hundreds of years, due to deteriorating political

situations within certain African countries. One of the writers of *News 24*, Rensburg (2019), interviewed the current president of South Africa, Cyril Ramaphosa about the current situation of white people, being told that young White South Africans are leaving the country. The president responded, "I don't want young white South Africans to leave the country. If I could, I would tie them to a tree." He added, "There is room for all of us to play a role." If such an attitude is applicable, this would lead to positive relations. Instead Africans oppress their own people while complaining about the Whites as their colonisers and oppressors.

The *Zambian Beserver* magazine (2019), highlighted thoughts presented by Russian president Vladimir Putin who gave a provocative definition of Africans. The article is titled "Russia President, Vladimir Putin says: Africa is a cemetery for Africans." Putin explains his thesis:

"When an African becomes rich, his bank accounts are in Switzerland. He travels to France for Medical treatment. He invests in Germany. He buys from Dubai. He consumes Chinese. He prays in Rome or Mecca. His children study in Europe. He travels to Canada, USA, Europe for tourism. If he dies, he will be buried in his native country of Africa. Africa is just a cemetery for Africans. How could a cemetery be developed?"

The problem is that Africans are not intent on the development of their own continent. Instead they consider it as a place merely to get buried. Therefore, seemingly basic human rights issues are not afforded high consideration, if any.

Africa seems a paradox as such. As a result, several of the provisions contained in regional, national, continental, and global agreements have remained unapplied, according to the following frameworks: Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNOHCHR (2016). Africa's Women's Right of Maputo Protocol (AWRMP), African Union Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa, and resolutions aimed at guaranteeing women's rights, and others. These agreements clearly demonstrate that Africa has a policy formulated to regulate the rights of children and women. Yet continent wide, the conditions exposing women and children to different dangers are not being addressed. Giving strong attention to HTP problems in most African countries would take time, and the practice could only be eradicated by implementing comprehensive plans. The reality is that the rights are outlined according to the declarations and decisions of the African leaders, but not implemented.

Based on the arguments above, it became evident how Africa has an excellent record with establishing human rights guidelines but fails to implement those guidelines when applied to harmful cultural expressions. It has been made clear how both international human rights law, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and the Protocol to the African Charter of Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in

Africa, all protect the right to life and human dignity of all people over and above their cultural identity.

In light of the discussion above, there must be an appeal that customary and traditional practices, which violate human rights, should be transformed to remove discriminatory elements. Special attention should be paid to transform the mingi practice of Ethiopia, which was not yet prevalent in the debate on human rights. Mingi has no legal base in all of the African agreements, declarations and decisions. Furthermore, it is a practice that grossly undermines the human rights of the most vulnerable members of society, women and children.

3.5 The Ethiopian Constitution, Family Law and Criminal Law

3.5.1 The Ethiopian Constitution

In its preamble, the Constitution of Ethiopia (1994) provides a striking introduction on the human rights of its citizens: “Firmly convinced that the fulfilment of this objective requires full respect of individual and people’s fundamental freedoms and rights, to live together on the basis of equality and without any sexual, religious or cultural discrimination.” This visionary statement brings a hopeful perspective at first glance to the document or even when one begins to read the whole content. The discussion of the articles is interesting since it should be noted that they contain well-stated ideas on the rights of children and women. The examples below should demonstrate.

Article 14: “Every person has the inviolable and inalienable right to life ...” – an idea that approves the security of life for all.

Article 15: “Every person has the right to life. No person may be deprived of his life except as punishment for a serious criminal offence determined by law.” This idea implies that no one has the right to kill another person due to cultural practices.

Article 16: “Everyone has the right to protection against bodily harm ...” – clearly no bodily harm should be inflicted on any member of society.

Article 25: “All persons are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to the equal protection of the law. In this respect, the law shall guarantee to all persons equal and effective protection without discrimination on grounds of race, nation, nationality, or other social origin, color, sex.” This stipulation upholds the protection of all people. Discrimination against women due to their sex should be considered illegal, unacceptable, and inhumane.

When examining these articles, it is clear that Ethiopian law has no room for harmful traditional practices (HTPs) or discrimination against certain citizens within society due to their sex or age. The way women have been treated and children have been suffering is a criminal offence which opposes the nationally ratified Constitution of the country. HTPs should be considered illegal practices that opposes the country's established human rights standards since the inviolable right to life of children is not respected. Article 15 stipulates: "No person may be deprived of his life except as punishment for serious criminal offence determined by law." Nevertheless, mingi children in Ethiopia have been suffering and dying at the hands of illegal mingi killers who continue this inhumane practice under the pretext of cultural custom.

Article 25 strongly opposes the discrimination of women based on their sex. Nevertheless, women in the Omo Valley have been suffering due to traditional practices of the society. In reality, the law does not protect women equally in situations where both a male and female are implicated in a situation. Thus, it is evident that the practice of mingi directly contradicts the Ethiopian stated Constitution. In a sense, it could be judged that mingi is currently an anti-Ethiopian custom, since it has no legal ground in the country's new dispensation.

3.5.2 Ethiopian Family Law

Family law is one of the best elucidated legal frameworks in the Ethiopian Constitution. There are many important stipulations about women and children. Before considering women and children separately, Article 25 of Ethiopian family law confirms principles about the right to equality for all people: "All persons are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to the equal protection of the law." In this respect, Ethiopian law should guarantee all individuals equal and effective protection without discrimination on the grounds of race, nation, nationality, or other social origin. This protection also encompasses colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, property, birth or other statuses as mentioned above.

Article 35 elaborates on the rights of women: "Women shall, in the enjoyment of rights and protections provided for by this Constitution, have equal rights with men ... Women have equal rights with men in marriage as prescribed by this Constitution." However, despite this clear legal precedent on equality, obviously there is a significant gap between men and women in Southern Ethiopia among the Hamar, Bena and Kara tribes. The notion of equality falls short among those tribes. Instead the relationship between men and women resembles a relationship closer to that of slave and master.

Women in these tribes are considered the property of their husbands once they are married. Parents also have the fullest right to give their daughters without their consent to anyone who can offer them a sufficient amount of cattle and an AK47 rifle. Once women are married, they have no chance to re-marry if their husband passes away. In contrast, a husband has the full right to marry as often as he chooses before or after his wife's death. Women have no right to choose their marriage partner, seeing that the family/parents have the full right to propose her future husband, even when a baby girl has just been born. At times, parents will even consult witchdoctors to divulge the sex of the unborn child, especially if the parents have economic difficulties. It is legal to claim financial rewards from the dowry of the unborn female child. Women have no right to inherit their deceased husband's property, even though they have borne dozens of children, seeing that it is culturally forbidden for a woman to acquire her husband's property.

Regarding children, article 36 explains: "Children born out of wedlock shall have the same rights as children born of wedlock." However, as discussed previously (ch. 2), one of the forms of mingi classification involves children born out of wedlock. The classification of mingi condemns these children. The parents must resolve the dowry and free these children either by having them 'jumping the bulls' or by paying the penalty requested by the elders. Otherwise, the fate of these "illegitimate" children is death. Seemingly there is no law protecting such children. However, jumping the bulls or paying a penalty to the elders does not even guarantee the lifting of the mingi sentence for those children who were already born 'illegitimately'. These actions may only bring freedom for future children.

Therefore, in such mingi issues, the written article and the approved law (Ethiopian law), has no power in the societies of the Hamar, Bena and Kara tribes. The written law is lost and is not applied to issues of illegitimate children (articles 25 and 36), due to entrenched mingi practices. Children in these tribes lose the human rights that have been provided to them by the law, which means they lose their right to life just by being born out of wedlock.

Among of these tribes, Lale, told Wharton (2018): "You have to remember as these people are not educated either. While murder is illegal, these people do not know what they are doing is wrong. They say, 'It's my culture and my heritage' and it is very hard to put people into prison for that." Unless people are willing to compromise the truth, the argument do not stand that being uninformed or ignorant about the law excuses individuals from moral behaviour. There is no double standard in criminal law. Limited knowledge about the law of the country would not exempt individuals from being convicted as criminals, if they transgress the criminal law. Women and children in Southern Ethiopia have lost their approved, law given (article 35), human rights and dignity in all decisions involving mingi culture. They have been suffering at the

hands of mingi practice. It is therefore clear that mingi has no ground in the family law of Ethiopia.

3.5.3 Ethiopian Criminal Law

The issue of women and children is also dealt with in the criminal law of Ethiopia. Article 569 stipulates the types of crime particularly regarding HTPs and actions that harm children from conception to age 18. According to this law, it is completely illegal even for biological parents to participate in HTPs knowingly or unknowingly. The law stipulates, “A parent or any other person who participates in the commission of one of the crimes specified in this Chapter [which includes HTPs] is punishable with simple imprisonment not exceeding three months, or fine not exceeding five hundred Birr.” Clearly the penalty is light at three months’ imprisonment or 500 Birr, which is equal to \$17.73 or R300. However, the important qualification is that the law forbids these practices.

Article 570 repeats the stipulation:

“Any person who publicly or otherwise incites or provokes another to disregard the provisions of this Code prohibiting harmful traditional practices, or organizes a movement to promote such end, or takes part in such a movement, or subscribes to its schemes, is punishable with simple imprisonment for not less than three months, or fine not less than five hundred Birr, or both.”

Again it is evident that the penalty for inciting someone to disregard the law in the area of HTPs is extremely low or non-existent. However, the crime is well stated in the law, and it implies punishment to the criminal.

In article 538 the criminal code strongly forbids homicide. In this article, number 3 stipulates: “Any person who committed homicide, whether intentionally or negligently, shall be punished by lawful judicial process and in accordance with decisions rendered thereby.” In this case no penalty is indicated, however, it confirms that this activity is also illegal. Therefore, the killing of mingi-classified infants should be considered illegal.

Regions have their own laws, but are subjected to the national law and Constitution. Nevertheless, despite a well-written Constitution and rule of law in Ethiopia, its application is questionable, especially regarding women and children. As explained previously (ch 2), for the Hamar, Bena and Kara people, their culture and elders’ leadership holds greater value than that of an official Constitution of the government. It seems that cultural rules and regulations or verbal laws are obeyed above the civil law of the country even though Ethiopia has well-written and documented laws regulating every area of its citizens’ security.

At times it is common to see serious and critical issues tolerated in this area. Many have been leaving law enforcement in the hands of the elders who at times, do good, but other times make serious mistakes. The sensitive areas involve the rights of children and women, which traditionally are not recognised due to views and perspectives inherited from the forbearers. Women and children have no right to present their problems face-to-face with the elders. The male leaders believe that women and children are unequal to men and should be treated based on the traditional practice rather than the modern constitutional principles, which abolish their forefathers' legacy and practices. The leaders believe that if they discontinue traditional ways, the wrath of the gods would destroy them. Rain would cease and plagues would strike their children. To obey the verbal law of the community, is considered the wise choice; therefore, members of these tribes willingly transgress the stipulations from written documents of the country's law.

From the discussion above, it can be concluded that mingi has no ground in the criminal law of Ethiopia. Instead, mingi as such is a crime against the human rights of women and children.

3.6 Religious Scriptures

3.6.1 Introduction

All people, except atheists who does not believe in the presence of supernatural power, fear and honour a form of religion and follow its teachings. Alex (2017) explains, "Religion is the most powerful weapon ever created by humankind."⁶ This statement is particularly thought-provoking when it is considered what devastation modern weapons can cause. Certain individuals obey and submit themselves to religion and religious leaders since it is most important to them and nurtures their holistic personality. For example, from the history of the crusaders, it is evident to what extent religion and religious speeches were fundamentally motivating to people seeking a calling or purpose. Pope Urban's speech during the crusades created a furour of followers by appealing to the spiritual heart of men:

"Whoever, therefore, shall determine upon this holy pilgrimage, and shall make his vow to God to that effect, and shall offer himself to him for sacrifice, as a living victim, holy and acceptable to God, shall wear the sign of the cross of the Lord on his forehead or on his breast. When, indeed, he shall return from his journey, having fulfilled his vow, let him place the cross on his back between his shoulders. Thus shall ye, indeed, by this twofold action, fulfil the precept of the Lord, as lie

⁶ This study believes that except for the Old Testament Jewish religion and the New Testament Christianity, the rest of the religions are constructs of human beings.

commands in the Gospel, 'he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me'" (Robinson, 1904).

The crusades campaign commenced in 1095 and concluded in 1291. There was a total of nine crusades but the last five were ineffective. According to Ringo (2015), it was estimated that more than 200 000 people died over the full campaign of the crusades war. The main reason for the war was to recapture Jerusalem, the holy city, from the hands of Muslims. The campaign, however, encountered strong opposition as negative attitudes increased toward it. Nevertheless, from the crusades it can be inferred that religious teachings and, at times spiritual orders, can reap enthusiastic motivation among religious devotees. The speeches and commands of religious leaders have significant value in the lives of dedicated followers. Therefore, it can be concluded rightly that religion is a powerful weapon which can invoke fear and submission in those closest to it.

Religion is powerful since almost all belief systems focus on a new life after death. Everyone needs a better place to look forward to away from the present-day brokenness. Religion promises an answer for the future whether it is true or not. Because life is the most precious resource, religion has power to control whole personalities throughout the world. Based on this perspective, the study compares different religions and their teachings. Specific focuses are drawn to perspectives on the rights of women and children within religious thought.

Finally, the researcher attempts a correlation by investigating the mingi practice to indicate how different religions oppose such a practice through their teachings.

3.6.2 The Muslim tradition

The Quran is the holy book of Islam, which includes numerous teachings to which Muslims adhere. A child is considered an extension of his father and the bearer of his characteristics in Islam. Stacey (2010) explains: "A child during his lifetime, he is the joy of his father's eyes, while after his death he represents a continuation of his existence and an embodiment of his immortality." According to the teachings of the Quran, the child has the right to life. Neither the father nor mother have the right to take the life of the child, whether a boy or a girl, by killing it or burying it alive. This was a practice among certain Arabs during *jahiliyyah* (before the advent of Islam in the middle east), based on Stacey's evidence. There are clear verses in the Quran which explicitly oppose the suffering and death of children. For example, the statement of Allah Ta'ala, "And do not kill your children out of fear of poverty; We shall provide for them and for you. Truly, the killing of them is a great sin" (17:31). According to this verse, Muslims believe that once a child is conceived, this one has the right to live and Allah is responsible to provide

for the child's need. The Quran also cautions, "Kill not your children because of poverty – We provide sustenance for you and for them" (Quran 6:151). According to Stacey (2010), "Once a child is conceived it is important to remember that this is a trust from God. Although the child is most certainly a blessing, it is not a possession. He or she has God given rights that must be fulfilled."

In Islam, all children before birth and thereafter, including orphans, are regarded as 'vulnerable' and deserving of intentional care. Their parents and society as a whole have a social responsibility to ensure these children are cared for. This is not only because children have intrinsic rights, but since Muslims have a duty to be charitable. Islam regards protecting and promoting children's rights as obligatory since human life is sacred to Allah (Arafat, 2013). Based on Kaufman's (2015) explanations, Sharia law supports the following rights for children:

- rights of the unborn child;
- right to noble parents and nurturing (prescribed breast-feeding);
- right to life and general care;
- right to lineage – knowing the biological parents and the choice to foster a relationship with them;
- *Kafalah*: child's right to information concerning her/his identity;
- right to socialisation;
- right to just and equal treatment;
- right to maintenance – expenditure for nourishment, health, education, and training; in case of orphaned child, the burden shifts to the grand-parents; parents should support their minor, irrespective of the child's religious preferences/particular inclinations.
- right to education; and
- rights of the orphans.

All the above-mentioned rights are afforded to children in Islam, regardless of their culture and economic status. This is due to the belief that maintaining these rights makes a Muslim righteous before Allah and has a positive consequence on the children's future life.

The founder of Islamic belief modelled care for children and paid serious attention to young ones while he was alive. One example of this care for children is presented by Tahera (2015), describing the incident of Muhammad and a certain child:

“Once, Muhammad was sitting with a child in his lap, and the child urinated over Muhammad. Embarrassed, the father scolded the child. Muhammad restrained the father, and advised him: ‘This is not a big issue. My clothes can be washed. But be careful with how you treat the child. What can restore his self-esteem after you have dealt with him in public like this?’”

Regarding the rights of women in Islam, both support and suppression are found. The Quran have hundreds of verses that deliberately defame and dehumanise women. An example is An-Nisa 4:34:

“As to those women on whose part ye fear disloyalty and ill-conduct, admonish them (first), (next) refuse to share beds, (and last) beat them (lightly); but if they return to obedience, seek not against them means (of annoyance): For God is Most High, Great (above you all),” or “The male shall have the equal of the portion of two females” (Quran 4:11).

However, there also are verses in the Quran that approve of women’s equality and disagree with any form of mistreatment against them, for example:

3:195: “Their Lord responded to them: ‘I never fail to reward any worker among you for any work you do, be you male or female, you are equal to one another” – equality of the gender;

4:124: “As for those who lead a righteous life, male or female. While believing, they enter paradise; without the slightest injustice” – equal inheritance of paradise and promise of justice.

16:97: “Anyone who works righteousness, male or female, while believing, we will surely grant them happy life in this world, and we will surely pay them their full recompense for their righteous works” – equal reward for sexes on the earth and in the coming world.

40:40: “Whoever commits a sin is required for just that, and whoever works righteousness – male or female – while believing, these will enter paradise wherein they receive provision without any limits” – equal inheritance in paradise.

From the verses and explanations above, it is clear that the Quran affords full rights to children and provide certain benchmarks (through verses) which give guidance on the rights of women. The guidance is not comprehensive but is present in a limited way. Therefore, it can be inferred that the practice of mingi would be against the teachings of Islam in terms of the rights of both women and children. This harmful traditional practice has no legal foundation in the teachings of Islam.

3.6.3 Eastern religious traditions

Apart from the so-called 'major religions', Eastern religions such as Buddhism and Hinduism also have established its own philosophical foundation for the rights of women and children.

Buddhism

Regarding Buddha's teaching on women and children, Hugh (1961) provides a significant explanation:

"There are stories of women and even children who attained enlightenment during the time of the Buddha. Furthermore, Buddhist doctrines do not differentiate between men and women since everyone, regardless of gender, status, or age, is subject to old age, illness, and mortality; thus the suffering and impermanence that mark conditioned existence apply to all."

The Buddhist belief does not discriminate against women due to their gender, or overlook children because of their age. According to Hugh's information, in Buddhist belief, no one escapes old age, illness and mortality, including children and women.

A known Buddhist author and theologian Panyanananda (2000), places this explanation about children within the context of Buddhism:

"In the heart of every father and mother, there is one thing in common without any exception. That is, they have the same wishes. They wish 'a bright future for their children.' If there are any signs, even though they are insignificant, showing that, 'the future of their children may not be certain,' the father and mother of those children would try to hide the sadness and unhappiness in their hearts during the time, which their children have no clear path."

This aspect of Buddhist culture reflects their care for children by minimising psychological problems. Adherents of this religion view children as future and imitators of their parents.

Hinduism

For Hinduists there is a perfect saying about women in their writing, Manusmriti 9.3, as cited by Jayaram (2019): "Her father protects (her) in childhood, her husband protects (her) in youth, and her sons protect (her) in old age; a woman is never fit for independence." According to Hinduism, females were created by Brahman as part of the duality in creation, to provide company to men and provide procreation, progeny and continuation of the family lineage. However, any respect that women enjoy in Hindu society apply to them as daughters, mothers

and wives. Life after a husband's death becomes extremely difficult for Hindu women, according to the above-mentioned source.

Children in Hinduism have a higher value than other phenomena since children are a means of reincarnation, according to Jayaram (2019). Jayaram cites the Sutra "Through a son he conquers the worlds, through a grandson he obtains immortality, but through his son's grandson he ascends to the (highest) heaven. (All that) has been declared in the Veda." Jayaram confirms that Hindus love their children dearly. They believe that their children are gifts from gods and products of their previous karma. Numerous Hindus presume that their children were related to them in their past lives, or even were their close friends. They believe that a man recreates himself through his own children. Based on their belief, allowing a child to suffer is causing oneself trouble in the coming life. Since they believe in reincarnation, any cruel act against a child becomes a self-degrading activity to oneself, seeing that they believe human beings reincarnate. From this brief exposition, it can thus be inferred that the mingi practice does not find any ground in Buddhism or Hinduism.

3.6.4 Jewish tradition

The Jewish religion and tradition is often criticised by many as laying the foundation for undermining the human rights of women and children. For example, regarding women the following idiom was common:

"God had not formed woman out of the head, lest she should become proud; nor out of the eye, lest she should lust; nor out of the ear; lest she should be curious; nor out of the heart, lest she should be jealous; nor out of the hand, lest she should covetous; nor out of the foot, lest she should be a busybody; but out of the rib, which was always covered" (Edershem, 1957, p.146).

Many people believe that such sayings and other early Jewish writings discouraged women's rights. The negative characterising of the female may have propelled early Jewish women to be considered less than full human beings; created to serve men and be the property of their husband.

Regarding women, Naomi (2019) explains, "If the husband's property is damaged, compensation is paid to *him*. He is not only the owner of his wife, he is also the owner of her pregnancy (Ex. 21:22). All of this may have contributed to an attitude that there was nothing wrong with physically abusing women."

However, even in light of the examples above, there is evidence that counter these perspectives. For example, in a magazine's recent publication a quote was published that demonstrates a different Jewish perspective:

“And thus the sages commanded that a man should honour his wife more than he honours himself, and love her as he loves himself. And if he has money, he should increase her benefits according to his wealth. He should not intimidate her too much; he should speak with her gently, and should be neither saddened nor angry” (*Mishnah Torah, Sefer Nashim* 15:19, cited in ReformJudaism.org).

This excerpt indicates that the classic Jewish tradition is changing. Men are encouraged to take care of women and provide for their needs equal to themselves.

It is believed that certain traditional customs are transferred across generations and are still followed by the modern Jewish community in many parts of the world. The verse cited above is one of the Talmud’s perspectives on women that affirms their equality with men and places more responsibility on men to uplift women. Radford (2000) qualifies: Although patriarchal leadership was common and dominant in ancient Israel, in Israel currently, “there is a dramatic reversal of this trend”. Currently women are allowed to inherit property, similar to their male counterparts. However, “married women (and spouses generally) are favoured in their ability to share the property formerly owned by the deceased spouse or by the couple during their marriage.” Equality and property ownership is common practice in the modern Jewish community.

Regarding children, Jews have a serious concern starting with the unborn child, who is in the womb. Based on information from Encyclopaedia Judaica (2008), “Accordingly man was created as an individual, to teach us that whoever destroys a single soul, is as if he destroyed an entire world ...” (Talmud Sanhedrin 38a). Yad, Sanhedrin 12:3 elaborates. For all those who come into the world are created in the form of Adam, and the face of no man is the same as that of any other. Accordingly, each and every one can say: the world was created for me” (Encyclopaedia Judaica, 2008).

From the discussion above, it is easily understood that a conservative Jewish religion provides clear teachings on the rights of children to live and prosper. Therefore, it can be inferred that the mingi practice of infanticide occurring in Ethiopia contradicts the teachings of the Jewish religion, especially the present-day perspective. The Jewish people believe that destroying a single soul is equal to destroying the whole community ... or the world. It was pointed out that Mingi is a practice that destroys members of the community. The conservative Jewish tradition holds no place for the suffering of children and the abuse of women’s rights. Mingi, on the other hand, inflicts suffering on large numbers of women without it being their sin. It can be concluded that the HTP of mingi has no legal ground in the teachings of the Jewish religion.

3.6.5 Christian tradition

3.6.5.1 Introduction

Many people believe that Christianity provided fertile ground for dramatic changes in attitudes towards the rights of women and children. Cartwright (2014) points out that the Greco-Roman culture suppressed women deeply, placing them "... under the complete control of the pater familias ...". Male superiority was paramount. Within this culture, women's decision-making power was limited strictly to managing the household. Naturally, women from the lower social classes – slaves, freedwomen and prostitutes – had even fewer rights and toiled mostly in the fields. Cartwright (2014) continues about the plight of women:

"... in many cases Roman women were closely identified with their perceived role in society – the duty of looking after the home and to nurture a family (*pietas familiae*), in particular, to bear legitimate children, a consequence of which was an early marriage, (sometimes even before puberty but typically around 20 years old), in order to ensure the woman had no sexual history which might embarrass the future husband."

Bearing children and taking care of the household was considered woman's primary responsibilities. Women were not public figures and had no access to converse with men.

Regarding children, Kelly (2019) explain that they had a better access to be treated in the society than other societies under the Roman rule (*pax Romana*). Both boys and girls wore a special locket, given to them at birth, called a *bulla*. This was an amulet, a protective charm against evil. Girls wore their *bulla* until their wedding night, when they put it aside with other childhood items such as toys. Boys wore their *bulla* daily until the age of 16 or 17 when they became full Roman citizens, with the right to vote, hold office and marry. This cultural practice in Rome indicates the value and care parents provided to Roman children.

In the midst of the Roman culture, Christian tradition introduced new practices, which differed starkly from the traditional practices of the Jews and the cultural heritage of Greco-Romans. According to the Christian tradition, Jesus Christ Himself brought about a dramatic change in the attitude towards women and children (which will be elaborated on later). While He was on earth Jesus treated women and children differently than the formal cultural practices prescribed. After His ascension, His legacy continued. The coming of the Holy Spirit was for both men and women (Acts.2:17), regardless of sex and gender. Men and women alike worshipped God together with the disciples of Christ and the Christian congregations during the first century (Acts 5:14).

As stated above, Christianity provided fertile ground for a change of mentality about women's and children's rights. This new way of thinking contrasted with the belief of Roman emperors who considered women and children as not fully human and minor creations. Myers (2017) argues this point:

"To say that Rome was distinctly anti-woman is an understatement. Families typically kept all their healthy boys and their oldest healthy girl. Other daughters were left to die as infants. Surgical abortion was available, and women often died from it or were left maimed. Surviving girls were typically married off at age twelve and were pressured into remarriage when widowed."

The brief explanation above, indicates that the official Roman world treated women harshly. Therefore, the message of Jesus was transformative throughout His ministry. Even after the resurrection of Jesus, the Christian community practiced His legacy. They gave equal positions to women and children in church even though other religious groups opposed this perspective.

The expansion of mission activities penetrated several harmful cultures throughout the world and brought about dramatic changes in their way of thinking. For example, Christians in India requested the British colonisers to put an end to the Sutee system, which entailed burning and burying women due to their husbands' death or dowry payment. The British government managed to eradicate the practice in several parts of India (Myers, 2017).

In China traditional culture held that tiny feet are a mark of status and beauty for women. Thus, across China, the feet of little girls were bound tightly to prevent them from growing. This operation broke the toes and bones in the arches of their feet, leaving numerous girls nearly crippled. However, converts from the country and Christian missionaries opposed the practice and it was eradicated in several parts of China (Myers, 2017).

The positive influence of Christianity was highly significant. According to Myers (2017), a Christian, female scholar Tsuda Umeko, opened a way for children's education and women's equality in Japan. Arguing from the teachings of Jesus, she brought about far-reaching change in the lives of women and children in most parts of Japan. In a similar way, Pandita Ramabai from India, motivated by her evangelical Christian belief, dedicated herself to breaking down the caste system in India and brought about radical equality (Myers, 2017).

During the Industrial Revolution in England, children were often treated as slaves. However, when Christianity became dominant, it paved the way for children's education. Therefore, it can be concurred with Myers (2017): "It was Christians, not Secularists, who helped secure rights for women based on a conviction that men and women are equal in the sight of God."

Although, historically, the Roman Catholic Church distilled the Biblical doctrine into a more humanist understanding, it still had a strong record on social justice and advocating for the plight of women and children. According to Thomas (2004), “The Catholic Church has influenced the status of women in various ways: condemning infanticide, divorce, incest, polygamy, and counting the marital infidelity of men as equally sinful to that of women.”

Regarding children, the Catholic Church at present took a strong stand in supporting the declaration of human rights. The Catholic News Agency (2019), under the title “Among the rights of the child, the right to life is the first”, states, “The Declaration on the Rights of the Child recognizes that, ‘... the child by reason of his physical and mental immaturity, needs special safeguards and care, including appropriate legal protection, before as well as after birth’ (Preamble) and ‘... every child has the inherent right to life,’ (Article 6).” The leadership of the Catholic Church underwrites this declaration, which is prevalent throughout the world. Nevertheless, numerous delegations and governments refuse to recognise this and similar declarations championing the right to life and the truth that life indeed begins at the moment of conception.

The Catholic Church argued to prohibit abortion, maintaining that life begins in the womb (Barry, 1997). Thus, according to the Church, every child has the right to protection and special care due to the dignity with which he or she has been endowed by God. Furthermore, such protection is owed to the child before birth and thereafter. Despite facing major opposition in many parts of the world, the Roman Catholic Church remains a strong voice against abortion by advocating that “abortion under any circumstances, including abortion to save the life of the mother, should be prohibited” (Barry, 1997). Therefore, it is evident that the Christian tradition, from the time of Jesus to the present Catholic Church, leaves no room for killing of children and dehumanising women for the sake of culture. Thus, clearly the HTP of mingi is contrary to the doctrine of the Catholic Church, and to Christian belief in general.

3.6.5.2 Reformed and Evangelical churches’ perspective on women’s rights

Reformed tradition appreciates the UN declaration on human rights and has endeavoured to apply the declaration throughout its history. Article 3 of the declaration states: “Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.” A renowned reformed theorist, Vorster (2004; 51), explains the connection, “Seen from a Reformed perspective this right can be regarded as one of the strongest rights in the Declaration because it deals with an essential concept in Biblical ethics.” Scholars from the Reformed Church believe, “Life comes from God and should as such be protected as a valuable gift” (Wustenburg, 1998). Vorster (2004), citing McCormic asserts, “Since human life can be regarded as essential for community building, it may never be

destroyed. Killing in whatever way is destructive of humanum and therefore destructive of community.” From the argument above, it can be concluded that it is biblical to regard a person as the foundation of a community, and therefore, destroying an individual is akin to destroying the beginning of the whole community.

According to the Reformed tradition, the problem of inequality for women was not the original design or plan of God, but occurred after the fall as a consequence of sin (Vorster, 2004). Therefore, it is important to understand the context of equality before the fall of humans since inequality is a consequence of sin. However, it should be emphasised, “Men do not become women and women do not become men, but they are equal before God and this equality should be the ethical directive in Christian anthropology” (Vorster, 2004).

A well-known scholar in the Christian world, Wayne, A. Grudem, attempted to create a balanced perspective on men’s and women’s equality in relation to the Evangelical and Reformed traditions based on the teaching of the Bible. Grudem presented his thoughts in the book, *Evangelical feminism and biblical truth*, published in 2012. According to him, a woman has the right to be treated as a female the way God designed her. In other words, no one has the ‘right’ to force a woman to behave as a man and defy her God-given gender because God placed beauty and grace in the female soul different from the characteristics He gave men (Deu. 22:5). In addition, a woman has the right to nurture and protect her own baby growing inside her body. No one has the right to force a woman to abort her child. By the same token, no woman has the right to force her baby’s death (Psalm 139:13) (Grudem, 2012). From Grudem’s views it could be inferred that the practice of mingi is dehumanising to women since it considers them inferior to men.

Taking a seemingly a patristic rather than paternalistic approach, Grudem continues that a woman has the right to flourish and grow within the boundaries God created for her, just as the case is with men. Men do not have the right to inhibit women’s growth and freedom, making life bitter for them (Col 3:19). This has been done in the past and is still practiced across the world. A woman has the right to fair treatment since women are “joint heirs of the grace of life,” (1 Pet. 3:7). This freedom for women includes equal opportunities to own property (Pro. 31:16), receive an education, make personal decisions, or receive equal pay for equal work (Deu. 24:17).

A woman has the right to compete on an equal footing with a man for opportunities not related to gender. A woman has the right to all a man claims as his own, while honouring the God-given distinctions between the sexes (Gal. 3:28). Neither gender nor race should be used as an excuse to oppress or exclude a person from resources that God allows.

Finally, Grudem argues strongly, “When the phrase *women’s rights* agree with the rights God instituted when He designed the woman, then the Bible fully supports those rights. When that term is hijacked to include evil that God never endorsed, then those so-called ‘rights’ are not rights at all” (Grudem, 2012). Grudem’s strong arguments take into account natural boundaries between men and women and Bible-based testimony. Based on this view, women should have full right to exercise their gifts and talents as well as the freedom to apply what God endowed them.

In contrast, what can be observed of women in the Hamar, Bena and Kara tribe is clearly contrary to the teachings of Christian tradition and both the Evangelical and Reformed points of view. Therefore, it can be inferred that that mingi has no logical motivation in the Christian tradition.

3.7 The Holy Bible

It is necessary to develop a thorough understanding of equality according to the biblical guidelines. Thus, this part of the study analyses certain sections within the Bible. The analysis starts off with the Pentateuch, historical books, wisdom literature and prophetic books consecutively. Thereafter the focus shifts to the New Testament, dividing its testimony into the Gospel perspective and the teachings of the Apostles. This structured analysis aims to provide clarity on the way the Lord Himself honours human rights, regardless of age and sex.

3.7.1 The Old Testament

The biblical testimony states that humans are created in the image of God (Gen. 1:27). Therefore, humans have a certain dignity, right and was given dominion over the rest of creation to manage and conserve it (Gen. 1:26). Regardless of sex and age, both men, women and children are equal in God’s eyes by being created in His image and likeness (Gen. 1:27). God gave humans the full right to life and they were allowed to exercise this God-given right equally with others, according to the Old Testament testimony.

Subsequently, the study analysis testimony from the main sections that comprise the Old Testament.

3.7.1.1 The Pentateuch

Child rights

The history of child sacrifice in ancient Israel and God's response to the practice can be uncovered by examining the biblical texts addressing this practice in the Pentateuch. Moses warns the Israelites as they are about to enter the land of Canaan (Lev. 18:3; 20:21-24). There God's people will be exposed to the cult of Molech. They are prohibited from sacrificing any of their children to the gods of neighbouring nations since such practice is detestable before God:

Any Israelite or any alien living in Israel who gives any of his children to Molech must be put to death. The people of the community are to stone him. I will set my face against that man and I will cut him off from his people; for by giving his children to Molech he has defiled my sanctuary and profaned my holy name. If the people of the community close their eyes when that man gives one of his children to Molech and they fail to put him to death, I will set my face against that man and his family and will cut off from their people both him and all who follow him in prostituting themselves to Molech, (Lev 20: 1-5; see also 18:21).

In addition to this command, God gives a similar warning in Leviticus 18:21, "Do not give any of your children to be sacrificed to Molech, for you must not profane the name of your God. I am the LORD." According to Leviticus 20:2, the penalty for sacrificing children to Molech is harsh and requires the offender to be stoned to death since it is considered a serious offence against the Lord. Similarly, in Deuteronomy, God, through Moses, rejects child sacrifice even if allegedly done as part of the worship and service of God Himself (Dut. 12:29-31). Referring to the nations of Canaan, Moses commands, "You must not worship the Lord your God in their way because in worshipping their gods, they do all kinds of detestable things the Lord hates. They even burn their sons and daughters in the fire as sacrifices to their gods" (Dut. 12:31).

In these Pentateuchal passages dealing with child sacrifice, the offense is recognised as a sin in at least three different ways, according to Stager and Wolff (1984): "It was seen as a sin against God, i.e. in defiling His sanctuary; in profaning His holy name, in spiritual prostituting to Molech and; in ungodly worship of the Lord Himself." Therefore, child sacrifice was a practice in the Old Testament performed by neighbouring peoples, but strongly rejected in the sight of God. God explicitly prohibited His people from child sacrifices, seeing that it was a detestable practice. However, this prohibition caused severe hostility between God's people and other nations, the neighbouring gentiles.

Mingi in Ethiopia, is a similar detestable practice that traditional people use to worship idols and gain their gods' favour. The HTP of mingi clearly entails sacrificing children, which grieves the heart of God and arouses His righteous anger. The result of such harmful and heathen practices is spiritual condemnation. Due to their ungodly practices, God condemned the gentiles

and gave their land to His people, Israel. When the Israelites adopted child sacrifice after being influenced by their neighbours, God judged His own people for their detestable practice. Therefore, in light of its similarity to the Old Testament child sacrifice, the practice of mingi is condemned strongly by the holy values outlined in the Pentateuch (Stager & Wolff, 1984).

Women's rights

God created men and women as equal in order to manifest His identity on earth: "Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground'" (Gen. 1:26). Purposes of God explained in the Pentateuch is depicted inseparable between men and women. When God called Abraham, he was with his wife Sarah. Likewise, the Angel of the Lord brought the good news of them having a child by addressing Sarah (Gen.18:15).

When God liberated the Israelites from bondage in Egypt, Miriam was given leadership responsibility alongside her brothers and she encouraged God's people by songs. Miriam played a vital role in leading the Israelites. When the daughters of Zelophehad asked to inherit their fathers' portion among their father's brothers, God ordered Moses to give equal inheritance to the daughters of Zelophehad along with Joseph's men (Num. 27:1-11). According to the narrative God said to Moses: "What Zelophehad's daughters are saying is right. You must certainly give them property as an inheritance among their father's relatives and turn their father's inheritance over to them" (Num. 27:7). At a later stage, Joshua gave the daughters equal inheritance along with their brothers:

"Now Zelophehad son of Hepher, the son of Gilead, the son of Manasseh, had no sons but only daughters, whose names were Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah and Tirzah. They went to Eleazar the priest, Joshua son of Nun, and the leaders and said 'The LORD commanded Moses to give us an inheritance among our brothers.' So Joshua gave them an inheritance along with the brothers of their fathers, according to the LORD's command" (Josh.17:3-4).

In addition to the examples above, God ordered the Israelites to ensure mothers were to be honoured equally with fathers (Ex 20:12). In fact, to rebel against, or show disrespect for one's mother was a most serious offense which could be punished by death (Dut. 21:18ff; 27:16). No mother was stoned to death due to conceiving a child while she was still breastfeeding another one. According to the Pentateuch narrative, no mother was excommunicated from society after failing to complete dowry cases. Finally, no young girl was declared 'cursed' (as in terms of mingi) due to her maintaining her sexual purity. Instead, according to Meacham (2009), young Israelite girls were encouraged to keep their sexual purity until marriage (Deut. 22:20-22).

Therefore, the mingi practice as it applies to women and children in Ethiopia has no foundation in the Pentateuch.

3.6.1.2 The historical books

Women's rights

As stated above, as narrated in the beginning of the historical books, Joshua gave an equal allotment to Zelophehad's daughters while he was dividing the land among the tribes. This example establishes a precedent regarding the full rights of women to inherit land. In this regard, Caleb gave an inheritance to his daughter (Jos. 15:13-19).

During the period of the judges, Deborah appears as a prophet and judge (Judg. 4:4). At the time of Deborah, Jabin, king of Hazor, was oppressing the people. Deborah used her authority to appoint Barak as army general. His mission was to attack Sisera, Jabin's general. Barak, however, refused to go to war without Deborah. Deborah not only went along with the strike force; she also decided the time and place of attack. Though he refused to go to war without the presence of Deborah, Barak was indeed successful (Judg. 4:4-24) by the wise leadership of the prophetess.

In the story of Deborah (Judg. 4 – 5), another hero is called Jael, the wife of Heber. After his defeat, Sisera, the enemy general, escaped to Jael's tent. She invited him in and soothed him with extravagant hospitality. When Jael asked for water, she gave him milk (Jud 5:25). However, after Sisera went to sleep, Jael hammered a tent peg through his head. Thus, the enemy of Israel was slain because of Jael's courage. Jael's gender did not hinder her from fighting the enemy of God's people. The strategic participation of Deborah and Jael, two capable Jewish women, brought peace and security to the people of God for 40 years (Lutton, 2016; Judg. 5:31).

Considering other historical books of the Old Testament, King Solomon honoured his mother deeply when she came to his palace. It was his mother who helped him become king by consulting her husband, the old king, David. When Solomon's mother came to his palace, the following scene unfolded: "The king stood up to meet her, *bowed down* to her and sat down on his throne. He had a throne brought for the king's mother, and she sat down at his right hand" (1 Kin 2:19, the researcher's emphasis). King Solomon showed great respect to his mother while he was king and leader of the most influential country in the Ancient Middle East.

Finally, Esther, another queen, saved her people from genocide. She risked her life by approaching the Persian king without being summoned (Esth. 4:11). Then she invited both the king and her arch enemy to two banquets. At the second occasion, she revealed the enemy's plot to the king. The tables were turned, and the enemy suffered what he had planned to inflict on the Jews. As Esther's uncle Mordecai told her, "Perhaps it was for this very reason that you were made queen – to save your people" (Esth. 4:14). Proving his statement true, Esther did save her people. Furthermore, her uncle did not undermine her because of her gender. Instead he laid the great responsibility on her to save God's people. Astle (2019) explains: God did not undermine her act, but opened a way to save His people in a miraculous way.

The focus of the present study has been on the human rights of women and children. However, the discussion in this chapter on the authority and equality of women is key to understand these human rights. Clear precedents were set regarding the human rights of women in the historical books of the Bible as was evident from the examples where women were empowered with dignity and leadership. Therefore, it can be inferred that the biblical testimony affords women full human rights in order to exercise their right to life and survival as granted by God. These rights were upheld even within the patristic culture of the Jewish community. Thus, clearly the mingi practice operates in stark contrast to the values exhibited in these books and has no ground in historical biblical thought.

Children's rights

It is clear that throughout the biblical testimony, God maintains the importance of children through the message in His Word. After creating Adam and Eve, the first people, God commanded them to be fruitful, or have children. This shows that God's original design included families with children. Kids were not an afterthought. God pronounced the whole creation 'good', including His design for children. God's original plan was to make the first people fruitful in order to subdue the land and manage the creation through their offspring according to His will. Below are examples of God's concern for children as attested throughout the biblical testimony.

God takes care of small children and considers them as valuable in accomplishing His purposes:

- **Moses:** God took care of this baby when his mother abandoned him in the reeds fearing the regulations of pharaoh, the king of Egypt. Though the king of Egypt declared infanticide on Hebrew boys, God miraculously saved Moses for His future plan.
- **Samson:** God took care of this judge from the time of his conception to adulthood in order to use him as saviour of His people (Judg.13:1-25).

- Samuel: God used this small child to convey His dissatisfaction with Eli, his children and the sinful practices of the Israelites (1 Sam.3:1-21).
- David: God used a youth to slay the giant Goliath and conquer the Philistines who were known warriors as the enemy of the Israelites. Even king Saul himself fled away from confrontation with the Philistines for 40 days.
- Joash: God did not deter from letting a seven-year old become king of Judah (2 Kin. 12:1-22).
- Josiah: God appointed an eight-year old as king, who subsequently introduced a brief reformation in the history of Judah (2 Kin. 22:1-20). Although he was a small child, Josiah followed God's bidding since his father had previously defiled the temple, the dwelling place of the Holy One.

Despite the covenantal stipulations and warnings against child sacrifice, the historical books record that certain Israelites did sacrifice children on the altars of the gods. It is recorded of Ahaz, the king of Judah from 8th century B.C.: "He walked in the ways of the kings of Israel and even made his son pass through the fire, following the detestable ways of the nations the Lord had driven out before the Israelites" (2 Kin. 16:3). These actions brought condemnation on Ahaz, his family and the people of Judah.

In the same way, Ahaz's grandson Manasseh followed in his footsteps (2 Kin. 21:6) and his practice was abomination in the sight of the Lord. The book of Jeremiah records occurrences at the time: "They have built the high places of Topheth in the Valley of Ben Hinnom to burn their sons and daughters in the fire, something I did not command nor did it enter my mind" (Jer. 7:30-31; see also 2 Kin.19:4-5).

Manasseh's grandson Josiah, despite being extremely young, attempted to initiate reformation among the Israelites. He desecrated Topheth, which was in the Valley of Ben Hinnom, to prevent people from forcing their son or daughter through the fire to revere Molech, (2 Kin 23:10). Unfortunately, in this young age, Josiah was killed by the Egyptian king.

In all the mentioned incidents, the narrative makes it clear that God was unhappy and decided to punish His people for their detestable practices. Finally, God punished Judah for 70 years making them slaves to the Babylonians.

According to several historical biblical accounts, God granted dignity and worth to children and youth. The narrative from the historical books of the Bible clearly upheld the right to life even of infants and small children. God used children to accomplish His purposes. He punished those

who killed their children as sacrifices to pagan gods, following the way of the neighbouring nations.

In light of the exposition above, it can be concluded that the practice of mingi targeted against children has no ethical grounds in the historical books of the Bible. Ham (2015) emphasises, “Many times in Scripture, God’s people are warned not to be like the pagan peoples of other nations who sacrificed their own children.” Such sacrifices include killing children in any way, however, the people disobeyed God and practiced such abominations before the Lord.

3.7.1.2 The wisdom literature

In the wisdom literature, especially Psalms and Proverbs, the rights of women and children are interrelated. Rather than separating the books, this discussion prefers to consider their content together and how the literature as a unit addresses the issue of women and children. Numerous verses in wisdom literature describe woman as more precious than an expensive diamond (e.g. Pro. 31:10), and children as a gift from God (e.g. Ps. 127:3). Grudem (2004) provides a brief analysis:

“A woman has the right to nurture and protect her own baby growing inside her body. No one has the right to force a woman to abort her child, and, by the same token, no woman has the right to force her baby’s death (Psalm 139:13) since God created a human being as a perfect creature (Psalm 139:14).”

Children are considered gifts from God (Ps. 127:3); a good wife and children, as expressed by the psalmist, are the rewards of righteousness for a godly family (Ps. 128:1-6). The psalmist considers all family members equal and describes them as a beautiful family, a sign of blessing from Yahweh. In Proverbs, women have equal opportunities to own property (Pro. 31:16). In those days, shaping children in the way of God, was one of the duties of wise teachers (Pro. 31:1-9).

Job’s actions demonstrate his care for his family and children. He presents sacrifices on behalf of his children considering that raising God-fearing children is a practice expected from parents who serve God. The book of Proverbs frequently presents teachings on relevant education for children to live according to the will of God. The writer of Ecclesiastes focuses on youth practices. If young people live as they wish, it is inevitable that God will bring in to account everything in the day of Judgement (Eccle.12:13-14). Although there are numerous interpretations for the Song of Solomon, Simons (2016) typifies it as follows: This book appreciates a women’s beauty and love within marriage.

Therefore, based on the above-mentioned examples, biblical wisdom literature celebrates the value of children. The authors encourage parents to invest in their children by teaching them how to live according to God's will. Nowhere does this literature support or condone exposing children to suffering through inhumane traditional practices. The wisdom literature also encourages women to participate in building a God-fearing family, thereby highlighting the important role that women and mothers play in such a household.

Therefore, no legal foundation can be found in the Israelites' ancient wisdom literature that would support the value of mingi practice as a positive cultural attribute in Southern Ethiopia.

3.7.1.3 The prophetic books

All the prophets pay serious attention to the issue of women and children. One of the reasons for God sending His people into exile was the mistreatment of women (widows) and children or orphans (Isa. 1:17). Before the exile, Isaiah warned the Jewish people to treat children and women in godly ways, fearing God: "Learn to do good; seek judgement, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow" (Isa. 1:17, KJV). Isaiah describes his own family as a lone godly family in the time of an ungodly generation (8:18). He describes his children as a sign of warning and judgement to Israel and Judah (Isa. 7:1-9; 8:1-4).

Among the prophets, Jeremiah conveyed God's stern warnings:

"For they have forsaken me and made this a place of foreign gods; they have burned sacrifices in it to gods that neither they nor their fathers nor the kings of Judah ever knew and they have filled this place with the blood of the innocent. They have built the high places of Ba'al to burn their sons in the fire as offerings to Ba'al -something I did not command or mention, nor did it enter my mind. So beware, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when people will no longer call this place Topheth or the Valley of ben Hinnom, but the Valley of slaughter" (Jer. 19:4-6).

It was clear that Topheth was considered the place where evil and wicked fathers burned their children during worship to the idol gods, in an attempt to procure earthly blessings. Jeremiah revealed that the killing of innocent children was certainly not commanded by God; it was a thought that did not even enter God's mind (Jer. 7:31). It is not in God's heart that children should suffer in such evil practices.

Ezekiel adds: "And you took your sons and your daughters whom you bore to me and sacrificed them as food to the idols. Was your prostitution not enough? You slaughtered my children and made them pass through (the fire) to the idols" (Eze. 16:20-21).

God gives the Israelites another chance to amend their ways by stop shedding innocent blood, and cease oppressing the widowed and fatherless. These injustices perpetuated by the Jews were considered a serious sin, which resulted in God's anger toward them (Jer. 7:6). However, the people did not obey the voice of the Lord. Finally, because of these offenses and detestable acts for which Israel was corporately responsible, Jeremiah prophesied that disaster would befall them, "So beware, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when people will no longer call it Tophet or the valley of Ben Hinnom, but the valley of Slaughter, for they will bury the dead in Topheth until there is no more room" (Jer. 7:32; and 19:1-3; 6-15).

If only the people of God would repent, disaster could be thwarted (Jer. 18:5-11). However, the Israelites were a "stiff-necked" people who would not heed God's words (Jer. 9:15; see also 18:5-12). They had forsaken their God to serve other gods even to the extent that they would sacrifice their own children spilling "the blood of the innocent" (Jer. 19:4). As a result, their own dead bodies and bones filled the same valley where they slaughtered their innocent children:

"In this place I will ruin the plans of Judah and Jerusalem. I will make them fall by the sword before their enemies, at the hands of those who seek their lives, and I will give their carcasses as food to the birds of the air and the beasts of the earth," (Jer. 19:7).

Several years later, after Isaiah's prophecy and in the time of Jeremiah, God used Babylon to judge Israel. The Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem, levelling God's temple, which signified God's abandonment of His people. The Babylonians led Israel into captivity. While exiled in Babylon, Ezekiel reminded the two 'prostituting sisters', Oholah (representing Samaria in Ezekiel 23:4) and Oholibah (representing Jerusalem) of the reason they had been exiled. An expository preacher Mathew Hennery (2019) comments on Ezekiel 23, by explaining in confronting the two with "their detestable practices" the Lord's message through Ezekiel was: "They have committed adultery and blood is on their hands. They committed adultery with their idols, they even made the children they bore to me pass through the fire as food for them" (Ezek. 23:36-37). These acts were detestable in the sight of God.

As the sisters warned the people of Israel and Judah, a serious catastrophe came upon the two nations, which scattered most of its people to the ends of the world. According to the biblical testimony, the Northern Kingdom was captured by Assyria in 722 B.C. and its people ended in the diaspora. Similarly, Judah was exiled by Babylonians in 605, 597 and 586 B.C. This nation suffered for 70 years as prophesied by Isaiah, Jeremiah and others (2 Kin. 17:1-41).

In light of the testimony above, the issue of children and women is one of the main focus areas of the prophets. Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel all used their prophetic voices to speak against the evil practices of child sacrifice which the Israelites had adopted from their neighbours.

Throughout their ministries, these courageous prophets stood for the rights of the neglected and powerless groups within society. Killing children and mistreating women is described as ungodly activities in the books of prophets. Child sacrifice was considered a heathen practice which was detestable before the Lord. Thus, it can be inferred that mingi has no ground in the prophetic books of the Old Testament.

3.7.2 The New Testament

3.7.2.1 The Gospels

As mentioned previously, the Greek and Roman cultures viewed women and children as possessions and as less than full human beings. In the midst of these cultures, Jesus showed love and respect for women and children. It was further mentioned above that women and children were discarded within the heathen cultures from Old Testament times, especially children were sacrificed too readily on the altars of false gods. However, Jesus modelled a different way of thinking toward women and children. His actions and teachings in the Gospels influenced the Jews' belief and attitudes significantly towards women and children. Jesus not only included women in His audiences; He also used illustrations and images that would be familiar to them (Mt.13:33; 22:1-2; 24:41; Lk. 15:8-10). Furthermore, Jesus specifically applied His teaching to women (Mt.10:34).

Jesus welcomed children into His presence even during busy times (Mt.18:1-6). Children were not an imposition to Him but a treasure. There were women who participated in ministry alongside Jesus and His male leaders (Lk.8:1-3). Matthew indicates that certain women were part of the company that followed Jesus (Mt 27:55). Bauckham (2006) explains: "Though Matthew does not identify these women by name, as Luke did, the fact that these women 'provided' for the welfare of Jesus and His disciples indicates their association 'with' Jesus." By welcoming women into His fellowship and allowing them to accompany Him regularly, Jesus showed a more positive attitude towards women than conventional culture expected from a 'rabbi' of His stature. Women formed part of the disciples of Christ during His ministry, death, resurrection and the church expansion.

The Canaanite woman's plea that Jesus heal her demon-possessed daughter is recorded in Matthew 15:22-28. In the described incident a woman broke both a Jewish and Canaanite cultural rule by the way she addressed Jesus publicly. Bauckham (2006) sketches the scene:

"The Jewish cultural abhorrence of lone women addressing public figures or men in public is expressed through the voices of Jesus' disciples (Mat. 15:23). It seems that His disciples were not happy in the incidence. However, instead of rebuking the woman for breaching the numerous

Jewish restrictions laid on her using her gender and ethnic affiliation, Jesus publicly admired her persistence and wit. He heard her voice, gave attention to her plea, and cured her daughter.”

This story is a clear indication that Jesus provides for the needs of people without regarding their ‘social’ placement or gender orientation. Therefore, “...when contrasting Jesus’ attitude towards women with that of the Jewish-conditioned attitude of the disciples” (Bauckham, 2006), it is clear that He modelled a positive and empowering attitude towards women. Such an attitude was different from the approach based on the Greek and Roman culture that surrounded them. According to Logan (2012), the choice of Jesus to reveal Himself to women and subsequently use them as prime witnesses to the resurrection event, was unconventional in the Jewish culture. Nevertheless, Jesus chose women to be witnesses on the forefront of His resurrection.

To the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4), Jesus clearly revealed that He was the Messiah, a revelation that he had not made to many others. He also took time to discuss different topics with her such as eternal life and the nature of true worship. Such a discourse with a woman was unlikely in Jewish tradition. According to Grudem (2012), “Jesus not only speaks with her but also enters into a prolonged dialogue, a dialogue which recognizes and honours her thirst for religious truth. Ultimately, he reveals his identity as the Messiah.” When His disciples returned, they clearly were uneasy with Jesus’ behaviour. John includes the questions they are afraid to verbalise: “What are you looking for? Why are you talking with her?” (Jhn. 4:27).

Generally, according to the narrative in John 4:4-42, Jesus seems to ignore two codes of behaviour. He initiates a conversation with a foreigner, and a Samaritan, which is considered distasteful among Jews. In addition, this foreigner is also a woman, not deemed welcome in the presence of men. Both forms of behaviour are unfamiliar to the culture of that day. Therefore, her surprised reaction is included in the narrative: “How can you, a Jew, ask me, a Samaritan woman, for a drink?” (Jhn 4:9). Jesus discarded two barriers in this conversation: cultural boundaries and gender discrimination (Grudem, 2012).

The Gospel writer John does not hesitate to conclude the story at the well with a comment revealing that in Jewish thought a woman’s testimony was not considered trustworthy. According to Levine (2018), this mentality is “simply based on verses in Devarim 16:6 and 19:15 (in Talmud) where the male gender (as opposed to the female gender) is used when describing witnesses: *‘And they shall stand the two **men**, who have them the conflict, before God. Before the priests, and the judges, that will be, in those day’.*” Levine (2018) clarifies through a *gazeirah shava* (an inference from the Biblical text), that the Gemara in Shavuot 30a explains that only men are witnesses in court. However, after her interaction with Jesus, the Samaritan woman’s excited words are heard and acted on by her neighbours. John confirms: “Many of the

Samaritans of that town began to believe in him because of the word of the woman who testified on his behalf” (Jhn. 4:39). It is highly significant to see crowds of people, including men and women, were drawn to Jesus, and believed in Him as Saviour (Jhn 4:40-45; Levine, 2018).

Jesus did not only converse with women. He had miraculous and transformative interactions with them. In one such interaction, Jesus cured a woman who had been crippled for 18 years, laying hands on her in the Temple, by declaring, “Woman, you are set free of your infirmity” (Lk 13:12). When the leader of the synagogue became indignant since Jesus healed a woman on the Sabbath, Jesus uses a title of particular dignity to address her: “... daughter of Abraham” (Lk 13:16). This particular title declared publicly that her value was equal to that of a man. It was unusual within that culture for a man to touch a sick woman. However, Jesus touched the woman and spoke to her using the title of dignity equal to men. Thereafter Jesus healed her. In a different situation, when people brought charges against a woman due to her immoral nature, Jesus did not condemn her. Instead He conversed with her and gave her a chance to repent (Jhn. 8:1-11), then urged her not to sin again.

Jesus taught the two sisters Mary and Martha according to their different personalities. Even when the Lord was admonished by Martha, He gently pointed out the priority of learning spiritual truth over ‘womanly’ responsibilities such as serving guests in one’s home (Lk. 10:38). This opportunity for learning was unusual for a woman in the Jewish tradition. Though Jewish rabbis did not teach women according to the Jewish Talmud, “... it was better to burn the Torah than to teach it to a woman” (Gracechurch.org. 2019). Jesus did not hold that position towards women. Men at that time believed women, by their nature, were unable to understand spiritual or theological truth. Women were considered as being ignorant of truth. However, Jesus did not only include women in His audiences; He also used illustrations and images that would be familiar to them (Mt.13:33; 22:1-2; Lk.15:8-10).

Furthermore, Jesus touched women to heal them and allowed women to touch Him (Lk.13:10). He even allowed a small group of women to travel with Him and His disciples (Lk. 8:1-3), which was an unprecedented occurrence at that time. Certain women were among those who supported His ministry financially. After His resurrection, Jesus appeared first to Mary Magdalene and sent her to announce His resurrection to the disciples (Jhn.20:1-18). This was done despite women not being allowed as witnesses in Jewish courts, seeing that they were considered liars (Gracechurch.org., 2019).

Regarding children, it is obvious that Jesus welcomed them and used them as model to teach His followers about humility (Mt. 18:1-3). Generally, His disciples were not comfortable when people brought their children to Jesus. The Gospel of Matthew narrates: “Then little children were brought to Jesus for him to place his hands on them. But the disciples rebuked those who

brought them. Jesus said, ‘Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these’” (Mt.19:13-14). According to Piper (2017), Jesus honoured the rights of children. In His ministry, He raised children from the dead (Mt. 9:18-26; Lk.7:11-17), healed some from demonic possession (Mk. 9:14-29), and warned people not to inflict bitterness on them (Mt.18:10-11).

Generally, the Gospels plainly teach that Jesus honoured the rights of women and children in contrast to the cultures of the day and the surrounding Jewish culture. Jesus modelled the understanding that both children and women are created in the image of God. Thus, to dehumanise them implies disobeying the Creator. Murdering children is an ungodly practice. Discriminating against women is not according to the heart of the Creator.

Therefore, it can be inferred that the practice of mingi finds no ground within the teaching of the Gospels. The reason is clear. Such an HTP dehumanises women and sacrifices the image bearers of God to honour human culture, or the ancestral spirit.

3.7.2.2 The Epistles

In the writings of the apostles concerning women and children, the principles of equality, submission and obedience to each other exist side by side. The epistles apply both these concepts to women, honouring parents and even pay due attention to children. The Apostle Paul established equality by indicating that everybody is saved the same way regardless of gender or age. Paul emphasises, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:28). Men, women and children are considered equal before God because of Christ; they stand as equals before God, bearing His image. According to Smith (2017), without making one group inferior to the other, God calls on both men and women to fulfil the roles and responsibilities designed specifically for them, (1 Cor.11:3).

By fulfilling the divinely given roles taught in the New Testament, women are able to realise their full potential since they are following the plan of their own Creator and Designer. Only in obedience to Him and His design will women truly be able, in the fullest sense, to give glory to God. Similarly, Paul orders children to obey their mother and father since it is God’s commandment which carries the promise of an extended life. Paul stresses: “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ‘Honour your father and mother’ [the first commandment with a promise] that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth” (Eph. 6:1-3). On the flipside of the coin, Paul advises parents to take care of their children and not provoke them: “Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord” (Eph. 6:4: Piper, 2007).

A woman has the right to flourish and grow within the boundaries God created for her, just as men do (Grudem, 2012; Col.3:19). Men do not have the right to inhibit that growth and freedom. In addition, women have the right to fair treatment as “joint heirs of the grace of life” (1 Pet. 3:7). A woman has the right to serve the Lord according to her gifts and within the boundaries God set for His church (Tit. 2:3-5; 1Tim.3:11), in the same way as God set boundaries for men. Finally, women have the right to all resources a man claims as his right, while honouring the God-given distinctions between the sexes (Gal. 3:28). Grudem (2012) emphasises, “Neither gender nor race should ever be used as an excuse to oppress or exclude a person from anything God allows.”

Generally, the epistles of the New Testament celebrate the equality of all people before the Lord, regardless of gender or age. Thus, it can be concluded that the HTP of mingi practice find no support in the epistles of the New Testament.

3.8 Summary

This chapter explored the human rights of women and the living rights of children based on different international declarations, non-governmental organisational charters, African declarations, the Ethiopian Constitution. Current Ethiopian legal frameworks, both family and criminal law, were also touched on. In addition, different religious groups, especially the so-called ‘major religions’ (Judaism, Islam and Christianity) were examined regarding their beliefs on the human rights of women and the living rights of children. Furthermore, Eastern religions were studied to establish a clear contrast to the mingi practice. Finally, since this study is based on a Christian ethical perspective, the Holy Bible was assessed by dividing the testimony in terms of the Old and the New Testaments.

After examining the above-mentioned sources, it became evident that the mingi practice finds no support for its existence in Southern Ethiopian culture. Mingi has lost its legal foundation, both in the Constitutions of human beings and the testimony from the eternal Word of God.

Thus, to conclude, the HTP of mingi is unethical and inhumane since it transgresses the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR, article 5) by violating the rights of women and children. Mingi is illegal since it opposes UNESCO’s article 4, which concerns itself with the protection of every child in the entire world. In addition, mingi is contrary to Ethiopian law since the Constitution of Ethiopia do not allow (article 14) anyone to be killed. Finally, mingi is contrary to the teaching of God’s Word, both in the Old and the New Testaments.

Given that mingi finds no legal ground in the above-mentioned teachings, declarations and beliefs, the following chapter (ch 4) will indicate the negative outcomes (influences) of the mingi practice in the Hamar, Bena and Kara community. This analysis will be based on the holistic personality of human beings: the psychological, social, economic and spiritual aspect of the lives of women and children. Having practical experience from the people of the mentioned tribes, the researcher will explain the extent to which this HTP has affected the women and children of these people groups throughout the ages.

CHAPTER 4:

THE EFFECTES OF MINGI PRACTICE ON WOMEN AND CHILDREN IN THE HAMER, BENA AND KARA COMMUNITIES

4.1 Introduction

It is believed that most social groups worldwide have specific practices, traditions, customs and beliefs, which often have strong cultural underpinnings. Although such practices may have important and attractive sides, there are also negative influences in these phenomena. The UNCHR (1995/ A/49/12) states, “No one denies that it is a mere fact that Harmful Traditional Practices (HTP) are global problems affecting millions of women and children of many cultures, religions, socio-economic strata, educational levels and other diversities.”

HTPs have devastating and long-lasting physical, psychological, mental, spiritual, social and emotional consequences for women and children. Such practices may result in disability, illusion, disorder or death. Mostly, the most vulnerable (women and children) are affected adversely. According to Kangas, et. al. (2014:41), “... these segments of the population face physical damage, psychological disorders, moral guiltiness, health complications including inactive and irresponsible in social life and passive decisions in everyday life”. They would be suspicious of the spiritual reality and endure complicated emotional feelings eroding their confidence in all matters. In precise terms, according to UN (2009), HTPs are used as weapons to keep women and children subordinate by denying their health, social, economic and human rights.

Various international, national, regional and legal frameworks have been playing decisive roles to eradicate HTPs. Nevertheless, every year millions of women and girls, infants and adult children across the world are still becoming victims of different HTPs, especially in developing countries, such as Ethiopia. It is unlikely to expect upstanding citizens and an active generation in Ethiopia unless decisive actions are taken concerning the plight of women and children. Such actions should be focused on eradicating the HTPs from the country. Among those HPTs, as pointed out in the present study, the case of mingi is a debased inhuman practice. Women and children have been suffering for years within the Hamer, Bena and Kara tribes with limited interventions by the government, churches, individuals and non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

As stated previously, scores of children have been offered as sacrifice to the traditional gods and ancestral spirits. Numerous women have been discriminated against in various ways

regarding the social affairs of the community. The deceased victims have no hope. However, the living suffers multi-dimensional effects impacting the whole person. The HTPs take place among the Hamar, Bena and Kara tribes, where immediate interventions are necessary. If the intervention is swift, there would be hope for those who are struggling to survive in the midst of suffering because the effect is both physical, moral, mental, psychological, economical, spiritual and social. Kapur (2015:63) explains the situation as follows:

“When individuals do not have access to a social network, when they are residing in seclusion and when they have not developed within themselves effective communication skills, fair treatment and active care, then, they would encounter obstacles during the course of their holistic life development.”

Seclusion from others lead to a hopeless life. It is believed that for individuals to develop holistically, a number of aspects are crucial. These dimensions are: the family, community, educational institutions, learning centres, technology, science and culture. This includes development of effective communication, which shape individuals’ personality within society (Kapur, 2015:63).

Based on the explanation above, this part of the study examines the consequences of mingi as HTP among the informed ethnic groups, and its negative impact on the whole person, or holistic identity, of women and children among the Hamar, Bena and Kara tribes. The holistic identity entails multiple dimensions: physical, psychological, economic, social, spiritual, mental, moral and spiritual. Thus, this raises the question: What are the negative influences of mingi practice in relation to women and children around Hamar, Bena and Karo tribes?

To answer the question, this part of the study focuses on the mentioned holistic dimensions to assess the current lives of the victims in the area under research.

On the one hand, the women are demoralised and dehumanised by the practice either through losing their children, or being prevented from bearing children due to the pre-marriage obligations the community laid on them. Some ‘affected’ women are living an isolated life which is not appreciated in the culture of the community as well as the country at large. As was explained previously (ch. two), women have been discriminated against due to pregnancy, bearing children, marriage before the so-called ‘bull jumping’, and related issues. On the other hand, children’s right to life is violated due to their teeth position, incapability, being born before ‘bull jumping’, and other related issues.

By addressing the above-mentioned issues, the aim of this chapter is; To study and evaluate the negative outcomes of mingi in the community. The reason is that mingi impacts the multiple

dimensions comprising women's and children's holistic identity, involving their body, mind and spirit.

4.2 Physical Consequences

The definition of physical problems, according to the New York State Office of Children and Family Services, is: "Non-accidental use of force that results in bodily injury, pain, or impairment. This includes, but is not limited to, being slipped, burned, cut, bruised or improperly physically restrained" (Tracy, 2012:26). According to Tracy (2012), neglect is also considered as a form of physical abuse, which often occurs when an adult fails to care for another or in the case of an adult child lacking care for a parent.

The long-term effects of physical abuse (violence) are far-reaching and often devastating for victims – most often women and children, according to Gluck (2012). The scholar sketches the scenario that women and children face, who live in an area where physical problems commonly occur:

"... increased risks because of the tumultuous atmosphere in their lives. Women may develop an impaired ability to nurture their children, whether victims themselves or just witnesses, may withdraw from their parental relationship, suffer seriously delayed or distorted development and emotional problems" (Gluck, 2012:27).

As explained comprehensively in the previous chapters, mingi has been negatively affecting the physical identity of women and children for many years. Based on Wharton's report, the tradition of mingi has led to countless babies and infants murdered as well as the resulting suffering of the women of the Kara, Hamar and Bena tribes. Although not statistically accurate, it is estimated, that 300 children a year still perish because of the 'curse' (Wharton, 2018).

Under article 6 in the Rights of Children, UNICEF states that every child has the right to live. To realise such a right in practice, it is the responsibility of the government, in addition to the family, to take care of the children in society. (UNICEF, article 6). However, it is evident that in certain Ethiopian cultures, the rights of children and women are being violated through traditional practices. Disabled children are discarded because they are considered as mingi. It is thought that their presence causes disasters such as drought, disease and death to the people of Hamar, Bena and Kara tribes and their precious assets namely cattle. Women have been suffering due to various reasons:

- showing moral integrity – abstaining from sexual relations before marriage;

- succumbing to natural phenomena – conceiving another child while breastfeeding the former; and
- being abandoned by their husbands for four to five years in fear of sexual relations while husbands enjoy several women away from home.

In addition, the community forces women to abort when they fall pregnant to assure fertility. A number of girls die during forced abortion, however, they must prove their fertility before marriage.

On the day of ‘bull jumping’, women suffer immensely. When a young man jumped the bulls, his sisters and immediate relatives would be whipped on their backs with birch sticks. In between dancing, they approach ‘the men’ who have completed the ritual, begging them to whip their backs. Even after repeated whipping, the women refuse to back down, instead competing against each other. Tafesse (2018) explains this behaviour: “The women believe that the greater the pain they endure, the higher the level of loyalty they’re showing to the young boy; the scars left on their body are a symbol of the loyalty they’re entitled to receive from him.” If a woman has no scars on her back, community members consider her as a loner who has no relatives. Physically, women suffer to make others happy and appease their ancestral spirit.

Internationally, human rights are regarded as inseparable and exist until the person dies. Therefore, no one can take such rights away from an individual in a way that it is contrary to the person’s decision. Similarly, no one has the right to kill or cause a person to suffer who is in the image of God, according to the teaching of the Bible and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights’ (UDHR, article 5). However, the HTP of mingi transgressed all these international, continental and national rules and regulations. Children have been killed and women have been considered as mere object for the enjoyment of their husbands and other men. On the day of bull jumping, everyone whips these women until the bleed. They have no right to be treated in the health centres; they carry a big water pots on their back while blood gashes out. Due to dozens of burdens, they work from early morning to mid night while husbands sit idle, having their *cheka* (highly fermented maize-and-sorghum mixed alcoholic drink) with their friends or go hunt in the wild. Therefore, it can be concluded that mingi is one of the cruellest activities that has been affecting the physical identity of women and children in the Hamar, Ben and Kara tribes.

4.3 Psychological consequences

According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2012), "...psychological disorders have aetiologies that are largely multi-factorial, involving complex interactions between genetic and environmental factors". A number of risk factors have been implicated in the development of psychological disorders which lead to serious psychological problems. One of these factors is practiced widely, namely dehumanising women and discriminating against them as if they are not complete human beings. Such an approach reminds of, the Greek philosopher Aristotle's remark: "... that women have fewer teeth than men; that a female is an incomplete male or, as it were, a deformity" (cited by Witt, Charlotte; Shapiro, Zalta & Edward (2016).

According to Smith (2011), a director and founder of The Human Nature Project at the University of New England, historically human beings have been dehumanising each other for thousands of years. This practice still continues with the mottos of: *I am better than You; We are better than them ...!* To dehumanise God's image bearer, correlates to undermining the Creator, who made human beings in His own image. People in the world is categorising 'others' as Black, White, male, female, rich, poor ... in order to become better than them. Nevertheless, according to John (1999), God created variety to make this planet attractive, alternative and convenient to its dwellers (Gen 2:3). However, from the beginning, humankind has endeavoured to distort or destroy God's creation.

As mentioned previously, there is no exact evidence to indicate how many women and children who have been suffering psychologically within the Hamar, Bena and Kara tribes due to mingi cases since its inception. However, undeniably, the dehumanising and discrimination caused these most vulnerable groups to become inactive, irresponsible and unconcerned for their lives in society. Women from this region seem indifferent or have become apathetic under the seemingly unbreakable yoke loaded on them for centuries. Their situation will not improve without the intervention of the stakeholders of society, both political leaders and religious fathers. The entrenched condition is evident from the response of Lale's mother to her young son when he began the anti-mingi movement. She urged Lale to accept his culture and not to concern him about the superstitious sacrificing of the poor children (Wharton, 2018).

People who live excluded from their society are not responsible to their community, their family or even to themselves, seeing that they are psychologically tormented. Instead such people prefer to revolt or oppose the community, violate their customs or lose hope in their daily lives, showing it in different ways. Matthew, Jackson, Melissa and Williams (2008) elaborates on this condition:

“Dehumanization is viewed as a central component to intergroup violence because it is frequently the most important precursor to moral exclusion, the process by which stigmatized groups are placed outside the boundary in which moral values, rules, and considerations of fairness apply.”

In the Hamar, Bena and Kara tribes, women and children have been excluded from activities of the society. They have been restricted from social involvement and participation in endeavours where they would be productive and effective by applying skills that at times may surpass that of men and adults. Women and children in society are excluded by their society members. Thus, these vulnerable groups have to function outside the boundaries of society. They are not only barred from societal decisions; they also forfeit security in their lives. They have no power to protect themselves from inhuman actions of traditional leaders, witchcraft and certain members of the community. As a result, the women lose hope and become indifferent towards all activities. Wharton (2018) points out: Being pessimistic, women do not expect a better life than their present one. In their apathy they often turn to alcoholic abuse, called *cheka* as their day-to-day existence.

As parents, women psychologically suffer when they lose their children whom they conceived for nine months, gave birth to in pain and nursed as a mother for months. Often women have cared for children for years before the child is snatched from them to be murdered. The psychological burden becomes clear when observing Buke Bulguda's her physical appearance in her early 40s. This woman lost 15 children, eight boys and seven daughters due to mingi cases. Although she was only 42 years old when interviewed, she gave the impression of an 80-year-old lady (Styles, 2014). Psychologically, this woman has suffered immensely, however no society member considers her as a victim. Instead these members expect her obedience to their culture and submission to the ancestral spirit, by allowing her children to be thrown to starved crocodiles.

It is understandable how much psychological suffering comes to the fore in women's outward appearances (as depicted above). It is naturally difficult to comfort a parent who lost a single child, whereas this woman has lost fifteen. As a result, such women fear their community, detest its members and are under constant psychological pressure, frequently recalling their dead children.

The psychological suffering does not only apply to parents. It is inevitable that children would observe how members from their society treat the mingi children. According to Lockyer (1970), psychologists reported that children show actions they observe in their childhood years after they have become adults:

“If a child lives with criticism, he learns to condemn and be judgmental; If a child lives with hostility, he learns to be angry and fight; If a child lives with ridicule, he learns to be shy and withdrawn; If a child lives with shame, he learns to feel guilty; If a child lives with fear, he learns to be apprehensive; If a child lives with pity, he learns to feel sorry for himself; If a child lives with jealousy, he learns what envy is” Lockyer (1970:72).

The way children grew up shapes their future identity as adults. Furthermore, it is obvious that the children of the Hamar, Bena and Kara live in constant fear of their society, considering that one day they could be killed in the same way as their brothers or sisters. Furthermore, if such children did escape, they tend to grow up merciless in future and may participate in such cruel activities themselves.

Inevitably, adults reflect the behaviour they observed as children, especially when exposed to cruel activities. Most of human’s current behaviours are the outcomes of the past, how they grew up. Their family and cultural context shape their future ways. LaPlante asked Bona, one of the mingi killers from the Kara tribe, whether he enjoys killing such children. He responded, “So yes, it is sad, but we are thinking about the village, the family, all the people.” He added, “We tell the parents, ‘don’t cry for your baby, because you will save everyone. You can always make another baby” (LaPlante, 2011).

The question arises why such an individual becomes merciless and considers killing innocent children as an ordinary task? He is applying what he had observed from his society since his childhood. He grew up watching adults kill innocent mingi children. Therefore, he was psychologically prepared to perform deeds which seem shocking to other people. Killing human beings became an ordinary cultural activity to him.

Men from the Hamar, Bena and Kara society seem under psychological pressure in two ways: spiritually and physically.

Spiritually: If the community stopped sacrificing mingi children to their ancestral spirits, they are afraid that the anger of the spirits and witches will deliver all forms of disaster on their tribe. This was the explanation of Muga Bezabehi to the researcher when he went to visit mingi children in Jinka. The Bena tribe agreed to cease with the mingi practice. However, two successors of their kings died one after the other within a year. As a result, the elders and the witchdoctors warned the young that this is a sign of anger from their ancestral spirit. Therefore, the spiritual role-players are pressurising the Bena tribes to restart practices which they have discarded for years.

Physically: People are struggling with two thoughts. If they continue to sacrifice their children, they are in danger of losing their successors, both to replace themselves and to battle or ward off their physical enemies. A larger number of inhabitants, especially young men, provide the advantage that neighbouring tribes are deterred from attacking, fearing their opponent's response. However, if they cease the practice, according to their agreement, they stand to lose their kings because their ancestral spirit would kill their kings. Thus all tribe members are tormented psychologically due to the current situation (informal discussion with Muga Bezabehi, at Jinka, 14 December 2019).

The Kara people are the minority group in the area. Whenever they kill off mingi children, they lose their future generation who will fight for their tribe and expand their territory. As practical evidence, Hack (2012), writer from the Cande Nast newsletter reported his observation of the Kara tribes. He recounts his former report about the Kara leaders' agreement to stop the mingi deaths:

"On July 14, I reported that elders of Ethiopia's Kara tribe formally renounced the practice of Mingi, or child sacrifice. What motivates a tribe to overturn a belief system that has been in place for generations? According to John Rowe – the president of Omo Child, a youth shelter for Mingi children – the answer is simple: demographics. It is unlikely to fight against thirty thousand population having only two thousand" (Hack, 2102).

Such a situation is a dilemma for Kara elders. To support his report with evidence, Hack reports John Rowes response to the situation:

"The Kara look around them and see the Nyangatom, the Hamar, the Dassanach, and other much larger tribes and realize they need to increase their numbers,' Rowe told me by cell phone from Omo region's largest town, Arba Minch. As I wrote in my piece, 'Customs of the Omo,' the Kara (also transliterated as Karo) who number about 2,000, and the Nyangatom, who number about 30,000, live on opposite banks of the Omo River. Families, whose only modern possession is the AK47, engage in tit for tat blood feuds over men killed during cattle raids. In a subsistence economy based on herding and flood agriculture, cattle raiding is the only way for a young man to accumulate the wealth he needs to pay a prospective bride's family before marriage" (Hack, 2012).

In addition, Hack (2012) calculates that beside having a decreased population, the Kara people are subjected to delayed marriages, thereby failing to raise sufficient children to ward off their neighbouring enemies who outnumber them 150 times.

"Not only are the Kara fewer in number compared to their traditional rivals, but their men traditionally may not marry until they have completed a complicated bull jumping ceremony that takes place every seven years. This has meant a dwindling pool of eligible bachelors and an increase in the number of children born to unwed couples" (Hack, 2012).

In the context of these tribes, having a lower number of inhabitants is a source of anxiety to the elders of the lesser populated tribes. After reporting about the conflict between the Kara and Nyangatom tribes, Girke explains to what extent demography became a dilemma for the Kara, but reason for optimism to the Nyangatom tribes:

“I was told by Nyangatom officials that in a recent census they had surpassed 33, 000. This number might be skewed as there is often an advantage to be found in terms of fund allotment and NGO help if one can claim a larger population. But rumours have it that many of today’s Nyangatom were or still are Sudanese Toposa¹⁵. If this is the case, the Nyangatom demographics are readily explained, as well as the awesome pressure they exert on all their neighbours” (Girke, 2007:148).

Hack’s reasoning about the Kara people makes sense when comparing the Hamar tribe, who was unsympathetic towards the plea of Lale and his team. The Omo Child Project frequently requested the Hamar king and elders to cease the mingi practice but they refused. The reason is clear. They are the major people group with a population of more than 30 000 (Shea, 2010). Currently, the Joshua Project (2019) reports that the population of the Hamar and Bena exceeds 76 000. Such statistics present a problem for those attempting to initiate anti-mingi action among the mentioned two tribes. However, Ayike Gudure, the former Omo Child vice-chairman, refuted the notion when the researcher prompted him: “This is completely false. This old man (John Rowe) is becoming out of mind. Our people stopped child mingi understanding that it is an evil practice. The issue of demography is what he thinks” (informal discussion with Ayike Gudure, at Jinka, 14 December 2019).

Women within these societies suffer constant anxiety about their children not only for those they lost in the past, but also their future children. Such women constantly feel isolated and experience trauma that do not cure easily. They know that people such as Bona would hunt their children who were born out of wedlock or before the jumping of the bulls. LaPlante interviewed a woman who lost her child and was on her way to lose the other child in her womb out of wedlock. When giving birth to such a child out of wedlock, she is not permitted to nurse him, hold him or even see him, according to LaPlante. Nevertheless, this woman still clings to an image of the baby she lost – although as a fantasy, talking to him:

“‘I think he must have been a beautiful boy,’ Erma says as she rests on a pile of sticks, surrounded by a playful mob of younger children. ‘I wanted to keep him.’ [He continues on her present feelings] She still mourns. But she does not question why her son was killed. ‘There was no other option,’ she says. Her hands fall to her swollen stomach; she is pregnant once again. ‘It was an accident,’ she laments as she rubs her bare waist. ‘I don’t want to lose this baby, too’” (LaPlante, 2001:6).

The psychological torment shown by the mentioned woman reflects that of hundreds of Hamar, Bena and Kara women. These women have been suffering psychologically for numerous years due to loss of their beloved children.

4.4 Social consequences

Social challenges occur wherever people live together. According to Open University (2018), social problems represent conditions that should not be allowed to continue since these are perceived to be societal issues requiring society to react to them and find remedies. Such problems can be categorised as either individual, or communal. Private issues are matters that the individuals involved should resolve. Public issues or social problems demand a public response in order to solve. Solutions should thus be introduced into either the personal sphere, or community affairs. If social problems persist without interventions, this may cause communal alienation and disagreement, which lead to public conflict or even war (Open University, 2018). Finally, unless social problems are solved timely, the results may be disintegration, disunity and division within a society. Should such disruptions continue unsolved, this may eventually lead to civil war.

Robinson (2011) poses the question: "When is a social problem a social problem?" He answers his own question by developing the sociologist point of view on resolution: "According to some sociologists who adopt this view, negative conditions and behaviors are *not* a social problem unless they are recognized as such by policymakers, large numbers of lay citizens, or other segments of our society". This scholar's question reminds of to the age-old question: "If a tree falls in a forest and no one is there to hear it, does it make a sound?" In answering this question, Robinson acknowledges that the answer is not easy however, it tends to reinforce a core belief of the social constructionist view: "Perception matters at least as much as reality, and sometimes more so" (Robinson, 2011:3).

Based on the argument above, the practice of mingi is becoming a social issue in the country and beyond. However, the social ill is still undermined and faces negligence from the government. Even though no one hears when a tree grows, several people will hear it when it falls. This image is true about the immergence of mingi, since no one understands when it started. However, currently numerous people have begun to perceive mingi as real and a social issue. Mingi would be perceived as social ill, not individual practices, when the stakeholders become involve in the efforts to eradicate this HTP. The church, government, individuals and NGO's should join forces against this malady. Otherwise, the social disintegration will continue among the mentioned tribes.

As mentioned previously (ch 2), Ethiopia is a country that gives due attention to social issues. The following institutions were pointed out: *mehiber*, *edir*, *equib* and other social organisations where people gather to deal especially with social issues. Similarly, as part of the country, the members of the Hamar, Bena and Kara tribes focus strongly on social issues as they perceive them. The killing of the infants and excommunicating women from marriages out of wedlock is considered to be for the societal good. These members believe that they are building a better society by avoiding curses among them. In other words, these tribes give priority to the well-being of the society above the interests of individuals. LaPlante (2011) explains, “The decision to kill the boy was the easy part. It was the sacrifice of one infant for the good of the entire tribe – a rite that some of the elders had witnessed hundreds of times throughout their lives in Ethiopia's remote Omo River Valley”. However, this seems untenable that parents will lead a harmonious life with a murderer living among them. It is unlikely to live together with the man who murdered one's son or daughter, even though it was by following the cultural mandate of the community.

Kaiso is a Christian woman who lives among the Bena tribe. Once she heard that people were planning to kill a mingi girl. The girl was born without the appropriate Bena ceremonies, but her birthmother hid the child for six months. Kaiso took care of the girl and began raising her as her own daughter. Kayso explains, “Then the rains stopped for a short time. The people rose up and said, ‘You must get rid of her. Throw her into the bush.’ But I said, ‘do not throw your child into the bush, give her to me’” (LaPlante, 2011). Her neighbours were angry with her, under the impression that she mocked them. As a result, no one had social interactions with her. In addition, the area's children stopped playing with Kaiso's daughter since she was considered mingi. Kaiso had saved another mingi, but her daughters remained alone in her family's small compound. Not only the adults, but children themselves learn how to excommunicate their peers. The result may be serious conflict that could divide the community among themselves.

On the other hand, mingi women have no opportunity of participating in the social activities of the society such as bull jumping, *gilo* practices, *mehiber*, *edir* or enjoying a cultural alcoholic drink together, which is common in their society. It is thus to be expected that these women experience loneliness and become bitter towards their society. Furthermore, by isolating mingi children from their peers could cause these children to detest their society and become towards their relatives and the elders.

The researcher met a saved mingi named Tarikua in 2016 in Alduba among the Bena community. She was saved by a national evangelist and grew up at his home as his daughter. Currently she works as a government school teacher and is married with two children. The researcher prompted her at the Alduba primary school about her feelings toward her biological

family and the community that persecuted her and sought her death. She responded: “It took me a long time to reconcile with my biological parents after I understood that they hated me because I was mingi. Anyway, I forgave them because Christians should forgive others in order to be forgiven” (informal discussion, 26 January 2016).

The reality was that her family did not hate her, but struggled to decide saving her due to the influence of their community leaders. Guided by God, dedicated evangelists saved her by placing themselves in a grave danger (dealt with in more detail in the following chapter). In other words, mingi has double social consequences: this HTP causes conflict and bitterness among society members due to the excommunication and causes improper interrelationships with an immediate neighbour.

4.5 Moral consequences

Human are moral beings who has the ability to distinguish good from bad and right from wrong since the creation, from the perfect beginning, the Garden of Eden. God posted two trees in the Garden with two consequences giving life or bringing death (Gen. 3:1-3). Unfortunately, the first people negated their moral values and disobeyed God. Being a moral being and created in the image of God, human beings have an intrinsic thirst for God. Eckersley (2006) explains the significance of morality: “[It] is an important dimension of religious belief and practice. Values provide the framework for deciding what is important, true, right and good, and so have a central role in defining relationships and meanings.”

Morality does not merely imply rules that people learn; rather, it is an inner quality with which humans are born, inherited from their parents. In this regard, morality focuses on integrating individuals into their community. Cook (2013) points out: “At birth, babies are endowed with compassion, with empathy, with the beginnings of a sense of fairness which are the core essence of morality that come with the birth of human being.” According to this explanation, moral life and experience is not acquired, but inborn.

The humans’ soul, according to the ancient Greek philosopher Plato, strives for three things: wisdom, conquest and gratification (Rosenthal, 2016). A righteous life, for Plato, is governed by reason and all three elements help the person achieve a good and moral life. Using the metaphor of humans living, chained, in a dim cave and facing a blank wall with fire at one’s back, Plato suggests that seeing the true light of reality means turning away from the wall and its shadows and escaping the cave, which is living a moral life (Rosenthal, 2016).

Human beings are created in the image of God and to some extent carries His essence within him. According to Mayfield (2017), one of the attributes of human beings is to act with love, be

compassionate and detest wickedness (Micah 6:8). These attributes manifest in humans as image bearers of God. This identity could grow when humans live a godly life and reflect God's presence through their actions. If humans lose that identity, they turn away from God's presence and demonstrate inhumane nature, animalism.

Regarding Christians, the most basic principle of moral life is the awareness that every person has the dignity and identity of being made in the image of God. God has given us as humans an immortal soul and through the gifts of intelligence and reason, He enables us to understand the order of things established in His creation. God has also given us a free will to seek and love what is true, good, and beautiful. However, because of the Fall, we as humans also suffer the impact of sin in our daily lives. Loving one's neighbour is the second biggest commandment Jesus asked of all who claim to be His followers. The unfortunate reality is that most of us do not apply this commandment in our day-to-day lives. In contrast, the important foundation of Christian morality is to understand moral acts and live a peaceful life with others (Rosenthal, 2016).

According to the United States Catholic Catechism for Adults (2019), every moral act consists of three elements: the objective act (what we do), the subjective goal or intention (why we do the act), and the concrete situation or circumstances in which we perform the act (where, when, how, with whom, the consequences, etc.). However, sinful nature which darkens our mind, weakens our will, and inclines us to sin make us weak. Nevertheless, the image of God is impressed within people despite their evil ways. This moral life operates in the family, community and national identity. No person can escape the inner conscience, which challenges humans to live a moral life and act according to the moral principles of the Creator.

The people of the Hamar, Bena and Kara tribes are moral people, similar to other nations in the world. They hear the voice of divine calling, obey their conscience and honour human values. They equally shared the likeness of God according to which they were created. However, certain man-made cultural practices tend to darken the mind of these tribal members.

Undeniably, the members of the Hamar, Bena, and Kara tribes do not differ from other Ethiopians or human beings. They cannot be blamed as immoral people who have been disobeying the voice of the Holy Spirit or their inner conscience and purposely perpetrate inhuman activities for countless years. LaPlante (2011) relate a German charity organisation worker's testimony: "These people are really good people," according to the German missionary, who was granted permission from tribal elders to build a home on the Kara lands. He explains, "They are not doing this because they are evil, wild, dumb monsters. They're doing it out of fear. They fear for the lives of others in the tribe."

It is clear that their conscience gives priority to community over individuals, to social issues rather than personal and to the spiritual world instead of the physical one. In other words, they perform such immoral activities for the sake of their community. Their acts are perceived immoral by outsiders and most of the international community. However, they follow their cultural mandate, which perform for the good of their society, to the guidance of their social conscience. They love their community more than they care for their own flesh and blood, their dearest children.

Above all, parents of mingi children, morally have been suffering for years, losing their own children and descendants due to their cultural practices and fear of evil. This raises the question whether these people feel moral guilt when they hand over their children to the killers. The issue stretches further than the parents. The other question would be: Do these mingi killers feel silently guilty when they kill innocent children by suffocating by stuffing sand in their mouths or throwing them to the hungry crocodiles in the Omo River?

During a meeting, Lale asked the elders and the Kara kings: "Who is guilty, the parents who had sex before marriage or the baby? The child is innocent so why do we kill the baby? Why are the parents not punished for breaking tribal law about sex before marriage?" (Wharton, 2018).

No one answered him or objected to the question. Those present preferred silence. The reason is that people are moral beings with a conscience, which can distinguish good from evil, and moral from immoral. It was clear to Lale they understood what he said. However, they were tied down by the harmful mingi practice, which they inherited from their fore bearers. Fear of evil leads these tribal members to a restless and ruthless life. Women are disbarred from several resources and privileges in society. Further questions should be asked about women's experience when their neighbours excommunicate them from certain social affairs because of her marriage. How would a women react if she hides a mingi child and are excommunicated by her family, neighbours or relatives?

It is unbearable to be lonely in the midst of social people, prohibited from social affairs of the community. Such exclusion may generate hate for themselves, their gender or their community. Leary, Gabriel and Pelham (2018) point out: "The evidence suggests – that pursuing moral values instead of merely focusing on self-oriented values may be necessary to instil meaning and purpose that lead to a flourishing life." Life becomes meaningful when individuals submit them to a moral life. Such an orientation would apply to the tribal members of the mentioned tribes in the sense that they take care of others than themselves in day to day lives.

4.6 Economic consequences

Cultural influences have a negative impact on the future economic life of people, especially on women and children. This section of society is highly dependent on husbands and parents. Based on UNICEF's (2006) report, most women in developing countries are unaware of their basic human rights. Such a state of ignorance leads to their acceptance and, consequently, the perpetuation of harmful traditional practices (HTPs), thus affecting their well-being and that of their children.

According to UNICEF for Africa (2019), women occupy a significant and decisive position in the social, cultural, economic and political life of Ethiopia. Their importance is evident both in modern and traditional sectors, "not only as housewives and mothers in society – a pre-eminent role" (UNICEF,2019). They feature particularly by their contribution to the quality of day-to-day life. UNICEF for Africa (2019) point out that, even when women acquire a degree of economic and political awareness, they often feel powerless to bring about the change necessary to eliminate gender inequality. Being educated or occupying important positions in society alone would not guarantee overcoming poverty, unless their new status is supported by their marriage partners. In Ethiopia, it is culturally preferred that women take responsibility for the household affairs rather than office jobs.

As indicated above, throughout Africa, especially in Ethiopia, the primary responsibility of women is domestic activities such as taking care of children, preparing food and attending to other household chores. According to the World Bank (2017), Ethiopia, with approximately 105 million people, is the second most populated nation in Africa after Nigeria, and the fastest growing economy in the region. However, Ethiopia is also one of the poorest countries, with a per capita income of \$783 annually. This country aims to reach lower-middle-income status by 2025. However, it is obvious that there is insufficient empowerment of women in economic affairs. The reason is the primary responsibility of home-maker attributed to women in the country (World Bank 2017 Report). Recent racial conflicts have also hampered the development of the country, contrary to wide-spread expectations of faster progress. The most vulnerable group caught within such conflicts are invariably the women and children.

Being predominantly an agricultural country, most of the Ethiopian people reside in rural areas. Farming is the primary occupation that determines the rhythm of economic life. In such an environment people live modestly, dedicating themselves mostly to traditional occupations. However, the Ethiopian government is attempting to diversify into manufacturing, textiles, and energy generation. Coffee is a major export commodity. Nevertheless, the agricultural sector suffers from inadequate cultivation practices and frequent drought.

Regarding the specific conditions of the Hamar, Bena and Kara tribes, women have no access to education and are not given government job opportunities unless they are daughters of Christians or national evangelists who enjoy more benefits than others. Pastoralists refrain from sending their female children to school. These farmers consider their cattle as better assets than a monthly salary. Girls are the main source of income to these people, due to the dowry payments (as pointed out previously). Thus, if the girls attend school, parents are in danger of losing dozens of cows and oxen, which is a mark of someone's wealth within the area. Should a girl decide to attend school, parents allow her to be kidnapped by the man to whom she was promised earlier, even while she was in her mother's womb.

It is believed that education is the foundation of economic progress for the individual as well as a country. According to Nwangwa (1976), education is one of the fundamental rights of individuals. Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in December 1949, stipulated:

- "Everyone has the right to education. This shall be free at least in the elementary and primary stages.
- Elementary education shall be compulsory while technical and professional education shall be made generally available.
- Higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.
- Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children."

From the exposition above, these rights clearly are not accepted and implemented among the mentioned tribes. The government in the area attempted to provide free food, shelter, learning materials in addition to free education to the children of pastoralists. However, most of the parents are not willing to send their children to school, especially the girls. The problem is that these people may fail to overcome poverty unless they study since "... education is the process of providing information to an inexperienced person to help him/her develop physically, mentally, socially, emotionally, spiritually, politically and economically" (Oforima, 2009). It is unlikely to expect improved economic development by having uneducated people who merely tend cattle, seeing that education is considered as the foundation of economic development throughout the world.

The latest economic statistics for the Omo region currently are not available. Nevertheless, to give an impression of the economic condition, information is provided from the 2006 statistics for the Southern Omo region where the Hamar, Bena and Kara tribes are located. Regarding

the Debub Omo zone, where the mentioned tribes reside, the economic status seems lower than others in the southern zone of the country. According to a World Bank Memorandum (2006), only 4% of the inhabitants from Debub Omo have access to electricity. This zone has a road density of 22.7 kilometres per 1 000² km, the average rural household owns 0.4 ha of land (compared to the national average of 1.01 ha) and an average of 0.89 for the South Nations, Nationalities and People Region (SNNPR) (the equivalent of 1.5 heads of livestock). The pastorals cultivate wide-spread fields of agriculture. However, due to arid temperature conditions and low interest in farming, scant attention is paid to agriculture. Therefore, merely 11.5% of the population occupy jobs unrelated to farming, compared to the national average of 25% and a regional average of 32%. Regarding education, 37% of all eligible children are enrolled in primary school, and 7% in secondary schools. These figures indicate that most children have either no access to education or are compelled by parents to be cattle herds.

Considering the statistics above (i.e. for the Hamar, Bena and Kara tribes), it is understandable that a large part of this region has a lower economic status. This status includes education where only 37% of children are sent to primary schools and a mere 7% complete secondary school, while others become cattle herds and house workers under their parents. Girls are not allowed to reach the school gates since their parents proposed their marriage at a time even when they were in their mother's womb. The education and training of a country's work force is a major factor in determining economic progress. It is unlikely that an economy will have a competitive advantage in all skills. Thus, the country can focus on a number of skills in which professionals are trained more readily. It is obvious that differences in training levels have been cited as a significant factor that distinguishes the developed from developing countries.

Other factors are certainly in play such as geography and available resources. Nevertheless, having better-trained workers creates spill-over and generate income for the country. For example, it is easy to compare the better educated Ari tribe with the Hamar, Bena and Kara tribes, to point out a significant economic gap between them. Most educated people are from the Ari tribe, most of whom are Christians and farmers. These people can be depicted as follows:

"The Ari people are the biggest group in the Omo region, numbering over 100,000. Speaking an Omotic language (like Hamar and Bana) their origin must be close to the area they live now but they are very different from the other people living here. Ari are living in wider villages with private compounds on which they have their huts/houses and grow a variety of crops. They have adapted 'western' clothing" (Boundless Ethiopian Tours, 2013).

As a result, the offices of South Omo are fully occupied by Kari members, since only few members from the Hamar, Bena and Kara tribes adhere to the standard of a government official.

Unlike the Ari people, most members of Hamar, Bena and Kara tribes do not seek government jobs. They do not remain long in such jobs, seeing that they consider office work as similar to be a prisoner. They prefer to be pastoralists, enjoy moving from one area to another. They treasure their modern Ak 47 weapon and a small chair called a *borkota*, which has a dual purpose: sitting chair by day and sleeping pillow for the night. According to the experience of the researcher, these are the items that make the tribal members content.

The government of Ethiopia, attempting to civilise these members, is facing fierce opposition from the outside and within. Since 2010, the government initiated modern sugarcane agriculture in the area and built a sugarcane factory. However, most inhabitants and other role-players did not welcome this initiative. They preferred their cattle rather than huge investments and new buildings. The tribe members seem to be bound to their forbearer's style of life, having hundreds of cattle, often with little to eat. The reasoning is that cattle require herd boys. Thus, children are not sent to schools since they already have an occupation of herding cattle.

One of the plans of the government was making schools accessible to pastoralists and changing their lives, however, the members did not 'buy into' the venture. To the researcher's knowledge, there are suspicions that international organisations are fanning these tribes' opposition against modern agriculture and industry, in the name of sustaining organic culture. For example, Human Rights Watch (HRW, 2012) accused the Ethiopian government of destroying the indigenous culture of the Omo people. HRW strengthened the pastoralists' perception that the Ethiopian government is destroying an organic culture and exposing the pastoralists to a difficult life by introducing sugarcane agriculture and a factory. In 2012, the HRW took the government to task in an extensive report (approx. 81 pages). The crucial point the report made was:

"Human Rights Watch calls on the Ethiopian government to suspend the clearing of land and construction of roads associated with irrigated commercial agriculture and the sugar plantations until these developments can be carried out in a manner that is consistent with national laws and international human rights standards. Any displacement or relocation should comply with international and Ethiopian law. Expropriation (with appropriate compensation) is a last resort and should only occur as outlined in the appropriate legislation. The Ethiopian government should conduct an environmental and social impact that considers the cumulative impacts on the Lower Omo and Lake Turkana of the irrigated agriculture development, Gibe III, and other developments in Lower Omo" (HRW, 2012).

The writer of 'The Conversation Africa. Inc. 2018' accused the government in a similar way:

"It is difficult not to conclude that what we are seeing in the Omo is the wholesale disregard of these commitments by the Ethiopian government. Its development policies are not only transforming landscape and heritage but destroying complex systems of sustainable living that have endured for millennia. The huge injustice of all this is that the ecological costs will be borne by local communities while the profits will be enjoyed by central and international corporations".

His argument is, "Since 1948, Ethiopia has also been signed up to the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide", however, the government is disregarding that agreement and exposing the native dwellers to difficulties.

The report reflects a perplexing attitude that confuses those who read the full content. Throughout their lives, these tribe members have been suffering from low education, poor sanitation, unbalanced health and extreme poverty. They were exposed to famine, drought, disease and insufficient living conditions for many years. The confusion concerns the perceived 'plight' of the residents: "While government sources indicate that the sugar plantations will create more than 150 000 full-time and part-time jobs, existing residents will be resettled and will need to find alternative livelihoods" (Stirton, 2007).

According to the government, the sugarcane factory will require over 150 000 trained workers. This need for manpower would be the opportunity to train children of these tribes to be hired as skilled employees. In this regard, the children of pastoralists may benefit from the factory by further development of clinics, schools and related modern-life experiences. The question could be posed why HRW give priority to culture over people. The approach is seemingly not well-defined and is provoking the government of Ethiopia to act aggressive and over-confident by establishing more factories. Recently the government ignored the protestations of this group and implement its plan accordingly. As a result, the feedback from the government is adamant: "Where we resettle people, really we re-establish their lives and their livelihood in a way that is more advanced than what it used to be by providing potable water, electricity – by providing schools and social infrastructure" (Solomon, 2019).

Twenty years ago, the Omo River overflowed its banks in the area. Hundreds of people were killed and thousands of cattle drowned. The government plans to use this river for irrigation, thereby changing the lives of these tribes. Throughout the centuries this river has been eroding fertile soil from Omo Valley and carrying it into Lake Turkana, at the border of Ethiopia and Kenya. However, the inhabitants did not exploit the fertile soil at the time and live extremely poor life. These people are left behind several nations in the world since they have no access to modern life as well as infrastructures such as schools, hospitals, electricity and roads. In the

face of modern technologies, the world has to offer, the only modern item that makes an impact to these tribes is the automatic rifle, which they do not use as food; rather to kill each other.

The Ethiopian government built a dam called Gilgal Gibe in 2013. The purpose of the dam is to produce electric power for Ethiopia, Sudan and Kenya. However, certain international organisations are opposing the development as acts which may destroy the organic culture of the Omo Valley people. Seemingly, these organisations give priority to natural beauty, which they visit frequently. However, the Ethiopian government is working hard to provide sustenance to these needy people. Their dilemma is clear. If the rain stops, their cattle would perish, leaving them no food. However, if they have access to modern infrastructure, they would sustain. A government official remarked to the researcher, “These tourists finished their natural beauty to develop their country, but trying to protect our land to visit it while we live an extreme poverty life in the world” (private conversation at Dimeka government office, January 2016). It must be stated: Beauty is not beautiful if there is no bread.

It is clear how the factors mentioned above relate to the mingi practice and cause economic challenges to women and children. If women are declared mingi, they have no access to participate in various income-generating activities such as selling their produce at the nearest markets since they are excommunicated from society. Even if the government creates basic jobs just to provide in people’s personal needs, the mingi women would not be able to participate and reap the benefits. Furthermore, if NGOs seek to support such women in need, especially those under extreme poverty, the cultural leaders would not allow such interventions, seeing that these women were excommunicated. Should the leaders transgress that social custom, they would be excommunicated themselves.

The same custom applies to mingi children. At first, no one is allowed to live with them. Thus, if such children are alive by chance, they do not benefit from of education, agriculture or rearing animals. All members understand that whatever the mingi children touch, will bring a curse over their society. These children often hide themselves until someone finds them and betrays them to the elders in the area. As a result, such children become totally dependent on their parents or relatives. They have no chance of participating in economic activities since they live under the curse of everyone seeking their death. All these expose them to be economically dependent.

4.7 Spiritual consequences

Unless people commit them to being atheistic, all have a spiritual dimension in their lives. Although there are different belief systems, every deity needs spiritual submission and commitment from its followers. Thus, there can still be spirituality without religion. According to

Eckersley (2007), spirituality represents “The broadest and deepest form of connectedness. It is the only form of meaning that transcends people’s personal circumstances, social situation and the material world, and so can sustain them through the trouble and strife of mortal existence.” Therefore, an individual may be spiritual without following a specific religion, seeing that spirituality is one of the common essence shared by humankind. Someone could live a spiritual life without being involved in religion. Being religious implies belonging to an established order, whether large or small. Thus, religion may have incorporated billions of followers such as Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism. Eventually, no one escapes from either being spiritually, or religious since spirituality is interrelated strongly with conscious belief.

In previous chapters it was indicated that most people of the Hamar, Bena and Kara tribes have no specific form of religion, neither Christianity nor Islam. However, they worship their ancestral spirit, obeying its rules and regulations which is related more to African Traditional Religion (ATR). Their belief has no written document as the main religions do, but its rules and regulations are transferred orally across generations as legends. Nevertheless, these people are deeply concerned with spiritual activities, considering being spiritual as the appropriate way of life.

At times outsiders could blame members from these tribes’ people for their inhuman activity. However, these people consider such unusual actions as killing mingis, as obedience to spiritual deities or to their forbearer’s’ gods. A German missionary among these tribes explains their real identity: “These people are really good people. They’re doing it out of fear. They fear for the lives of others in the tribe” (LaPlante, 2011). Therefore, the main problem of these people is their fear of evil and lack of self-confidence. As a result, they are continually concerned about disobeying the spirit, spurred on by their culturally oriented spiritually. Wallace (2016) explains, “The tribal elders traditionally believed that the sun will stop shining or becoming blazing hot, the rains will stop, their crops will die and their animals will become diseased if they do not get rid of ‘cursed’ children.” This is an excellent explanation of these tribe members’ life and spirituality.

The people of the Hamar, Bena and Kara pay stronger attention to spiritual beings above other things. They believe that if they disobey the spirit, it manifests itself in various ways. This spirit warns that it will destroy their cattle, stop the rain, send plagues, make their women barren, kill their children or betray them to their enemies, and the list goes on. Such devastation would wait unless they perform the rituals by killing mingis, performing gilos, or other related ceremonies, which would appease their ancestral spirit. The mediators of the spirit, the so called witchdoctors, play a significant role between the people and the spirit and would benefit more through these rituals.

The spiritual consequences are evident. It is unusual to see smiling and content faces in this region, unless they indulge in a strong *cheka*, the highly fermented maize-and-sorghum mixed alcoholic drink. Seemingly all members are worried about the future, expecting that the coming day would be worse and bring unexpected incidents. Whenever the rain is late, cows do not give abundant milk, or women became barren, there is concern about the future. If the tribes are attacked by outsiders, the Omo River gets lower, or heavy storms burst, they begin to wonder about their lives. They begin to wonder why people are falling ill, why there is drought or famine, or why there women become barren. They wonder whether the ancestral spirit is angered due to the 'mingi or other hidden sins that the members committed.

Therefore, to appease the spirit, they sacrifice what they have, including their children. Certain Kara tribe elders began regretting their ignorance saving the mingi children. They related their observation of the present situation as follows:

“Elders bitterly recall times in which their sympathy for mingi children prevailed over their fear. They believe that heedlessness cost the tribe most of its cattle and many of its members. Today, Kara leaders say, a more respectful adherence to the brutal obligations of their beliefs has allowed their tribe to thrive” (LaPlante, 2011).

The elders of this tribe agreed to stop killing mingi children. However, it seems that they will break the agreement due to continuous drought and cattle diseases.

The witch doctors are also warning the people that a great judgement is looming due to their disobedience to their ancestral spirits. Such spiritual afflictions would pose a strong challenge to the Omo Child Project, unless the area government intervenes. Spiritually perplexed people could follow what they consider a solution to their concerns. This would be to relieve the unbearable pressure of a spiritual power that creates the impression that they are vulnerable to spiritual attacks. It would be unfair to view these people harshly, or judge their actions, unless one understands the driving force that urges them to perform acts they do not want to do. In the Omo River Valley the spiritual concerns are a continuous reality.

As mentioned above, women and children are subjected to a hopeless, careless and indifferent existence within their community by having to submit to their husbands and parents. The women and children are exposed to continuous spiritual worries since all members point out the mingi women and children. As a result, the women internalise the practice as an action that must take place, whether they like it or not. Lale's mother's response is an apt example: “Explaining the superstitious sacrifice to a horrified Lale, his mother said: ‘It is your culture and you must accept that’” (Wharton, 2018). It is understandable that she is pessimistic about the practice, seeing that she experienced this spiritual consequence from the beginning. In addition,

Buke Bulguda explains the torment: “I lost five plus five plus five babies – 15 in total. I had seven males and eight females. During this time, our tribal traditions were very hard. I did not respect our traditions, so they killed ...” (Styles, 2014). After experiencing the practice for many years cause women such as Buke to lose hope. She had no right to save her 15 children, fearing spiritual retribution by the ancestral spirit.

4.8 Summary

In the perspective of the present study, mingi has been affecting the holistic identity of women and children of the Hamar, Bena and Kara people, more than other internal or external problems of the area. In normal circumstances, if it stops raining for a year, this is a temporary problem since the rains will return the following year. Currently climate change in the world are influencing the climatic conditions of numerous countries. Until the rains return, the government or any other NGO will support the people. However, to the Hamar, Bena and Kara tribes, the issue is beyond climatic change; they consider it as the mingi curse. If a disease occurs within a specific community, it will pass when those affected have received medical treatment. Should tribes face attacks from their neighbours, this will be over after days or weeks. However, for the mentioned tribes, the main cause is mingi. The mingi curse is not a temporary problem but is transferred from generation to generation. This curse still threatens numerous inhabitants of the Omo Valley causing them to carry on the custom. As stated above, this harmful traditional practice has been affecting these tribes, in terms of the whole person (in the various dimensions), particularly women and children.

Physically: Women have been suffering from different forms of harm and children have been killed after being considered a bad sign that may impact their communities’ well-being.

Psychologically: Most women and children are suffering intense pressure and unrest. The cultural custom forces women to lead an immoral life, although though God created humans for a moral life.

Socially: Tribal members experience hostility among themselves even though it is not explicit from their day-to-day affairs. Inevitably there would be disagreements between neighbours when someone kills a child in their own or another family, due to mingi. For the mingi women, especially, being isolated in the midst of a social community is intolerable.

Economically: Their standard seems below the extreme poverty line, since they become over-dependent on their cattle. As a result, they are not open for modern development and economic progress.

Spiritually: The tribe members fall under the bondage of evil. They become slaves of witchdoctors, fortune tellers and the elders within society.

Regarding the benefits, the main share goes to the spiritual leaders of the community. The members are also exposed strongly to poverty since they have many lords, both physically and spiritually. Their *balabats* (kings) as well as their spiritual leaders exploit them. Their finances are taken over by *gilo*, bull jumping, *evangadi*, women's dowry and related social practices and ceremonies. These mentioned tribes' subsistence economy involves multiple stakeholders, both physically and spiritually, who seek its portion. As a result, children and women have become powerless due to enduring exploitation and violation from both the community and spiritual leaders.

The eventual question is about the strategy that could be used to liberate these people from their physical and spiritual bondages. How could they be given hope in the midst of such trying circumstances? The following part of the study explains the current situation of mingi and points out glimpses of hope that is emerging among the mentioned tribes in the Omo Valley. The following chapter (ch 5) will assess these indications of hope in terms of individuals, churches, national evangelists, the area government and as well as certain NGOs. The assessment will focus on positive beginnings in the area, despite the multiple obstacles and challenges.

CHAPTER 5:

THE CURRENT SITUATION OF MINGI AND GLIMPSES OF HOPE

5.1 Introduction

To attempt action is better than merely being pessimistic and leaving the existing problem to the following generations. Abandoned homework will be too costly to these generations. People who attempted to change the world had the motto, “Never give up!” and encountered problems face to face without relenting. Their strength brought about far-reaching changes within the world. Among the numerous examples is the hard work of Thomas A. Edison.

According to Buster (2012), Edison made 5 000 to 10 000 attempts to invent an electric light bulb that changed the face of the entire world. Buster presents the dialogue between Edison and the writer of *Harper’s Monthly Magazine*:

“I speak without exaggeration when I say that I have constructed three thousand different theories in connection with the electric light, each one of them reasonable and apparently to be true. Yet only in two cases did my experiments prove the truth of my theory. My chief difficulty, as perhaps you know, was in constructing the carbon filament, the incandescence of which is the source of the light” (Buster, 2012).

The magazine writer recounts the dialogue between him and Edison: “I said: ‘Isn’t it a shame that with the tremendous amount of work you have done you haven’t been able to get any results?’ Edison turned on me like a flash, and with a smile replied: ‘Results! Why, man, I have gotten lots of results! I know several thousand things that won’t work!’” (Buster, 2012). Edison’s unrelenting effort brought a significant benefit to this world. After 10 000 trial and errors, he lighted the bulb that changed the world.

The issue of mingi was taboo in the Hamar, Bena and Kara tribes for countless years. Humphreys (2014) explains the matter as follows:

“Mingi – a concept so taboo that the word is rarely spoken aloud in the Omo Valley ... The word mingi was never uttered. It was taboo. You certainly didn’t discuss that with somebody outside the tribe ... Children declared mingi are thought to bring drought, famine or disease to the tribe – so they are killed.”

Mingi is not a term from day-to-day communication that everyone utters. This is the prerogative of selected elders within the society. This custom was followed for years with no one daring to question it. However, currently, through God’s guidance and concerted effort of certain

individuals, missionaries, journalists and ventures from those such as Lale Labuko, this taboo is becoming a major topic of discussion among the Hamar, Bena and Kara tribes – and beyond.

At first a few national evangelists opposed this custom covertly. However, no one dared to mention the taboo issue in public, until Lale Labuko broke the silence to take on the mingi custom among his tribe. He established an organisation that took an open stance against this harmful traditional practice (HTP). Utilising the opportunity provided by Lale's organisation, currently, several journalists, NGO's and concerned individuals have begun dealing with the issue and making it public to involve government officials. Thus, the issue of mingi was placed on the public agenda and people have broken the silence.

Based on the above-mentioned development, this part of the study answers the research question: What are the hopeful glimpses of the struggle against the mingi cultural practice by the indigenous people, charity organisations, government and some churches in eradicating this HTP among the people of Hamar, Bena and Kara tribes? By answering this question, the present study strived to address its aim: Show the current hopeful glimpses of struggle against the practice by the indigenous people, the charity organisations, the government and some churches.

In the process, the role-players found that this problem required more time to address and raise awareness among whole tribes. Except for the Hamar tribe, there have been hopeful glimpses among the Kara members due to Lale's effort; and the Bena members due to the expansion of evangelical Christianity. Below, certain hopeful glimpses are highlighted from agents who are playing decisive roles in reducing the mingi practice among the Hamar, Bena and Kara tribes.

5.2 The Omo Child Project

Hopeful news was posted by Stephen Wallace in 2016 about glimpses of hope during his tour to the south Omo region:

"The first time Mingi was explained to me I found it hard to believe. What society would support the killing of healthy children, their children? Mingi is the tribal killing of newborns and infants believed by male elders to be cursed. The elders in the Omo Valley of south-west Ethiopia traditionally believe if allowed to live these children will bring death and widespread suffering to the entire tribe. However, there are people in the community making moves to end this" (Wallace, 2016).

This "move" was the Omo Child Project, which was founded by Lale Labuko. Lale is among the Kara tribe who lost his two oldest sisters due to mingi. He testified to reporter Jane Wharton how he decided to begin the Omo Child Project: "I saw the elders grab the two-year-

old girl. The baby was crying, and the mother was crying but the elders were stronger. They took her and drowned her in the river” (Wharton, 2018). According to Wharton, Lale Labuko was a mere schoolboy when he watched his first tribal killing. Distraught by the murder he witnessed, as reported by Wharton, Lale asked his mother what was happening. He was very sad in the situation. Her response was more distraught: “Don’t cry” she replied. “One day you will have to kill your own children too” (Wharton, 2018).

Lale was reluctant to hear out his mother on this topic. However, she continued, as retold by Wharton. She told her son his two oldest sisters were killed as soon as they were born, seeing that they were conceived out of wedlock, breaking one of the prerequisites for marriage according to that custom. Wharton explains that their deaths had been decided before they were born, and they did not live long enough even to be given names. Wharton remembers how Lale’s mother warned her son: “Explaining the superstitious sacrifice to a horrified Lale, his mother said: ‘It is your culture and you must accept that’” (Wharton, 2018). However, Lale decided not to accept this culture as his own, instead he planned to oppose this practice and save mingi children, even though it was a difficult decision.

However, to start off the rescue activity was not as simple as Lale Labuko expected. There were various factors such as un-traversable roads, lack of communication systems, the inconvenience of the weather and other obstacles. In 2012, Lale was working to save a baby girl considered as mingi because she was born out of wedlock. He rescued her from the brutal hands of mingi killers, facing immense challenges. Thereafter, he continued to perform similar actions among his tribe.

After saving a number of children, he decided to establish an organisation which would provide him a legal foundation with internal legal support and external financial support. From the outside, he encountered and befriended John Rowe. CGTN.com America (2018) relate the incident: “In 2010, Rowe traveled to Ethiopia’s Omo valley where he discovered the Kara tribe and its long-standing tradition of Mingi – the killing of children thought to be cursed. But he found one native, Lale Labuku, who was fighting to end the practice.” Lale was provided an excellent opportunity to work with this photographer, first as translator, thereafter as a co-fighter against mingi and finally as a co-founder of the Omo Child Project. In the process, Lale’s dream was realised when the photographer began paying attention to the practice.

After several ups and downs, Lale established a shelter for the so-called cursed children. Since 2012, the Omo Child has been rescuing and caring for mingi children from the Omo Valley tribal region. The project saved dozens of children and opened their human right to life and their opportunity to learn. Rowe (2017) reports about the present state: “Forty-five rescued children

have received financial support to provide a loving home where they are going to school and living happy lives because of the support of people ...” A number of children began their schooling since the shelter provided them with a safe, loving home and quality education. Situated in Jinka in South Ethiopia, Lale and others negotiate with the tribes to allow the mingi children to live outside the tribe, thus saving them from certain death.

Beside John Rowe, other partners who participate in this organisation, by offering funds and their skills. Stephan Wallace, the photographer of Epic Photo Tours explains:

“We are currently involved with Omo Child, the only organisation that is attempting to end the ritualistic killing of infants. Epic Photo Tours has been leading culturally immersive photographic expeditions to the Omo Valley since 2007 ... When we are in the Omo we donate food, medical supplies and school supplies to the Kara, Hamar and Arbore tribes” (Wallace, 2016).

Wallace appreciates the tribes’ approach, despite their inhumane practice: “Despite this struggle, the painted, pierced, body adorned, lip plate wearing tribes of the Omo Valley are still thriving and love interaction with foreigners. Just as we are watching them, they are really interested in how we dress and act. A meeting of two worlds” (Wallace, 2016).

The Omo Child plans to address the mingi case among the Hamar and Bena tribes as well. The Kara people are Lale’s tribe and already agreed to cease the practice although there are rumours that certain Kara members are still killing mingi children in secret. The Kara tribe elders were optimistic to stop the practice, however, they seem difficult to trust, according to LaPlante. Before 2011, they agreed to discard the practice, but soon changed their decision. According to LaPlante’s report, elders began to regret their previous decision before the establishing of the Omo Child:

“Elders bitterly recall times in which their sympathy for mingi children prevailed over their fear. They believe that heedlessness cost the tribe most of its cattle and many of its members. Today, Kara leaders say, a more respectful adherence to the brutal obligations of their beliefs has allowed their tribe to thrive” (LaPlante, 2011).

According to Wharton (2018), Lale concurs and cautions: “Most of the young are changing but it’s the older people, they are the ones who are sticking to the traditions.”

Nevertheless, Lale seems determined: “There can be a lot of resistance to us taking the children because they still think there will be a curse. I say, ‘let me take them and the curse; it will come to me.’ People thought I was going to die because of it so they are very surprised I’m still alive” (Wharton, 2018). Lale achieved a measure of success among his tribe, but has to put in more effort to save other children from this harmful practice.

Unlike the Kara tribes, the Hamer and Bena tribes seem to have more benefits due to their population number since demography is one of the focus areas of the region. It seems difficult to sway these members through meetings and discussions since they do not have the concern of a reduced population, especially the Hamer tribe. On the other hand, the Bena tribes were converted as Christians and began opposing the HTPs including mingi. Regarding the current Bena tribes, LaPlante (2011), reports:

“But one small band of Christians in one tribe, along with other supportive Christians, has pledged to protect these cursed children until mingi is no more. They are determined to show tribal elders that there is something ‘stronger than mingi’ – the power of Jesus Christ. Earlier this year, I travelled to the hard-to-reach Ethiopian river valley to hear their story. Some matured Bena Christians began adopting mingi children among their tribes and some stretched their arms to welcome from other tribes.”

In light of the hopeful depiction above, it would be wise for the Omo Child Project to cooperate with Bena Christians in order to stop the mingi practice in the Bena as well as the stronger Hamer tribes. The Hamer tribes have a strong resistance to change. Thus, a more effective approach would be to deal with and convince their kings. It would take too long to convince the members to discard mingi among the Hamer. As Lale began saving mingi children, this practice would be successful if another member (from the Hamer tribe) would follow his example. The reason is that the Omo people honour someone among themselves rather than listening to outsiders’ views.

5.3 The role of the tribal kings

In the previous sections, it was explained that tribal kings from the Hamer, Bena and Kara tribes are accepted more readily among their tribes. These kings are obeyed more often than other authorities. It would be difficult to change the mind-set of the kings. However, if such a change succeeds, this would be the most important breakthrough for those who wish to work within these tribes. If the kings could be convinced about a critical issue, doors will be opened in every direction. Since 2012, there is a glimpse of hope among the Kara people. As explained above, the influence of Lale Lebuko and his organisation have been decisive, although they still face opposition and have to overcome reluctance among the tribal elders.

Neile Shea, writer for *National Geographic* magazine, wrote the following about the king of Hamer under the title “Africa’s last frontiers”:

“The man they call king sits just inside the door of the large, mud-walled hut on a white, plastic grain sack that bears the fading seal of the U.S. Agency for International Development. It is an unlikely throne, donated by a people who do not know his highness exists and who certainly have not heard of his power to control the elements, the animals, even the reach of death. He taps snuff from a plastic bottle. His hair, slick with butter and brilliant with crushed minerals, is perfect” (Shea, 2010).

The mentioned figurehead was king Wangala, of the Hamar people. Shea was afforded the opportunity to see the most respected leader among the Hamar and discuss with him his greatness and the power he wields regarding his tribe as well as ‘nature’ – according to the king’s belief.

When Shea asked the king about his authority, he replied:

“‘If there is a problem, with cattle, people, the land – I resolve it,’ the king says. He inhales the snuff. In his face is a rare and complete confidence. ‘If there is a problem in my kingdom,’ he says, ‘the solution is me.’ Shea asked him about his ‘absolute omnipotence’ regarding his power to be a solution to all problems; ‘I’ve never met a king before; I am not sure how to behave. In the dim, smoky hut, one of the king’s wives boils coffee over a hearth. I ask the king why, if he can summon rain, he has not done it earlier to avoid the looming drought. He looks at me with the expression of a man humoring his guest. ‘The people did not come to me,’ he says. ‘They did not make sacrifices to ask for rain’” (Shea, 2010).

The custom is that people sacrifice to their gods and come to request the king’s intervention. Then he will order rain and his tribe would enjoy the blessing from the heavens. This man believes that he has the absolute power of providing rain and protecting his people from famine.

Shea discussed the mingi practice with king Wangala. The king told him that he supports ending the killing of innocent children. Shea explains: “But Wangala has already made up his mind. Not long ago, after heavy government lobbying, he decided to support a ban. ‘Now there will be no more mingi killing among the Hamar,’ the king tells me. ‘I have made it so.’” (Shea, 2010). Ideally, the king agreed to stop the mingi practice. However, in reality the situation seems different.

After eight years, according to Wharton (2018), mingi cases among the Hamar tribe is widely practicing. As recent as 2018, Wharton reported about the Omo Child and its founder, Lale’s, future activity:

However, ritual killings still go on within the Hamar and Bena tribes, whose numbers total around 250,000 people. With his charity Omo Child, he speaks to people in the communities to try to get

them to rethink their policies. He also negotiates with them to allow him to take “Mingi” youngsters to stay at his orphanage in Jinka (Wharton, 2018).

Klausen (2017) provides similar information to the *Travel with all Senses* magazine: “The old tribal traditions can be brutal. Life here is tough and everyone struggle to survive. The Hammer tribe is still practicing Mingi; killing babies and children, even though Ethiopian law prohibits it”.

From the explanation above, it seems that Wangala, the king of the Hamar had it wrong. In December 2019, the researcher traveled to South Omo and was informed that king Wangala had passed away. His successor is attempting to stop the mingi practice because his own son became mingi and he is trying to convince the elderly to follow suit (informal discussion with Vice-director of the Omo Child Project).

Nevertheless, the role of the cultural kings is highly significant, in view of their belief that they have absolute power over their people. King Wangala’s statement, “If there is a problem in my kingdom, the solution is me” (Shea, 2010), is an apt example among the three tribes. These kings hold the solution to eradicating the mingi practice among the mentioned three tribes, seeing that king Wangala recognised this practice as common among these tribes. According to Wangala, as king he wields the power to call or stop drought and rain; stop death and bring life to his people; however, forgetting that he has no power over nature. Therefore, it seems the appropriate approach is to convince the kings of these tribes and put in concerted efforts to minimise the mingi practice among them. In light of the findings about the kings, this study encourages those who seek to eradicate this HTP to establish and maintain a positive relationship with these rulers of the tribes.

5.4 The involvement of foreign missionaries

Foreign missionaries, particularly Westerners, began mission work in the Omo Valley since 1950. These missionaries are still serving this community despite numerous obstacles and hardships (Mata, 2014). Among these problems the most pressing is the weather situation and the nature of the people. The region is situated within the rift valley, stretching from Syria to Mozambique, which makes it one of the hottest areas in Ethiopia. Due to its high temperature, malaria, typhoid, and related tropical diseases are common. As mentioned previously, it is common to see sunburnt white missionaries with brown faces. They do not only have to deal with diseases from the desert, but also high temperatures throughout the year, which makes it extremely difficult to function and minister to the people.

Beside the high temperatures, the natural resistant behaviour of these people is another problem. Tribal members have a resistance to new spiritual phenomena. They are particularly

unprepared to look beyond the beliefs and practices which they experienced throughout their existence. They have the underlying fear that if they change their traditional beliefs, their ancestral spirit will be angry and punish them by sending drought, plague or natural catastrophes. Furthermore, these tribes do not welcome foreign individuals until they understand who they are, why they came, what they are doing and are going to do, and related matters. Some members establish superficial relationships for gain, especially clothes, medicine and coffee. Others keep tracking the stranger suspiciously until they understand why he is there. To win them over, early missionaries, tried to attract these members by handing out clothes, sugar and candy, which seemed the best approach at that time, however, such handouts became a major obstacle to evangelism in the later days.

Due to the handouts, certain tribal members relate Christianity with material gains and expect money or other gifts whenever being asked to hear the Gospel, even though the preacher is one of their tribe. Therefore, in certain areas, as witnessed by the researcher, it is common to see someone receiving Christ as personal Saviour twice or more. The reason is that these tribes understand: the more they believe, the best opportunity to receive the material blessings. Whenever missionaries provide material incentives, especially among the Geleb tribes, some members renew their beliefs daily. This is one of the challenges missionaries and evangelists mention when reporting about their ministry to the sending churches. However, current missionaries and national evangelists completely changed this habit. They emphasise to the tribes that Christianity does not concern material blessings, but eternal life.

In the process, current missionaries are managing to change the lives of these people in various ways. In the central region, called Alduba, missionaries opened a healthcare centre, which takes care of both people and their cattle. A pastoralist community was provided the opportunity to receive medical support for their children and keep their cattle free from tsetse flies. Missionaries provided clean water to the society and access to the healthcare centres. This activity opened ways of communicating with Western missionaries and helped nurture a positive relationship. Rather than considering to kill or driving the missionaries away, certain Hamar and Bena elders protect these missionaries from attacks whenever civil war or internal conflicts flared up. Even though the tribes killed each other, no one attacked the missionaries. The tribes listen to the message the missionaries bring, although the response is not that encouraging where conversion is concerned.

Missionaries encourage parents to send their children to school and some followed the advice of the missionaries. Most of the government workers are among the Christian community, who considered the advice of missionaries and sent their children to school. They also denounced the mingi practice publicly and encouraged people to rescue mingi children. Certain

missionaries advised members against sex outside marriage or having multiple wives. Most Bena tribes made use of this opportunity and fare better than the Hamar and the Kara tribes.

Missionaries are also attempting to train the members in farming the land. In reality these tribes live on highly fertile land that was not cultivated from the outset. Certain members underwent mechanical training which taught them to drive vehicles and repair machinery. As a result, they acquired job opportunities in their region and beyond. In addition, the missionaries have influenced them to stop the civil war and have taught them how to live peacefully with their neighbours. The tribal members are encouraged to live godly lives under the roof of a single church.

In this regard, missionaries help the community establish a church and provide support for those who were persecuted by their people because of their Christian faith. Girls who escaped from early marriage come to the church and are sent to schools away from the area. Missionaries provide in the needs of these girls, cultivating a positive relationship with the area government in order to protect these girls from being kidnapped by tribal men. The missionaries also support national evangelists sent by other tribes, especially from Wolayita, Gofa and Ari. These evangelists find it easier to communicate with the tribes due to their shared culture.

In addition to Alduba (mentioned above), missionaries opened another centre at Turmi, to train evangelists and converted people of the Omo tribes. This centre is available to the Hamar, Bena, Geleb, Herboro and other local tribes for daily service. There is also an academic school for evangelists' children and people from the area. In addition, a Bible school trains future ministers of these tribes, both through formal education and ongoing training. Missionaries dig wells and provide clean water to the community and the surrounding churches. It is common to see a water tap the distance amid arid land of the Hamar and Bena tribes. The central training place, Turmi, gives the impression of a lush oasis amid the desert, because of its water. It is common to see the pastoralists fetch water from this spot, mainly for drinking purposes. This tap water began generating income for the Turmi training centre. At times, visitors are led to the Living Water, which changes their eternal destiny.

The Omo Valley is a taxing place in which to stay for days. However, missionaries are living as indigenous citizens facing dozens of challenges. SIM (former Sudan Interior Mission, currently known as Serving In Mission) is playing a decisive role in this area since the 1950s. This organisation sent missionaries, provides in the needs of the pastoral society and empowers national evangelists. SIM also sends students to Bible colleges for further training, in order to have churches managed by indigenous ministers.

As explained above, the missionaries also support individuals who are persecuted by their community due to their conversion to Christianity, and girls who broke away from early marriage. Due to this ministry and numerous other missionary activities, mingi is becoming an obsolete practice among believers, especially the Bena tribe. Indirect involvement of missionaries resulting in more local churches, is bringing about a formal change in members' adherence to the mingi practice.

5.5 Journalists, tourists and NGO workers

If there was no information from journalists and tourists on the websites and other sources, it would be unlikely to gain valuable information about mingi for the present study. As explained previously, the challenge for this research was the high volume of secondary sources, due to the insufficient studies on the mingi problem within the country. These journalists and tourists visit and photograph the so-called 'organic' culture, document what they observed and make available to readers enlightening information on the practice.

Certain individuals exploit this culture for their personal promotion, for example the German anthropologist mentioned previously (ch. two). However, dedicated individuals have encouraged others to oppose the mingi practice by establishing a counter-mingi organisation called the Omo Child Project where people can partake in various activities.

Among these contributors, in addition to articles, is the photographer John Rowe. He made a striking documentary called "The River and the Bush" in 2015 on the mingi practice amongst the Hamar, Bena and Kara tribes. He achieved several rewards for the film, which moved the heart of numerous viewers.

After watching the documentary, people testified on the impact the film made on them. Among those, was a viewer, Paola in January 2019:

"I cannot praise this film enough. It was as engaging and riveting and suspenseful as any fiction movie. The strength and courage, the pain and trauma, is so incredible. It emotionally affected me. Not only is this film showing the world this truly horrific practice, but it says something about the world. Just because something worked in the past, because it has always been done or because it is "our culture" does not mean we must accept things that are wrong. What an amazing young man. And how fortunate for everyone that he had such an amazing father" (Rowe, 2015a).

To create such a production from a general lack of information, is a difficult task which only a few people could achieve. This becomes clear from the efforts of the filmmaker John Rowe.

Matthew D. LaPlante is another journalist who exposed mingi and its harmful practice to the outside world. He was a special reporter for CNN, Turner Broadcasting System (LaPlante, 2015). According to his explanation, it is impossible to calculate how many children have been suffering due to this practice. However, as this HTP seems ancient and ingrained in the culture, experts estimate the number at many thousands. He mentioned further that there has been limited academic research on the topic. However, certain observers have speculated that this HTP might have started several generations ago as a way to purge people who are more likely to become a burden or who are unable to contribute to the propagation of their people. La Plante travelled frequently into the Omo Valley and visited mingi children, their parents, local kings, the Omo Child Project, as well as both elders and young people of the Hamar, Bena and Kara tribes.

He interviewed scores of parents who lost their children; and attempted close relationships with reported mingi killers such as Shopa. His ground-breaking article was published in 2011: "Is the tide turning against the killing of 'cursed' infants in Ethiopia?" In this article he aimed to address the mingi issue according to the perspective of victims, the Omo Child Project, mingi killers, the government officials and police. He also attempted to explain the NGO workers' involvement and their positive impact, as well as reporting numerous other experiences. LaPlante, who worked with the Kara people for several years, reported that the mingi practice seems unstoppable unless the government and other stakeholders become involved and work together.

Ruth Styles is another journalist who interviewed a woman who lost 15 children due to mingi. After she met Buko Bulguda from the Kara tribes, she recounted the incidence as follows: "Buko Balguda, who was 45 years old, from Duss, a Karo tribal village in southern Ethiopia's Omo Valley, is alone. The reason for her loneliness is losing her children not by accident, but knowingly her community elders killed all fifteen children turn by turn. Village elders who decided that the children were cursed, killed all her seven sons and eight daughters at birth" (Styles, 2014). Buko spoke in a bitter voice and with a continuous frown, without tears, since she had no more tears weeping for 15 children for the past 30 years. She explained her ordeal to Styles: "I lost five plus five plus five babies – 15 in total ... I had seven males and eight females. During this time, our tribal traditions were very hard. I did not respect our traditions, so they killed ..." (Styles, 2014).

The main question from readers of this article was: Why? Styles (2014) explained:

"Her problems began before she even married, when her future husband failed to take part in her tribe's traditional bull jumping ceremony - an initiation rite for men that has to be completed before

they can marry. When he married Ms. Balguda, anyway, village elders declared that any children would be considered illegitimate and would be killed as soon as they were born.”

The elders acted on their declaration and in the process killed 15 innocent children. Buke recalls what happened at that time: “It was not me who killed the babies ... It was other people from my village. I broke the rules of our community, so they killed my babies” (Styles, 2014).

One could query such obvious cruel deeds. However, it should be understood that their response is legitimate to them based on their culture. These members give priority to the community rather than individuals since, according to their belief, they will lose the whole community unless they killed mingi children such as those of Buke. They believe that evil spirits or the ‘curse’ will bring bad luck to the community with afflictions such as drought, famine, disease or even death, unless children declared mingi are killed. Therefore, mingis should be killed, as the only way to save the other members. By revealing the plight of Ms Belguda, Styles contributed through her profession by making known the mingi taboo.

Recently a number of NGOs began charity work among the tribes. Beside their humanitarian activities, the NGOs are teaching the people to stop the mingi practice. Certain charity workers began understanding these tribes and are helping them question their tradition and understand that killing their own children would be an unacceptable practice for parents. For example, LaPlante met a German charity worker, Kosubek who gained permission to work among the Kara people. While they were discussing the mingi practice, this NGO worker explained: “These people are really good people ... They’re doing it out of fear. They fear for the lives of others in the tribe.” From Kosubek’s point of view, that fear would be conquered if the Kara could be led to believe in a reality stronger than mingi. “In his way of thinking, that means introducing them to Christianity” (LaPlante, 2011).

On the other hand, certain NGOs support these tribes in their cultural practices. Whenever they see or hear about mingi, they photograph evidence or write in their journals, however they are not working thoroughly to eradicate this practice, seeing that they do not consider it their primary task. In this regard, NGOs such as World Vision, Compassion International, WHO, World Food Program (WFP) and similar organisations have access to reach these members. However, the duration of the project or the policy of the organisation does not allow detailed focus on mingi, as others did. Personal commitment matters. Nevertheless, it would be difficult even to have heard the name mingi, was it not for these NGOs’ contribution.

5.6 Christian government officials

The “Democratic rights to individual’s beliefs” is stipulated in the Ethiopian Constitution under article 27 (1994):

“Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right shall include the freedom to hold or to adopt a religion or belief of his choice, and the freedom, either individually or in community with others, and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching.”

This article provides legal freedom of religion, especially for evangelical Christianity, where the Orthodox Church and the government are intertwined since the fourth century, A.D. Girma (2018) explains the context: “Inasmuch as Ethiopia’s context was one in which the church and the state were accustomed to seeing themselves as two sides of the same coin, the discourse of modernization had both a political and religious flavor to it.” Therefore, evidently the transformation in article 27 should be queried where only one church dominated for centuries.

The problem is that this article rendered several government Christian workers powerless in their opposition against certain HTPs. They have no power to resist these harmful practices in the rural areas since this article causes a barrier. Put differently, the tribal communities are pressurising Government to allow the exercise of their ‘constitutional rights’. Presently, it seems that government officials are caught in the crossroad of Christianity and political mandates. Such duality leaves them perplexed where they have to satisfy the needs of both sides. If officials openly disobey the Constitution, which is approved by all, they would forfeit their government positions. Similarly, if they support these cultural practices, including mingi, the church would not welcome them. However, mature Christians do not disobey their conscience since they understand that most HTPs are unbiblical. They oppose certain illegal and immoral practices by applying articles in the constitution that dismiss the HTPs, as was explained previously in chapter four.

In addition, recently officials have begun imprisoning mingi killers, accusing them of murder. Reporter LaPlante visited a mother who was imprisoned due to a mingi case within the south Omo zone, Jinka. He relates the incidence as follows:

“They have taken her tribal clothes. Her beads, her animal skins and her jewellery have been replaced by a tattered shirt and loose-fitting skirt. In that and most other visible regards, Mashi Lamo is indistinguishable from the other inmates at the Jinka Prison Institute. Yet everyone in this ragtag penitentiary knows who she is. ‘The mingi mother,’ says one guard, a woman who’s crisply pressed khaki uniform seems to stand out in defiance of this dirty, dilapidated jail, cut into a hillside

in the South Omo region's administrative capital. 'Yes, we all know what happened to her. It is very sad'" (LaPlante, 2011).

This case seemingly presents the first fruits of opposing the mingi practice among the Hamar, Bena and Kara community, although the woman is from the Kara tribe, who agreed to stop this HTP. Since this case, there was no legal action taken among these tribes whenever dozens of children have been killed by their parents and trained mingi killers.

Before the Kara tribes agreed to stop the killings, it was not typical for Kara mothers to kill their own mingi children on demand – none are known to have done so of their own volition. Thus, seemingly this was a hopeful start to arrest a woman who allegedly killed her own mingi child. Nevertheless, according to LaPlante (2011), a fellow Kara member reported: "Mashi could not have killed her baby; she was far too weak after the birth to have done such a thing. It was other women who took the child away, they say." Whoever performed these deeds, it is encouraging that officials have begun imprisoning alleged mingi killers. In addition, certain Kara politicians have agreed to stop the mingi practice. LaPlante sees a bright future in eradicating mingi if the government put in the effort of imprisoning the mingi killers. He explains, "Unevenly executed as it might be, the government's effort to crack down on mingi killings has influenced the Kara. Combined with other interventions, the fear of prison might be helping to save some children" (LaPlante, 2011).

On the other hand, certain tribal leaders still lag behind, seeing that they recall their involvement in these practices with pride. One of such leaders explained to LaPlante (2011):

"‘The baby was crying,’ Ari says, ‘so we put sand in its mouth, and he was still trying to cry but couldn’t anymore.’ Soon, the child was dead, and Ari escorted a group of women away from the village to throw the tiny boy’s body into the bush.’ [LaPlante asked] ‘What became of the child’s remains?’ [the answer was]: ‘The hyenas or other animals took it away,’ Ari says with a shrug. Today, Ari is the leader of Korcho village, and he counts his participation in the boy’s death as one of his proudest memories. ‘All the families would thank me for throwing away that baby,’ he says. ‘If I had not done it, they would have been angry.’"

This man is clearly proud of his participation in the practice, before he attained the position of leader over his people.

The question would be whether real change is possible. Such change seems unlikely if government officials are of the same view as the leader Ari. Based on LaPlante’s information, it is extremely uncommon for police officers to make the arduous trip from Jinka to any of the Kara villages. Nevertheless, there is a deterrent: "Ari says he and other leaders are nonetheless wary of the threat of prison. At some point, he says, the government will want to make an example

out of someone of his stature” (LaPlante, 2011). It seems that the hope of eradicating such inhumane actions among the mentioned tribes rest on the shoulders of certain Christian government officials who lead their people in the South Omo zone office. The way would be to pay serious attention to the problem, apply the constitution of the country and live a practical Christian life.

5.7 Contribution of evangelists

To follow, is a testimony of the evangelist Berhanu Chamo, made to the researcher in 2015. Chamo is a national evangelist who has been working hard to save mingi children beside evangelising the area since the 1990s. Although he is from another ethnic group, far north-west from the Omo people, he dedicated himself from the outset to save the mingi children. Berhanu Chamo was sent as an evangelist to these tribes 30 years ago (since the 1990s) by the Gofa Church. When he arrived in the area, he observed how those members kill their own children due to teeth positions and related cultural reasons. In addition, he saw how much the society discriminated against the women. On several occasions he attempted to oppose the activity, but no member was willing to listen, which included hearing the Good News of Jesus. However, Chamo met an indigenous convert, Adiyio Ayike, from the northern region, the Tsemay tribe. They began working together by reaching out with the Gospel and teaching people in several other social issues.

Since Adiyio was one of the earliest converts from his tribe, he began witnessing for Christ, although he did not receive sufficient education. Evangelist Berhanu taught him the basic doctrines of the Bible. Adiyio formed a close relationship with Berhanu by translating their language into Amharic. At a time, on their way to Alduba, the sun set unexpectedly and they knew they had to ask someone to spend the night seeing that travel during night time was dangerous.

It is common in many parts of Ethiopia to welcome guests who need shelter to stay the night. They entered a certain house to stay the night. The family welcomed them warmly. Though the guests could not understand what was going on, neighbours outside the house were involved in a heated argument about a certain issue. Evangelist Berhanu and his friend became concerned that the people outside would kill them but were afraid of the house owners. In that area, it was also common to feed and kill guests at that time. However, the neighbours had another issue. Villagers were discussing how they should kill a mingi girl called Tadiye Guldo. She was two years old when Berhanu and his fellow brother faced the situation.

The two guests overheard the discussion from Tadire's family. After a while, they asked her parents why they decided to kill an innocent child. Her family told them that the villagers blame them for not avoiding the mingi child. The whole year there was no rain around the village. As a result, all people blamed the family who did not avoid the mingi girl. Finally, the villagers decided to kill the girl. If her parents disobeyed their decision, their neighbours threatened to burn down their house and kill the whole family, for the sake of the community's survival. After having dinner and discussing similar issues, her family told them that selected elders of the area will arrive early in the morning to kill the child. Evangelist Berhanu and his friend heard their decision, but were powerless to oppose it.

It was a difficult time for these evangelists. Nevertheless, Berhanu and his friend spent half the night with prayers and secret discussions and woke up during midnight. Secretly, they persuaded the child's parents to give the girl to them, saving her from death. This was good news amid darkness to her parents, however they found it extremely difficult to decide. Nevertheless, her parents gave the child with mixed emotions. They were happy about child's fate but feared their community's furious retaliation and cruel punishment. In the late night the two missionaries took the child to Alduba, walking more than 40 km where the mission station is located. When the killers arrived before sunrise, Tadire was not there. The furious mob hit her parents, asking where they hid her. They told the mob that the guests stole her, and they are looking for her.

Berhanu's wife, Nigist Burkiche, took the girl and raised her as one of their own children, even though the threat was high from all directions. They changed her name from Tadire to Tarikua, which means "History" because God saved her in His own historical way. She attended school early when normally girls were not allowed to learn. Currently she is a teacher, where she priorly was 'cursed' as mingi. She is married and has children. The researcher met Tarikua, her husband, and her parents in Alduba on 26 January, 2015. Her husband works in the same office. Presently Tarikua, is a mother of beautiful children. Beside her regular job, she is attempting to oppose the mingi practice in the area. Berhanu also saved another mingi and is teaching her. She is learning at Kei-Afer Secondary School together with Berahnu's biological children.

A further incidence can be reported from the exact place. Mr. Awade Chata, an evangelist from the Kemba area, was sent to Alduba since the beginning of the 21st century. When he arrived there, he had a lovely child called Agegnahu, which means "I got him." Unfortunately, the child's first teeth appeared in the upper part of his mouth. Although they tried to hide the child, during a

women's meeting villagers observed how the teeth have grown. These women told to their husbands, who informed their friends. In a week the news was known to the whole Alduba.

On a Saturday morning, before sunrise, a mob from the community in the area arrived at the evangelist's home and demanded that he hand over his son. Otherwise, they threatened to kill him as well. They warned him that they would return early in the morning on Sunday. If he refused to hand over his son, they threatened to kill the whole family. He admitted to the researcher that this was the most difficult time of his life. After a moment of consideration, he told the mob to return after a day, seeing that he decided to save his son in any case. Awade Chata testified as follows to the researcher:

"It was the most difficult time that I never, ever faced in my life. I came here to fight against unbiblical practices like mingi and other harmful traditional practices, but I became a victim of it in a few months. My wife and I spend the whole night with prayer before they came to us, but God was silent until the end. Finally, I decided to die behalf of my son, but I fear that whether these people accept it or not" (Chata [personal interview], 26th January 20016, Alduba).

The following day, early in the morning, just before the mob arrived, six police officers came to that area for a security matter. The evangelist saw them coming. After discussing the matter with his wife and sharing a brief prayer, he picked up his son and ran to the police officers, yelling out to them. When they asked him what the matter was, he told them that the people from the area were on their way to kill his son.

Suddenly, there was an unexpected change. The police officers took the evangelist and his son to the area's *balebat* (king) and told the leader what was going on. As most people testified, Girazmach⁷ Adinew, the Bena king, is a good man who directly opposed inhumane practices, including mingi. If he opposed this practice openly, the elders would not support the mob. Without the support of the elders, no actions could be taken in the Omo Valley. The king ordered his people not to touch the evangelist's son because the latter is invited under his roof and attempting to civilise his people. In addition, the king cautioned that harming guests and their property brings shame to his people. Although the mob reminded the king that the evangelist's son is mingi, the policemen chased them off. The angry mob had to withdraw without satisfying their blood lust to kill the baby.

God saved the child, Agegnahu, miraculously. In such and similar ways, Awade and Berhanu and numerous other evangelists played a decisive role in eradicating mingi among the Bena

⁷ This was a position with equal status to commander in chief.

tribe. The researcher met two girls who were rescued by Berhanu. Currently they are scholars in high school.

Evangelists who came from outside these tribes are welcomed among the Bena. However, the neighbouring Hamar tribe members for years did not allow evangelists to teach against the mingi practice. In a previous chapter (ch 4), it was mentioned how the Hamar people killed evangelist Abel Gondalo in 1999 merely for opposing mingi and other HTPs among them. Nevertheless, the involvement of evangelists in eradicating mingi practice is more successful than efforts from other organisations. The evangelists succeeded in rescuing mingi children such as Tarikua since the 1990s. As was pointed out, even Lale (founder of Omo Child) was a victim of the mingi practice. These were the forerunners who opposed the practice before any NGOs or tourists visited or frequented that region.

5.8 Saved mingis

At the beginning of the 21st century (20 years ago), it was impossible to save mingi children, unless there were miraculous interventions by God as in the case of Tarikua. Most saved mingis are under ten years old and some are teenagers. Those who were saved by evangelists are currently in their twenties and Tarikua is in her mid-thirties. Beside the Omo Child Project, only a small number of children were saved by evangelists. However, the saved mingi children were not idle.

Teacher Tarikua has a wonderful opportunity of teaching students in the Alduba Junior School. As she told the researcher, she raises the issue of mingi when possible to her students and hear their feedback. Most students began to understand that mingi is illegal, unethical and a harmful practice that decayed the society of the Hamar, Bena and Kara tribes for several years. She holds panel discussions with her colleagues and most teachers are teaching against the practice. Tarikua confirmed to the researcher that mingi will become obsolete history among the Bena tribe after decades, seeing that most of these tribe members are converting into Christianity. The only challenge that she is facing is certain teachers who are considering her approach as more religious than ethical. Thus, they are cautioning that she is undermining the cultural attitudes of the students and converting them into the Christian faith without their consent.

Nevertheless, she and her husband are doing well to change the attitude of their fellow brothers who teach in the Alduba Junior School. She voices her expectation in this regard, "If God wills, the saved mingi in Omo Child and some saved mingis in high school would change the mind of the Omo people when they grew up and return to their society" (Tarikua [personal interview],

January 26, 2015, Alduba). Having a testimony by a saved mingi herself provides a valuable opportunity to raise the discussion among believers and others. These rescued mingis are asked to relate how they were saved and to express their feelings about the issue. Such queries in itself lead to discussion and opens avenues to deal with the harmful practice.

The hope of many is that the rescued children will become future leaders and help the cause by raising awareness. McCurry (2012) explains, "The hope is that the rescued children will be future leaders in their communities and will help raise awareness to help advocate the ending of the tribal practice of mingi." This is what the various role-players expect from the rescued mingis. Furthermore, the development of the saved mingi children matters. There are rumours that certain children are taken outside the area by adoption. If this is true, the adoption focuses only on individuals not the social issue, which thus would prolong the eradication of the practice.

5.9 The involvement of evangelical community

The churches' involvement in their holistic ministry toward society is the positive outcome and understanding of the Great Commission from both sides. It would be appropriate to start off with the statement of Monroe (2012) in the article, "The role and importance of the church in the community". The scholar explains as follows:

"The role of the modern church in the life of the 21st-century believer is critical because it fills a void only the church can. If a car needs fixing, it is brought to the mechanic shop. If someone is sick, the health centre or hospital is the best place to seek medical attention. Church is where people should go if they need a 'spiritual fix'. The church is really a hospital for sinners and not an exclusive club for saints."

From the exposition above, evidently the church is not a safe place for the saved believers; rather a place where people should be healed from their brokenness. The church is not a shelter that protects performing cars from the sun and the rain; rather it is a garage where broken vehicles are repaired. If that was not the case, the church would have no better value than any other organisation.

From the beginning in this study, it was made clear that the evangelical churches in the Hamar, Bena and Kara are more than 50 years old. Since the beginning of these ministries in the 1970s, SIM missionaries made significant contributions by expanding this church, until the present. As a result, the lives of numerous people changed in various ways. Some members from the Bena tribe became Christians from the outset. Their lives changed as they received the Christian faith. The reason was that the missionaries brought not only faith, but also education, training, healthcare centres and other infrastructure to this community. The immediate

neighbours of the Bena are the Hamer tribe, who speak the same language. The latter tribe members did not commit their lives to Christ as most of the Bena did. Nevertheless, the Hamer tribe also benefit from the healthcare centres. Almost all the Hamer people bring their cattle whenever they need medical aid from missionaries whose service centre is in Alduba, among the Bena tribe. The Hamer tribe also make use of the clinics.

Believers from the Bena tribe, together with national evangelists and foreign missionaries, have been attempting to reach the Hamer, Kara, Tsemay, Geleb, and other neighbouring tribes for numerous years. However, the ministry faced several obstacles that hampered their expansion. Civil war between these tribes hindered the evangelists from moving safely among them. Retaliation is common when someone is killed among the tribes. If a member from the Bena kills a Hamer member, they will bide their time to kill someone from the Bena people. It does not matter to the killers who the member is, whether an evangelist, a pastoralist, or a government worker, except for women. Thus, out of fear those who minister do not go that frequently to evangelise among their neighbours. Nevertheless, certain influential individuals are overcoming the mentioned obstacles and are making headway by getting through to the tribe members around them.

The other mission centre, Turmi, is located between the Hamer and Dasanech tribes. Missionaries purposely established this centre to reach southern Ethiopia and the northern part of Kenya where the tribes share the language and culture. The prominent workers of this centre are people from the Bena and Ari tribes, as well as national evangelists from the central part of Ethiopia. As a result, the growing influence of the churches becomes clear by the spreading the Good News and eradicating the HTPs, which seems a positive start.

However, a further barrier is that evangelists expect resources from foreign missionaries including their salary. For years, churches did not learn to be self-sustainable as expected. However, currently, there are changes. One of the purposes of the training centre at Turmi is teaching evangelists to become 'tent makers' rather than depending fully on local churches for their remuneration. Recently, there are glimpses of hope around the Turmi centre. Amid high temperatures and arid land, missionaries helped the church by digging a well to provide water. As a result, the people around Turmi have access to tap water. Church leaders such as Muga Bezabehi is turning this resource into an income generating venture. They sell pure water at a low price to the pastoralists.

The church leaders also launched a new agricultural project called Farming God's Way. This entails organic farming, keeping chemical fertilisers from the soil and growing crops by using natural compost. Muga is a Bible school director, zonal General Secretary of EKHC, currently

pursuing his MA in theology. He came to South Africa to receive further training provided by professional trainers from Canada and South Africa, Daniel Wiens and Grant Dryden in Port Elizabeth. Should Muga apply these additional skills, Turmi as training centre could service south Ethiopia and northern Kenya. In this way, Turmi could be a holistic training centre where head, heart and hands combine to eradicate poverty as well as HTPs such as mingi and numerous other unbiblical, illegal and immoral activities. Due the training centre, not only the HTPs, also poverty could be eradicated among these people, if they put in the effort. The present study aims to contribute to the holistic operation of this centre, combining Word and deeds.

5.10 Summary

This chapter pointed out and assessed hopeful glimpses that emerge from the Hamar, Bena and Kara tribes regarding minimising or eradicating the mingi practice among these tribes, formally or informally. The rise of the Omo Child brought about far-reaching changes among members of the Kara tribe. Furthermore, the expansion of the Christian faith among the Bena tribe is another ray of hope. Missionaries and national evangelists have fulfilled a significant role from the outset. In addition, certain journalists from abroad are penetrating the darkest reaches of the Hamar tribe where doors were closed for national evangelists and the Omo Child Project.

The involvement of the government workers is also encouraging. They are attempting to convict and imprison suspected mingi killers since the Kara people agreed to stop the practice. Workers from certain NGOs are also contributing what they can in order to fight the mingi practice. EKHC and SIM opened a training centre in the middle of the pastoralist society, providing holistic training to tribe members. In other words, this centre caters for both physical and spiritual needs of these members. In this centre, there is transformation that combine hand, head and heart. Before evangelists begin their ministry, they receive cross-cultural training. Both the Bible school and academic school is helping tribe members understand that true life does not entail having an AK47 and hunting animals, and at times, human beings.

In light of the mentioned glimpses of hope, the question remains as to the role of all the relevant stakeholders who serve among this community. This would be the focus for the following chapter (ch 6). The government, healthcare centres, police and court offices, NGOs and churches – all should cooperate to eradicate the mingi practice.

CHAPTER 6:

THE ROLE OF THE GOVERNMENT, CHURCH AND INDIVIDUALS IN BATTLING AGAINST THE MINGI PRACTICE

6.1 Introduction

The previous chapter (ch 5), depicted the current situation in relation to the opposition against the harmful traditional practice (HTP) of mingi. From the findings certain glimpses of hope emerged in the battle against the mentioned HTP among the Hamar, Bena and Kara tribes. The positive impact of certain role-players is helping to decrease the negative influence of the mingi practice among the mentioned communities. It was found that the Omo Child project is playing a significant role among the Kara people, with calls to the government to participate. However, responses queried the involvement of the government. In addition to addressing the mingi issue among the Kara tribe, it became clear that the Omo Child project has a future plan targeting the Hamar tribe, which is the most influential tribe in the area with the largest population. NGOs, individuals, churches and evangelists are also involved in the struggle against this HTP.

It is a highly sensitive matter to deal with entrenched HTPs, particularly the issue of mingi. However, this matter is not a future issue. It is an unwise decision to leave mingi as 'homework' for the following generations. Instead, it is necessary to gain a thorough understanding of the nature and extent of the practice, including its root causes and destructive social consequences throughout the community. The focus should be on promoting and providing technical support as well as mobilising resources for national and local groups. Such a concerted effort will initiate community-based activities aimed at eliminating the mingi practice. Such an initiative should be part of the daily activities from stakeholders who live among these tribe members.

The fight against HTPs is not the sole responsibility or burden of specific individuals, churches and NGOs who have been opposing its expansion for years. Nor should the battle involve only evangelists who have been fighting both spiritual and physical entities within the area for centuries. All members from these communities should participate in opposing such an unethical and inhumane practice that discriminated against women and violated the rights of 'condemned' children within the area for years.

The Ministry of Women, Children and Youth Affairs of Ethiopia (MWCYoA, 2013) stated, "Most HTPs are manifestations of inequalities and power imbalances between men and women, deeply entrenched in the social and economic structures and inhibit women's full and equal enjoyment of their basic human rights." These manifestations cause real problems that require

the involvement of all stakeholders. Therefore, bringing about balance of power and equality among citizens should involve the government, individuals, all NGOs and the evangelical community of the particular zone, region, or the country at large. If everyone cleans his/her surroundings, the environment will be clean and attractive. Otherwise, it is inevitable that the unclean environment spoils or pollutes the clean ecosystem. Thus, this part of the study strives to answer the specific research question: What are the roles of the Government, Church and Citizens of Ethiopia in minimizing the practice around the mentioned peoples group in Ethiopia? By answering this question, the study aims to attain the corresponding specific objective: To evaluate the role of the government, church and individuals in minimizing the practice among the mentioned people groups;

6.2 The role of the government

Governments have the responsibility to take care of their citizens. According to Slaughter (2017), President and Chief Executive Officer, New America, every government has three responsibilities towards its citizens. These are: protection, provision and investment: "Government will continue to protect citizens from violence and from the worst vicissitudes of life. Government will continue to provide public goods, at a level necessary to ensure a globally competitive economy and a well-functioning society." After stressing protection and provision, she adds thirdly: "... government should invest in citizen capabilities to enable them to provide for themselves in rapidly and continually changing circumstances" (Slaughter, 2017). Based on her explanation, the government's responsibility is clear: protecting its citizens from external invasion and internal attacks and providing in the needs of its people. The government should also invest in its individuals' capabilities by enabling them to fulfil their role as citizens in the country. These are the most focused areas of governance whether it is democratic or autocratic.

Boyden, Pankhurst & Tefera (2013, p.13) report that Ethiopia is a signatory to several legal frameworks. These are: the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC), the 1998 Organization of African Unity Addis Ababa Declaration on Violence Against Women (OAUAAADVAW) and the 2008 United Nations Interagency Statement on Elimination of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) (UNISE). Furthermore, Ethiopia was party to the 2008 United Nations and UNICEF joint initiative against FGM in 17 African countries. These are numerous agreements, however, it can be queried whether the Ethiopian government is applying the stipulations sufficiently. In a sense, it seems unbelievable that the mingi practice is leaving women and children agonised in a country that partake in several international, continental and

national agreements, declarations, and where joint initiatives were signed and approved. Signatures on documents have no real value unless it is applied in practice.

Nationally, the 1995 Federal Constitution, under article 35 on the rights of women, prohibited laws, customs and practices that oppress or cause bodily or mental harm to women and children. This Constitution completely opposes any form of physical abuse against women and children. Based on this article, the Ethiopian government has taken an extremely strong stance against both female child marriage and female genital mutilation (FGM) as the most important HTPs affecting women and children. In this regard, the government exerted effective influence by curbing female circumcision. The following remarks is often heard among tribe members:

“If she is not cut, she will break all the pots in the kitchen; If she is not cut, who will eat the food that she prepares? Cutting controls a girl’s sexual feelings, that is why the community like to do it; Being cut disciplines a girl’s mind and her reproductive parts, so she is more in control” (Williams, 2014, as cited by Boyden, Pankhurst and Tefera:39)

Such remarks and related offensive idioms and practices are common among the mentioned tribes. Nevertheless, the government worked to eradicate this practice. However, to date, there was limited organised and official efforts or overt involvement from the government to eradicate the mingi practice among the investigated groups.

In addition, according to Boyden, Pankhurst & Tefera (2013), the 1997 Federal Cultural Policy mentions the need to abolish HTPs step by step. The 2005 Criminal Code of Ethiopia also has relevant articles stipulating specific penalties for perpetrators of such practices. Based on the source above, several external interventions were promoted by the Ethiopian government and international and national organisations, through legislation, policy, advocacy and law enforcement, to address HTPs in general. These developments are clearly leading to changes in both values and practices in several parts of the country, if applied accordingly.

Based on international and national grounds, the Ethiopian government has the responsibility of opposing any form of violence against children, whether physical, psychological or emotional, which violates their rights. Such practices would entail: “All forms of physical or mental violence”, according to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC article 19), and a fundamental breach of their dignity and integrity. In addition, the 1993 National Policy on Ethiopian Women (NPEW), incorporates the elimination of HTPs as one of its core objectives (NPEW, 1993). The policy, thus in principle, emphasises the importance of fighting HTPs which have negative consequences for the wellbeing of women and girls.

The above-mentioned agreements, laws and declarations clearly concern the legal rights of women and children within the Hamar, Bena and Kara tribes. Both national, regional and local government offices have a legal ground to oppose the mingi practice. In the process they will save voiceless babies and women who are deeply discriminated against, among the mentioned tribes. Besides the local government, churches, individuals, NGOs and other humanitarian organisations have a legal mandate from the country's Constitution if they commit themselves to save women and children from these HTPs.

Therefore, the government from the area should respect the written document, the Constitution, which all Ethiopians endorse and is implemented throughout the country. These legal guidelines may be applied to save the children and stop discrimination against women in the Hamar, Bena and Kara tribes. The government should also confer with the churches, individuals, NGOs and humanitarian organisations on their views about the practice, and exercise its legal power to stop the practice. Evidently, all stakeholders have a legal foundation which gives them the right to battle the inhuman and illegal HTPs such as mingi among the mentioned tribes.

Subsequent, different aspects of government and their responsibility will now be discussed. When these aspects are promoted it will significantly contribute to the combat against this cultural practises.

Aspects of governments

Governments have different aspects. Essays, UK (2018) mentions eight aspects that good governance should have. These are; participatory, consensus oriented, accountable, transparent, responsive, effective and efficient, equitable and inclusive and follows the rule of law. Since there are many people who need the support of the government, governments should take consider the views of minorities and taken into account and that the voices of the most vulnerable in society are heard.

As it is mentioned above, the people of Hamar, Bena and Kara need a good governance and government intervention upon their cultural practice which has been affecting them for many years. Therefore, the area government should respect the written document, the constitution which all Ethiopians agreed and implementing throughout the country in order to save the children and stop discrimination of women in Hamar, Bena and Kara tribes. The government should also hear what the churches, individuals, NGOs and humanitarians say about the practice and exercise its legal power to stop the practice. Everyone has a legal foundation which gives the right of fighting against such inhuman and illegal HTPs among these people

Responsibilities of governments

As a leader of its people, every government should fulfil the needs of its people. According to Slaughter (2017), three main responsibilities should be fulfilled to each people from its leaders. These are protection, provision and investing on its citizens.

Government as protector of its citizens: One of the duties of every government is protecting its citizens from external attack as well as internal discomforts. For centuries all countries of the world have been protecting their citizens from outside invaders who came to dispossess the citizens from their country. According to Slaughter (2017), “Regarding foreign threats, government as protector requires the ability to meet and treat with other governments as well as to fight them” while assuring safe life in the country, it has to “...taxes to fund, train and equip an army and a police force; to build courts and jails; and to elect or appoint the officials to pass and implement the laws citizens must not break” (Slaughter 2017). Regarding mingi practice the law of the Ethiopian government hasn’t applied among the informed group of the country since both international declaration, for example UDHR **Article 3** states that “Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person,” shows that no one should be put to death for the sake of others or to adorn cultural practices; and the Ethiopian constitution approves that “Every person has the right to life. No person may be deprived of his life except as punishment for a serious criminal offence determined by law” (**Article 15; 1994**); an idea that implies that no one has right to kill someone due to cultural practices;

Government as a provider to its citizens: As we stated earlier in chapter four, one of the obstacles that has been paving ways for secret mingi practice is inaccessible infrastructure of the region, especially among the Kara community. It is unlikely to save mingi children from the attackers in the area. Sometimes it takes days to save since no roads are available and communication systems are poorly operated. As a provider, the government should provide services that individuals cannot provide individually for themselves because every government is “...the medium through which citizens create public goods that benefit everyone, but that are also subject to free-rider problems without some collective compulsion” (Slaughter 2017).

Government as an investor on its citizens: In addition to protecting and providing, every government has a huge responsibility of investing its citizens to have a better life because “...government should invest in citizen capabilities to enable them to provide for themselves in rapidly and continually changing circumstances” (Slaughter 2017).

Based on the above information, the government of Ethiopia as well as the regional government of South Omo has multi-dimensional responsibility to the people of Hamar, Bena and Kara people. Funding education and encouraging parents to send their children rather than sending behind their cattle, opening health centers and teaching them to use clinics and health centers

rather than depending on their cultural medicines which have sometimes direct relations with witchdoctors, investing on their education by sending them to boarding schools and providing their needs, opening modern agriculture system among them and shifting their attitude from herding to cultivating land and many other investments could change the attitudes of Hamar, Bena and Kara tribes.

6.2.1 The government schools

The government schools have the responsibility of legally compelling families to send their children to school where they can be taught and trained in various affairs of life. According to the World Bank (2017), UNESCO estimates that approximately 130 million girls between the age of 6 and 17 are not attending school and 15 million girls of primary-school age – half of them in sub-Saharan Africa – will never enter a classroom.

Education focuses on forming the people of Ethiopia since this country suffers from extreme poverty, compare to others in this region. It is, therefore, imperative that students, teachers, parents, and other role-players focus on education, thereby producing active future citizens that may help develop this impoverished country.

The emergence of modern education is a recent phenomenon in Ethiopian history. Bishaw, (2012:54), citing Teshome, (1979:28) and Pankhurst (1979: 676), explains how modern education took shape in Ethiopia during the reign of Menelik II in 1908: “Observing the shortcomings of traditional schools to meet the demands of the international political atmosphere, and feeling a need to advance the nation, Menelik II opened the first modern school at Addis Ababa in 1908”. After depicting its beginning, Teshome explains the main purpose behind opening these schools as “... educating the young to ensure peace in the country, reconstructing the country, and enabling Ethiopia to exist as a great nation among the comity of nations” (Pankhurst, 1976:676). In addition, the schools also aimed at producing administrators, interpreters and technicians. However, access was not for all, rather: “It was primarily for the sons of the nobility, and the fundamental principle that dictated the development of its curriculum was political interest” (Bishaw, 2012:54). Most Ethiopians did not benefit from these schools, only elites and their family members.

After the fall of the monarchy, the communist regime changed the objectives of schools and education throughout the country. Tekeste (1990, v. 2, #1) explains:

“Marxist-Leninist philosophy was the central theme that guided the political, economic and social life of the country. There had been no other time in the Ethiopian history that education was

conceptualized as an important means to secure political power. As a result, the curriculum during this period was highly politicized that students were required to take courses in political education.”

The above-mentioned ideology led the country into abject poverty where there was a high availability of schools, but low-quality education. The curriculum was designed based on the communist system of Eastern Europe.

After the fall of the communist regime, the current government made certain changes but the education system still needs several improvements. Currently the government understands the value of education and dedicates a significant amount of resources towards its development for all genders. Although the presence of girls in schools is necessary, numbers are still insufficient in several parts of the country. In addition, rather than prioritising national and international languages, the current government encourages diverse ethnic groups to use its mother tongue as school language. This approach seems unpractical since Ethiopia is a multinational country, comprising more than 86 language groups. Nevertheless, the use of schools have increased significantly, compared to the system under the communist regime; however, quality still matters above quantity.

According to the Social Assessment of General Education Quality Improvement Program (SAGEQIP), Phase 2 Ethiopia (2013), the ministry of education in Ethiopia has clear guidelines. The Constitution, policies and programmes in Ethiopia strongly support and promote the equitable inclusion of regions and vulnerable groups that lag behind in access to quality education. However, regarding the specific area of the Hamar, Bena and Kara tribes, the groups lagging behind is below the statistics for schooling. Children are not encouraged to learn, instead, they tend cattle with their older brothers or their parents. Girls are considered as their parents’ income source since they are promised to husbands, at times before birth while still in their mother’s womb (SAGEQIP, 2013).

Although the government provides access to education directly in the area of the pastoralists, no children attend. Rather than sending their children to school, utilising the educational offices, parents prefer to keep them around the homes and behind the cattle, seeing that children play a critical role in the pastoralist lifestyle. Boys from as young as six years begin to herd their family’s sheep and goats. Those above ten years tend cattle further away from home together with their fathers and older brothers. Girls marry when extremely young to provide parents additional livestock through a dowry. Procuring a dowry seems a favourable ‘shortcut’ to become wealthy in the area. Based on the above-mentioned reasons, parents do not send their children to school.

To overcome this problem, schools should become involved by encouraging parents to send their children to school rather than merely teaching those children who attend by their own accord. If school gates are opened only to register those who attend school but the parents are not motivated, there will be empty classrooms. Pastoralists focus on the present rather than wait for 20 or more years to benefit from their children's education. Nevertheless, also in this region schools have both a legal mandate and responsibility for citizens to motivate the parents, persuading them to send their children to the nearby schools. If there is no effort to reach the parents, they find that no children will attend their schools.

6.2.2 Health and education offices

One of the strategic policies of the World Health Organisation (WHO) is their battle against HTPs. Every member of society is encouraged to oppose HTPs after understanding its negative consequences better. According to UNHCR (1997:35), one of the strategies of eradicating harmful traditional practices entails:

“Focus on educating target populations (both men and women), namely religious leaders, traditional leaders such as chiefs, tribal elders and political leaders, traditional birth attendants, other health workers and the refugee women, men and children themselves on the harmful health consequences of these practices. In particular, it is very important to educate young girls on these issues.”

In addition, the Ministry of Women, Children and Youth Affairs (MoWCYA, 2013) states that the Ethiopian Health Policy also recognises the equality of women and the need to provide and expand health services to the most vulnerable and marginalised section of society, namely women and children. Special attention has also been paid to mothers and children because they are affected and are vulnerable to diseases due to various socio-economic, cultural problems and practices. Of the many strategies of the policy, prevention, is crucial to fight against the violation of reproductive health rights of women in general, including violations due to HTPs both against children and women, according to MoWCYA (2013).

Policies from both the UNHCR (1997) and MoWCYA (2013) clearly applies to the Hamar, Bena and Kara people since it focuses on traditional leaders such as chiefs, tribal elders and religious leaders. These sections claim themselves as the final authoritative leading bodies of society. If the healthcare workers build and maintain sound relationships with these groups, they will improve their opportunity of fighting the mingi practice. The reason is that healthcare officers in most parts of Ethiopia are well educated and have a better knowledge than others about the destructive consequences of HTPs. Throughout the country, numerous health centres have

been established, called *kebele*. These centres have structures that operate from the central office to the lower administrative level and thus have a better opportunity to address HTPs, including mingi.

In addition to its wide scope, the law of the country specifically categorised the practices which are harmful, stipulating their legal protection. For example, The Criminal Codes of Ethiopia, articles 561 and 562 refer to endangering life or causing bodily injury or mental impairment to a pregnant woman or new-born child by applying traditional practices known by the medical profession to be harmful. Professional healthcare workers and offices have a legal mandate and thereby, legal protection, to fight the mingi practice in the country (Articles 561 and 562). There are several offices and the officers are well trained. Nevertheless, usually it is not evident that they oppose the mingi practice openly. Rather, in several instances, certain health officers treat or battle other diseases as if nothing is the matter in the community.

Apart from the health offices, regional schools' offices are also better positioned to address HTPs, seeing that education is not only academic learning but also about life (Ozturk: 2001). Furthermore, education must focus on communal issues that hurt the holistic development of students, as explained by Ozturk (2001:39):

"Education in every sense is one of the fundamental factors of development. No country can achieve sustainable economic development without substantial investment in human capital. Education enriches people's understanding of themselves and world. It improves the quality of their lives and leads to broad social benefits to individuals and society."

Furthermore, Ozturk (2000:41) specifies the purpose of education: "Teaching only in the class and having not adequate background of the pupil could not transform the learner to bring changes in his/her holistic life." Understanding the backgrounds of students and solving their problems only takes teaching halfway. Unfortunately, numerous schools fail to focus on their pupils' background; instead these institutions attempt to change the students according to their system.

People are beginning to understand that education should effect practical change in the holistic personality of learners. The Teachers Certification (2019) explains:

"Schools in the 21st century will become nerve centers, a place for teachers and students to connect with those around them and their community. Teachers in this new environment will become less instructors and more orchestrators of information, giving children the ability to turn knowledge into wisdom."

Knowledge should play a decisive role in transforming the lives of the learners. If such knowledge fails to change their attitude, belief and skills, it has no value to the learners and the surrounding community. Acquiring knowledge must also address head, heart and hands, expecting a holistic transformation of the learner. Therefore, it can be considered 'best practice' to involve all relevant stakeholders in order to improve educational access to Ethiopians. In this regard, the researcher concurs with Shibeshi (2005:14):

"The analysis of educational supply, demand and processes related to poverty alleviation and the pursuit of sustainable rural development indicates that there is a serious problem that requires urgent attention. Thus, the international community, civil society and development organizations who have keen interest in supporting education systems of the country can and should work with national and regional authorities who have committed to change, and begin the process of improving the lives of large numbers of rural people."

In light of the explanation above, education offices in South Omo should address the need of students rather than opening their offices and welcoming only the those who attend. Instead, the education officials should move from their offices to visit and motivate the pastoralist community and encourage them to send their children to school.

6.2.3 The police and court offices

The 1948 UDHR and Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, (CEDAW, 1979, article 16) states that marriage should be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses. In addition, article 3 of the UDHR states that everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of their person. Article 7 also emphasises the equality of everyone before the law: "All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law. All are entitled to equal protection against any discrimination in violation of this Declaration and against any incitement to such discrimination" (UDHR, Article 3).

Adding to this international declaration as well as other previously mentioned global laws and agreements, Africa has formulated its own continental agreements and declarations on the rights of children and women. Regarding children, Africa has created the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) to defend children and safeguard their innate rights. For example, in article 21, Protection against Harmful Social and Cultural Practices, the Charter states the following:

"State Parties to the present Charter shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate harmful social and cultural practices affecting the welfare, dignity, normal growth and development of the child

and in particular: those customs and practices prejudicial to the health or life of the child; and those customs and practices discriminatory to the child on the grounds of sex or other status” (ACRWC, 1999).

The Charter also serves as the major legal instrument within the African human rights system that clarifies the rights and privileges which African nations must guarantee their children.

Regarding the Constitution of Ethiopia (1995), there are clear statements about protecting its citizens from inhumane practices or from any type of suffering or death. The Police and court offices have legal mandates to protect all citizens from danger. Below are the relevant articles from the Constitution on these matters:

Article 14: “Every person has the inviolable and inalienable right to life ...” – approves the security of life for all.

Article 15: “Every person has the right to life. No person may be deprived of his life except as punishment for a serious criminal offence determined by law” – establishing that no one has the right to kill someone through cultural practices.

Article 16: “Everyone has the right to protection against bodily harm ...” – prohibits bodily harm inflicted on anyone.

Article 25: “All persons are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to the equal protection of the law. In this respect, the law shall guarantee to all persons equal and effective protection without discrimination on grounds of race, nation, nationality, or other social origin, color, sex.” – upholds the protection of all people. Discrimination against women due to their sex is illegal, unacceptable and inhumane.

The Ethiopia-law-report (2018, Articles 561–570) of Chapter III of the Criminal Code, also deals with “Crimes Committed Against Life, Person and Health through Harmful Traditional Practices”. In particular, the Criminal Code stipulates the following offences:

- Articles 561 and 562 refer to endangering life or causing bodily injury or mental impairment to a pregnant woman or new-born child due to applying traditional practices known by the medical profession to be harmful.
- Articles 565 and 566 respectively set out punishments for the performance of FGM on ‘a woman of any age’ and infibulation of ‘the genitalia of a woman’.

- Article 568 states that the transmission of communicable disease through harmful traditional practices is subject to penalties.
- Articles 569 and 570 cover the procurement of, and aiding and abetting FGM by making it a criminal offence for 'a parent or any other person' to commission the practice or encourage someone to disregard the legislation prohibiting harmful traditional practices.

Finally, the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia Ministry of Women, Children and Youth Affairs (2013:26) states:

"The legal framework in Ethiopia has different considerations concerning HTPs. The major laws dealing with HTPs are the constitution, the Revised Criminal Code and the Revised Family Law. Collectively, these legal instruments explicitly prohibit and punish the practice of HTPs in general and FGM, child marriage and abduction in particular."

Based on the above-mentioned legal frameworks of international declarations, the continental agreements and Constitution of the country, the police and the court offices within the Hamar, Bena and Kara district maintain full rights to protect the vulnerable sector of society against the mingi practice, which is a deep-rooted problem in the area. In addition to the police and courts, Churches, NGOs and other role-players have the right to cite the articles of the country's Constitution and urge the security services and the court offices to bring an end to such inhumane practices among these tribes.

Individuals, victims, relatives and others who are concerned about the mingi practice, have a legal mandate that supports them if they interpret the law according to its stipulations. The various stakeholders should not point out the Omo Child project as only responsible body that opposes the mingi practice openly. The aim should be that all stakeholders contribute to eliminate this illegal, inhumane, unethical and unbiblical practice. As mentioned previously, such concerted effort will result in mingi becoming an obsolete practice in the near future among the investigated tribes.

6.3 The Non-Governmental Organisations

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have been involved for decades in numerous social problems. According to the Newsletter of Candid (2019:501, 503), Non-governmental organisations were first indicated as such in article 71 in the Charter of the newly formed United Nations in 1945. NGO activities include the following projects: environmental, social, advocacy and human rights. These organisations can work to promote social or political change on a broad scale or locally. NGOs play a critical part in developing society, improving communities,

and promoting citizen's participation. The main focus areas of NGOs' activities are the developing countries in the world (Candid, 2019: 501, 503).

NGOs are widely active in the developing countries. Regarding its expansion in Africa, the Conversation journalist writer, Matthews, reports (2017, v.7622):

"The non-profit sector continues to grow rapidly in Africa and around the world. In South Africa alone, there are more than 100,000 registered non-profit organisations and in Kenya the number of NGOs grew by over 400% between 1997 and 2006. And for most observers, they seem to be well-intentioned actors who do a lot of good on the continent."

Ethiopia is considered as one of the poorest countries that opened its door to several NGOs for support to its people. Based on Clark's (2000:4) information, "NGOs themselves – both national and international – began to appear around 1960, when neither the various self-help groups found in all levels of Ethiopian society nor the government were able to meet the growing demands of the population." During the communist regime, NGOs were restricted, being categorised as imperialists, or USA spies, thereby prevented from expansion. However, in the current political dispensation, after the fall of communist regime, the government welcomed several NGOs to the country. Since then, these organisations have been providing in the needs of impoverished Ethiopians in various ways.

According to Clark (2000:5), from time to time the numbers of NGOs active in the country has increased:

"By 1998, some 240 national and international NGOs were officially registered with the government, and a large number of additional groups awaited the recognition status offered through the registration process. The pace of registration continued to accelerate into 1999, with the best available count of registered NGOs now being 310. Further, there has been notable progress in the ability of the national NGOs to strategically target and design activities, credibly deliver critical services, and provide accountability on programming and expenditure of funds."

During 2019, according to the International Center for-Not-Profit Low (ICNL, 2019), there were 3181 NGOs in the country. This shows that NGOs are increasing annually, making use of the favourable political situation in Ethiopia. However, it should be queried why seemingly no NGO is involved in eradicating the mingi practice, except an indigenous NGO, the Omo Child?

One of the need-based areas in southern Omo is the location of the Hamar, Bena and Kara tribes. Most of this region is exposed to arid temperatures and face constant low rainfall. Being cattle farmers the people have an intensive agrarian life, depending mainly on rainfall during

three months or less annually. Being provided the window of opportunity, according to European Commission (2018), NGOs entered this area: World Vision, Compassion International, USAID, RESET, Pact, Ethiopia-Kenya Omo Delta Cross-border Project, Christian Aid and many others. Though there are multiple projects, their focus area is self-sustainability and providing in the short-term needs of the inhabitants.

However, as mentioned above, seemingly no NGO targeted the eradication of HTPs such as mingi. The reason for such inaction may be the government's political influence of the country or the original purposes of NGOs. In addition, as was emphasised previously, each tribe appreciates its traditional practices as the most appropriate culture in the country. Therefore, these tribes will not invite NGOs if they plan to eradicate HTPs. Certain NGOs are involved in eradicating FGM around central and southern Ethiopia. A specific organisation achieved significant success. According to Yee, from the Christian Monitor (2017:27), in one of the zones in southern Ethiopia, the NGO, Kembati Menti Gezima (KMG), was instrumental in halting the FGM practice. Yee reports, "Today, KMG is credited with virtually eliminating FGM in Kembata, a region of 680,000" (Yee,2017).

A key reason for the success of KMG as NGO has been its focus on "community conversations, giving residents a chance to think through the issues" (Yee, 2017). The mentioned region in southern Ethiopia is the area where the researcher was born, grew up and served the churches for more than ten years. The founder of KMG, Dr Bogalech Gebre, has passed away in November 2019. Under her guidance, KMG brought about impressive changes in the region. Thus, if the government in the area and churches motivate the NGOs to become involved in the opposition against the mingi practice in the region, such a combined effort would stand a real chance of eradicating this HTP among the investigated tribes.

6.4 The role of the Ethiopian Kale Heyiwet Church (EKHC)

According to Niebuhr (1951), one of the prominent American ethicists and well-known theologian of the 20th century, there are five basic ways how Christians should interact with culture. Before exploring the role of the churches among the Hamar, Bena and Kara tribes, it would make sense to follow Niebuhr's guidelines on ways Christians should approach the culture in which they live. Niebuhr explains the relationship between Christianity and culture in terms of five paradigms.

"Christ against culture": describes an ongoing battle between the kingdom of God and human's surrounding culture. According to Niebuhr, the reason for this antagonistic relationship is the Fall that caused a rift between God and humans. Therefore, Christians should withdraw

from the culture around them and create their own cultural expressions that give a better reflection of God's kingdom on earth.

“Christ of culture”: all aspects culture deems to be good is to be accepted as from God. This paradigm is appreciated by those who would argue that the Bible's moral norms often were written for a particular time and place and have limited applications for contemporary concerns (Spencer, 2015).

“Christ above culture”: According to Spencer (2015), culture can be successful apart from the Gospel since everyone has access to natural law. The Creator, through common grace, has given all humans a natural talent. In other words, being adept as an artist, musician, car mechanic, or doctor is not impacted by being born again as Christian. Though the church is a centre for saved sinners, that does not exalt the members or make them more efficient than others in their profession. However, they should live out the redeeming work of Jesus in every activity since Christ is above all cultures (Spencer, 2015).

“Christ and culture in paradox”: clearly indicates two kingdoms, according to Spencer (2015). “There is a radical distinction between culture and Christian life. In one's secular role, the values of the culture are most significant. In one's sacred role, the values of Christ's kingdom are dominant.” In other words, there is a continuous struggle within the human beings, between their fallen sinful nature and the Christ's identity redeemed in them. Such a struggle encourages Christians to oppose HTPs such as mingis that is set against the new creation.

“Christ transforming culture”: focuses on restoring of all things through the power of the Gospel. Until the day of the final restoration, Christians must work hard to transform destructive cultures into constructive ones since there is no demarcated territory for Christ and evil to operate, seeing all of creation fall under the control of one God.

For the best transition in approach to HTPs, the present study prefers the fifth paradigm. In this regard Ethiopian churches should participate in the transformation of destructive cultures into constructive ones since there is no dichotomy between the secular and sacred realms. It is the researcher's belief that the proclaimed Gospel has the power to transform even the cultures of the mentioned tribes. There is no territory demarcated for God and evil practices, seeing that all things on earth and the universe belong to one God.

6.4.1 Ethiopian Kale Heyiwet Church (EKHC) – national office

The Ethiopian Kale Heyiwet Church (EKHC) is the dominant denomination in the region of the Hamar, Bena and Kara tribes. The EKHC, of which the researcher is part, ministered for 60 years in cooperation with the former Sudan Interior Mission (SIM), currently, named Serving the Community in Mission. Since its beginning in 1927, beside evangelism, the EKHC has been opposing the HTPs in several parts of the country.

This church was established in south Ethiopia, where there are 56 nations and nationalities with their own language and cultural practices. From the beginning, it was extremely difficult to balance the teaching of the Gospel with deep-rooted cultural practices, which are transferred across generations. The early fathers of the EKHC received the message of the Gospel by faith, even though they were still involved in numerous cultural practices that were against their new faith. At that time, almost all these fathers were unable to read and write. The only way that they understood the Bible was by memorising verses and orally spreading the Good News which they understood from the sections they memorised. The more verses these fathers memorised, the higher would be their reward by the missionaries. The prime reward during that time was being provided a Bible.

Missionaries attempted to learn southern languages and translate parts of the Bible into such indigenous languages. However, these fathers were prone to dichotomise the secular and sacred realms in life. As a result, most of them led an ascetic life, separating themselves from society in various ways. Therefore, early believers were excommunicated from several social activities such as the *mehiber*, *edir*, *equib* (see ch 1) and other benefits. The reason was that they were convinced that God's people should isolate them from others. One of the prerequisites of being a Christian was 'leaving everything behind for the sake of the Gospel', as it is stated in Mat.19:29. At least for 50 years, this dualistic approach led to a rare or low engagement between the church and the rest of society.

Nevertheless, since 1999, the EKHC has begun understanding how cultural experiences should be dealt with in such traditional societies. Rather than judging the culture, this church preferred to teach people how HTPs hurt the holistic life of those most vulnerable. The vision of this church is "... to see a world where all the peoples of Ethiopia and beyond have heard the Gospel and become Christ's disciples and members of His Body – the Church, and actively involved in His service for holistic transformation" (Klaver, Jacobs, Terefa, Getaw & Getu, 2015:5). This church has been practicing its vision to help create a better world for all Ethiopians. In addition to its vision, based on the above-mentioned source, the EKHC also follows a clear mission statement:

“EKHC exists to serve God through proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ to the people of Ethiopia and beyond so that people may have eternal life, become Christ’s disciples, and be fulfilled spiritually, socially, mentally, and physically so that they become salt and light for the glory of God” (Klaver, Jacobs, Terefa, Getaw & Getu, 2015:5).

The aim is to change the physical needs of the people, regardless of denominational focus. To accomplish this aim, the church has been attempting to address the plight of tribal members, especially those of women and children, across the country.

The EKHC’s main office has two divisions: Spiritual wing and Development program. Asha (2009) make a relevant observation about the overall activity of the EKHC Development program, which focuses on the holistic life of Ethiopians:

“These programs and projects include the following: Integrated Rural Development Projects; Health Services and HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control; Water Development and Sanitation; Education and Vocational Training; Child and youth care; Leadership Development; Harmful Traditional Practices Prevention and Control; and Integrated Urban Development” (Asha, 2009:6).

In concert with the government, a number of projects achieved success in certain parts of the country, for example, those focusing on FGM and HIV/Aids prevention. Another achievement of the EKHC was to provide clean water to the northern and southern part of the country. Unfortunately, it is not clear why the EKHC, since its inception, has not become involved in the battle against the mingi practice as a national project. If the role of the church is transforming the whole area of life, the EKHC main office should participate in the fight against all HTPs, including mingi among the Hamar, Bena and Kara tribes.

6.4.2 Ethiopian Kale Heyiwet Church (EKHC) – regional offices

The EKHC follows a bottom-up structure: local churches, district offices, regional offices and the head office. Regional offices are closer to the local churches than the head office. Therefore, church leaders from these offices are more familiar with local churches due to frequent contact. In certain regions, regular meetings take place once a month. Each month, church leaders gather for prayer, discussion and sending evangelists to unreached areas. In addition, the regional offices have a stronger cultural awareness or closer knowledge of the context within the area. This understanding allows the regional office to cooperate with the tribal leaders, cultural kings and other well-known influential individuals from the area.

As mentioned previously, most political leaders in the south Omo region are from the evangelical community. If the regional church leaders use a humble approach, backed by the

sound teaching of the Holy Bible and critical arguments, the church leaders may get through to the politicians. As a result, the local churches ministering among the Hamar, Bena and Kara tribes could have political backing to battle the HTPs within the region. Furthermore, the local churches will serve as a bridge between the regional offices and the local people. The positive involvement by local church members will provide the regional offices better access to opportunities for battling the HTPs from the area.

6.4.3 Ethiopian Kale Heyiwet Church (EKHC) – national evangelists

The involvement of the national evangelists in opposing the HTPs, especially mingi, among the Hamar, Bena and Kara tribes, is one of the earliest activities in the region. The evangelists were the pioneers to expose HTPs to others in the central part of the country from where they were sent. A number of these evangelists were killed while opposing the unbiblical and inhumane practices in various ways. Evangelists such as Abel and Petros were killed in the region, merely for proclaiming the Good News and preach against HTPs such as mingi and similar practices. Furthermore, evangelists such as Mr. Berhanu (see ch 5), saved mingi children, raised and taught them as equal to their biological children. Berhanu has been teaching these rescued children as his own and providing them a successful future. There were other evangelists such as Awade (see ch 5) who resisted and experienced hardship when the community elders ordered them to kill their own children since they were considered mingi.

Evangelists residing in the Omo Valley battled the mingi practice for years but they did not have the opportunity to expose it except by minor reports to the sending churches. Should the evangelists gain similar access as current tourists and journalists, this HTP would be one of the critical issues in the country as well as beyond. In such instances the government and other stakeholders would also become involved. Thus, if these evangelists had such access, (money, communication channels and enough transportation access...et) as tourists do, they would have had the chance to speak out, however, their involvement in the area is limited.

One of the focus areas of the training centre, Turmi, is to teach and train evangelists before they begin their ministry. This cross-cultural training centre teaches evangelists to contextualise cultural practices guided by the teachings of the Bible. This centre requires stronger support from the EKHC and its regional offices, which would enhance the future impact of Turmi. On the other hand, the evangelists from the EKHC do not cease to bring the Gospel in the area. Currently, evangelists are proclaiming the Good News among the Hamar, Bena and Kara tribes. In the process, they attempt to oppose unbiblical and unethical practices such as mingi, *evangadi* (cultural dance) and related HTPs. However, they are hampered in their struggle since they still have no access to the problematic areas to expose the HTP of mingi to the rest of the

country. The training centre should be well-equipped with important resources such as transport access, communication tools and financial support. Such resources will help evangelists bring about stronger transformation within these societies.

6.4.4 Ethiopian Kale Heyiwet Church (EKHC) – Bible schools

The EKHC Bible school's ministry began in 1949 and has been spreading throughout the country in miraculous ways. Since its establishment, more than 82 000 church ministers graduated and fulfilled the Great Commission within the country and beyond. Currently the EKHC have 250 Bible schools, of which 165 teach on diploma and higher certificate level. The central office coordinates these schools and provide professional support such as supervision, training and teaching material. The researcher acted as one such coordinator.

Turmi Bible School was established seven years ago (2013). Currently, this school is used as the central training centre for students from both southern Ethiopia and northern Kenya. The Bible school also trains evangelists who are sent from the central part of Ethiopia to evangelise the pastoralists. These evangelists are better educated than others, but still need cross-cultural training to address the unique context of the pastoralist community. Therefore, the mentioned school is providing ongoing training to help these evangelists improve the cross-cultural skills in their ministry. The evangelists attend the centre every three months and stay on for a month for additional training in ministry.

Most of the students are recent converts who need basic doctrinal education from the start. In addition, some also have low formal education and did not complete secondary school. Therefore, the Turmi training centre provides formal education for the mentioned evangelists. In addition, the children from the evangelists and those from a number of pastoralists are attending school in the centre. Students come to this school from the Hamar, Bena, Kara, Geleb and other surrounding pastoralist tribes, keeping the teachers busy.

Nevertheless, most teachers are not strange to these cultures. The only new approach of the school is contrasting the pastoralists' cultural practices with biblical teachings and showing them that HTPs are unethical, immoral and unbiblical. The students understand the matter readily since they are familiar with these HTPs from the beginning. Some may even be victims who have lost their brothers or sisters, or are rescued mingis. They are well-informed about mingi and other HTPs. The appropriate practices would be if this Bible school train these students about HTPs and send them into their community to teach against these destructive practices which have been part of their society for years.

However, most students focus on evangelising their community rather than focusing on HTPs. The reason is that the Bible school is not yet equipped to focus on cultural practices. Thus, the aim would be to reshape its curriculum to include cross-cultural studies for an effective training programme. Such reshaping is the way forward. As was indicated, Lale from the Omo Child project is opposing the practice among his people. No one attempts to prevent him, even though they are not comfortable with his activities. Similarly, no one will prevent these students from teaching against mingi since they are part of the community. If an outsider opposes the practice, tribal members could threaten to kill that person. However, they do not harm these students since they are their children. Furthermore, as indicated previously (ch two), they are aware that killing each other results in bitter retaliation.

6.4.5 The Ethiopian Kale Heyiwet Church (EKHC) – church leaders

Previously (ch 3), the present study pointed out the powerful effect the sermon by Pope Urban on the expansion of the Crusades, although not supported by the majority of Christians. His sermons incited numerous Christians to kill and die for their faith. The religious leaders, community elders and traditional dispute resolution mechanisms have an immense influence on the community, directly or indirectly. According to UN Women (2016/8):

“‘Religious leaders are fundamental allies in driving the advancement of women's rights in Ethiopian society,’ says UN Women Ethiopia Deputy Representative Funmi Bologun. “Where patriarchal traditions and cultural practices condone discrimination against women, true interpretation of religion has the power to break the barriers and unlock human potential. Programs aiming to build the capacity of religious leaders on women's rights, is critical in order to reduce the social acceptance of violence against women and to change discriminatory attitudes and behaviors.”

Such an approach also applies to fighting HTPs in relation to children.

Traditionally, in Ethiopia, people honour someone who has become a spiritual leader in the country. For example, Orthodox Church leaders enjoy immense honour among their members in Ethiopia. Many people assume that the Ethiopian Orthodox priests possess *the keys of heaven*, therefore the people obey the priests in whatever situation they command, although these leaders do not have such omnipotent power. On Sunday mornings the priests hear the confessions of the people, in order to convey these to the Virgin Mary. According to these priests, Mary intercedes between the confessors and her Son and give them absolution for their sins. Naturally, such intercession is unlikely and unbiblical. However, the main issue in this regard is that most Ethiopians honour their spiritual leaders more than other authorities.

Therefore, this provides a clear opportunity to bolster the fight against HTPs if the priests are involved properly.

It is also common for certain rural evangelical churches to honour their leaders and afford them a special position in society. Most churches prepare more comfortable seats for their elders in the church and place it in front of the congregation. They sit around the podium and watch over the congregation. This practice began in the time of the monarchy, with a view that believers honour their leaders similar to the way secular leaders are revered. As a result, numerous church elders consider them superior to members and feel they deserve the honour. Currently this practice has been discarded in numerous churches, seeing that most elders are becoming graduates of the Bible schools. In these institutions the elders begin to understand the Christ-like leadership as a biblical way of exercising authority. They return and teach their congregation that all members in the church are equal before God. Thus, except for the elders responsible for the program on the day, all members sit together and worship equally.

If church leaders should participate actively in eliminating HTPs, including mingi, the outcomes would improve, should these leaders become involved in the strategy. The main problem regarding ministry among the Hamar, Bena and Kara tribes is the low number of evangelical churches, compared to other regions, especially the central south part of the country. However, currently the number of churches is increasing and numerous people are converted. The reason is that the new generation has the advantage of interacting with other ethnic groups in various ways. Thus, despite the lower numbers of local churches, if the elders apply their mind and accept responsibility, they may make a crucial contribution to the fight against the HTPs. People listen to and obey their spiritual leaders in Ethiopia, and honour their guidance.

6.5 Cultural kings

Most African countries had been led by traditional leaders for numerous years. According to Palitza, "In African society, the sphere of influence of traditional leaders continues to be strong, especially in rural areas. As heads of their communities, traditional leaders are key decision makers and the custodians of tradition, culture and rites" (Palitza, no date). The case is similar in Ethiopia, mainly in the southern part of the country.

In the previous chapters (chs. two and five), the issue was raised of cultural kings and their strong influence over their society. As was indicated previously, the Hamar king confirmed his powerful influence to Shea (2010): "If there is a problem, with cattle, people, the land – I resolve it," the king says ... "If there is a problem in my kingdom," he says, "the solution is

me.” Shea asked the king how far his absolute power can provide solutions to all problems. Shea recounts their encounter:

“I’ve never met a king before; I am not sure how to behave. In the dim, smoky hut, one of the king’s wives boils coffee over a hearth. I ask the king why, if he can summon rain, he has not done it earlier to avoid the looming drought. He looks at me with the expression of a man humoring his guest. ‘The people did not come to me,’ he says. ‘They did not make sacrifices to ask for rain’” (Shea, 2010).

Although they are mortal human beings like others, traditional leaders consider themselves as possessing powers beyond human beings, inferior only to deities. Nevertheless, certain kings understand their mortal nature, but put on the act because of their culture. The Bena tribe’s king, Mr. Adinew, was among those who understood his real position. Currently, he is deceased. His successor died also, after a year. The elders from the tribe are attempting to blame these successive deaths on Adinew’s decision to stop the mingi killings.

Mingi is not a temporary disease that needs a mere a vaccination. This is a deep-rooted practice that requires complete surgery. For such a perfect intervention, the specialists can be considered as the elders and cultural kings. If people treat the cultural kings based on their relevance to society, they are specialists who provide the perfect remedy to cure the practice of mingi among their people. Churches, government offices, NGOs and other stakeholders who concern them with the practice, should build a healthy relationship with cultural kings. These leaders are the right people to approach for stopping HTPs in the region. They have the perceived absolute power to command the elders to cease the practice among their people.

Nevertheless, the elders will be open if they are approached in genuine humility with the concern for their people, especially pointing out their vulnerable spot. The elders continually want to surpass their neighbours in demography, namely population numbers. An appropriate example is the main reason the Kara elders agreed to stop the mingi practice. Their consideration was not just agreeing with Lale and others about the women and children, but rather the issue of demography, as explained by Hack (2012):

“On July 14, I reported that elders of Ethiopia’s Kara tribe formally renounced the practice of Mingi, or child sacrifice. What motivates a tribe to overturn a belief system that has been in place for generations? According to John Rowe – the president of Omo Child, a youth shelter for Mingi children – the answer is simple: demographics” (Hack 2012).

It seems that John Rowe and Lale Labuko raised the issue of demography with Kara elders, seeing that their numbers are lower than that of other tribes in the region, for example,

compared to the Hamar and Bena population. According to Atlas of Humanity (2019), the population of the Hamar tribe alone was almost near to half a million, as reported by the national census of 2007, with 46 532 people in this ethnic group of whom 957 were urban inhabitants. In comparison to the Kara tribe, there are seemingly a large gap.

Hack (2012) places the reality of these people into perspective by relating an observation from John Rowe, the Co-founder of Omo Child:

“‘The Kara look around them and see the Nyangatom, the Hamar, the Dassanach, and other much larger tribes and realize they need to increase their numbers,’ Rowe told me by cell phone from Omo region’s largest town, Arba Minch. As I wrote in my piece, ‘Customs of the Omo’, the Kara [also translated as Karo] who number about 2,000, and the Nyangatom, who number about 30,000, live on opposite banks of the Omo River.”

The mentioned tribes have battled each other to strengthen their economy by plundering each other’s cattle. However, it would be extremely difficult for the Kara to fight the Nyangatom tribe, which exceeds them 14 times, or the Hamar, which have almost 22 times as large a population (Hacks, 2012). Thus, the Kara tribe have no other way to increase their population except by ceasing the mingi killings. Seemingly Lale and Rowe have found a way to convince the Kara elders that ceasing the mingi practice would increase their population and give them more authority as tribe in the area.

Thus, to conclude, cultural leaders do not want to be submissive to others. Most of the time, they seek dominance. If churches and government offices, including NGOs and individuals, focus on the vulnerable point (demographics), the issue of mingi would have found a complete remedy. On the other hand, leaders from the Hamar tribe resist the call to stop the mingi practice, seeing that they have large numbers to fight their neighbours, as Hacks pointed out. Therefore, to convince the Hamar leaders, other mechanisms should be considered to attract them, which will be dealt with in the recommendations (ch 7).

6.6 Summary

This chapter discussed the role of the government, church and other stakeholders in addressing the mingi practice. As explained previously, if all the relevant role-players accept their responsibility for changing society or put in the effort to improve the lives of the people, one may expect an improved society and country at large. The focus should be to promote the cause, provide technical support, and mobilise resources for national and local groups that will initiate community-based activities aimed at eliminating the mingi practice. These should be the daily activities of the stakeholders who live among these tribes.

Based on the imperative mentioned above, the chapter highlighted the contributions of the relevant role-players. These entail the government, police and courts, healthcare centres, NGOs, schools and educational centres. It was found that a concerted effort would be needed to eradicate the HTPs, especially mingi. These organisations have a legal and ethical ground to teach, mobilise or protect their citizens from any form of harm. Religious organisations should support their members holistically, in terms of head (knowledge), heart (attitude) and hands (skills), instead of focusing only on the spiritual forming of their members.

Finally, it was emphasised that the battle against the mingi practice should not be the burden of certain evangelists who fight both spiritual and physical entities within the area for centuries. The open opposition to this HTP, should not only be the concern of Lale Labuko and his Omo Child project. All citizens who reside in the area or in Ethiopia should participate in the fight against such a harmful practice that discriminated against women and violated the rights of children within the area for years.

The following chapter (ch 7), will answer the final research question. By answering this question, the final objective of the study will be attained by providing recommendations to change tribal members' attitude.

CHAPTER 7:

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Introduction

The last part of this study focuses on the conclusions and recommendation based on the detailed analysis of the research findings. The chapter attempts to answer the final research question: What are the recommendations for possible elimination of the HTP called mingi among Hamer, Bena and Kara tribes and assure the human rights of the victims? By answering this question, the final specific objective of the study is attained: Recommending the appropriate and possible ways of changing the attitudes of these people groups according to the teachings of the Bible and regulations of the country's constitution in relation to several declarations and agreements of global, continental and national regarding the human rights. Finally, the researcher attempts to show that the Christian-ethical approach will provide a better solution to the mentioned bio-ethical problem among the investigated tribes in Ethiopia.

7.2 Conclusion

Thus far the present study has indicated to what extent the HTP, mingi, has been affecting the holistic development of the children and violated the human rights of women within the Hamer, Bena and Kara tribes. After examining certain HTPs globally and nationally, this study explained the types of mingi. Thereafter, specific cultural practices were identified that provide fertile ground for the practice. These cultural practices entail: traditional beliefs, the role of witchdoctors and fortune tellers and the system of the traditional elders. The study investigated factors that contribute to the existence of this HTP. Among these factors were found: resistance to accept changes, cultural heritage, fear of evil, influence of foreign interventions, the government's policy that is not sharply defined and the resurgence of obsolete cultural practices.

The study focus shifted to international declarations and teachings from the mainstream religions, Christianity, Judaism, Islam, as well as other denominations and its views on the segregation of women and killing of children. It was found that almost all religious organisations oppose the mingi practice directly or indirectly. When examining international, continental and national legal frameworks, the Constitution of the country and the teachings of Scripture, it was evident that the mingi practice found no support in these documents.

Thereafter the research revealed how this practice has been affecting the holistic personality of humans by violating women's human rights as well as the rights of children to live and be

protected from harm. Physical, psychological, mental, economic, social and spiritual problems are widely seen in the region. Nevertheless, the study highlighted glimpses of hope that started since the last two decades (beginning of the 21st century) in the region. Churches, individuals, NGOs, missionaries, national evangelists and others began opposing the practice openly and in the process, saved numerous children from being killed. The mentioned role-players also began fighting discrimination against women. After discussing the hopeful instances among these tribes, it was emphasised that all stakeholders are responsible to protect the vulnerable sections of society within the mentioned tribes against such an unethical, inhumane, illegal and unbiblical practice as mingi. Government officials, churches, cultural kings and elders, the police and court offices have a moral and legal mandate to protect the women and children against this HTP.

Given that mingi has no legal, moral, ethical or religious foundations, the following recommendations are made. These guidelines aim to help all stakeholders who concern themselves with the rights of helpless children or of women who face discrimination among the Hamar, Bena and Kara tribes.

7.3 Recommendations

In light of the brief exposition above, the following recommendations are made.

7.3.1 Create awareness among the tribes

At heart the uneducated, but informally well-trained and skilled members of the Hamar, Bena and Kara tribes are prepared to accept changes. They should be approached within their context and considered as equal to other tribes. Early missionaries followed this approach and won over many people. While the Hamar tribe repeatedly attacked and killed indigenous people, no one touched the missionaries since their approach was humble and honourable. The missionaries understood that these tribes are totally different and require a different approach.

On the other hand, people blamed certain of the earliest missionaries for their approach not being above board. When a tribe member became converted, they gave him clothes to wear, money to use or other items for his daily life. This led to the misunderstanding that Christianity relates to material gifts. Such materialistic expectations will have to be dealt with in the future. Currently, this approach has been discarded.

Early governors from the northern part of the country focused only on exploiting these tribes for their own gain, rather than approaching them in a humble way and making them aware of the inhumane nature of the mingi practice. Certain governors did not consider these people as human beings, rather created to serve them. Woolbert (1935) relates the approach of the ruling

class to the tribe members, “The rest neither profess Christianity nor speak the Amharic tongue and are consequently regarded by the ruling race as its inferiors.” Thus, the ruling class did not focus on the problem of mingi and failed to create awareness of the problem.

Regarding the current political situation in the area, for the most part, the government does not exercise its authority properly. The area government are more familiar with the society than the national government, however does not pay attention to the practice. The government is also encouraging the resurgence of these obsolete practices. The reason is that these early practices are becoming a trademark of their tribe, which attracts tourists to the region and generates income. Therefore, the government officers seem powerless to oppose such a prosperous enterprise.

From the discussions and findings, it is clear that mingi can be considered as homicide. This harmful traditional practice (HTP) has been destroying tribes and families for many years. As pointed out previously (ch 2), one mother lost 15 children for being considered mingi. It is important that mingi should be viewed and dealt with as homicide, or more specifically, infanticide.

On the other hand, the cultural context should be considered as well. No parents will willingly kill their own flesh and blood unless they were misled and felt compelled by these ancient cultural practices. Therefore, churches in this region should preach against the practice. Schools should teach against this inhumane practice in public education. The government, legal system and police should enforce the clear laws against HTPs such as mingi. These entities should follow up on their legal mandate and prosecute perpetrators who practice mingi. All stakeholders should create awareness among these tribes about the unethical and inhumane practice and, by a humble understanding approach, urge them to stop.

If the community is fully aware of what mingi entails, it is possible or impossible to avoid this practice without being persecuted as criminals. The insight of LaPlante (2011) should be headed: “They're doing it out of fear. They fear for the lives of others in the tribe.” Awareness campaigns should understand: The tribes will listen if the approach is focused on the community rather than individuals, since they have a social conscious. They give preference to social rather than private issues, or to the spiritual realm above the physical world. Their acts may seem immoral to outsiders, but it is their cultural mandate that they perform for the good of their society. It is thus, first necessary to understand that these tribe members seek to save their community, which they place above their own flesh and blood, their children. However, by creating awareness with humility and honour, the tribes can be approached and persuaded to cease the mingi practice.

7.3.2 Build peaceful relationships with the community, cultural kings (*balabats*) and mingi-practicing groups

Naturally it is shocking to hear about the mingi practice for the first time, as witnessed by Wallace (2012): “The first time Mingi was explained to me I found it hard to believe. What society would support the killing of healthy children, their children?” (Wallace, 2012). Thus, no humane response appreciates or encourages this activity as an important cultural practice that must be transferred across generations. Instead, people opposes this practice strongly and discusses ways to stop this inhumane activity from the Omo Valley.

Missionaries and national evangelists responded to the seriousness of this harmful practice. They struggled to stop the mingi practice by supporting families who hide condemned children and taking them to the missionaries to save. Evangelists achieved some success by bringing up saved mingi children as part of their family in the midst of severe opposition.

However, these missionaries and evangelists were not from the specific ethnic group. Thus, despite rescuing a number of children, they could not exert more influence among the tribes. During the regime of the military government, the practice was almost stopped. However, the approach was not convincing or peaceful; instead it was done through force. These actions caused many tribes to leave, moving into the deepest valley area across the Omo River, and began opposing the government from there.

The situation under the current government seems paradoxical. On the one hand, the government is encouraging the resurgence of important, ignored traditional cultures, which bind ethnic communities together. On the other hand, several of these activities are leading the current generation back to the ancient practices. These include witchdoctors’ supremacy, reading intestines by fortune tellers and the harmful traditional practices such as mingi. These unethical, unscientific, unbiblical and inhumane activities that were buried for years are becoming prominent again within communities, including that of the investigated tribes. Even educated and revered political officials partake in rituals with witchdoctors where they smear their faces with goat’s blood and read its intestines to predict their future and path of the community which they govern.

Approaches should understand that these practices are ingrained in the culture. Thus, building a healthy relationship with the community and its leaders, the cultural kings (*balabats*) should not be through superficial humility or with autocratic legitimacy. The relationship should be based on sound principles that convince them through a humble approach. In this regard, the government should lead the people according to the ratified Constitution of the country, which

all should obey. Churches and NGOs should approach traditional leaders and elders humbly to explain how much this practice has been affecting the community in terms of health, demography and a civilised lifestyle.

As was indicated previously (Ch. 2), improper relationships invoke resistance, disobedience and revolution. Thus, proper and sound relationship are more likely to bring changes and transformation within the society. Therefore, all stakeholders who work, teach, lead and live among these tribes should invest in a sound relationship. Within such a relationship of trust, they can be guided to understand how much they are disobeying God and breaking the Constitution of the country, even though they have multiple useful practices to help them prosper otherwise.

7.3.3 Equip and support the trained people of the area in all activities

The Omo Child project is bringing about change on a large scale among the Hamar, Bena and Kara tribes, although there is still resistance from the Hamar people. However, although personal efforts and support from the area government are appreciated, most of the funding is from abroad. As explained previously, concerned individuals such John Rowe are the sources of income. Rather than depending on income sources from the outside, it is recommended that tribes develop indigenous income generating systems. Examples would be opening lodges and hotels by the area government, charging the tourists to support saved mingis and protection centers, encouraging religious organization to include mingi prevention projects in the holistic activities are some among many.

On the other hand, many educated people from the Hamar, Bena, Kara and other tribes understand that the mingi practice is illegal, immoral and against their religion. Neighbouring tribes also are better informed about the context of the tribes living next to them. To transform the area, these neighbours should become involved by committing themselves to serve their wider community. Development is successful when it is cooperative and proportional. An undeveloped economy, untransformed minds and unaware citizens become a burden to others unless the process is changed. Therefore, to work towards a transformed community, the enlightened people of the area must be supported.

To ensure happy and unconcerned children who enjoy God's grace in their life, the mingi practice should be stopped, which requires a change in mind-set. Therefore, an awareness should be created among the mentioned tribes. In the process, the apprehensive people must be well-equipped, supported and encouraged, although this is not a one-day operation. The campaign against the mingi should not be only the burden of charity organisations, government

officials and generous sponsors. It is the responsibility of everyone who seeks a transformed and developed Ethiopia in the future.

7.3.4 Establish care centres for mingi children

This study highlighted the Omo Child project, established by Lale Labuko and foreign supporters. The project set out to save and support mingi children in the midst of dark conditions among the investigated tribes (see ch 5). Many children were saved from not only death, but also from poverty, illiteracy and different forms of inhumane cultural bondages. It is encouraging to see contented children where others are cast of a high cliff or thrown into the river without it being their fault. Many indigenous people appreciate this child project, although there are minor objections, especially among the elders.

The government and the church are playing a limited role in this campaign. A few government bodies are attempting to create awareness about the unlawful and inhumane nature of mingi and churches are teaching against this practice. However, neither institutions are trying to open additional caring centres to support these children. It is true that certain evangelists are raising saved mingis as their own children and helping them attend school. Nevertheless, these evangelists are among the poorest members in society. Churches support them with only a monthly salary, which is insufficient to support their children. While evangelists are struggling to sustain themselves, they are battling the practice that kills condemned children around them.

To overcome the problem, Government should open care centres in towns such as Alduba, Demeka, Kei-Afer and Turmi, which are widely occupied by mingi-practicing tribes. With care-giving centres established, it would open ways for churches and charity organisations to support the affected children. The area government should cooperate with legal and political bodies by supporting charity works. Such a concerted effort will make it possible to stop the mingi practice within this society and make it part of the other obsolete practices among the Hamar, Bena and Kara tribes. In addition, churches should consider opening such centres alongside their evangelism, thus presenting a holistic ministry of Word and deeds.

The findings have shown that the Ethiopian Kale Heyiwet Church (EKHC), the dominant denomination in the area, has a wing that focuses on development. This church played a significant role in stopping Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and HIV/Aids in several parts of the country. If this church expands its vision to save mingi children, there will be no opposition to its actions. The reason is that the EKHC is a well-known religious organisation, which has been involved in many holistic activities in the country since 1927. Therefore, the central office should consult with the regional offices to open such mingi-saving centres in South Omo.

7.3.5 Using geographical and economic opportunities as a means of income to support mingi-prevention activities

Southern Omo region is a favourite tourism site for visitors and a fertile land that support not only its inhabitants, but also the whole of southern Ethiopia, if used properly. Tourists from different countries come to this area frequently and invest large sums to visit and experience the 'organic' culture of the tribes from the "Lower Omo Valley", compared to the "north" historical circuit (Lonely Planet Magazine, 2019).

Around Turmi, there are several tourist centres, lodges and hotels located, however all are owned by private sectors companies. Despite the impressive private recreation centres, the area government did not build roads to this area to provide better infra-structure. In addition, this government are not opposing HTPs, seeing that they receive revenue from tourists who visit the 'organic culture', which is unique in the world. Therefore, the government will not open ways to involve the private sector in the fight against the mingi practice.

However, people, unless they are selfish or careless, cannot enjoy their personal lives at the cost of suffering innocents. Therefore, in addition to encouraging the private sector in the area to improve the lives of the indigenous dwellers, the government should open ways for additional revenue. Fees could be imposed for tourism, funding the campaign to prevent the mingi practice. Supporting centres could be established that collect gifts or donations for the mingi-protection centres, helping them improve their jobs and support the victims.

A further opportunity of this area is economic. Since most of the tribes follow a pastoral lifestyle, the fertile land is available for the private sector to involve them in agricultural enterprises. It is encouraging that the government opened a sugar factory at Kuraz and is introducing certain pastoralists to a mixed economy, despite the national and international opposition against the destruction of the traditional cultures (see ch 4). In addition to Kuraz, there are wide-spread fertile land along the Omo River until it flows into the Turkana Lake. It is recommended local investors should get involved in this project and render support to the government. Thereby, the government may use this opportunity to civilize the community and help eradicate the harmful traditional practices (HTPs) such as mingi.

7.3.6 Equip the Turmi training centre for cross-cultural ministry

It was indicated (ch 5) that the Turmi centre is an important facility for biblical teaching and cross-cultural training. The resident Bible school trains converts from the Hamar, Bena, Kara, Pody, Geleb and several other surrounding tribes. After undergoing two years' formal education,

the graduates are sent to evangelise their tribes in their own language. Those who have no secondary school certificate, return every three months for ongoing training while in the ministry. Recently (2012) Turmi was turned into a training centre for organic farming in the midst of an arid climate. Missionaries dug wells to support the surrounding community with fresh water. Such service and other activities made this centre extremely important to people from the area. Nevertheless, the centre has certain needs:

- There is a lack of transport to move students between areas. An old vehicle, jokingly named “ship of the desert”, is currently almost done after service of more than 20 years.
- The living rooms are deteriorating and additional homes are needed in the compound.
- Those who work day and night to help transform the surrounding society have to get by with a low salary, insufficient to support their family.

A concerted effort is required by the government, churches, NGOs and other stakeholders who seek the eradication of mingi among the Hamar, Bena and Kara tribes. All available role-players should participate by supporting this training centre through their knowledge, skills, finance, experience and other resources.

7.3.7 Stop the bull jumping practice among the tribes

One of the root causes of mingi is the bull jumping. Therefore, in order free oneself free from the consequences, one has to avoid the cause. Bull jumping is the main source of the mingi culture. As explained previously (e.g. ch.2, young men are forced to participate in a ceremony where they jump seven to fourteen bulls at least four times to gain the right marry. For the bull jumping, the family has to prepare a huge banquet and invite at least more than 300 relatives and friends, which is costly. If the family do not have the funds for these preparations, the young man would not be able to ‘jump the bulls’. Thus, if he marries before that time, his wife is considered mingi. Should they bear children before he performs the ritual, all children should be killed. The community excommunicates the pair and the husband and wife will live a miserable life, losing their children and being driven from their society.

Many people encourage bull jumping, considering it as one of the unique traditional practices in the world. One of the main reasons is that hundreds of tourists’ flock to the area to watch the bull jumping ceremony and take photographs, providing a means of income for the tribe. Therefore, as a step to stop the mingi, it is recommended that the area government use its legal mandate to stop and prohibit the bull jumping ceremony in the region.

If the recommendations above are applied properly, mingi will be an obsolete history which the coming generation will refer to as: "It was!" Agonised children of the Hamar, Bena and Kara tribes will enjoy a better life as it is granted by their Creator. Women will enjoy their marital life and delight in raising their children without worrying over the mingi curse. To bring about this change, the researcher believes that the proposed Christian-ethical approach is the best way of providing a sustainable solution to this bio-ethical problem among the investigated tribes in Ethiopia.

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