

# *The Condition of Women and the Land Nationalization Law in Ethiopia*

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## **Introduction**

The Land Nationalization Law in Ethiopia was passed in 1975. In this article I will discuss the position of rural women in Ethiopia *before* the Act has passed, in order to lay the basis for an evaluation of the possibility of the reform to influence women's legal and social status. *antibok*

The position of the rural women in Ethiopia must be discussed within the framework of the extent of the agricultural population in Ethiopia. 90% of the entire population is considered part of the rural population. Men within this enormous agricultural population have in their roles as farmers and heads of household been the object of both scientific and administrative interest. Not least in view of the severe crisis within the agricultural sector of the Ethiopian economy. Women, on the other hand, have escaped more systematic notice. This is due to two reasons. On the one hand the crisis within the agricultural sector of the economy has been so severe it has been impossible to sort out the position of women within this crisis. That is, the importance of a failing sector and the consequences for millions of lives have obscured the position of rural women in Ethiopia.

The second reason is that within the rural population of Ethiopia, there are very few educated women. Women who *are*

educated believe that they exist on an equal footing with men, hence they are not active in organizing less fortunate sisters or interested in focusing light on the more general question of women's legal and social status in rural Ethiopia.

By examining three areas of everyday life, socialization of women, marriage, and education, this article gives a description of the attitudes, traditions and structural hindrances which exist in the life of the rural women in Ethiopia. Although differences do exist between the rural women of the North of Ethiopia (mostly in terms of inheritance rights) and those of the South of Ethiopia as well as between Muslim women and Christian women, I have chosen to treat rural women in Ethiopia as a collective group and to specify differences where appropriate in the text.

Although my field work in Ethiopia was carried out a short time after the Land Nationalization Law became effective, the deep-interviews I did with individuals in nine provinces during March - August 1976 encompassing over 200 persons or groups of individuals, were sufficient to clearly depict the long tradition of women's place in society. The following article is based on interviews gathered during this period as well as follow-up interviews in the years between 1976-1984 on return visits to Ethiopia.

In a country like Ethiopia, where there is a lack of active organizations that can activate women and stimulate parents to overcome their suspicion towards educating their children at government schools, the children and especially the girls are dependant on their parents' way of socializing them. And the socializing of a girl is completely different from that of a boy. Girls have always been taught not to discuss and ask questions in public and it takes time to overcome such inhibitions. Among the women interviewed in Wollo, Woyzero Yewoyesht, a middle aged woman, said:

When I was a girl, I was told not talk or laugh loudly in front of men and elderly people. After I got married it took me three years to start talking freely with my husband, but this freedom still does not mean that I can join discussions whenever a third person is present. I am supposed to leave the room and prepare food or drink for them or sit quietly until the guest has left. Therefore I do not think that I will be able to talk or ask questions in public even if I am given the chance to do so, because of lack of experience in practicing public discussions and also lack of education to construct the speech.

## 1. The family and the upbringing of children

The family is both the economic unit and the cultural institution, based on authoritative position. The women and the children are under the control of the head of the family - the man. But the structure of the family varies according to the economical and cultural status of the family members. Thus, in this type of family the husband has a dominating power over his wife and children. The birth of a son, especially the first one, is celebrated, while the birth of a girl is deplored. Therefore, the women most of the time fear being abandoned by their husbands if they do not succeed in giving birth to a boy.

Female children are trained to take care of their younger brothers and sisters and to help their mothers in the household work. They are also constantly reminded of their being under their older brothers' and their husbands' protection. Therefore they have to love, respect and care for them and obey their orders without questions. Boys are given the proper training of how to cultivate the land which gives them the status of participants in decisions concerning the family's economy. Thus, in a society where a woman is denied participation in meaningful production or her part in the production is seen as marginal, the role of mother will be the only way of realizing herself. However, a woman's freedom to play the role of mother is restricted by her subordinate position to her husband.

In 1979 in Gojjam, I asked Ato Ayele Mulatu, a married man with two sons and three daughters, how he brought up his children. He said:

You know I almost decided to divorce my wife after her fourth pregnancy. But it turned out be a boy and that saved our marriage. I have two sons, four and two years old, and three daughters, twelve, nine, and seven years old. I have already started to take my four year old son out into the fields as much as possible. He is a very clever boy and learns much simply by looking at what I and my friends do. I will send him to school so that he will learn to read and write so that nobody can trick him into signing letters without reading them like I used to do before.

He went on telling me about his four years old son and even his two year old son, who according to him will learn much from his brother and the two will become good friends and work together.

At last I managed to ask him about his daughters and what he planned to do for them. He said that his wife is a very good woman and that is why he did not divorce her even if he was not happy with waiting for sons. She is taking care of them and he hopes that they will be like her. What he was intending to do for them was to find husbands that are working hard to protect and support them. It would not be hard for him to find husbands for them, because they are well mannered and beautiful. The oldest and the nine year old were engaged to young men who according to him have good family backgrounds. This discussion gives us a clear picture of the position of a woman in the family.

## 2. Marriage

According to the law, marriage is a contract into which two individuals, a man and a woman, enter of their own free will. But this does not work in Ethiopia, especially not in the rural areas.

In the rural areas it is the parents of the couple who, most of the times, decide the marriage. In this way, friends promise each other to unite their children in marriage even before they are born. In northern Ethiopia the best criterion of being a good family is to marry off the children at a very young age – for example a girl at the age of six to eight and a boy at fifteen to twenty. The reason behind this is that the couple grows up together and develops a feeling of affection to each other. The parents do not seem to be concerned whether the boy and the girl love each other or not. An open love affair, especially an open reaction of a woman towards her husband, is disliked by her family and relatives because they fear that her husband's family and others will think that she may react towards other men in the same manner. This is one of the reasons why girls are circumcised.

In 1980 in Gonder I asked Woyzero Tewabech Belete, a mother of four girls and three boys, if her daughters were circumcised. She said, "Oh yes!" and she looked at me as if I asked her about something that I did not need to ask, because she thought that I as an Ethiopian should know about it. After a while she said that circumcision is meant to reduce the sexual need of a girl so that her husband will not have any difficulty in



handling her. A man, she said, may have sexual relations with other women and he may sometimes force his wife to accept his illegitimate children if there are any. But when a man suspects his wife of having affairs with other men, he beats her badly and then he divorces her. A girl, who has had sexual relationships with men before marriage, most of the time will most certainly be pregnant and this in almost all cases means that the girl is rejected by her parents, relatives and also by the man who made her pregnant. Even if a girl over the age of twelve has no sexual relations with men she is seen as improper for marriage if she tries to be independent. Her independence will be seen as characteristic of a type of girl that can go to bed with anybody and therefore she is going to be a prostitute. Her present and future life will be judged and condemned by the members of society who live up to the traditional way of life.

For this reason parents try their best to marry off their daughters in good time, that is before relatives and friends consider them to have passed the age of marriage because nobody wanted to marry them. Parents, who have ten to twelve year old daughters at home and nobody to ask for their hand, start to feel ashamed of the situation and will do whatever they can to marry them off. Especially the mother feels herself responsible, because she will be accused of not having educated them in a proper way, so that men will be attracted to them. In other words, the future of a girl depends primarily upon the economical conditions of the family and, secondly upon her mother's capacity for training her in house-hold work and good manners.

Young mothers behave in a way that other people expect them to, not only for their own sake but also for the sake of their daughters' future. Mother and daughter have to go through the same training and behave in the same manner without any alteration of the pattern accepted by the members of society. The mother is a female who behaves properly and manages the house-hold work, and her daughters are females and therefore have to be exact copies of their mothers. Many of the interviewed women explained that when the number of daughters increases, their worry for their daughters' future also increases. They told me that relatives and friends used to remind them that they as mothers of several girls should not comment on other girls' behaviour before succeeding in marrying off their own

daughters. Though the mother is responsible for attracting men towards her daughters, the decision as to whom they are going to marry is made by the father.

The most interesting point is that a girl is forced to be a copy of her mother while a boy, even if he is trained by his father, the father is not seen as responsible for the activities of his son since the son is expected to accept responsibility. Part of a boy's training is to remind him that one of the criteria of being a good man is to be responsible for what he has done and is doing.

Thus, a man can evaluate his wife as obedient or disobedient, and accept or reject her accordingly. The woman on the other hand is aware of her position and has to live up to the expectations of her husband and his relatives, because of fear for being rejected not only by her husband but by her family and her relatives as well. Therefore a woman stays with her husband not of love but for fear of what will happen to her in the future. Since a woman exposes herself to criticism and possibly even to insult from people in the area many women are forced to run away from their husbands and their children. The hiding places of these women are small towns where they might obtain work as servants in decent families or turn into prostitutes.

As I pointed out before, especially in the northern part of the country a girl marries at the age of six to eight years old. Many women interviewed in this area said they got married at the age of five, six or nine and lived with their parents-in-law. One of them by the name Belaynesh told me, that she got married at the age of five and lived with her parents-in-law for seven years. During this time she had problems in determining whether the boy was her husband or her relative. This was because her parents-in-law used to address him as if he were her brother or a relative. They used to say to her "call your brother", "give this to your brother", etc.

One night, when he tried to make love to her, she did her best to slip out of his grip. She ran to his mother to say that her brother tried to have sexual relationship with her. She was told that he was her husband, not a relative. There was no way out of her but to accept the situation. But the marriage did not last long because her husband did not find her obedient and therefore sent her away. She said that she and her mother had a hard time for about three years until she managed somehow to get married again. Her new marriage, she said, was a relief not only for her

but also for her mother who was blamed because her daughter was disobedient.

At another time I asked one of the men among the members of the peasant association in Gonder how he got married and how he looked upon the marriage conditions in the rural area. He told me that he got married at the age of twenty-one and he saw the girl he married beforehand. His uncle pointed her out to him at a distance. He and his friends watched her for a long time before he accepted his parents' suggestion. But he said that there are many who were not in a position to argue with their parents because of fear of being economically punished. He mentioned that most of the time it was the father who decided marriage. The father used his authoritative position based on the fact that he could disinherit his son. His wife who was ten years old at the time of marriage saw him for the first time on the second day of their marriage, and it was too late for her to react even if she understood her situation and wanted to react.

If we look at the conditions of the muslim women in the country we find them worse than those of the orthodox women. Here several women are married to one man whom they can not meet every day. None of the have control over their husband but he has control over them. They have to be at home in case he comes for a visit. They are responsible for taking care of the house, the garden, the animals if they have any, and their children. In general they work hard to earn their keep - the economy is under the control of the husband. The most interesting thing is that they know each other very well and that the second wife and her children are subordinated to the first wife and her children, and the third wife is subordinated in the same manner to the second wife. Many women interviewed said that they have to accept sharing a man with other women because they do not want to violate the muslim law which allows polygamy - a man can marry several women if he feels that he can support them. It is not hard to see that it is advantageous for a man to marry several wives who work hard and support him instead of vice versa. The muslim men interviewed said that the only problem that might restrict them from having several wives is that they have to pay up to 700 Eth. dollars to the family of each girl. But all of them said that it is more advantageous to pay and acquire several women who work hard in competition. This shows how women with no knowledge of their rights can be

manipulated very easily to the men's advantage.

One important point that I want to discuss here is that the economical conditions of the family are the most important factor when it comes to marriage agreements. Therefore it is always a danger that children from poor families can remain unmarried for a long period of time since their parents are not able to give the familial assistance that the couple receives in normal cases. The familial assistance can be land, cattle, assistance in building a house, the money to start a family life etc, depending on the economical conditions of the family. In the north, the familial assistance is in most cases given to the boy's family since the couple lives with them, or it is kept aside as a promise and given to the couple in time of need.

Girls whose families are not in a position to pay familial assistance said that they work very hard in order to acquire enough money to attract men to marry them. They said that they work as servants in families which can afford to pay their salary, or take seasonal work in different places to make preparations for different ceremonies. It takes a long time to reach their goal because they are underpaid and their employers sometimes refuse to pay them. They are not protected by any kind of regulations since they have an oral agreement which is very difficult to prove against the employer. Boys in the same position work in the same manners as girls, but the employers mostly encourage them to get married since it is to their advantage that the wife also will work for them. There is a saying that there is a bright side of every situation but it depends on how one looks at it. In the case described both the boy and the girl will mature, gain experiences of different kinds of life and have time to get to know each other better. They build a family on equal basis which gives the woman the chance of being share owner to the family property. But this does not mean a complete change in her position at home, since she still will be under the control of her husband.

The marriage arrangement is a way for the boy to show that he has become a grown-up person. He gets married in order to gain respect from the public as well as from his wife. The form of respect that is expected from the wife includes obedience, fidelity, care for the husband's comfort and health. As to sexual life, it is purposely ignored because the slightest indecency or indiscretion with regard to sexual relations in marriage is viewed

by the relatives and friends, as well as others, as inconvenient. People are afraid that the parents may stimulate their daughter's sexual feelings so that she may start sexual relationships with men before marriage. Nobody wants to marry a girl who is considered a prostitute. But a man can flirt or go to bed with any girl or woman he likes before and after marriage and he is not considered a prostitute. The first night of the marriage, relatives, friends and neighbours sing and dance until the husband comes out and confirms that the girl was a virgin and shows a white handkerchief with a fresh blood stain as an evidence. Or he comes out with a face that shows that he has lost something very important or refuses to come out, and then the laughter, the song and the dance will die away as if somebody died and they will all leave the house. The girl will be beaten and treated as if she is not a human being. He might send her home the next day if he is not losing economically by doing so.

The girl's mother on the other hand, will not sleep the whole night until she hears the news the next day. But in most cases a girl is examined by an elderly woman before the marriage and will be kept under strict control afterwards. Many girls who are not virgins run away from home when they hear that their parents are planning to marry them off. In some parts of Ethiopia, especially in Hararge, the vagina of the girl is closed with stitches in order to make sure that the girl is not going to have sexual relations at her own fancy. The stitches will be taken off just before the day of marriage. All this shows that a woman is considered to be the property of a man while the man can not be dominated by any woman under any situation. Muslim women in the province of Arssi who do both men's and women's job while their husband is lying under a tree or going around without doing anything, are also under the control of their husbands.

### 3. Education

The standard of education in the rural areas is very low and the government does not try to improve the situation.

The number of schools in the rural areas are very few and they are situated in small towns. The children of the farmers have to

walk for several hours, and many live very far away and they have to stay the week days near the school with relatives and friends of the family. These conditions seem to be the main factor that limit the girls' possibility of attending school. Parents often claimed that they could not afford two house-holds - their children in town and the rest of the family at home. They also said that it was risky to send children under the age of ten to a school that was situated far away. It was out of the question to send girls to school in such cases, because of fear that somebody might rape or kidnap them on their way to school.

In some places where parents could send their children to school their male children were given the priority to go to school over the daughters. Among girls who attended school, dropouts were common because the burden of house-hold work did not give them time to attend school every day. Moreover the lack of sex education and lack of contraceptives made many girls victims of the situation: they left school because of pregnancy. Because of this, girls were always under pressure to marry as early as possible. The effect of all these conditions is that very, very few women in the rural areas can read and write.

Even town girls who attended school were encouraged to take short courses in order to get married in time.

Many parents were not in favour of sending their children to school even if they were capable of doing so. Government schools were looked upon as stimulating the children to change their traditional way of thinking - especially their religion. In such cases parents induced their sons to attend church school in order to stimulate their religious thoughts and perhaps with the hope that they would become priests.

A priest recounted to me that Orthodox religion is on its way of being replaced by Catholic or Protestant religion. The reason, he said, is that many children now are attending government schools and are not coming to church the way they did before. I told him that I came from an Orthodox family, attended government school and that I am still an Orthodox. He looked at me for a long time and asked me if I eat meat on Wednesdays and Fridays. I answered yes. He said: "You see, you are not a Christian any more!" I asked him why I should avoid eating meat on those two days of the week, and he said that a good Christian does not question, but follows the rules and regulations. "And questions," he said, "show that the person is already

doubting God's word and it is not good." This shows that even priests are not given the proper education to understand what they have learnt and also to be able to explain clearly to others. However, a priest with such education can be accepted by an illiterate audience as a learned person and his words will be taken as God's words and it takes a long time to make the people understand the situation.

The educational conditions in the country can be illustrated by children who most of the time never have seen each other before school, and by teachers who more or less concentrate on their authoritative position rather than help the children to adjust to the situation in school. Already the first day gives a clear picture of the school's rigid and unfriendly atmosphere, compared to the atmosphere the children came from - friendly, open and flexible. The school, said many girls, should be an institution where everybody can come and go without much restrictions, and they expected teachers to make the atmosphere pleasant and stimulating. But most of the time there is a distance between teachers and children, especially those who have difficulties following the lectures; not because they are not capable but because they have to help at home and therefore have no time to do their homework. The girls are not encouraged to continue and their absence is not noticed by the teacher. The boys would have fun for a while because they thought, as they always do, that a girl stayed at home for the reason that she was either going to marry soon or because of pregnancy. Many girls and boys interviewed told me that almost all the girls who were attending school were also helping at home in every kind of activity. They would be too tired to do their home work and thus did not participate actively in school.

Despite all these problems the attitude of the rural population towards educating their children has recently changed in a positive direction. This is because the peasants are organized in peasant associations and participate in the decision-making process regarding the future of their children and the economical development as a whole. According to information of members of the peasant associations the negative attitude towards sending their children to government schools is based on a feeling of powerlessness in relation to an institution over which they had no control, and the uncertainty as to what would become of their children's future.

The literacy campaign became very effective because it was meant to mobilize the entire population of the country, and therefore the schools moved out to the local communities instead of vice versa. The present local schools are partly run by teachers recruited from the area. In fact, the success of the literacy campaign is mostly due to the peasant associations, since they provided class rooms and mobilized the local people to start learning how to read and write. This is a very interesting point; the success of a literacy campaign depends on the use of organized movements within the local community as an activating agent that can involve itself deeply in the matter. Illiteracy is one of the problems which limits the activity of the peasant organizations. Most of the time the associations have been forced to employ a student as a secretary because of illiteracy among association leaders.

When studying the participation of the rural women in the literacy campaign, we must pay attention to their working conditions and their possibilities of attending lectures. The women are willing to come to any type of meeting or to lectures only if they are arranged for women only. They do not want their husbands and other men to hear them talking because of fear of being criticized afterwards. The men are still not in favour of allowing their wives to attend meetings or lectures, because they are afraid that the house-hold work will not be effectively attended to and that there is nobody to take care of their children – the husbands said that they do not know how to take care of very small children.

Mothers are encouraged by the leaders to come and attend lectures. The problem is that the women can not concentrate, since the children shout, run around or cry all the time. This discourages many mothers from coming. Young girls now have the advantage of learning how to read and write. The number of girls registered at schools are increasing a great deal and this means perhaps that a transition of their way of life is taking place – that the traditional way of living is gradually giving way to modern life. Yet there is a long way to go before a woman reaches her goal – to educate herself on the same level as men in order to fight for equal treatment and equal rights. The government however strives to eliminate illiteracy and to make state education a right of all citizens.



#### 4. Has the Land Nationalization Reform led to any changes in the position of women?

In this article I have aimed at a description of rural Ethiopian society in relation to the conditions of women, socially, legally and economically. The situation described was up to the land reform of 1975 the dominating social pattern. The rest of this article will describe some of the changes in rural Ethiopia brought about by the reform itself. However, since changes occur slowly and over a long period of time, my observations are of tendencies – sometimes obvious and unambiguous, sometimes vague and uncertain.

The Land Nationalization Law of 1975, is one of the most important events to have happened in Ethiopia. In order to see its effects on the conditions of the rural women we have to look at the social and economical structure of the society in relation to the Nationalization Law and it's implementation process. Article 4 of the proclamation concerns women and runs as follows:

1. without differentiation of the sexes, any person who is willing to personally cultivate land shall be allotted land sufficient for his maintenance and that of his family.
2. Any landowner willing to personally cultivate land shall likewise be allotted with land.
3. The amount of land to be allotted to any farm family shall at no time exceed 10 hectares (1/4 of a gasha).
4. The amount of land to be allotted to farm families shall as far as possible be equal in size. The size may, however, vary according to the productive potential of the land.
5. No person may use hired labour to cultivate his holding. However, the foregoing shall not apply to a woman with no other means of livelihood, or where the holder dies, is sick or old, to the wife of the deceased or the husband or to his children who have not attained majority.
6. The Minister shall determine the amount of land sufficient for a farm family.

This proclamation is instituted with the intention of promoting equality between the sexes, but it seems to create problems in practical life. The problems emerge from the legal status of the women in relation to the land ownership system in the country.

If we look at the first point in Article 4 we read "*without differentiation of the sexes*; any person who is willing to personally cultivate land shall be *allotted land sufficient for his maintenance*

*and that of his family*". When looking carefully at the words underlined we can notice that there still is a tendency of keeping the man's position as the head of the family. The Land Nationalization Law, though it has no intention to do so, weakens the women's possibility of acquiring land, except after the death of her husband. This is one of the reasons why it is very rare to see a woman being a member of a peasant association except on settlement areas, where a woman as individual settler can acquire land.

The rural women are in fact the hard working people in the field and at home and yet they are not participating in the peasant associations. The government tries to stimulate the peasant associations to encourage women to build their own associations. There are women associations all over the country, from the local level up to the national level. Women are now working together more actively than before. But the activities of their associations, especially on the local level, varies a great deal from place to place. In Gimma the women in the Tiro Becho area were not organized properly up to 1984. They told me that a woman comes from Gimma every three months to collect membership fees of 50 Eth.cents from each of them, and she goes back to Gimma without any discussion. The majority of the population in this area are muslims and the men were not allowing their wives to go to meetings or to attend school.

When I came to Gimma I went to the woman in question only to find that she was away. I discussed the matter with another woman who knew about the problem. She told me, that the women in Tiro Becho are told to meet the association representative on every visit, but they do not come. Obviously, the level of activity within the associations depends on the individuals involved, but also on structural factors, like in this case the distance between the two areas and the difficulty of getting transport. The road is very rough and there is no public transport except governmental cars visiting this area now and then and the cars have no time to wait for her. The reason why I have chosen to discuss this case is to show how misleading it is to say that all women are organized, and that their organizations are improving the conditions of women in the rural areas.

Another very interesting point to look at is Article 6 under 2:

The provisions of the preceding Article shall not apply to a person who has rented land from a woman with no other

means of livelihood or from a person who by reason of minority or old age or illness, cannot cultivate his holding.

This indicates that a woman is not capable of cultivating land herself, and therefore her share remains under the previous tenant. When reading this point one can not help noticing that a woman's status in the society is considered to be the same as those who are underaged or handicapped.

A woman is always treated as someone who must be supported and protected. It might sound good, the idea of being supported and protected, but not if its compared to the price the woman pays. From childhood women are strictly socialized to be good at house-hold chores and they are not encouraged to use the plough. They are, however, more and more forced to work in the fields on equal terms with boys, but their contributions are not seen as having the same importance as those of the boys. Therefore they are subordinated to their husbands and brothers.

The same attitude towards women appears in article 10 under 7; one of the functions of the peasant associations is

to cultivate the holdings of persons who, by reason of old age, minority, or sickness, or in the case of a woman, by reason of her husband's death, cannot cultivate their holdings.

One comes to the conclusion that the Land Nationalization Law can have no effect in changing the women's attitude towards themselves, defining their economical conditions and improving their status within the family. The authorities who enacted the proclamation were obviously not aware of the woman's situation within the agricultural sector and did not inquire into these problems beforehand.

I have tried to portray the differences between the conditions of women in the north and the southern part of the country. In the south polygamy has been a tradition, but now, according to the law, a man is not allowed to have more than one wife, and land is given to a man with considerations to only one wife and her children, while the other wives and their children are left without land. Many peasant associations promised to give land to these women, but women whose former husband were not willing to help in ploughing were not given land. They were considered unable to plough the land themselves.

In 1984, in the Arssi settlement area, I saw female settlers ploughing together with men, using tractors. They told me that they did not have any difficulty in learning how to plough and they said that they enjoyed working in the fields on equal terms with the men. The men on the other hand, said that when it comes to practical work in the field, they found women very talented and very good working partners. This can be a positive side of the Land Nationalization Law which favours collective farming. Even if it takes time it might change the attitudes of men towards women, looking at them as companions and not as subordinated to them.

According to the law the peasant associations may have their own rules and regulations. Responsible for the formation of these rules and regulations are the leaders of the peasant associations and the field personnel.

Among the rules and regulations of the associations I have noted the following passage:

In the case of divorce among members of the association the judicial committee will send persons who are related to both parties as go-betweens to settle the matter easily. But if the partners insist on being separated, the judicial committee will examine the case and decide as follows:

- a) if the parties have children, the committee will decide which of the parties is most capable of taking care of the children,
- b) the committee will assist in the division of property between the two parties.

This shows that noticeable changes are being made to improve the conditions for the rural women. Other important improvements are the establishment of cooperative service shops (previously the women walked miles away to get to the nearest town and buy the necessary items); the opening of health centers and schools; and the introduction of flouring mills and water pipes. But as we have seen, a life time is needed for the women to reach the level where they understand who they are and what they have to do in order to be treated as capable individuals who are able to support and protect themselves.