



# Overview of Developments and Achievements in Gender Data Use in the Federal Republic of Ethiopia

## Background and Context

Gender equality is one of the priorities of the Government of the Federal Republic of Ethiopia. The Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE), adopted in 1994, establishes the equal rights of women and men across economic, social, and political spheres including education, employment, and access to and management of resources.<sup>1</sup>

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, and the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA), Ethiopia has passed a number of progressive national laws, in its bid to endorse the gender principles addressed in international laws and these conventions.<sup>2</sup>

The country has made significant strides in advancing gender equality and women's empowerment across various fronts; for example, in leadership and governance, in 2023, women held four in 10 parliamentary seats (41.3%) in national parliament<sup>3</sup>—one of its highest values over the past 24 years (its lowest value was 2% in 1999).

The World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report (GGGR) also shows a significant improvement in Ethiopia's gender gap index from 0.65 in 2018 to 0.71 in 2020, ranking the country 82nd out of 153 countries and placing it among the top five

most-improved nations in 2019.<sup>4</sup> The latest GGGR shows that Ethiopia has maintained its gender gap index in the same range (0.709 for 2024) but ranking the country 79<sup>th</sup> out of 146 countries surveyed.

Like elsewhere, gender statistics in Ethiopia are critical for measuring and monitoring the lived realities of women and girls, men and boys and providing evidence for improved policy design, gender mainstreaming, and systematic monitoring of progress in implementing the country's [Growth and Transformational Plan II](#) (GTP II) as well as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and associated 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).<sup>5</sup>

[Ethiopia's 10-Year Development Plan](#) (2021-2030) further outlines the country's vision, objectives, and strategic pillars for sustainable development identifying gender inclusion as one of its priority goals among improving living standards, access to services, and regional integration.

Indeed, achieving **development for all** requires the formulation of policies that recognize the role of gender equality and, by extension, women's empowerment. The production and dissemination of timely and reliable sex-disaggregated and gender-related data is thus particularly important to facilitate evidence-based policies and decisions, which, through implementation, result in inclusive growth and improve the lives of women and girls who form approximately half<sup>6</sup> of Ethiopia's population.

1 Women's Rights and Ethiopia's Future Social Contract: The Need to Adopt an Intersectional Approach <https://hrp.law.harvard.edu › 2023/02 › pp-95-114.pdf>  
2 UN Women Ethiopia: Changing the Lives of Women and Girls (2018) accessible at <https://africa.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2019/01/un-women-in-ethiopia>  
3 <https://genderdata.worldbank.org/en/economies/ethiopia>

4 Ethiopia Country Gender Equality Profile Brief (Abridged version) accessible at [https://africa.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2024-07/abridged\\_version-ethiopia\\_country\\_gender\\_profile.pdf](https://africa.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2024-07/abridged_version-ethiopia_country_gender_profile.pdf) and World Economic Forum. 2021. Global Gender Gap Report, March 2021 at [https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_GGGR\\_2021.pdf](https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2021.pdf)  
5 Gender Statistics Report 2017 – National Planning Commission and Central Statistics Agency of Ethiopia  
6 <https://www.statista.com/statistics/967834/total-population-of-ethiopia-by-gender/>



### Introduction

Lack of gender data to inform policies and programmes was previously a challenge in Ethiopia. From January 2019, [Making Every Woman and Girl Count](#) (Women Count), UN Women's gender data and statistics programme, began to put in place the data needed to systematically analyze the state of women and girls in the country and promote the use of this data for informed decision and policymaking.

Implemented by the Central Statistics Agency (CSA, now Ethiopia Statistics Services, ESS), the Planning and Development Commission (PDC), the Ministry of Women, Children and Youth (MoWCY, now Ministry of Women and Social Affairs, MoWSA), and selected civil society organizations (CSOs) in conjunction with UN Women Ethiopia, the programme aimed to support the production and use of gender statistics in the country. *Making Every Woman and Girl Count (MEWGC) in Ethiopia: Supporting the Monitoring and Implementation of the SDGs through better Production and Use of Gender Statistics* (Women Count Ethiopia in short) developed strategies to achieve outcomes by working at the policy level, with data producers, and data users and seconded staff to the three main institutional partners to implement activities.

"Women Count was instrumental in helping to alleviate budget constraints and low visibility of gender and gender data issues," said Sorsie Deme, Director of Gender and Social Affairs Mainstreaming Directorate at Ethiopian Statistical Service (ESS).

"Gender mainstreaming at the national statistics office was at its early stages and capacity development on production of gender data was needed across different departments," said Deme.

"Under Women Count, we held numerous consultative workshops and carried out a national survey on gender assets gaps, which we benchmarked against Ghana," explained Deme.

"This helped to grow capacity remarkably and also put in place measures for sustainability and continuity. The programme was truly a lifesaver and even provided extra support for a social inclusion department at ESS," Deme continued.

ESS, Ethiopia's national statistics office (NSO), has had a growing awareness and commitment to gender data aptly reflected in the agency's new organization, which gives due attention to gender in the new structure. The Ministry of Women and Social Affairs (MoWSA) in collaboration with UN Women played an important role in influencing for and informing respectively the recent internal restructure of ESS to establish a standalone gender statistics unit. The gender statistics and inclusion directorate is reasonably well resourced for a start (seven to eight specialized staff).

Emerging data and statistics products such as the Ethiopia Demographic Health Survey (EDHS), the Labour Force Survey, and the Migration Survey are mostly disaggregated by sex with increased use observed based on requests to the NSO. For instance, collaboration between MoWSA, UN Women and ESS on the latest (2024) EDHS resulted in the development of a standalone section on gender-based violence (GBV), for which training was carried out for the relevant staff and prior to data collection.

### Developments in Gender Data and Use in Ethiopia

The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia is dedicated to gender equality and women's empowerment (GEWE) even in the midst of recent shocks not least of all the economic and other effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the ongoing conflict in the country.

The country is a signatory to and has ratified many international and regional frameworks for GEWE and has an inclusive constitution as well as gender-related laws and policies such as the Family Law, and National Women Policy of Ethiopia (1993), to which the Ministry of Women and Social Affairs (MoWSA) has made updates and amendments awaiting ratifications using gender data. The Country Gender Equality Profile (CGEP) developed by UN Women and partners has significantly informed updates to the Policy, which has been reviewed by the Ministry of Planning and Development (MoPD) and the Council of Ministers to be made law and replace 1993 policy.



Demand for gender data in Ethiopia is at an all-time high with gender data now recognized as essential for planning, decision-making and policymaking.

“There is a big concern and demand for gender data as a cross-cutting issue,” said Fekade Asrat, Senior National Statistics Data Quality and Standards Expert at ESS.

“Gender data is getting increased attention in various sectors most notably agriculture, labor, and education, as well as in household expenditure surveys,” said Asrat.

This is evident in new and recent gender data undertakings such as the Gender Gap Assets Survey.

Gender is a foundational issue even in complementary sources of data such as administrative data. There is thus growing interest in and recognition of complementary data sources such as administrative data and citizen data as sources of specific types of statistics.

Gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) in Ethiopia is also growing in recognition and priority with the Ministry of Finance (MoF), which is coordinating closely with MoWSA and the gender mainstreaming unit at ESS to deliver effectively on this.

In the new dispensation, all new surveys are required to reflect gender perspectives to ensure that they properly represent societal issues, including those of women and girls as well as other vulnerable groups, which are often left behind in data and therefore programming, planning, policy and decision-making.

Working through its partners, including UN Women under Women Count and other initiatives, ESS has managed to lobby stakeholders to promote, popularize, and analyze data, by extension raising the profile of gender data as a cross-cutting accelerator for development. This has included collaboration with Ethiopia's Health Extension Programme and the associated Health Extension Workers (HEWs) deployed nationally to build their understanding of and appreciation for gender data. Vital data is also coming more into the spotlight now with ESS ensuring that it has a subsector on vital statistics for more information and data, which is now obligatory in Ethiopia.

The rising appreciation for administrative data and citizen data as part of the new data ecosystem and in part due to UN Women's efforts in the region, has contributed to the NSO establishing a unit dedicated to administrative data in the restructured ESS and supported its collaboration with non-state actors (NSAs) in the case of citizen data, to help boost all sources of gender data.

### Examples of Uptake and/or Use of Gender Data in Ethiopia

#### a) Programming and decision-making

Increasing availability and access to administrative data and MoWSA collaboration with ESS on data collection has seen the growing integration of major gender issues, especially on violence against women and girls (VAWG), women's economic empowerment (WEE) and harmful practices into Ethiopia's data collection guidelines. This includes the Ethiopia Demographic Household Survey (EDHS), most notably the Special EDHS or Ethiopia mini-DHS or Interim Ethiopia DHS of 2019) and census tool both of which now have major gender elements.

“This close coordination between MoWSA and ESS has resulted in various data types integrated in official statistics as sex-disaggregated data,” said Bezawit Bekele, Programme Specialist, Gender at UN Women Ethiopia (seconded to the MoWSA at the time of this documentation exercise).

The different types of data include employment, agriculture, and migration guidelines, which have provided the impetus for policy advocacy.

Other examples include growing access to administrative data, which is improving in quality and usability for statistical purposes and has been an essential element for MoWSA in planning and programming. For instance, the Ministry has rolled out a cutting-edge national web-based gender information system, which contains major gender indicators on the relevant social, economic, political and other aspects. The information system already gathers sound data, including administrative data, which has been used to influence programming as well as policy development, for example, on the Gender Equality Policy. The Code of Practice for Official Statistics in Ethiopia



acknowledges administrative data as an important source of official statistics for the NSO to standardize and apply alongside census, sample surveys, and other sources of data.

### b) Policymaking

- Collaboration between MoWSA, Un Women and ESS on the latest (2024) EDHS resulted in the development of a standalone section on gender-based violence (GBV), for which training was carried out for the relevant staff and prior to data collection. The GBV section in the Gender Equality Policy used GBV data to make the case on the extent of the issue in Ethiopia and therefore lobby for a standalone policy to address the problem.
- Ethiopia's Country Gender Equality Profile (CGEP) developed by UN Women and partners has significantly informed updates to the Policy, which has been reviewed by the Ministry of Planning and Development (MoPD) and the Council of Ministers to be made law and replace 1993 policy.
- Policymakers in various sectors are using the findings of the Wealth or Asset Gap Survey to reference and inform more gender-responsive decisions. The Survey was undertaken in collaboration with MoWSA and support from UN Women.
- Based on the analysis of increasing gender data in the NSS, Ethiopia is in the process of developing a policy on the elimination of violence against women (EVAW), which is expected to inform action including the assignment of both financial and human resources.
- Data on unpaid care and domestic work (UCDW) is influencing legislation on labor in Ethiopia. Findings from Ethiopia's Time Use Survey—supported by UNW— has led to unpaid care work being reflected in updated labor and employment laws. UCDW was previously not considered as productive in the national budget, but now has laid sectors leading to gender-responsive social support mechanisms such as daycare facilities being made a requirement at work-

places to enable new mothers to breastfeed their children and have them in a safe and accessible place while they are working.

- Migration laws are also being influenced by gender and other data on domestic workers. Domestic work was not previously considered as work but data as shown that huge remittances come into the country through domestic work. This recognition on the extent of the remittances has influenced policy in the sense that based on these findings, workers are now first certified from basic housekeeping and upgraded to primary and high level with additional skills provisions e.g., I.T. for workers who are not highly literate. The workers are now also connected to the labor market/international labor market creating an overseas employment unit with Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and Dubai as the main recipients of this labor force. Previously anyone can travel to carry out this work in these countries but now (gender) data has played a big role in helping to recognize the resource that needs to be harnessed through this job creation and skills commission. More studies are underway to show who is going where for what purpose and the associated dangers and vulnerabilities and how to best harness the opportunities. This data has thus informed decision-making to keep girls and women safe and equip them for the respective markets. It is also influencing the policies and decisions taken by the Government.

### c) Planning (including budgeting/resource allocation)

- **Agriculture and access to inputs:** An assessment on agricultural productivity on equal pieces of land between women and men showed that women (including those in female-headed households) were 35 percent more productive. This gender data is informing the provision of inputs as well as informing access to land and financing and bolstering the push for joint land certification as part of a social justice and women's economic empowerment agenda.



- **Political party funding:** Data from women's rights CSOs showing the prohibiting factors for women in leadership and their high attrition rates has influenced election law in affirmative action measures. The data has provided a basis for positive discrimination funding measures with political parties funded for supporting women as an incentive to include more women in public leadership.
- **Gender asset gap survey and Ethiopia's 10-year development plan:** Collaboration between ESS, UN Women, MoWSA, and MoA resulted in a Gender Asset Gap Survey, which significantly informed Ethiopia's 10-year development plan towards more gender-responsive planning (including budgeting and resource allocation).

#### d) Advocacy

- Gender data led to a Ministry of Education (MoE) directive on the promotion of girls from grade to grade and assessing competence including teen/underage mums. The Ministry's gender directorate requested support from MoWSA (with ESS) to build and showcase evidence to allow these girls to return to school after a four-month maternity break. Previously, underage mothers were given only 15 days for maternity recovery and MoE required data to showcase the economic cost of this policy. The emerging data also supported the policy/decision options for teen mums to continue their education including virtual learning and tutorials to help them stay abreast of learning.

The data showed the incidence of teen pregnancies including by region. The Ministry is now using the data to draft updated education legislation with NEWA and UN Women using this data to advocate for improvements in girls education and steps towards curbing child marriage.

### Good and Promising Practices in the Uptake and/or Use of Gender Data in Ethiopia

- **MoWSA's rollout of a cutting-edge national web-based gender information system,** which contains major gender indicators on the relevant social, economic, political and other aspects was identified as a good and promising practice from Ethiopia. The information system gathers high-quality data and makes it readily available through dashboards and user-friendly reports. Already, gender data from the system has been used to influence programming as well as policy development, for example, the Gender Equality Policy.
- **Ministries in Ethiopia have mainstreamed gender in data collection** as part of their mandate and responsibilities to gather, collate and use gender data. For example, through the Ministry of Health's health management information system (HMIS) and the Ministry of Agriculture's (MoA's ) land data system, both of which incorporate gender issues.

**This good practice has delivered dividends for instance in MoA, where data on female-headed households has influenced decisions at the Ministry.** MoA officials disseminating information and providing advisory services now go house to house for training rather than calling general meetings, in recognition of the distinct modalities and demands of female-headed households, where time constraints often prevent these women from engaging optimally with the ministry through the broader meetings. Informed by this data, MoA has thus increased its number of outreach/advisory staff to reach these households to ensure that they benefit from the lessons to access the necessary information and even inputs to optimize productivity on their farms, thereby also improving household and overall food security as well as livelihoods and even nutrition through improved farm practices.



- **MoWSA's establishment and maintenance of a coordination platform where all the federal ministries including the ESS's gender department deliberate on gender issues** has been instrumental in disseminating timely information about gender issues. Key of this is information on ongoing gender data initiatives and identifying areas for support to the respective ministries in planning and implementing gender programmes and activities.

**Even more remarkable is that the coordination platform invites and hosts the standing committee responsible for gender issues in Ethiopia's parliament and the sector ministries** to discuss and apprise them on the key and emerging concerns on gender and gender data for onward submission and lobbying in parliament. This not only creates a direct line of information and influence with lawmakers but has also served to influence other standing committees towards more gender-responsive decisions.

- **Collaboration with diverse partners** including the Health Extension Programme (and HEWs) to promote, popularize, and analyze gender data boosting their skills and employment opportunities.
- **Annual user-producer platforms** including the Ethiopia Statistician and Demographers Association Annual Conference where research papers with the latest data, including in new areas, are presented. UN Women and ESS have played a significant role in influencing the inclusion of two to three research papers on gender data to grow interest and understanding of this specialized and yet mainstream area.
- **Research dissemination workshop platform** conducted quarterly at MoWSA to help ensure ownership and sustainability of gender and gender data issues and narrow the gap on communicating gender data. Policy briefs developed as some of the products of the meetings tackle topical issues in the gender and gender data space and find audience

with the policy directorate in the Ministry of Justice, providing an invaluable opportunity for further informed user producer dialogues and evidence-based action.

- **Capacity development in communicating gender statistics at ESS** is expected to boost communication of the numerous statistical products and their findings in well-packaged and accessible formats for the target audiences. Over and above technical expertise and capacity from UN Women in communicating gender data, ESS has also partnered with Statistics Norway through a bilateral arrangement to build capacity in statistical communication and advocacy. That said, more support is needed to continuously enhance capacity on communicating and advocating gender statistics.

**The establishment of a department on administrative data at ESS** is a huge step in raising the profile, availability, quality, and use of administrative data for statistical purposes.

"In the new organizational structure, this new department is also aimed at identifying and addressing gaps in coordinating statistics between sectors to improve coordination," said Asrat.

Established at the start of 2024, the administrative data department is also tasked with following up on the quality and harmonization of standards and coordinating statistical activities with other sectors.

"MoWSA is one of the top priorities for this department to work with," said Asrat.

"The others are the ministries of education, health, labor, trade, tourism, and planning and development," explained Asrat.

The department will coordinate with diverse sectors at both the federal level and bureau and other lower administrative levels including regions/woredas given the growing demands for this support from these levels as well. Regular consultations are planned between the NSO and gender data users to assess and ensure the relevance of and to prioritize and produce quality data that meets the needs of users, most notably the Ministry of Planning and



Development (MoPD) for the all-important GRB and the Ministry of Women and Social Affairs (MoWSA) for crucial policy guidance.

The coordination between ESS and data and gender data users will thus partly entail tailored capacity building for instance through training on the management of administrative data.

As part of these new initiatives, ESS has also established a training center to develop materials and curricula to promote statistical activities in Ethiopia after a two-year trial. The training center is expected to bring a systematic approach to capacity building and will fulfil current and anticipated demand from organizations in the sector including CSOs.

The administrative data department includes a programme verification desk and a statistical standards and quality desk to be staffed with at least 10 personnel. The department will assess and contribute to questions at the design stage of surveys to probe and enhance the sections on gender to establish/ensure a gender lens.

### Challenges in the Uptake and/or Use of Gender Data in Ethiopia

Some of the challenges in gender data use are summarized below:

- High staff turnover in ministry and sectors hampers the retention of institutional memory and continuity in gender data initiatives as sometimes new staff, especially at the senior level, come with new priorities and approaches.
- Limitations in advocacy and strategic communication to make target users aware of available gender data products and sources, thereby inhibiting their effective use.
- Ensuring consistent and high-quality of administrative data for statistical purposes and the application of standards is an ongoing challenge. The new structure at ESS is expected to greatly mitigate this as is continued collaboration with partners who are well resourced in the space, including UN Women. ESS is working closely with producers of this data to mitigate this and improve methodologies and approaches, among others.

### Prospects and opportunities for the uptake and use of gender data in Ethiopia

- There is a growing interest in the NSS to work even more closely with CSOs to undertake evidence-based advocacy, for example on harmful cultural practices such as child marriage. This can only boost the effectiveness of the NSS and gender data use by extension as CSOs can grow their capacity to produce high-quality citizen data as a complementary source of data and also make their advocacy campaigns more effective using available and new evidence.
- Working very closely within the NSS is proving to be increasingly critical for the sectors. Sector data collectors, e.g., MoA are benefitting from ESS reviewing their traditional administrative data collection tools especially gender-responsive administrative data. This is playing an important role in guiding this and other sectors and will be instrumental in ensuring that a scientific methodology that can ensure comparability and timeliness is applied thereby ultimately promoting the uptake of administrative data.
- Increasing support to the NSOs analyze data is envisaged given the growing demand for gender data. The current capacity to process data for policy and programming is not commensurate with the amount of raw data available. Going forward, it will thus be important to invest in data mining from existing data to save resources and time and to optimize use of existing data.
- Continued efforts to ensure there is a minimum set of gender indicators (MSGIs) to report on SDGs are foreseeable; Women Count has been instrumental in providing guidance on the identification of the MSGIs in Ethiopia.
- While the appreciation for gender data in ESS is high following the partnership with Women Count, there is room for growth in perception of gender data as an inclusiveness issue in Ethiopia due to some persisting resistance and the often sensitive nature of the subject.
- The development of a citizen data guideline in partnership with the International Institute of Rural Reconstruction (IIRR) is expected to



## Developments and Achievements in the Uptake and Use of Gender Data



be highly beneficial to the NSS given the value of citizen data as a complementary source of data given the high cost and demands and challenges with timeliness of conventional data such as surveys. Government ownership and/or leadership of the initiative will be instrumental in its success and the initiative will be invaluable in growing partnership with civil society for heightened visibility of gender data.

- New structures at the NSO including a dedicated department on gender mainstreaming to promote gender responsive data and social inclusiveness bode well for the future of gender statistics in Ethiopia with more opportunities for even more developments in the NSS. This, coupled with strong goodwill from the NSO executive and concerted efforts towards strong collaboration, give promising prospects for gender data production as well as use in Ethiopia.
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