

# ETHIOPIA COUNTRY GENDER EQUALITY PROFILE BRIEF



GRUPE DE LA BANQUE AFRICAINE  
DE DEVELOPPEMENT  
AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK GROUP



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Ministry of Women and Social Affairs





ABRIDGED VERSION

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# INTRODUCTION

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The Country Gender Profile is developed under the guidance of Ethiopia's Ministry of Women and Social Affairs and in extensive consultation and coordination with the Ethiopian Statistical Services (ESS), Ministry of Development and Planning (MoDP), other Government agencies, the African Development Bank, UN Women and other devel-

opment partners. The CGEP relies exclusively on qualitative and quantitative secondary data sources for the analysis. The overall objective of the assessment is to undertake a comprehensive multi-sectoral gender analysis of Ethiopia, culminating in a Country Gender Equality Profile.

# BACKGROUND

Gender equality is fundamental to sustainable and people-centered development and is essential for achieving progress and ensuring a fair and prosperous society. By excluding women from equal participation in all areas of life, we create barriers that impede societal advancement and overlook the immense potential of half the world's population regarding skills, talent and innovative thinking. Empowering women is crucial for attaining sustainable development, as it entails granting them more power to influence consumption and production patterns, make decisions and exercise control over the distribution of resources within and between generations. Recognizing the significance of gender equality and women's empowerment (GEWE), the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia greatly emphasizes eliminating all forms of inequality and promoting inclusive growth.

For the past three decades, the Ethiopian government has made gender equality a top priority on its development agenda. It has introduced a wide range of legislation and policy reforms to promote gender equality throughout the country. One notable policy is the National Policy on Women (NPW) enacted in 1993, preceding the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in 1995. Currently, the government is finalizing the National Policy on Gender Equality and Women Empowerment (NP-GEWE), which will supersede the NPW. This comprehensive policy has been developed through a multi-sectoral and inclusive process, guided and coordinated by steering and technical committees led by the Ministry of Women and Social Affairs (MoWSA).<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, Ethiopia is a signatory to the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), an international treaty adopted in 1979 by the United Nations General Assembly.

Ethiopia has made significant strides in advancing gender equality and women's empowerment across various fronts. According to the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report (GGGR), Ethiopia's gender gap index improved from 0.65 in 2018 to 0.71 in 2020, ranking the country 82<sup>nd</sup> out of 153 countries and placing it among the top 5 most-improved nations in 2019.<sup>2</sup> Noteworthy advancements have been made in the social and leadership dimensions, with women assuming top positions within the government, including the Presidency, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court and 50 per cent of Cabinet positions, including influential roles such as Minister of Defense and Minister of Peace. However, there are recent worrying trends where women in key leadership positions have either resigned or been demoted to deputy positions. The Government of Ethiopia (GoE) has also enacted laws and made national commitments to address systemic gender issues, such as the 2020-2024 National Costed Plan to End Child Marriage and Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and the 2019 Proclamation for Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), allowing CSOs receiving foreign funding to work on rights-based issues, including women's rights.<sup>3</sup> Earlier achievements include amendments to family law in 2000, ensuring fair wages, women's right to own and register property, raising the legal marriage age, granting women greater say over marital property and guaranteeing the right to marital property in the event of divorce. The land certification law, which mandates joint registration of married women and their spouses, is also a significant victory for women in Ethiopia. However, the 2021 GGGR indicated a slight decline to 0.69, with Ethiopia ranked 97<sup>th</sup> out of 156 countries, primarily due to a regression in political empowerment as the percentage of women holding ministerial positions decreased from 47.6 to 40. Nonetheless,

1 Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, Ministry of Women and Social Affairs (MoWSA). 2022. "The National Policy on Gender Equality and Women Empowerment (NP-GEWE)."

2 World Economic Forum. 2021. *Global Gender Gap Report, March 2021*. [https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_GGGR\\_2021.pdf](https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2021.pdf)

3 USAID. 2019. *Gender Analysis Final Report: Private Enterprise Project, November 2019*. [https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf\\_docs/PA00WP-CB.pdf](https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00WP-CB.pdf)

in 2021, the country's score slightly improved to 0.71, driven by progress in economic participation and political empowerment.<sup>4</sup>

The African Development Bank and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) are collaborating with the Government of Ethiopia (GoE) to establish a Country Gender Equality Profile (CGEP). The previous CGEP was completed in 2004 and a Preliminary Gender Report issued in 2016 by UN Women. This report builds upon previous work, including the new national policy on gender equality and women empowerment, to enhance national understanding of progress and gaps in achieving gender equality. It provides evidence to inform strategic policy priorities and

increase gender-equitable programming to advance the development agenda. The CGEP will assist the GoE in ongoing law and policy engagement, decision-making and prioritization in response to the current socio-economic context. It will also help monitor achievements, support national development planning, expand existing programs and guide new development initiatives. Furthermore, the profile will serve as a reference and guide for development partners, civil society organisations and the private sector. Overall, the CGEP will play a crucial role in setting a forward-looking gender equality agenda aligned with national, regional and international norms and standards.

4 World Economic Forum. 2021. *Global Gender Gap Report 2021*. [https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_GGGR\\_2021.pdf](https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2021.pdf)

# POLICY, LEGAL AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR GENDER EQUALITY

## a International Commitments



The Government of Ethiopia is a signatory to several international conventions and protocols that promote gender equality and equity including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW); the Beijing Platform for Action; the Maputo protocol (the African charter on human and peoples' rights on the rights of women in Africa) with some reservations related to marriage and inheritance; Maya declaration on economic rights; the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which includes a specific goal on gender equality-SDG5. Ethiopia has recognized the transformative potential of the agenda to eradicate poverty, reduce inequality and build a sustainable future for all. It has proactively integrated and aligned the SDGs with the Ten-year Development Plan (TYDP, 2021 to 2030)<sup>5</sup> to ensure that the goals are mainstreamed across all sectors of the economy.<sup>6</sup>

Ethiopia has also adopted international treaties and development goals that guarantee equal opportunities to high-quality education for all. Prominent international agreements such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), CEDAW (1979), Beijing+, SDGs, AU 2063, International Covenants on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966), African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (1981) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), stipulate free and equal access to elementary education. The Universal Declaration on Human Rights and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child enshrined the right to education. In addition, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, which Ethiopia is a signatory to, calls upon Governments to take 'special measures in respect of females.'

## b National Legal and Policy Framework



On the National front, the Ethiopian Government has made significant progress in internalizing its international and regional commitments through national laws and policy frameworks that promote gender equality and equity. Some frameworks developed include the National Policy

on Women (known as the Women's Policy) which aims to establish gender-sensitive government structures to promote the political, economic and social rights of women and ensure equal development opportunities for both genders.

The Ethiopian Constitution (1994) includes provisions on gender equality and women's

5 Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, Ministry of Planning and Development. 2022. Ethiopia Voluntary National Review. [https://hlpf.un.org/sites/default/files/vnrs/2022/VNR%202022%20Ethiopia%20Report\\_1.pdf](https://hlpf.un.org/sites/default/files/vnrs/2022/VNR%202022%20Ethiopia%20Report_1.pdf)

6 UN Women. 2021. Ethiopia Country Gender Data. <https://data.unwomen.org/country/ethiopia>

rights, including the right to education, equal participation in political, economic and social life. It includes stipulations for affirmative action to fight prevailing inequalities and level the field for women and girls.<sup>7</sup> The 2000 revision of the family code establishes equality between men and women, which is a major departure from the 1960 Family Law, which placed women subordinate to men and defined women's roles as complementary and supplementary to men's roles. It elevated the legal age for marriage from 15 to 18 years. It also made significant gains in the protection of women's economic rights by giving women who have been in a union with a partner for three years or more to share any assets that the household had accumulated. It should be noted that not all regional governments (Afar and Somali) have aligned their regional Family Laws to federal law.

In 2005, revisions were also made to the 1949 Criminal Code to align with international and regional instruments. Domestic violence was criminalized, removing the clause that entitled men to discipline their wives in certain conditions. The revised criminal code also criminalizes rape, female genital mutilation/cutting, abductions and early marriage, which is a landmark gain for women and girls in Ethiopia. Other reforms and proclamations that demonstrate the government's commitment to gender equality include: proclamation No. 1064/2017 on federal civil servants which provides for the prohibition of sexual harassment; proclamation No. 923/2016 on overseas employment protects the rights, safety and dignity of Ethiopians who take up employment abroad; proclamation No. 943/2016 on the establishment of the Federal Attorney

General of Ethiopia, which covers the provision of free legal services to women who do not have sufficient resources; proclamation No. 970/2016 on the amendment of the Proclamation on the Federal Government of Ethiopia's financial administration, which integrates a gender perspective into the preparation of the budget programs (NEWA Report) and Rural Land Administration and Land Use Proclamation No. 456/2005 Art. 78.

The "Ten-year perspective plan – the pathway to prosperity," a continuation of the Growth Transformation Plan (GTP) I & II, also highlights key reform areas for women's equal participation in education, social sectors, leadership and decision-making power and overall development of the country. In the education sector, the government has implemented policies such as the Education and Training Policy<sup>8</sup> and the Education Sector Development Program V<sup>9</sup> to increase access to education for girls and women. These policies and programs have included initiatives like providing free education for girls up to grade eight and expanding access to secondary education for girls. The government has focused on improving maternal and child health outcomes in the health sector by implementing policies such as the Health Sector Development Program IV<sup>10</sup> and Health Sector Transformation Plan.<sup>11</sup> These policies aim to expand access to reproductive health services and increase the number of health facilities in rural areas. The government has also implemented programs such as the Micro and Small Enterprises Development Strategy,<sup>12</sup> and Agricultural Growth Program I and II,<sup>13</sup> to promote women's entrepreneurship and increase their participation in the formal economy across sectors. These programs include initiatives such as

7 Ministry of Women and Social Affairs and Network of Ethiopian Women. 2021. *Ethiopian Gender Development Index Report*. <https://newaethiopia.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Ethiopian-Gender-Development-Index-2021.pdf>

8 Federal Democratic Government of Ethiopia. 1994. *Education and Training Policy Document*. [file:///C:/Users/bersa/Downloads/Education%20and%20training%20policy%20Ethiopia.%201994%20\(1\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/bersa/Downloads/Education%20and%20training%20policy%20Ethiopia.%201994%20(1).pdf)

9 Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, Ministry of Education. 2015. *Education Sector Development Program V (ESDP V) (2016-2020)*. [https://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/sites/default/files/ressources/ethiopia\\_esdp\\_v.pdf](https://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/sites/default/files/ressources/ethiopia_esdp_v.pdf)

10 Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, Ministry of Health. 2010. *Health Sector Development Program IV (2010-15)*. <https://www.ecolex.org/details/legislation/health-sector-development-program-iv-201011-201415-lex-faoc186138/>

11 Federal Democratic Government of Ethiopia, Ministry of Health. 2020. *Health Sector Transformation Plan (2019/20 – 2024-25)*. <https://e-library.moh.gov.et/library/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/HSTP-II.pdf>

12 Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, Ministry of Urban Development and Housing. 2016. *Micro and Small Enterprise Development Policy and Strategy*. <file:///C:/Users/BersabehBeyene/Downloads/MoUDH%20MSE%20Development%20Policy%20&%20Strategy%20280416.pdf>

13 International Food Policy Research Institute. 2013. *Ethiopia Agricultural Growth Program I (AGP)*. [https://essp.ifpri.info/files/2013/03/ESSPII\\_EDRI\\_Report\\_AGP\\_Baseline.pdf](https://essp.ifpri.info/files/2013/03/ESSPII_EDRI_Report_AGP_Baseline.pdf)



providing microfinance loans and setting targets for the representation of women in the public and private sectors.

Ethiopia's Constitution also identifies education as a key right for all citizens. It stipulates the rights of every citizen to equal access to publicly funded social services and that support shall be given to accommodate the needs of persons with disabilities (Article 41). The 10-year perspective plan envisions equitable access to education regarding location, gender and disability. The gender parity across all levels of education is planned to be closed by 2029/30.<sup>14</sup> The Education Sector Development Program VI is a national education policy that aims to promote gender equality in the education sector. It emphasizes equal access to education for both boys and girls and addresses the systemic barriers that prevent girls from attending and completing school. Its action components include the promotion of gender-sensitive policies and practices throughout the education system, such as providing gender-sensitive curriculum and teaching materials, training more female teachers and promoting equal participation of girls and boys in all levels of education, including higher education and technical and vocational training.

In partnership with UNICEF, a targeted education strategy for girls was developed in March 2014 by the Ministry of Education. The Strategy aims to enhance and improve gender equality outcomes in pre- and primary and secondary education. Furthermore, it integrates functional adult literacy, technical and vocational education and training and higher education and addresses cross-cutting issues such as gender equality in different fields of studies, structural arrangements and budgeting.

The National Plan of Action for the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities (2012-2021) is an important framework that makes disability issues part of the core activities of all government organs. At least 1 of the 13 objectives is focused on the full participation and equality of women with disabilities.<sup>15</sup> The Right to Employment of Persons with Disability Proclamation No. 568/2008 gives equal rights to employment without any discrimination to Persons with Disability. Documents, such as Growth and Transformation Plan I and II and the Ethiopian constitution (Article 41(5)), also recognize the need to address disability and the rights of people with disability to achieve development within the country.

### c Institutional Framework



Several institutions in Ethiopia work towards promoting gender equality and women's empowerment. Established in 2014, the Ministry of Women and Social Affairs (MoWSA) is the primary coordinator of the gender machinery in Ethiopia.

The government has institutionalized gender priorities by establishing Gender Directorates within every line ministry accountable to the ministries they serve and the Ministry of Women and Social Affairs. The Ministry has regional and sub-regional offices with gender focal points to the lowest administrative unit, Kebele, which

indicates the Government's commitment to implementing the women's policy and attaining gender parity. At the federal level, the Ministry is mandated to coordinate and implement gender mainstreaming policies and programs. The Ministry also oversees the National Action Plan on Gender Equality and advocates for women's rights and empowerment.

The Annual Women's Conference hosted by the Ministry of Women and Social Affairs creates space for Federal, Regional, UN agencies, private sector through Ethiopian Women Entrepreneurs Association, NGOs and development partners

<sup>14</sup> Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, Planning and Development Commission. *Ethiopia 2030: The Pathway to Prosperity Ten Years Perspective Development Plan (2021 – 2030)*. <https://faolex.fao.org/docs/pdf/eth215704.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> <sup>62</sup> Review of laws - Includovite 2020.

working on Gender and Women's Empowerment to convene and exchange on the achievements, challenges and strategies on how to address and promote women's equality in Ethiopia. The Annual Women's Conference also provides an opportunity to profile specific Regions in terms of gender equality and for a week, brings critical policymakers together to discuss gender equality and the empowerment of women. A women's parliamentary forum/women's caucus brings all women parliamentarians at the National Assembly together to identify common priorities, challenges, and integrate gender in the various Parliament Standing Committees, among many others. Thematic working groups and alliances, such as the Alliance to End Child Marriage, the Network for the Abandonment of FGM, a working group on violence against women and children established by the Ministry of Justice, all work to create a conducive environment for women and girls to thrive.

At the community level, women's associations have been established in almost all regions. The government facilitated the establishment of the Women's Development Army (WDA) among women living in the same neighborhoods. Professional women associations such as the Ethiopian Obstetric and Gynecologists Association, Ethiopian Women Lawyer's Association, Women Education Association, Women Association of the Disabled-Setawit, Network of Ethiopian Women's Association, etc., play a pivotal role in advocating, supporting and holding the government accountable to its commitment on gender equality in Ethiopia. They target and tackle problems in their respective areas; they bring out issues where women are disadvantaged and find solutions. They work in collaboration with other similar organizations in and outside the country. They promote women's capacity by providing training programs and experience-sharing forums.

# SOCIAL DIMENSION OF (IN) EQUALITY

## Gender and Education

### i Pre- Primary Education



According to the Educational Statistics Annual Abstract (ESAA)<sup>16</sup> produced by the Ministry of Education, the National Gross Enrollment rate (GER)<sup>17</sup> in 2021 for pre-primary education was 36.7 per cent, which is a significant increase from 2010, when GER was only 9 per cent.<sup>18</sup> Despite significant improvements, the overall national performance remains low. Except for Addis Ababa, with a pre-primary GER of 93.8 per cent, all other regions have an enrollment rate ranging between 67.4 per cent for Gambella and as low as 3.2 per cent for Somali.<sup>19</sup> Across all the regions, male enrollment continues to outpace that of female enrollment in pre-primary school with the GER for male students (37.7 per cent) that is 2.1 points

higher than that of female students (35.6 per cent).<sup>20</sup> The increase is attributed to government efforts and commitment in the Education Sector Development Program V, 2015, towards an 80 per cent enrolment target for 4-6-year-olds. The national Gender Parity Index (GPI)<sup>21</sup> of pre-primary education was 0.94 in 2020/21. The national average for pre-primary education NER among males is 21.8 per cent while for females it is 20.6 per cent in 2020/21 with a GPI of 0.94. In all the regions of Ethiopia, the NER for boys outpaces that of girls, with the highest gap between girls and boys in Somali with a GPI of 0.83. This implies that female children, relative to their male counterparts, are less likely to enroll in their official enrollment age (4-6).

### ii Primary and Middle School Education



Primary education in Ethiopia is defined as grades 1-8 and middle school from 7-8. According to the Educational Statistics Annual Abstract (ESAA), the National Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER)<sup>22</sup> for primary

and middle education (grades 1- 8) was 95.1 per cent in 2021. There is a wide regional variation in GER, with Afar having the lowest GER at 55.9 per cent and Gambella at the opposite side of the spectrum with a very high GER of 161.5 per cent. The Gender gap in enrollment at the primary

16 Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, Ministry of Education. *Education Statistics, Annual Abstract, 2020/21*. <https://ecde.aau.edu.et/jspui/bitstream/123456789/276/1/MoE%2018%20ESAA%202013%20E.C%20%282020-2021%20G.C%29.pdf>

17 Gross Enrollment Rate (GER) is the total enrolment in a level or cycle of education, regardless of age, expressed as a percentage (sometimes exceeding 100 per cent) of the population in the officially defined school-age group for the level or cycle. The indicators reveal the performance of the education system in terms of coverage (MOE, 2019).

18 UNICEF. 2022. *Quality Pre-primary Education is the Basis of a Child's Journey*. <https://www.unicef.org/ethiopia/stories/quality-pre-primary-education-basis-childs-journey#:~:text=In%20Ethiopia%2C%20pre%2Dprimary%20education,to%2044%20per-cent%20in%202022>.

19 Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, Ministry of Education. *Education Statistics, Annual Abstract, 2020/21* <https://ecde.aau.edu.et/jspui/bitstream/123456789/276/1/MoE%2018%20ESAA%202013%20E.C%20%282020-2021%20G.C%29.pdf>

20 Ibid

21 The Gender Parity Index (GPI) measures equity between girls and boys and is defined as female GER divided by male GER.

22 Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) calculates the total number of children that enrolled in a given grade range irrespective of their age as a percentage of the school age population. This indicator includes enrolment both in Alternative Basic Education (ABE) and formal primary schools.

level is much wider in some regions and widest in pastoral communities such as Somali and Afar with a GPI of 0.76 and 0.83, respectively. Addis Ababa is the only region of Ethiopia where the primary education enrolment rates of female students surpass that of males. The completion rate for grades 6 and 8 are lower for females

than male students, meaning female students experience delayed entry, high dropout and high repetition compared to their male counterparts. The national **dropout rate** for males and females for Grades 1-8 is 15.2 per cent and 13.7 per cent, respectively, in 2019/20.

### iii Secondary Education



Secondary education in Ethiopia is defined as grades 9-12. Access to secondary education remains significantly low at 42.1 per cent enrollment rate in 2020/21, compared to primary education at 95.1 per cent. This is, however, an improve-

ment from 2014/15, where GER at the secondary level was only 26.3 per cent for boys and girls. In essence, Ethiopia is far from providing adequate access to education at the secondary level for both boys and girls. Girls, however, continue to lag behind boys in secondary, with girls at 40.3 per cent in 2021 compared to boys at 43.8 per cent.

### iv Tertiary Education



According to the 2020 data from the Ethiopian Strategy Center (ESC), the proportion of female students in Ethiopian public Universities nationally is 35 per cent for undergraduates, 22 per cent for masters and 13 per cent for PhD students.

While it's an improvement from where it was 10 years ago, at 27 per cent for undergraduates, 17 per cent for masters and 11 per cent for PhD students, these numbers are still extremely low and means a lot of young women are deprived of higher-level education opportunities that would otherwise translate to better jobs and overall wellbeing for themselves and their families, since the level of education is a strong predictor of female labor force participation in Ethiopia, as women with a university degree are 16 per cent more likely to work than their male counterparts.<sup>23</sup> When we look at the gender gap in enrolment across 29 public universities, the highest performing university, Dire Dawa, has a ratio of 0.47, followed by Addis Ababa at 0.35, which means that for every 100 male students at Dire Dawa University, there are only 47 female students, a significant gender gap. In terms of programs, at the under-

graduate level, agriculture and forestry and social sciences and humanities enrolled the highest proportion of female students at 40 per cent, while engineering and technology enrolled the lowest proportion at 28 per cent. The proportion changes at the masters and PhD levels. In the master's program, the highest proportion of female students is enrolled in business, economics and health sciences, whereas the lowest proportion has been observed for natural and computational sciences and agriculture and forestry (14 per cent). At the PhD level, female students have relatively better participation in natural and computational sciences and health sciences fields (16-18 per cent), but less participation in the engineering and technology field of studies, where only nine female PhD. students for every 100 male Ph.D. students are enrolled nationally.<sup>24</sup> In other words, the highest number of female students are enrolled in the social sciences with less representation in STEM areas.

Gender disparity can also be observed within academic ranks. The ratio of female academicians in Ethiopian universities is very low. As we move up the academic ranks, the numbers

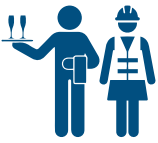
23 World Bank. 2019. *Ethiopia Gender Diagnostic Report*. <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/300021552881249070/pdf/Ethiopia-Gender-Diagnostic-Report-Priorities-for-Promoting-Equity.pdf>

24 IPDR. 2021. *Hawassa University, Gender Audit of the Ethiopian Higher Education*. Pg176

get even smaller. In 2020, there were only eight female professors nationwide for every 100 male professors. The numbers improve slightly as we go down the academic rank, with 10 per cent assistant professors without PhD and 23 per cent female lecturers.

The percentage of women in university leadership at all levels remains very low. Women are most represented at the Board level, with 31 per cent of board members being women in 2020, with a long way to parity. The lowest female representation is at the university president level with four female presidents (four per cent) in 2020.

## v Training, TVET and Adult Literacy



Despite establishing TVET institutions across all regions in Ethiopia, the enrolment rate in certain areas has been low. Afar, Gambella, Benishangul-Gumuz, Somali, and Harari regions have reported particularly low enrolment rates for TVET programs. Additionally, some woredas lack TVET centers, which creates accessibility challenges for women and individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds, as attending training far from home

can be challenging.<sup>25</sup>The government has made significant investments in TVET in recent years and the number of TVET institutions and students has increased significantly from 458 public and private TVET institutions in 2013 to over 1,800 in 2023.<sup>26</sup> In 2023, the government announced a major shift in TVET education policy with an increased focus on the quality of TVET across all levels and a targeted approach to accommodate varying regional needs.

## vi Access to Education for People with Disabilities



The Ethiopian Government has taken significant measures to provide equal access to education for people with disabilities. Despite national and international policy commitments, students with disabilities continue to face significant challenges in commuting to school; access to buildings in and around the schools and disability-friendly facilities such as WASH services, lack of learning materials suited to students with learning or intellectual

disabilities and teachers' responsiveness to the needs and conditions of students with various types and levels of disability. As a result, the GER rate for children with disabilities at the pre-primary level is 1.5 for female students and 1.9 for male students. When we look at the situation at the regional level, the enrollment rate for boys and girls is very low in all regions, with boys doing a little better than girls. Of the regions, Addis Ababa fares better, with an enrollment rate of 20.3 for boys and 12.8 for girls at the pre-primary level.

## Gender and Health

Ethiopia has made important strides toward improving the health status of its population. In 2003, it introduced the Health Extension Program (HEP), an innovative approach to address basic health service needs through community health posts that provide primary-level preventive services.

The program aims to achieve universal coverage of primary health care, create a healthy society and reduce maternal and child morbidity and mortality rates.

25 Ibid

26 Girum Abebe and Tsegay G Tekleselassie Chansathith Chaleu. 2022. "National TVET policies and systems in Ethiopia: Opportunities and issues in challenging times." International Labor Organization, 2022. [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---africa/---ro-abidjan/---sro-addis\\_ababa/documents/publication/wcms\\_863440.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---africa/---ro-abidjan/---sro-addis_ababa/documents/publication/wcms_863440.pdf)

Ethiopia has also made advances in healthcare financing reforms. In the past two decades, Ethiopia's health expenditure has grown in absolute and per capita from \$4.5 in 1995 to \$28.65 in 2013.<sup>27</sup> Despite these achievements, Ethiopia's population continues to be overburdened by both communicable and non-communicable

diseases, with children and women of reproductive age disproportionately affected. The 2021 Composite Ethiopian Gender Index shows a rate of 0.11 for health,<sup>28</sup> which signifies only 11 per cent of women have access to maternal health services in Ethiopia.

## i Women's Reproductive Health

**Maternal mortality.** Ethiopia has significantly improved maternal health with a decline in maternal mortality since 2000.

According to the EDHS surveys, maternal mortality has gone from



According to the 2020 Ministry of Planning and Development report, maternal mortality rate marginally declined to 401 in 2019/20.<sup>30</sup>

**Fertility.** According to the EDHS 2016 report, the total fertility rate in Ethiopia is 4.6 children per woman. This rate has declined over time, from 5.5 children per woman in 2000 to 4.6 children per woman in 2016. On average, rural women have a higher fertility rate at 5.2 children per woman

compared to urban women at 2.3 children per woman.<sup>31</sup> Fertility also varies by economic status and region. Women in the highest income quartile have a lower birth rate at 2.6 children per woman compared to the lowest income quartile at 6.4 children per woman. Addis Ababa has the lowest rate, with 1.8 children per woman. The contraceptive prevalence rate among all women is low at 29 per cent. The prevalence among married women has increased significantly from 29 per cent in 2011 to 42 per cent in 2014.<sup>32</sup>

**Prenatal care and birth in clinics versus at home:** According to the 2016 EDHS data, 73 per cent of births happen at home and 28 per cent at a health facility. About 6 per cent were attended by a doctor and about 20 per cent attended to by a nurse or midwife.<sup>33</sup> The level of education correlates with birth at a health facility. Women with more than secondary education obtained antenatal care from a health professional at a 98 per cent rate compared to 53 per cent by women without education.<sup>34</sup> Rural women are at a higher disadvantage than urban women.

**Postnatal natal care:** According to the 2016 EDHS report, 17 per cent of mothers had a postnatal check during the first two days after birth. Four

27 USAID. 2018. "Ethiopia's Health Financing Outlook: What Six Rounds of Health Accounts Tell Us." *Technical Brief*. [https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf\\_docs/PA00TBH3.pdf](https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PA00TBH3.pdf)

28 Ministry of Women and Social Affairs and Network of Ethiopian Women. 2021. "Ethiopian Gender Development Index Report." <https://newaethiopia.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Ethiopian-Gender-Development-Index-2021.pdf>

29 Central Statistics Agency. 2016. "Ethiopia Demographic and Health Survey (EDHS)." <https://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/FR328/FR328.pdf>

30 Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, Ministry of Planning and Development. 2021. "Statistical Report on the 2021 Labor Force and Migration Survey." *Statistical Bulletin*. <http://www.statsethiopia.gov.et/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/THE-2021-LABOUR-FORCE-AND-MIGRATION-SURVEY-STATISTICAL-REPORT-1.pdf>

31 Central Statistics Agency. 2016. "Ethiopia Demographic and Health Survey (EDHS)." <https://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/FR328/FR328.pdf>

32 Central Statistics Agency. 2016. Ethiopia Demographic and Health Survey (EDHS). <https://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/FR328/FR328.pdf>

33 Ibid

34 Ibid

in five women (81 per cent) did not receive a postnatal check. Around 30 per cent of women received a postnatal check from a doctor, nurse, or midwife, three per cent of women received a check from a health officer and another two per cent from a health extension worker.<sup>35</sup>

**Teenage pregnancies:** Teenage pregnancy is a significant issue in Ethiopia, with high rates of adolescent pregnancy. The legal age of marriage in Ethiopia is 18. According to research conducted by the Central Statistics Agency, 23 per cent of teenagers between 13 and 19 years are pregnant.<sup>36</sup> According to the Ministry of health, 14.1 per cent

of girls are married by age 15 and 40.3 per cent by age 18. Nationally, 13 per cent of teenage girls between the ages of 15 and 19 have given birth and 2 per cent are pregnant with their first child. Teenage childbearing is more common in rural than in urban areas (15 vs. 5 per cent) and varies from region to region; 23 per cent in Afar, 19 per cent in Somali and 3 per cent in Addis Ababa.<sup>37</sup> In December 2021, the Ministry of Health launched the National Adolescent and Youth Health Strategy (2021-2025), which aims to reduce teenage pregnancy to 7 per cent.<sup>38</sup>

## ii Nutrition status

According to the Ethiopia 2016 DHS Survey, undernutrition among women aged 15-49, as measured by BMI less than 18.5, has decreased in the past 16 years, with the proportion of thin women dropping from 30 per cent in 2000 to 22 per cent in 2016. However, there has been an increase in the proportion of women who are overweight or obese,



which indicates overnutrition. Adolescent girls aged 15-19 (29 per cent) are most likely to be thin.<sup>39</sup>

## iii Disease prevalence

**HIV:** According to the 2021 Gender Assessment of the National HIV Response, 669,236 people were living with HIV in Ethiopia in 2019, of which more than 62 per cent were women. An estimated 72,299 young adults (15-24 years) were living with HIV, of which 43,887 (61 per cent) were young women. The HIV prevalence among adolescents (15-24) was 0.34 per cent for girls, three times higher than boys in the same age group at 0.1

per cent.<sup>40</sup> The prevalence in women 30-34 years old was almost seven times higher among women (6.1 per cent) than men (0.9 per cent). The same assessment indicated that HIV prevalence among women peaked at 9.1 per cent among ages 35-39 years.<sup>41</sup> Addis Ababa and Gambella regions register the highest HIV prevalence at 3.4 and 4.5 respectively.

35 Central Statistical Agency. 2019. Ethiopia Mini Demographic and Health Survey (EMDHS), Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. <https://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/FR363/FR363.pdf>

36 Kassa Mamo, Melese Seyoum, and Adama Birhanu. 2021. "Teenage pregnancy and associated factors in Ethiopia: a systematic review and meta-analysis." *International Journal of Adolescence and Youth*. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/epdf/10.1080/02673843.2021.2010577?needAccess=true&role=button>

37 Federal Republic of Ethiopia, Ministry of Health, Reproductive Health, Family Planning, Adolescent and Youth Health Program. Health Strategy (2016-2020). [https://www.moh.gov.et/site/initiatives-4-col/Adolescent\\_and\\_Youth\\_Health\\_Program](https://www.moh.gov.et/site/initiatives-4-col/Adolescent_and_Youth_Health_Program)

38 UNFPA Ethiopia. 2021. Ethiopia's new adolescent and youth health strategy aims to halve teenage pregnancy. <https://ethiopia.unfpa.org/en/news/ethiopias-new-adolescent-and-youth-health-strategy-aims-halve-teenage-pregnancy>

39 Central Statistics Agency. 2016. Ethiopia Demographic and Health Survey (EDHS). <https://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/FR328/FR328.pdf>

40 UN Women, UNAIDS, Federal HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control Office (FHAPCO). 2020. Gender Assessment of the National HIV Response in Ethiopia. <https://africa.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-02/ethiopia%20gender%20assessment%20of%20the%20national%20hiv%20response.pdf>

41 UNAIDS. 2021. GENDER Assessment of the national system.

**Cancers:** The World Health Organization (WHO) reported in 2020 that cancer accounts for four per cent of all deaths in Ethiopia. In 2018, 67,573 cancer cases and 47,954 cancer deaths were recorded in Ethiopia.



Breast cancer accounts for  
**22.6%**  
of the total cancer incidences.  
it's the leading type of cancer  
in Ethiopia.

The mortality rate of breast cancer accounts for 17 per cent of the total cancer deaths. At 9.6 per cent, uterus and cervical cancers are the second highest cancers accounting for about 5.8 per cent of total national mortality.<sup>42</sup> According to the Ethiopian Ministry of Health, over 80 per cent of cases are detected late, predominantly due to a lack of information about cancers. In line with the WHO global strategy, Ethiopia introduced HPV vaccination in December 2018 for a single-age cohort of 14-year-old girls. As of June 2023, more than 6.5 million girls have been vaccinated with the first dose of HPV vaccine and 4.2 million have had their second dose.<sup>43</sup>

#### iv Gender-Based Violence and Bodily Integrity

**Gender-Based Violence:** Ethiopia has enacted several laws and policies to address acts of sexual violence, domestic violence, sexual harassment and harmful practices. The Ethiopian Criminal Code criminalizes various forms of violence against women, including rape, sexual harassment and domestic violence. Ethiopia has also ratified international conventions and treaties, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, which stipulate the protection of women and

**COVID-19:** The COVID-19 pandemic has also significantly impacted Ethiopia's economy and healthcare system. Since the first recorded case of COVID-19 on March 13th, 2020, the country has experienced various phases of the pandemic. From March to June 2020, Ethiopia had a relatively low incidence of COVID-19. However, in the following months until late 2021, the country saw a surge in cases and deaths. To combat the spread of the virus, the Ethiopian government implemented several measures, including the closure of schools, from kindergartens to colleges and remote work arrangements for some government employees. These efforts had varying impacts on different segments of the population, with women and girls experiencing the effects of the pandemic differently than men. The pandemic significantly affected job creation and sustainability, leading to business layoffs and slower job recovery. In 2020/21, approximately 39 per cent of businesses reported laying off employees, resulting in a rise in informal and less reliable jobs.<sup>44</sup> The strain that the pandemic put on the health system also meant that women and girls, particularly those in the low-income bracket, lost access to healthcare services.

men against gender-based violence. Despite many advances, significant gaps remain in the legal framework, including implementation and enforcement. According to the BPPFA +25 reports (2019), while the Revised Criminal Code criminalizes sexual violence (Articles 620-628), it does not recognize rape within the context of marriage. Sexual harassment has also been addressed, but hostile working, living and/or learning environments that create demands for sexual favors are not covered by the law. Similarly, psychological violence and/or economic violence against

42 Girma Amado, Fitsum Weldegebreal, Simon Birhanu, and Yadeta Dessie. 2022. "Cervical cancer screening practices and its associated factors among females of reproductive age in Durame town, Southern Ethiopia." *National Library of Medicine*. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9803181/#:~:text=An%20estimated%2022%20million%20Ethiopian,7095%20cases%20and%204732%20fatalities>.

43 Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, Ministry of Health. 2023. Cervical Cancer, National Program. [https://www.moh.gov.et/site/Cervical\\_Cancer\\_National\\_Program%3A](https://www.moh.gov.et/site/Cervical_Cancer_National_Program%3A)

44 Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, Ministry of Labor and Skills. 2022. Labor Market Intelligence in Ethiopia. <https://mols.gov.et/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/LMI.pdf>



women in the context of marriage and family are not addressed.<sup>45</sup> In recognition of this problem, the government has made significant strides in drafting a national policy on GBV prevention and response. The policy aims to protect vulnerable populations and respect their human rights. It will also serve as an overarching normative framework based on which, various laws, strategies and guidelines could be derived.<sup>46</sup>

Bodily Integrity/Harmful Traditional Practices. Several national policy documents recognize Harmful Traditional Practices (HTP) as detrimental to the status of women and girls and a violation of their rights. The 1993 National Policy on Ethiopian Women aims to eliminate harmful traditional practices. The National Strategy for the Elimination of HTP and the costed roadmap to end FGM and Child Marriage (2020-2024) aims to eliminate all harmful practices and institutionalize mechanisms to support women and children through prevention, protection and the provision of services, enhanced systems, accountability and strengthened evidence-informed decision making.<sup>47</sup> Despite the Government's pledge to

end child marriage by 2025, according to EDHS (2016)



40.3%

of young women aged 20-24 years were married before the legal age of 18



14.1%

of young women were married before the age of 15

In Ethiopia, 25 million girls and women have undergone FGM, the largest absolute number in Eastern and Southern Africa.<sup>48</sup> Overall, 65 per cent of girls and women aged 15 to 49 years have been subjected to FGM. Harmful traditional practices in Ethiopia mainly result from social, cultural and religious norms.

## Women with Disabilities

According to a report by the CSA, there are approximately 7,718,143 persons with disabilities in Ethiopia, which accounts for 9.24 per cent of the total population. Out of these, an estimated 437,582 are economically active, with 397,926 employed and 39,655 unemployed. As of 2021, the

estimated number of economically active persons with disability is 437,582, of which 397,926 are employed and 39,655 are unemployed. Females with disabilities are more unemployed compared with males in all places of residence.<sup>49</sup>

45 Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. 2019. Fifth National Report on Progress made in the Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (Beijing +25). <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/CSW/64/National-reviews/Ethiopia.pdf>

46 UN Women. 2022. UN supporting development of National Policy and Strategy on GBV Prevention and Response in Ethiopia. <https://ethiopia.un.org/en/213638-un-supporting-development-national-policy-and-strategy-gbv-prevention-and-response-ethiopia>

47 UN Women, UNAIDS, Federal HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control Office (FHAPCO). 2020. Gender Assessment of the National HIV Response in Ethiopia. <https://africa.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-02/ethiopia%20gender%20assessment%20of%20the%20national%20hiv%20response.pdf>

48 European Union, Agency for Asylum. 2022. Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting in Ethiopia: Country of Origin Information Report. [https://euaa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/publications/2022-05/2022\\_05\\_COI\\_Report\\_FGM\\_ETHIOPIA\\_EN.pdf](https://euaa.europa.eu/sites/default/files/publications/2022-05/2022_05_COI_Report_FGM_ETHIOPIA_EN.pdf)

49 Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, Ministry of Planning and Development. 2021. Statistical Report on the 2021 Labor Force and Migration Survey. *Statistical Bulletin*. <http://www.statsethiopia.gov.et/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/THE-2021-LA-BOUR-FORCE-AND-MIGRATION-SURVEY-STATISTICAL-REPORT-1.pdf>

# ECONOMIC DIMENSIONS OF (IN) EQUALITY

Women in Ethiopia face significant barriers to full and equitable economic participation. They experience high unemployment rates, are less likely than men to be equally paid for their work and are concentrated at the lower end of manufacturing and other value chains.<sup>50</sup> Women dominate the informal private sector with micro-enterprises playing an important survival strategy.

According to the World Bank, gender gaps in hourly wages, agricultural productivity business sales cost the Ethiopian economy an annual loss of \$3.7 billion of GDP in 2019. Several composite scores attempt to measure the state of gender equality in the economy. The African Development Bank, for example, developed the Africa Gender Index in three areas: Social, Economy and Empowerment. The economic dimension measures gender inequalities in labor market participation, wages and incomes, business ownership and access to productive resources. Ethiopia's AGI score on the Economic dimension is 0.54, indicating that the country still has a long way from parity.

## Gender and Poverty

Over the past 15 years, the poverty rate in Ethiopia declined from 45.5 per cent in 2000 to 23.5 per cent in 2016. According to the 2018 Household Consumption Expenditure Survey report, between 2010/11 and 2015/16, approximately 5.3 million people were lifted out of poverty.<sup>51</sup> Poverty is predominantly a rural phenomenon in Ethiopia. While urban headcount poverty declined from 36.9 per cent in 2000 to 14.8 per cent in 2016, rural

The Ethiopian Gender Development Index (EGDI), produced by The Network of Ethiopian Women's Associations (NEWA), is another measurement framework of gender equality in Ethiopia. The Economic Opportunities and Resources indicator is a composite score that looks at women's formal employment status, land ownership, house ownership, time-use and access to microfinance. The National EGDI score on economic opportunities and resources is 0.14, indicating an 86 per cent average gap that remains to be addressed to achieve full parity. While the comparison between different indices is not meaningful given that they all use different methods and measures, it is important to note that all the different measures indicate that Ethiopian women continue to be at a disadvantage, compared to their male counterparts, to benefit from full and equal participation in the economy.

The unmet economic potential of women in Ethiopia is linked directly to gender disparities in education and health, harmful cultural practices and the burden of family care.

poverty only declined from 45.4 per cent to 25.6 per cent in the same period.<sup>52</sup> Tigray, Amhara, Benshangul Gumuz, Oromia and Afar have the top five highest poverty rates in the country with 27 per cent, 26.5 per cent, 23.9 per cent, 23.6 per cent poverty rates, respectively, in 2016.<sup>53</sup> Poverty rates for female-headed households amounted to 19 per cent in 2016, which was significantly lower than the 25 per cent poverty

50 Buehren et al, Ethiopia Gender Diagnostic Report. 2019. World Bank <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/300021552881249070/pdf/Ethiopia-Gender-Diagnostic-Report-Priorities-for-Promoting-Equity.pdf>

51 UNDP. 2018. Ethiopia's Progress Towards Eradicating Poverty. <https://www.un.org/development/desa/dspd/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2018/04/Ethiopia%E2%80%99s-Progress-Towards-Eradicating-Poverty.pdf>

52 Ibid

53 World Bank. 2020. Ethiopia Poverty Assessment: Harnessing Continued Growth for Accelerated Poverty Reduction. <https://www.un.org/development/desa/dspd/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2018/04/Ethiopia%E2%80%99s-Progress-Towards-Eradicating-Poverty.pdf>

rate recorded for male-headed households in rural areas. However, according to research conducted by the Policy Study Institute (PSI), multidimensional poverty has declined rapidly over time among male-headed households, in contrast to female-headed households, indicating that poverty among male-headed households is essentially transitory, while female-headed households may be more likely to be trapped in chronic poverty, requiring more nuanced and gender-specific policies to address the situation.<sup>54</sup> In urban areas, both female- and male-headed households recorded similar poverty rates.<sup>55</sup> More recent data was unavailable for a more robust trend analysis. Nevertheless, adverse unanticipated shocks such as climate anomalies, fluctuating markets, outbreaks of crop pests and violent armed conflict continue to make households highly vulnerable to sustainability and graduating out of poverty, with women and children being disproportionately affected. When looking at the characteristics of the poor households, the head of household, 20 per cent (lowest quintile), is primarily engaged in farming (83.8 per cent) followed by 11.5 per cent self-employed and only 4.7 per cent wage earners.<sup>56</sup> This is closely correlated to educational attainment.

In line with its overall development policy goals, Ethiopia invests heavily in reducing poverty and promoting social development. The proportion of public spending on pro-poor sectors has increased from 57 per cent in 2004/05 to 66 per cent in 2016/17. Consequently, Ethiopia has one of Africa's largest social assistance programs, the Productive Safety Net Program (PSNP), launched in 2005. The program currently covers eight million households<sup>57</sup> and incorporates several

interventions such as public works activities geared towards improving climate resilience; a risk financing facility to help poor households and communities to better cope with transitory shocks, including households outside of the core program; and the use of targeting methods that assist the most vulnerable community members in obtaining the full benefits of consumption smoothing and asset protection. The program also strengthens existing government institutional systems at all levels (health, water, agriculture, etc.) rather than creating separate systems.<sup>58</sup> The PSNP program seems to target women and men as beneficiaries, with some effort towards equal access to program interventions. According to the World Bank Ethiopia Rural Productive Safety Net Project report, as of May 2022, 4.1 million women were benefiting from the program, representing 51 per cent of total beneficiaries.<sup>59</sup> A gendered analysis of the PSNP in Ethiopia shows that despite progressive gender equity goals, the program falls short of implementation. Special provisions for women are neglected and programs often do not challenge unequal social norms nor recognize unequal gendered roles and responsibilities.<sup>60</sup>

The Urban Productive Safety Net Project (UPSNP) was also launched in 2016 and currently covers 11 cities and more than 600,000 households. In 2019, an urban destitute component was introduced, which has the potential to extend social assistance to particularly hard-to-reach and at-risk urban populations, such as children living and/or working on the streets. The Community-Based Health Insurance (CBHI) scheme is another flagship program currently being rolled out nationwide. It provides health financing measures to the informal

54 Dr. Admassu Tesso, and Dr. Tilahun Tefera. 2023. Findings on Dynamics of Multidimensional Poverty in Ethiopia. Policy Studies Institute.

<https://psi.org.et/index.php/blog/161-psi-researchers-released-preliminary-findings-on-dynamics-of-multidimensional-poverty-in-ethiopia#:~:text=In%20Ethiopia%2C%2068.7%25%20of%20the,between%20urban%20and%20rural%20areas>

55 World Bank. 2020. Ethiopia Poverty Assessment: Harnessing Continued Growth for Accelerated Poverty Reduction. <https://www.un.org/development/desa/dspd/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2018/04/Ethiopia%E2%80%99s-Progress-Towards-Eradicating-Poverty.pdf>

56 World Bank. 2020. Ethiopia Poverty Assessment: Harnessing Continued Growth for Accelerated Poverty Reduction. <https://www.un.org/development/desa/dspd/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2018/04/Ethiopia%E2%80%99s-Progress-Towards-Eradicating-Poverty.pdf>

57 World Bank. 2020. Ethiopia Poverty Assessment: Harnessing Continued Growth for Accelerated Poverty Reduction. <https://www.un.org/development/desa/dspd/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2018/04/Ethiopia%E2%80%99s-Progress-Towards-Eradicating-Poverty.pdf>

58 World Bank Group. 2013. Ethiopia's Productive Safety Net Program (PSNP) Integrating Disaster And Climate Risk Management. <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/893931468321850632/pdf/806220WP0P12680Box0379812B00PUBLIC0.pdf>

59 World Bank. Ethiopia Rural Productive Safety Net Project Page. <https://projects.worldbank.org/en/projects-operations/project-detail/P163438>

60 Melisew Dejene Lemma, Tesfaye Semela Kukem, Siera Vercillo & Logan Cochrane. 2022. "Norms, Equity and Social Protection: A Gender Analysis of the Productive Safety Net Programme in Ethiopia." *Forum for Development Studies, Volume 50, Issue 1. July 2022.*

sector. The government and many donors aim to effectively link the PSNP, UPSNP and the CBHI to provide integrated social protection measures

to the most vulnerable individuals, based on the five key pillars of the National Social Protection Policy.<sup>61</sup>

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61 UNDP. 2018. Ethiopia's Progress Towards Eradicating Poverty. <https://www.un.org/development/desa/dspd/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2018/04/Ethiopia%E2%80%99s-Progress-Towards-Eradicating-Poverty.pdf>

# WOMEN'S LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION AND EMPLOYMENT (FORMAL/INFORMAL)

According to the 2021 Ethiopian Labor & Migration survey, only 56.8 per cent of Ethiopian women participate in the labor market, while the figure for men is 72.6 per cent (Table 9). The labor force participation for both men and women steadily increased from 1999 to 2013 and dipped in 2021.

The employment to population ratio (EPR)<sup>62</sup> follows a similar trend where 58.5 per cent of women in the labor force had employment in 1999, a figure that steadily increased to 69.8 per cent in 2013 and taking a dip again in 2021 to 50.2 per cent (Table 10). Despite their increasing participation, women have a much lower ratio than men at 50.2 per cent EPR compared to 69 per cent for men. In other words, the Ethiopian economy does not adequately provide employment opportunities for women who want to work.

When employed, women tend to work in the informal sector with 28.6 per cent compared to 15.7 per cent for men.<sup>63</sup> This means women have little protection that comes with formal employment, such as a pension, insurance, etc. Apart from their lower representation in the formal sector, close to half of the female workforce (45.3 per cent) is engaged in unpaid family work, while the figure for men is 30.4 per cent.

When looking at the distribution by type of occupation, women occupy lower-level jobs, such as agriculture (41.3 per cent) and elementary employment (35.5 per cent)<sup>64</sup>. This finding is corroborated by the African Gender Index of 0.416 for Managers, professionals and technicians and 0.88 for vulnerable employment.<sup>65</sup> Overall, national figures show that agriculture is one of the most important sectors in Ethiopia, which engages the majority of people at 51.1 per cent (with 41.3 per cent women and 58.3 per cent men). That said, it is important to note that the service sector tends to be the highest job creator for both men and women in urban areas, employing 73.4 per cent of the labor force.<sup>66</sup>

Similarly, women are disproportionately affected by unemployment. Despite the progressive reduction in the unemployment rate for women and men since 1999, unemployment has spiked again in 2021 to 11.7 per cent for women and 5.0 per cent for men. Female unemployment exceeds men by an average of 6 per cent points. COVID-19 could explain the rise of unemployment, especially since the pandemic affected female-dominated sectors like services. Other factors could be the overall slowing down of the economy with compounding inflation challenges, and the foreign exchange crisis.

62 Employment to population ratio (EPR) provides information on the extent to which the population is engaged in productive activities.

63 Ethiopian Statistics Services. 2022. Statistical Report on the 2022, 2<sup>nd</sup> Round Urban Employment Survey. [http://www.statsethiopia.gov.et/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/2022\\_2nd-round-UEUS-Key-Findings.pdf](http://www.statsethiopia.gov.et/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/2022_2nd-round-UEUS-Key-Findings.pdf)

64 Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, Ministry of Planning and Development. 2021. Statistical Report on the 2021 Labor Force and Migration Survey. *Statistical Bulletin* <http://www.statsethiopia.gov.et/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/THE-2021-LABOUR-FORCE-AND-MIGRATION-SURVEY-STATISTICAL-REPORT-1.pdf>

65 African Development Bank. Africa Gender Index Report 2019- Methodological and statistical report. 2020 <https://www.afdb.org/en/documents/africa-gender-index-2019-methodological-and-statistical-report>

66 Ethiopian Statistics Services. 2022. Statistical Report on the 2022, 2<sup>nd</sup> Round Urban Employment Survey. [http://www.statsethiopia.gov.et/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/2022\\_2nd-round-UEUS-Key-Findings.pdf](http://www.statsethiopia.gov.et/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/2022_2nd-round-UEUS-Key-Findings.pdf)

# GENDER (IN) EQUALITY BY MAJOR PRODUCTIVE SECTORS

## Gender and Agriculture

According to the 2019 World Development Indicators, agriculture accounts for about one-third (33.9 per cent) of Ethiopia's GDP and employs 66 per cent of the labor force, which is a structural shift from 2016, where agriculture employed 80 per cent of the population.<sup>67</sup> Over the past two decades, investments in infrastructure and extension services have helped raise agriculture output and yields, particularly in cereals.<sup>68</sup> Meanwhile, rising technology adaptation, such as improved seeds and chemical inputs, has increased the total factor productivity by about one per cent annually over the past two decades.<sup>69</sup> This growth, particularly in cash crops, explains the bulk of Ethiopia's poverty reduction over the past 15 years (World Bank, 2020c).<sup>70</sup>

There are clear gender dimensions to agriculture in Ethiopia. About 47 per cent of the rural labor force are women, but deep-rooted gender inequalities continue to hamper their full participation and benefit from agricultural opportunities. Among the production factors, land is the basic resource for agriculture. According to the Ethiopia

Gender Statistics Report, only 12 per cent of the total land holdings of subsistence farmers are owned by female agricultural holders.<sup>71</sup> About 19 per cent of 17 million agricultural households nationally are female-headed and 81 per cent were male-headed. Female-headed households have a low percentage of rented land and tend to rely only on their land as opposed to male-headed households. The average land holding size for all agricultural holders was 1.03 hectares-0.65 for females and 1.12 hectares for males. These figures clearly show the fragmented nature and small landholding of subsistence agricultural practices across the country. Women farmers in Ethiopia produce 24 per cent less output per hectare than their male counterparts,<sup>72</sup> even after accounting for differences in average plot size and region of production.<sup>73</sup> Regarding asset ownership, the average plot size for female-headed households was 0.86 hectares, while male-headed households operated an average holding of 1.31 hectares in 2013/14.<sup>74</sup> Women's ownership of assets is particularly low in pastoralist areas. With women and men having differential access to land, other

67 International Labor Organization. 2021. Employment in Agriculture, Ethiopia. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.AGR.EMPL.ZS?locations=ET>

68 Bachewe et al. 2018. Agricultural Transformation in Africa? Assessing the Evidence in Ethiopia. <https://ideas.repec.org/a/eee/wdevel/v105y2018icp286-298.html>

69 Ibid

70 Millennium Challenge Corporation. 2020. Ethiopia Constraints Analysis to Growth Report. <https://assets.mcc.gov/content/uploads/Ethiopia-CA.2020-3.pdf>

71 Central Statistics Agency. 2017. Gender Statistics Report. [https://africa.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Field%20Office%20Africa/Attachments/Publications/2018/12/UN%20Women\\_Gender%20Statistics%20Report%202017\\_FINAL-compressed.pdf](https://africa.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Field%20Office%20Africa/Attachments/Publications/2018/12/UN%20Women_Gender%20Statistics%20Report%202017_FINAL-compressed.pdf)

72 Oxfam. 2021. Policy and Practice, Gender Responsive Budgeting in Agriculture. <https://policy-practice.oxfam.org/resources/gender-responsive-budgeting-in-agriculture-in-ethiopia-621344/>

73 Mamusha Lemma, Solomon Gizaw, Annet Mulema and Barbara Wieland. 2020. "Gender Integration in the Ethiopian Agricultural Extension System: A literature review." CGIAR, ILIR. <https://cgspace.cgiar.org/bitstream/handle/10568/110498/GenderIntegrationEthiopia.pdf>

74 Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources, UNDP, UN Environment Programme, UN Women. 2018. The Cost of Gender Gap in Agriculture Productivity in Ethiopia. <https://africa.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Field%20Office%20Africa/Attachments/Publications/2018/04/Study%20Report%20The%20Cost%20of%20the%20Gender%20Gap%20in%20Agricultural%20Productivity%20in%20Ethiopia%20Finalcompressed.pdf>

inequalities can follow, in access to water, irrigation, improved seeds, fertilizers, pesticides, tools and equipment, ploughing animals, labor, credit other

production factors. However, again, there would be significant variations across the country's regions.

## Gender and Industry

As previously noted, Ethiopia has achieved high growth and poverty reduction over the past 20 years, primarily due to public sector investment. While Agriculture continues to take the lion's share of GDP at (37.57 per cent) in 2021 compared to Industry (22 per cent) and Service (36.25 per cent),<sup>75</sup> the Government of Ethiopia has been implementing various industry-friendly policies and strategies since the early 2000s that seek to transform the structure of the economy and help the country achieve middle-income status by 2025.<sup>76</sup> Today, most industrial sectors consist of non-tradable construction activity-roads, power plants and buildings. Manufacturing accounts for just one-third of Ethiopia's industrial activity and has seen its share of the overall economy stall around five to six per cent. Over half of manufacturing activity is food and beverage processing, a sector with integration opportunities to agriculture. There is also an emerging textiles and garment sector that promises the potential for technology transfer, export growth and forex earnings, but yet to be realized.

In 2014, female workers comprised 33.3 per cent of the workforce in the manufacturing sector<sup>77</sup> (large and medium scale). According to a 2018 study by the Ministry of Industry, women dominate in labor-intensive, semi and low-skilled sub-sectors. For example, 48.08 per cent of women work as low-skill production workers, whereas only 27.6 per cent of men perform similar roles and 4.18

per cent of men are production line managers, compared to only 1.2 per cent of women. Similarly, the proportion of women who work as high-skilled production workers decreases as the task becomes more skill-intensive, with only 15 per cent female participation in chemical and pharmaceutical industries.<sup>78</sup> Of those participating in these sub-sectors, most women work on the factory floor, with women's participation in technical production being close to zero.<sup>79</sup> Traditional hand-woven textiles provide employment opportunities for large numbers of the least educated and most disadvantaged women, who have very limited alternative employment opportunities. In other words, like other sectors, women tend to hold lower paying and more insecure jobs within the industrial sector.

Industrial parks offer opportunities to young female workers entering the formal economy for the first time. By 2021, Ethiopian industrial Parks were employing 90,000 workers, of which 87 per cent of production workers were women.<sup>80</sup> Around 75 per cent of current workers are under 25 and the median age of entry is 19.5 years.<sup>81</sup> According to a Study on Women in Manufacturing in Ethiopia, the contributions of women are highly valued by companies who consider female workers as careful and more attuned to details. They perform faster and produce better quality and are trustworthy and dependable. They can perform routine tasks for longer periods and are

75 The Global Economy. 2022. Ethiopia Share of Agriculture. Ethiopia [https://www.theglobaleconomy.com/Ethiopia/share\\_of\\_agriculture/#:~:text=The%20latest%20value%20from%202021,to%20compare%20trends%20over%20time](https://www.theglobaleconomy.com/Ethiopia/share_of_agriculture/#:~:text=The%20latest%20value%20from%202021,to%20compare%20trends%20over%20time)

76 A Study on Women in Manufacturing. 2018. <file:///C:/Users/bersa/Downloads/A-Study-on-Women-in-Manufacturing-in-Ethiopia.pdf>

77 Ibid

78 Ibid

79 Ibid

80 World Bank. 2021. On the Path to Industrialization A Review of Industrial Parks in Ethiopia. Policy Review. <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099350011132228872/pdf/P1741950a12ef10560af5008750d1393b7c.pdf>.

81 Girum Abebe, Stefano Caria, Stefan Dercon, Lukas Hensel. 2019. The Determinants and Implications of Worker Turnover in a Nascent Industry, International Growth Centre. <https://www.theigc.org/sites/default/files/2021/05/Abebe-et-al-2019-Working-paper-2.pdf>

obedient to leadership.<sup>82</sup> Although these gender stereotypes may open opportunities to their first job, they unfortunately have negative implications

as they may limit women's economic advancement and opportunities towards high-skilled and better-paying jobs.

## Gender and Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship in Ethiopia is an important source of job opportunities for millions of people and a key tool in fighting poverty. According to the World Bank, the private sector made up 20 per cent of GDP in 2021. The Home-Grown Economic Reform (HGER), an interim plan to bridge the GTP II and the 10-Year Perspective Plan, also emphasized the private sector's role in sustaining Ethiopia's economic growth trajectory. The Ten-Year Perspective Plan (2021-2030) highlights private sector-led economic growth as one of the strategic pillars. Not surprising, Ethiopia's private sector is predominantly characterized by small-scale, informal companies operating in the domestic market, overshadowed by large government investments and state-owned enterprises (SOE). Enterprises in the informal sector are largely undifferentiated firms concentrated in manufacturing and trade.<sup>83</sup> National data on

women's entrepreneurship is unavailable, but various research, including the World Bank's Gender Diagnostic, points to the fact that women who have fewer wage opportunities are primarily concentrated in the informal self-employment sector. Male-owned enterprises tend to outperform female-owned enterprises using sales as a proxy for earnings by nearly 79 per cent. When considering individual, household and enterprise level factors, such time spent on business activities, cost of operating the business, etc., the disparity lessens to 24 per cent indicating the gender gap is largely due to levels of resources that female businesses, compared to male businesses, have access to.<sup>84</sup> Indeed, compared to male owners, female owners spend less time on business activities, hire less labor, are less likely to have a business license, and access less formal credit.<sup>85</sup>

## Gender and Digital Technology

Technology has the potential to play a significant role in addressing gender inequality. One way technology can be leveraged is through the development of services that provide women with access to information, resources and support. As the world embraces digital-led economies, digital technologies provide opportunities for developing countries to build an inclusive economy. Digital technologies can be used to expand access to information, education, training, health care and financial services.

One of the prerequisites for productively using digital technologies is access to the internet, but only 24 per cent of Ethiopians have access to the internet.<sup>86</sup> While there has been some improvement, the gender gap in internet connectivity has increased. In 2018, nine per cent of men had access to the Internet compared to five per cent of women, a difference of 4 percentage points. By 2021, that gap had increased to nine percentage points, with 20 per cent of men having access compared to 11 per cent of women with internet access.<sup>87</sup>

82 UNDP. 2018. A Study on Women in Manufacturing. <file:///C:/Users/bersa/Downloads/A-Study-on-Women-in-Manufacturing-in-Ethiopia.pdf>

83 Sisay Debebe, Semeneh Bessie. 2022. "Private Sector Development in Ethiopia: Trends, Challenges and Policy Issues." *Ethiopian Economics Association (EEA)*. <https://eea-et.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Working-paper-04-2022.pdf>

84 World Bank. 2019. Gender Innovation Lab, Gender Diagnostic report <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/300021552881249070/pdf/Ethiopia-Gender-Diagnostic-Report-Priorities-for-Promoting-Equity.pdf>

85 Ibid

86 International Telecommunication Union (ITU). 2021. "Digital Development Dashboard: An Overview of the State of Digital Development around the World Based on ITU Data." ITU Publications. [https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Documents/DDD/ddd\\_ETH.pdf](https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Documents/DDD/ddd_ETH.pdf)

87 Ibid



Access to technology-based devices, low digital skills and literacy and low infrastructure development, especially in rural areas, are the main barriers behind women's use of digital technologies to better their lives and participate in the digital

economy. Mobile ownership among women in Ethiopia is much lower than among men, with only 55 per cent of women owning a mobile phone compared to 76 per cent of men.

## Gender and Energy

Despite Ethiopia's commitment to achieving universal access to electricity by 2025, according to the World Bank, 65 per cent of Ethiopia's population lives within 2.5 kilometers of medium-voltage transmission lines. Still, only 50 per cent of households,<sup>88</sup> one-quarter of primary schools and one-third of health clinics have access to grid electricity.<sup>89</sup> For those connected to the grid, their demands are significantly unmet. The 2015 World Bank Enterprise Survey<sup>90</sup> and a 2017 UNDP survey of firms ranked electricity among Ethiopia's top obstacles to conducting business.<sup>91</sup> Estimates suggest that Ethiopia's frequent and lengthy electricity outages raise production costs by 15 per cent and firm-level surveys reveal losses due to outages and greater dependence on self-generated power.<sup>92</sup> At the household level, significant disparities exist between urban and rural areas for access to electricity. According to the 2016 Welfare Monitoring Survey, nationally, 28 per cent of households used electricity as a source of lighting, 34 per cent used solar batteries, 24 per cent used kerosene and 3.13 per cent used firewood. There is a significant urban/rural divide in electricity use, with 92 per cent of urban households using electricity as a

lighting source compared to eight per cent in rural households. Not surprisingly, 43 per cent of rural households use solar batteries followed by 30.5 per cent who use kerosene as a source of lighting compared to 4.3 per cent who use solar and 2.5 per cent who use kerosene in urban households. Gender-disaggregated information on access to energy at the national level was not available.

Similarly, a distinct pattern can be observed when looking at energy sources for cooking. Nationally, 70 per cent of households use collected firewood for cooking, 12 per cent use purchased firewood and 5 per cent use electricity. However, rural/urban patterns are significantly different, with 86 per cent of rural households using collected firewood, 4 per cent purchased firewood and 5 per cent electricity. In urban households, 16 per cent use collected firewood, 38 per cent purchased firewood and 21 per cent electricity for cooking. Given the gender divide in household work, particularly in cooking, it can be said that women bear the highest time and health burden related to acquiring fuel for cooking as well the health risks associated with smoke exposure.

## Gender and Roads

Access to road networks and transportation is a significant barrier in developing countries, including Ethiopia. The low development of road networks in Ethiopia has resulted in difficulty accessing basic services and marketplaces, particularly for those residing in rural areas. The World Bank's Logistics

Performance Index (LPI) indicates progress in infrastructural development. Ethiopia's quality of trade and transport-related infrastructure indicator was rated at 2.12 in 2021 and is ranked 133<sup>rd</sup> out of 139 countries.<sup>93</sup>

88 IEA, IRENA, UNSD World Bank, WHO. 2023. Access to Electricity (% of Population) - Ethiopia. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/EG.ELC.ACCTS.ZS?end=2020&locations=ET&start=2000&view=chart>

89 World Bank. 2012. Energizing Growth: Closing Gaps between Men and Women in Ethiopian Energy Sector. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2019/05/03/energizing-growth-closing-gaps-between-men-and-women-in-ethiopian-energy-sector>

90 World Bank Enterprise Survey – Ethiopia. 2015.

91 Ibid

92 Abdisa, 2018; Carlsson et al, 2018

93 World Bank. 2023. Logistics Performance Index (LPI). <https://lpi.worldbank.org/international/global>

The Ethiopian government initiated the Ethiopian Road Sector Development Program (ERSDP) in 1997 to address the issue. This program has undertaken 160,000 km of road physical works over the past 23 years, including the construction of new link roads and upgrading work.<sup>94</sup> Women are disproportionately affected by the lack of access to infrastructure as they are responsible for repetitive chores such as fetching water and collecting firewood, which often require travel on undeveloped paths rather than roads and on foot rather than by other modes of transportation. Additionally, women and girls are responsible for selling low-volume farm produce at the market and purchasing household supplies, meaning they take more market trips than men. The lack of road networks also affects the delivery of maternal and reproductive health care services, as women have to travel long distances to access

health facilities.

The government has been slow to implement gender-sensitive principles in the road construction sector. Women are typically not involved in community discussions about road projects during feasibility studies, resulting in their specific needs and interests being ignored. Another major challenge is the absence of gender-disaggregated data on the impacts of road construction, those affected by displacement and data on the accessibility of roads for women and other groups. According to key informants, accessibility and affordability to use different modes of transport is a serious challenge to women in general, but women with special needs, such as women with disabilities, pregnant and nursing mothers, are most affected.

## Gender, Leadership and Decision-making

The Beijing Platform for Action (1995) includes a strong statement calling for governments to ensure women's equal access to and full participation in power structures and decision-making. Despite measures taken to improve women's participation in leadership and decision-making positions, numbers remain low globally. Several composite scores attempt to measure the state of gender equality in leadership and representation. The African Gender Index (AGI) in Empowerment and Representation measures women's representation and leadership roles in government and the private sector. It compares the number of women and men in parliament and cabinet positions, including the proportion of firms with women managers and the ratio of female to male managers, professionals and technicians. Ethiopia's AGI score in empowerment and representation is 0.247, indicating that senior decision-making remains substantially in the hands of men in both the private and public sectors.

Significant progress has been made at the ministerial level, where the AGI is 1.021,<sup>95</sup> which means women and men reached parity during the 2018 appointments. Women's representation within line ministries increased from 13 per cent in 2015 to 50 per cent in 2018. Progress was also made with the appointment of a female President Head of State in 2018, a female president of the Supreme Court, a Female Attorney General (resigned in 2023) and a chairperson of the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia (resigned in 2023). However, the Voluntary National Review (VNR) of Ethiopia indicates that as of October 2021, women held only 8 out of 22 (36 per cent) ministerial positions and 33 per cent of cabinet positions, a regression from the parity achieved in 2018. Moreover, in contrast to the 2018 ministerial positions, where women held positions like Minister of Defense and Minister of Peace, women currently hold soft leadership positions such as Ministry of Tourism, Labor and Skills, Transport and Logistics.<sup>96</sup> Representation at the State Minister level is lower, with only 15 of 52 (29 per cent) positions held by women as of

94 Ibrahim Worku. 2011. "Road Sector Development and Economic Growth in Ethiopia." *Ethiopian Development Research Institute (EDRI)*. <https://elibrary.acbfpact.org/acbf/collect/acbf/index/assoc/HASH0154/75c72727/64f4e457/ff92.dir/EDRI0006.pdf>

95 African Development Bank. 2020. Africa Gender Index Report. [https://www.afdb.org/sites/default/files/documents/publications/africa\\_gender\\_index\\_report\\_2019\\_-\\_analytical\\_report.pdf](https://www.afdb.org/sites/default/files/documents/publications/africa_gender_index_report_2019_-_analytical_report.pdf)

96 Ministry of Women and Social Affairs, The State of Gender (In)equality in Ethiopia: Literature Review to Inform the Development of a Roadmap for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Ethiopia, 2022

October 20, 2021.<sup>97</sup> Women's representation across all government functions (executive, legislative, judiciary) remains low at the regional level, with 23 per cent of government leadership positions held by women; 36 per cent at the Woreda level, 25 per cent at the Zone level. Afar, Somali and Benshangul Gumuz have the lowest female representation in regional government, with 7 per cent, 11 per cent and 19 per cent respectively.<sup>98</sup> SNNPR region fairs slightly better with 31 per cent female representation in government, followed by Oromia and Amhara at 30 per cent and 26 per cent respectively, in 2021.<sup>99</sup>

The positive trend in increased women's representation in government is an important achievement and demonstrates political commitment to promote gender equality in politics. It also has the potential to shift cultural perceptions and attitudes surrounding women in leadership, allowing future generations of young girls to aspire to positions of power and leadership. However, the current backslide is an important trend to monitor to

ensure the government is held accountable for its commitment to gender equality.

It should be noted that Ethiopian Women face systemic barriers to participation in decision-making and reaching positions of influence in business and local politics. The gender gap for managers, professionals and technicians are 41.6 per cent and 16.0 per cent for top managers in firms. Diversity in leadership roles matters. Parliaments with a larger proportion of women, for example, tend to promote legislation that addresses women's needs and promotes gender equality. Companies with a greater share of women on their management boards perform better financially. These result in virtuous circles, as women leaders provide role models for girls and young women. It is therefore important to take active steps to address gender inequality in public and private leadership – while gender-based quotas have proven to be an important tool, more needs to be done to address systemic barriers and create conditions for women to ascend into leadership roles.

97 Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and UN Women. 2020. Status of Women in Leadership Positions in the Legislative, Executive and Judicial Branches of the Government of Ethiopia.

98 Ibid

99 Ibid

# GENDER, ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Ethiopia is particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. The country is already experiencing the effects of climate change, including more frequent and severe droughts, floods, crop failures and famine.<sup>100</sup> Climate-induced disasters have wide-ranging impacts on individuals, households and communities, leading to property destruction, loss of livelihoods and loss of lives. Whether in urban or rural communities, or pastoral and agricultural areas, different categories of women and men (male-headed households, female-headed households and youth) who have distinct roles and needs in productive, reproductive, community and political spheres, experience the effects of climate change differently. This often negatively impacts women and girls because their access to productive resources, services, mobility, information, markets and technology differs and impacts their adaptive capabilities.

Climate change emergencies such as floods also disproportionately impact the health and well-being of women, especially those in rural areas. During the 2020 rainy season (kiremt), numerous rivers, floodplains around Lake Tana and several dams flooded (Kesem, Koko, Kuraz and Tendaho), affecting more than one million people and displacing 292,863 of them.<sup>101</sup> By 2030, it is projected that there will be an additional 248,200 people, per year, at risk of riverine flooding due to climate change and more intense rainfall.<sup>102</sup> Floods increase mortality, either directly from drowning or indirectly through the increased transmission of waterborne diseases, such as dysentery and cholera,<sup>103</sup> that disproportionately affect women and children who are responsible for fetching water and are more likely to come

in touch with contaminated water. Inadequate access to resources and health services takes a toll on their physical and mental health. Women's increased responsibilities often lead to higher rates of fatigue, malnutrition and mental health issues, which can have long-term detrimental effects on their overall well-being.

To deal with the growing climate change-related challenges and gender inequality, the Ethiopian Government has demonstrated strong political will and commitment to gender-responsive climate action. Vulnerability to the impacts of climate change, with implications for food security, livelihoods and economic development, is presently one of the major challenges faced by Ethiopia. Recognizing these challenges, Ethiopia is moving towards a low-carbon and climate-resilient economy and has one of the most advanced climate policy landscapes in Africa.

The Government of Ethiopia has been striving to direct its development in a green growth and climate-compatible direction by launching its Climate Resilient Green Economy (CRGE) strategy in 2011. Ethiopia has extensively invested in climate change mitigation and adaptation actions and adopted policies and plans that ensure economy-wide integration of the climate change agenda, which sets out the national objective to achieve a climate-resilient middle-income economy with no net growth in greenhouse gas emissions by 2025. While committed to continued rapid growth and attaining lower-middle-income country status by 2025, the GoE intends net-zero Green House Gas (GHG) emission growth while simultaneously building the economy's resilience

100 International Monetary Fund. 2022. "Climate Change and Chronic Food Insecurity in Sub-Saharan Africa." *African and Research Department*. <file:///C:/Users/bersa/Downloads/CCCFISSAEA.pdf>

101 Government of Ethiopia and OCHA 2020

102 RCRC, IFRC. Country Assessment- Ethiopia Climate Change Impacts on Health and Livelihoods: Ethiopia Assessment. [https://www.climatecentre.org/wp-content/uploads/RCRC\\_IFRC-Country-assessments-Ethiopia-Final3.pdf](https://www.climatecentre.org/wp-content/uploads/RCRC_IFRC-Country-assessments-Ethiopia-Final3.pdf)

103 Ibid

to climate shocks.<sup>104</sup> Its CRGE Strategy focuses on mobilizing resources to achieve these triple goals - adaptation, mitigation, and economic growth.

Ethiopia's ambitious climate targets are focused on Agriculture, forestry, land management, renewable energy, water, health, transport, urban and industry and represent the major

commitments of the country to strengthening Ethiopia's response to climate change. As part of its national development priorities and international commitments, Ethiopia is translating the policies and global multilateral environmental agreements into actions through different flagship programs.

104 Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. 2011. Ethiopia's Climate-Resilient Green Economy Strategy. [https://www.prevention-web.net/files/61504\\_ethiopiacrge.pdf](https://www.prevention-web.net/files/61504_ethiopiacrge.pdf)

# GENDER AND PEACE AND SECURITY

After about 30 years of relative peace and security, Ethiopia is currently experiencing conflict and insecurity on multiple fronts. Ethiopia's political liberalization has been underway since April 2018 and promised political openings have been met by a series of ethnically motivated violent events and political upheavals.<sup>105</sup> Together, these conflicts and periods of insecurity caused untold deaths and destabilized millions, turning Ethiopia into the home of one of the largest humanitarian and internally displaced person (IDP) crises in the world. In November 2020, power struggles in the North triggered the war in Tigray against the federal government, which quickly spilled into nearby regions of Amhara and Afar and caught global attention. It is estimated that the conflict in the north alone killed an estimated 600,000 people.<sup>106</sup> According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Ethiopia is now home to 4.2 million IDPs and over 1.5 million IDP returnees as a result of the northern and localized conflict.<sup>107</sup> IDPs have limited protection and access to social services and unsafe shelters have put women and girls at an increased risk of violence and sexual exploitation.<sup>108</sup> Despite the signing of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement (COHA), in November 2022, Ethiopia continues to experience internal violence and insecurity in various regions. Insurgencies, ethnically motivated attacks and tensions between the federal government and the Amhara region pose significant risks to peace and stability. The global community must pay attention to these ongoing

challenges and support efforts to mitigate further conflict escalation.

Women, men and children act and are affected differently in periods of conflict and post-conflict settings. The conflict in Tigray, for example, has limited access to resources, education, employment opportunities, basic health services, protection of basic human rights and, further, it has subjected women and men on all sides to violence and harmful traditional practices. Looting and destruction of public infrastructure have resulted in many being unable to access basic social services. Gender-based violence has become more prevalent.<sup>109</sup> A full picture of the multidimensional impacts of the conflict is still unknown. Still, most often, males disproportionately bear the mortality burden of war.

In contrast, women and children constitute the majority of refugees and the displaced and are almost exclusively subjected to sexual and gender-based violence. A Joint Investigation by the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission and OHCHR<sup>110</sup> reported findings that rape and sexual violence had been used as a weapon of war to inflict lasting physical and psychological damage on women and girls in Tigray.<sup>111</sup> Similarly, an investigation report by EHRC covering events beyond June 2021 and targeting Amhara and Afar regions documented widespread, cruel and systematic sexual and gender-based violence, including gang rape against women of different

105 (Ethiopian Peace Observatory (EPO). 2022. For detailed timeframe and location of each phase of the Tigray war.

106 UN Women. 2023. Humanitarian Gender Alert: Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action in the Context of Ethiopia. [https://africa.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2023-05/Humanitarian%20Gender%20Alert\\_April\\_2023%20TY%20FINAL%5B78%5D.pdf](https://africa.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2023-05/Humanitarian%20Gender%20Alert_April_2023%20TY%20FINAL%5B78%5D.pdf)

107 United Nations High Commission for Refugees, n.d.

108 Ministry of Health, Ethiopia, 2022

109 Ministry of Health, Ethiopia, 2022

110 Ethiopian Human Rights Commission. 2021. Report on Violations of Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law in Afar and Amhara Regions of Ethiopia. <https://ehrc.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/English-Executive-Summary-AAIR.pdf>

111 Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC) and Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). 2021. Joint Investigation into Alleged Violations of International Human Rights, Humanitarian and Refugee Law Committed by all Parties to the Conflict in the Tigray Region of the Federal democratic Republic of Ethiopia. <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2021-11/OHCHR-EHRC-Tigray-Report.pdf>

ages - girls and elderly women, sometimes deliberately committed in front of family members, often indiscriminately and sometimes in a targeted manner.<sup>112</sup> The hostilities in northern Ethiopia alone have left over two million students out of school for the past two years, posing a significant challenge to realizing the goals set in the Ten-Year Development Plan. A Ministry of Health study conducted before and after the 2020/2021 conflict in Tigray, Afar, Amhara, Oromia, Benishangul-Gumuz and the SNNP (Konso zone) regions reveals a considerable decline in healthcare services for over 24 million people. The health system's ability to provide essential services has been impeded due to the destruction of health infrastructure, widespread theft of medical supplies and medications, insecurity and the displacement of families and healthcare workers. Reports indicate that 3,217 health posts, 709 health centers and 76 hospitals in the six

conflict-affected regions have been partially or entirely damaged.<sup>113</sup>

Despite bearing a heavy burden during the conflict, women were absent from the peace process in Ethiopia. While women seem absent in the national peacebuilding process, Ethiopian women have been playing an increasingly important role in UN peacekeeping operations. In 2022, over 2,000 Ethiopian women were serving in UN peacekeeping missions around the world. This represents a significant increase from the number of Ethiopian women serving in UN peacekeeping missions in 2010, which was just over 500. This is partly due to the growing recognition that women can often better interact with local communities and build trust with local populations. They are also less likely to be seen as a threat by local men, which can help to reduce tensions and prevent conflict.

112 Ethiopian Human Rights Commission. 2022. <https://ehrc.org/in-a-first-of-its-kind-human-rights-situation-report-on-ethiopia-ehrc-submitted-to-the-house-of-peoples-representatives-the-commission-call-for-government-to-protect-respect-and-guarantee-hu/>

113 Ibid

# CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, this comprehensive gender equality profile for Ethiopia sheds light on the progress made, challenges faced and the way forward in achieving gender equality in the country. Through a detailed analysis of key areas such as education, employment, political representation and social norms, we have gained valuable insights into the current state of gender equality in Ethiopia.

Ethiopia has made significant strides in promoting gender equality over the years. Efforts to improve girls' access to education and reduce gender disparities in enrollment rates have yielded positive results. Women's participation in the labor force has also increased, although significant gender gaps in job quality, wages and leadership positions persist. The representation of women in political decision-making roles has seen improvement, but further progress is needed to ensure equal representation at all levels.

However, this gender equality profile also highlights the numerous challenges that hinder progress. Deep-rooted social norms, cultural practices and stereotypes continue to perpetuate gender inequality. Gender-based violence remains a pressing concern, requiring concerted efforts to eradicate and provide support to survivors. Limited access to resources, particularly in rural areas, hinders women's economic empowerment. Moreover, intersectional issues, such as the experiences of women with disabilities or from

marginalized communities, must be addressed to ensure inclusivity in gender equality initiatives.

The government of Ethiopia has several policies and programs in place to promote gender equality, but more needs to be done to ensure that these policies and programs are effective. Multiple efforts are underway to produce data on Gender, such as the Central Statistic Agency's efforts to produce gender-specific reports, NEWA's Gender Development Index and the Gender MIS of the Ministry of Women and Social Affairs. Despite these commendable efforts, one of the biggest challenges to gender equality in Ethiopia continues to be the lack of data. There is a lack of reliable data on the status of women in Ethiopia, which makes it difficult to track progress on gender equality and to identify areas where further action is needed. Additionally, the available data is often not disaggregated by gender, which makes it difficult to get a comprehensive picture of the situation. As such, achieving gender equality in Ethiopia requires long-term commitment, collective action a comprehensive approach addressing the multifaceted dimensions of gender inequality. The following section outlines a few recommendations that can help foster a supportive environment for gender equality, equal opportunities, rights and freedoms so that women and men can thrive and contribute to the nation's development.



# RECOMMENDATIONS

**Recommendation 1: Build strong accountability measures for gender throughout the gender machinery.**

**Recommendation 2: Improve gender data collection, coordination and management to make information publicly available.** Making data readily available, including evidence on the impacts, feasibility and costs of gender programming, could support policy-makers and the donor community to design data and evidence-driven policies and interventions. Support from the research community in designing, experimenting, and evaluating innovative solutions in gender programming can help increase the cost-effectiveness of gender programming and maximize the impact on women and girls' empowerment.

**Recommendation 3: Involving men and boys as allies.** Involving men and boys as allies in pursuing gender equality is essential to challenge traditional gender roles and promote positive social norms. Regarding structural and attitudinal constraints, there is a tendency to interpret gender issues as women's issues, push gender issues only to the gender mainstreaming directorate of ministries and consider women's empowerment as providing fragmented and piecemeal technical support to female staff of respective government sectors. The government can adopt a whole government approach to gender equality and build the capacity of men and boys across all sectors of the economy to question internal biases and play a proactive role in reducing gender inequalities.

**Recommendation 4: Adapt policies and measures recognizing unpaid care and domestic work and reducing the time and energy burden for women and girls.** Some progress has been made on this front, but the government can continue supporting stronger policies and better implementation of interventions and services aimed at reducing the burden of unpaid care and domestic work on women, including subsidized childcare, parental leave and flexible work arrangements.

These policies have helped to reduce gender inequality in other countries and increase women's labor force participation, closing the gender gap in employment and earnings.

**Recommendation 5: Invest in public awareness campaigns that challenge traditionally held beliefs and norms about women and girls.** Consider public awareness campaigns that bring positive light to women's contribution to the economy while challenging gender norms and stereotypes that hold women back. These can be creative, motivational and uplifting campaigns that paint women and girls in a new light. Examples of such approaches exist with programs that can be scaled, such as the MasterCard Girl Power Yegna campaign.

**Recommendation 7: Consider focusing on a gender-transformative education system.** The government and its partners should strengthen and build gender-transformative approaches in the education sector. Ongoing initiatives need to be strengthened and initiatives such as developing Gender Responsive Pedagogy (GRP) and the revision of materials to remove gender biases from textbooks at all levels need to be considered.

**Recommendation 10: Improve women's access to extension services and time-saving technologies.** Investments providing access to labor-saving technologies, can reduce women's labor burden and time poverty in contract farming and improve productivity and income.

**Recommendation 11: Support and promote the emergence of women leaders and wealth-creating owners in the private sector.** The Ethiopian government and development partners can consider the adoption of the Seal in Ethiopia that can be implemented through the Ministry of Women and Social Affairs, for example.

**Recommendation 12: Promote the emergence and graduation of women-owned and led**

**businesses from informal to formal enterprises.** Supporting informal businesses to migrate into formal by understanding why women-led businesses tend to stay in the informal space and designing interventions that help remove and promote the emergence of formal women-owned and led businesses should be considered.

**Recommendation 13: Regional trade and gender integration in the formulation of policies and implementation.** The Ethiopian government and its development partners have an opportunity to carefully assess and design interventions that promote SMEs and links them to the African market. Interventions such as awareness building and trade readiness programs targeting SMEs with a focus on female-owned and led SMEs should be considered.

**Recommendation 14: Increase investments in upskilling women workers.** Investing in relevant training that boosts productivity and promotes gender equality is critical. Skills gaps are directly linked to productivity. Demand-driven skills training, internships, vouchers and/or subsidies for young women have been identified as successful interventions but often too costly for companies.

**Recommendation 15: Increase the number of women in the energy sector (technical and management roles).** Work with universities and TVET centers to improve the number of women who participate in STEM programs by understanding barriers and designing interventions that address these barriers, such as gender stereotypes, highlighting role models of women in STEM, helping remove instructor bias, creating a supportive environment for women in STEM, etc. This could help build a strong pipeline of potential female recruits who can occupy technical roles within the utility companies and the energy sector.

**Recommendation 16: Understand and promote technology with the potential to be transformative for gender equality.** There are many opportunities for promoting gender equality in technology, some of which have been addressed in the STEM discussions.

**Recommendation 17: Promote women's leadership in government.** Support effective collaboration of state and non-state actors to build the capacity of women to participate and engage in competitive politics, leadership, and governance. Initiatives like the one led by the Ethiopian President can be further encouraged and scaled up.

**Recommendation 18: Promote gender analysis and gender needs across interventions.** When investing in climate change interventions, development partners should consider making gender analysis and action planning a mandatory criterion for accessing funding for adaptation action. This should allow projects to understand and address barriers so that women can have equal access to project participation and resources (assets, technology, climate information). Climate interventions should push the boundaries and promote the design and implementation of gender-transformative interventions that seek systemic and sustained impacts.

**Recommendation 25: Promote women's active engagement in peacemaking and peacebuilding initiatives.** The government of Ethiopia and its development partners should consider interventions that support women becoming active contributors to formal and customary dispute resolution mechanisms rather than being considered as active contributors to formal and customary dispute resolution mechanisms rather than being considered victims only. This would mean seeking active female community members, addressing structural barriers affecting women's participation in formal peace processes and promoting women's meaningful engagement in the formal peace-building institution, engaging and empowering them to play an active role in peacebuilding. This could include capacity building, learning opportunities and seeking out the opinions and contributions of women leaders in the community.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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The gender profile brief was developed under the overall guidance and leadership of Maxime Houinato-Regional Director, UN Women East and Southern Africa and Zebib Kavuma-Deputy Regional Director, UN Women East and Southern Africa.

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