COUNTRY PROFILE: ETHIOPIA

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### SUMMARY TABLE: ETHIOPIA

| FORMAL INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT | The Constitution includes provisions for the promotion of gender equality and establishes a Ministry for Women’s Affairs.  
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<thead>
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<th>National development strategies include mainstreaming women’s development and ending harmful traditional practices.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>REPRESENTATION</td>
<td>Women represent 27.8% (152 out of 547 seats) of the national legislature. In 2010, women made up 10% of Cabinet Ministers.</td>
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| ECONOMY                    | Ethiopia has experienced high growth over the last decade and considerable poverty reduction.  
| EDUCATION                  | There is a significant gender gap for literacy (18% for women vs. 42% for men), particularly in rural areas.  
|                            | Primary education enrolment has been improving (80% of girls; 85% of boys) and is close to gender parity (0.94).  
|                            | Enrolment levels and gender parity decline at higher levels:  
|                            |   o Secondary: 11% of females; 17% of males (0.66 ratio)  
|                            |   o Tertiary: 2% of females; 5% of males (0.31 ratio). |
| LABOUR FORCE               | Women represent close to half of the labour market, but are more likely to be employed part-time, seasonally or in the informal sector.  
|                            | Only 14% of women are employed outside their family.  
|                            | On average, women earn 69% of men’s income. |
| AGRICULTURE AND LAND TENURE | 82.98% of the population lives in rural areas; agriculture makes up 85% of employment.  
|                            | Since 2008, the Government has been actively pursuing large scale investment in agricultural land. To date, over 3 million Ha have been leased to foreign investors.  
|                            | Women hold only 18.7% of land and head 20.1% of poor rural households.  
|                            | Agricultural activities continue to be divided into culturally ascribed gender roles; women receive 38.22% of the benefits from extension services. |
| FAMILY                     | The Federal Family Code stipulates reforms such as legal age for marriage at 18 and equality in marriage contracts; however, not all regional governments have implemented the Code.  
|                            | Women have exclusive access to paid parental leave. |
| POVERTY, INCOME INEQUALITY & FOOD SECURITY | Though poverty levels have decreased significantly, approximately one third of the population (24.8 million people) still lives below the poverty line.  
|                            | Ethiopia is ranked 76 out of 79 countries on IFPRI’s Global Hunger Index. |
| HEALTH                     | The maternal mortality rate is 470 (out of 100,000 births). |
Ethiopia (population 84.73 million\(^1\)) is the second most populous country and has one of the fastest growing, non-oil producing economies in Africa. In the last decade, Ethiopia has taken great strides to reduce poverty and increase the welfare of its largely rural, agricultural-based population. Though the Government is taking positive steps to improve the legislative framework for gender equality and has committed more than 60% of its expenditures to poverty-oriented sectors\(^2\) and improving rural welfare, cultural norms, traditions and practices continue to impede women’s substantive equality. Ethiopian women have less access to land and resources, have fewer economic and educational opportunities, and face considerable risks of gender-based violence, including female genital mutilation and domestic violence. Moreover, Ethiopia has been ruled by one authoritarian regime after another. The present ruling EPRDF has been in power (under Meles Zenawi until his recent death) since 1991. Despite advancements in development indicators and poverty, human rights organizations have persistently criticized the Government for the violent oppression of opposition.

### GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE
- Adolescent fertility rate is 79 (per 1000 females aged 15-19); the fertility rate is 4.8 children per woman.
- 1.5 million people have HIV/AIDS; more women than men are infected (5% vs. 3.8%), though infection rates for young women have been falling significantly.
- Violence against women legislation has been passed and efforts have been made to train prosecutors, judiciary and police.
- FGM is still widely practiced (62.1% of 15-19 year olds), though awareness is growing about the associated harms.
- 49% of Ethiopian women experience physical violence and 59% experience sexual violence by an intimate partner in their lifetime.

### CLIMATE CHANGE
- Given the importance of agriculture, mitigating the impacts of climate change is an important factor in Ethiopia’s continued development.
- Women and girls tend to be more vulnerable to the economic impacts of climate change on agricultural productivity.

### CIVIL SOCIETY AND WOMEN’S MOVEMENTS
- The Charities and Societies Proclamation (2008) limits the amount of foreign funding for human rights NGOs to 10%, which has implications local women’s rights organizations. There are reports of organizations closing their doors as a result of this policy, including two major human rights organizations, the Ethiopian Human Rights Council and the Ethiopian Women Lawyers Association.

### INTRODUCTION

Adolescent fertility rate is 79 (per 1000 females aged 15-19); the fertility rate is 4.8 children per woman. 1.5 million people have HIV/AIDS; more women than men are infected (5% vs. 3.8%), though infection rates for young women have been falling significantly. Violence against women legislation has been passed and efforts have been made to train prosecutors, judiciary and police. FGM is still widely practiced (62.1% of 15-19 year olds), though awareness is growing about the associated harms. 49% of Ethiopian women experience physical violence and 59% experience sexual violence by an intimate partner in their lifetime. Given the importance of agriculture, mitigating the impacts of climate change is an important factor in Ethiopia’s continued development. Women and girls tend to be more vulnerable to the economic impacts of climate change on agricultural productivity. The Charities and Societies Proclamation (2008) limits the amount of foreign funding for human rights NGOs to 10%, which has implications local women’s rights organizations. There are reports of organizations closing their doors as a result of this policy, including two major human rights organizations, the Ethiopian Human Rights Council and the Ethiopian Women Lawyers Association.

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FORMAL INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

The Constitution of Ethiopia (1995) establishes the equal rights of women and men across economic, social and political spheres and includes the possibility of using affirmative action to address women’s current subordinate status. There is legislation in place prohibiting gender-based discrimination; imposing gender-neutral practices in the workplace; establishing a Ministry for Women’s Affairs with monitoring authority; and providing programs to promote female entrepreneurship. National development plans, such as the Growth and Transformation Plan 2010/11-2014/15, include women’s empowerment and equitable benefit, and prioritize women’s participation in economic development, the social sector and politics, and ending harmful traditional practices.

The Government of Ethiopia’s commitment to promoting and protecting women’s rights is embodied in the National Policy on Women (1993). The Ministry of Women’s Affairs is charged with making recommendations on the protection of women’s rights at the national level, monitoring policies and legislation for gender considerations, and devising strategies for their implementation. The Ministry also monitors the Ethiopian Women’s Development Fund, which was established in 2001 to provide financial, material and technical support to women’s organization that undertake women’s capacity building activities. Despite these steps, the institutionalization of gender equality has not met objectives, due to inadequate staffing, equipment and training.

REPRESENTATION

The number of women in politics has increased as a result of affirmative action policies. Women represent 27.8% of the national parliament, but only hold 3 out of 23 ministerial positions. In the last federal elections, 15% of candidates were women; 43% of whom were elected. No women were elected to the official opposition, though it should be noted that the official opposition holds only 24 out of 547 seats. CEDAW’s concluding observations of Ethiopia’s 2011 report finds several barriers to women’s equal political participation, including: cultural ideas about women’s leadership capabilities; their limited access to resources; insufficient policies to promote participation; and women’s own limited interest. Women make up 40% of the civil service; however, only 29% of these are in upper level positions.

ECONOMY

Over the last seven years, economic growth has averaged at more than 11% per year. In 2011, the GDP was US$31.71 billion (GNI per capita: US$ 1,110). Services (45.51%) and agriculture (46.4%) account for most of GDP. Despite impressive economic growth, Ethiopia remains a low-income country, highly
dependent on official development assistance for up to a third of its national budget\textsuperscript{16}. Almost one third of the population continues to live below the poverty line, with strong disparities between regions, as well as between rural and urban areas, in income levels, poverty and access to social services\textsuperscript{17}.

**EDUCATION**

Only 18\% of Ethiopian women are literate, compared to 42\% of men\textsuperscript{18}. However, gender gaps in literacy are decreasing among the younger population. Urban/rural differences are important for literacy rates: approximately 10\% of rural women are literate, compared to 60\% of urban women\textsuperscript{19}.

According to the 2011 Ethiopian Health and Demographics Survey (EDHS), 52\% of women and 38\% of men have little to no education. Urban women are far less likely to have no education (28\%) than rural women (58\%). Poverty is also an important factor in educational attainment: 69\% of women in the poorest households have no education, compared to 27\% of the wealthiest\textsuperscript{20}. Education levels have been improving; among girls aged 10-14, only 17\% have no education, compared to 98\% of women over 65 years. Enrolment in primary education is up to 80\% for girls and 85\% for boys, with a gender parity ratio of 0.94. These numbers decline significantly at higher levels: enrolment in secondary education is 11\% for girls and 17\% for boys (0.66 ratio), and enrolment in tertiary education is 2\% for women and 5\% for men (0.31 ratio)\textsuperscript{21}.

**LABOUR FORCE**

Women represent close to half of the Ethiopian labour force, with a participation rate of 82\% (men’s participation rate is 91\%)\textsuperscript{22}. In the formal labour market, 76\% of women are employed in agriculture, 8\% in industry and 16\% in services. Women earn an estimated 69\% of men’s income\textsuperscript{23}. Only 14\% of women work for someone outside their family. The EDHS found that 3 in 10 women receive no pay for their work, including more than half of women engaged in agricultural work\textsuperscript{24}. Urban centres, representing only 17\% of the population, are heavily dependent on the informal sector. 43\% of urban women and 28\% of urban men are employed in the informal labour market\textsuperscript{25}.

While the national Labour Force Survey (2005) puts unemployment at 5\%, it advises caution as paid, formal employment forms less than 10\% of reported employment\textsuperscript{26}. Other sources estimate that 30\% of women are unemployed, compared to 12\% of men\textsuperscript{27}. Women represent 56.2\% of all part-time workers (28.4\% of women’s employment) (2004 data)\textsuperscript{28}. 
AGRICULTURE AND LAND TENURE

The population of Ethiopia lives largely in rural areas (82.98%) and agriculture makes up 85% of employment. Smallholders make up the majority of farmers, producing 95% of agricultural GDP. The sector is characterized by subsistence, rain-fed farming with low productivity. 83% of rural households cultivate less than two hectares of land; 52% have less than one hectare. Climate change, population growth and poor technological adaptation are cited as the main impediments to productivity.

Constitutionally, all land belongs to the state, but women and men have equal legal access to land use and can pass that right on as an inheritance. Women hold only 18.7% of agricultural land and head 20.1% of rural households. Their farms are smaller than men’s (0.9 Ha vs. 1.03 Ha) and produce 35% less per hectare due to lower levels of input use and less access to extension services. In some regions, land certification reforms have resulted in better access to and control of land for women, however, customary practices in many regions continue to discriminate against women, particularly in inheritance practices.

From 2008-2011, the Government leased over three million hectares of land to foreign investors, and reserved an additional 2.1 million hectares in the federal land bank for agricultural investment. This policy has been criticized for encouraging agricultural and horticultural production for export markets at a time when a high proportion of the population depends on food aid. As well as detracting from food security goals, critics say industrial agriculture poses a threat to biodiversity and contributes to the feminization of poverty. For example, Human Rights Watch has reported that 70,000 people have been relocated under the guise of a “villagization” program so their land can be leased to foreign investors. The new villages are under-serviced and lack adequate food and farmland to sustain the population, while there is little regulation or monitoring of foreign operators. However, the Government’s position is that the areas being leased are scarcely populated, and projects funded contribute to employment and include compensation schemes.

In agricultural work, women predominate in lower status positions; seasonal and temporary employment represents 77.6% of all women’s agricultural employment. Though women are widely involved in agricultural activities, it is generally believed that they are not farmers. Culturally ascribed roles for women include weeding, harvesting, and preparation for storage, while other tasks are prohibited, notably plowing. This gendered division of labour impacts women’s ability to access government programs and extension services. For example, horticultural production and small animal husbandry were traditionally not considered part of agricultural industry, and so were excluded from extension services, training and credit. To address women’s barriers to extension services, the Women’s Development and Change Extension Package, introduced in 2006, targets traditional women’s activities, such as subsistence
gardens and poultry. While such initiatives are encouraging in terms of
government recognition of rural women’s economic role, this program has not
adequately addressed the needs of female-headed households, where women
sell their weeding services to other farmers. Many development agents will still
only speak with the head of the household, which excludes most women, and it is
often culturally prohibited for a man to speak with a married woman. In 2011,
women received 38.22% of the benefit of public spending on extension
services. Further, men are far more likely to be employed by extension
services: the ratio of female to male extensionists is 1:15; the ratio of
development agents is 1:50.

Horticulture, employing predominantly women, is a growing component of
agriculture in Ethiopia involving a high degree of foreign investment. However,
there have been reports of poor working conditions, including 105 health-related
complaints to the Ethiopian Trade Union.

**FAMILY**

In 2004, a new Family Code was established with important reforms: a legal age
of marriage at 18 years; stipulating that marriage contracts are between husband
and wife, and not families; and shared ownership of matrimonial property,
including shared responsibility for decision making concerning this property.
Responding to Ethiopia’s 2011 report to CEDAW, observers raised concerns that
regional level family laws do not all conform to the Federal Family Code. Further,
there is very limited provision for financial support for women or their children
from a former spouse (three month’s support). The law also preserves
discriminatory regulations, such as the recognition of the husband as the head of
household and guardian of children under five.

The percentage of women first married at 15 years is declining: in 2005, 39% of
women ages 45-49 years compared to 8% of women ages 15-19. Still, 63% of
women were married by 18 years and 77% by 20 years (compared to 13% and
27% of men). In some regions, child marriage is still quite prevalent, though there
is growing awareness of the problems associated with the practice. Marriage by
abduction is still culturally acceptable in some areas; an estimated 8% of married
women were abducted and forced into the marriage. Polygamous unions
account for 11% of marriages, and are more likely for rural, uneducated and poor
women.

Women have exclusive access to paid parental leave. Eligible women can
receive full wages for up to 45 days (out of the total 90 days leave), paid by their
employer. Men are allowed 5 days unpaid leave after the birth of their child.

Though customary and sharia courts are permitted by the Constitution, they are
restricted from applying customary laws that contradict the Constitution. Sharia
courts are accountable to the Federal Judicial Administration Commission and
have jurisdiction only where both parties and consented to be adjudicated under their law. Data on the use of Sharia courts is not available.

According to the United Nations' 2010 report, *The World’s Women: Trends and Statistics*, women in Ethiopia maintain some control over how their income is spent: 83% participate in daily household purchase decisions and 57% participate in major purchase decisions. Only 5% do not have any input. Though women are unlikely to own property on their own (11%), 45% are joint owners with their husband. 26% of all households in Ethiopia are female-headed.

The LGBT community faces severe discrimination and stigma. Homosexual activity is illegal and punishable by imprisonment.

**POVERTY, INCOME INEQUALITY & FOOD SECURITY**

Poverty levels have declined from 38.6% in 2004 to 29.3% in 2010, largely as a result of targeted government spending in sectors such as agriculture, infrastructure, education and health. According to the MDG 2010 Report, poverty has been declining by an annual average of 2.32% (compared to 0.5% for Africa), putting Ethiopia just 7% away from meeting its 2015 poverty reduction goal. However, regional disparities still exist and inequality in rural areas has increased. Ethiopia currently ranks 174th out of 187 countries on the Human Development Index. Average incomes are less than half the average for sub-Saharan Africa.

Food insecurity is a widespread problem in Ethiopia. USAID estimates that 3.76 million people will require emergency assistance between August and December 2012. The country ranks 76 out of 79 countries on IFPRI’s Global Hunger Index, though it did register an improvement in its score from 34.5 in 2001 to 28.7 in 2011 (where zero signifies no hunger). 26.5% of women and 36.7% of men have chronic energy deficiency; 40% of rural children are underweight.

The Ethiopian Productive Safety Net Programme, launched in 2005, provides five days of employment per month for six months to food-insecure individuals. Six million people have been reached by the programme, which helps increase household food consumption and provides for children’s needs. In addition to financial support, women are said to gain from the infrastructure projects undertaken by the programme, such as water harvesting facilities and land rehabilitation, and from changes in men’s attitudes towards women’s capabilities as a result of joint work on these projects.
HEALTH

The current fertility rate is 4.8 children, though rural women have twice as many children on average than urban women (5.5 vs. 2.6). The total wanted fertility rate for women is 3 children. The adolescent (15-19 years) fertility rate is 79 out of 1000. The 2011 EDHS found 12% of women aged 15-19 are pregnant or mothers. The Government has invested heavily in the Health Extension Program, hiring close to 34,000 health extension workers to provide medical advice and services to rural women. Use of contraception has increased sharply in the past few years (27% of married women) due to the increase in use of injectables. The Government provides contraceptive methods to more than 8 in 10 users.

The maternal mortality rate continues to be quite high at 470 deaths per 100,000 births. The EDHS reported that the most important barrier to health services cited by women is lack of transport to a facility, followed by lack of money and the distance to a health facility. This indicates that rural services continue to be inadequate for the needs of the population. However, it should be noted that 61% of women did not believe it was necessary to deliver at a health facility. Numbers of births attended by health care professionals vary by source: the Government of Ethiopia reported 18.4% of births were attended by a professional in its report to CEDAW, other sources find only 6-10%.

It is estimated that 1.5 million people have HIV/AIDS (4.4% prevalence – 5% female, 3.8% male). Antenatal care surveillance data shows a decline in infection rates among young women, from 5.6% in 2005 to 2.6% in 2009. The percentage of the population who have received HIV testing has increased to 20%, up from 2% in 2005. Ethiopia has integrated HIV/AIDS treatment and prevention services into its national development plans. Though implementation of national HIV/AIDS programs has improved, there are still gaps in service, notably to injection drug users and gay men.

Abortion is legal in cases of rape, incest or where the health of the mother or child is at stake. It is not available on request, however. Hospital deaths attributed to abortion decreased from 32% in 2005 to 6% in 2010.

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

A 2002 study found that 49% of Ethiopian women experience physical violence and 59% experience sexual violence by an intimate partner in their lifetime. Moreover, up to 65% of women believed that domestic violence was justified in certain contexts. In 2005, a new Criminal Code was enacted, criminalizing various forms of violence against women, including domestic violence, extramarital rape, early marriage, female genital mutilation, and trafficking in
women and children\textsuperscript{78}. Marital rape is not included however, and courts generally do not consider domestic violence a justification for divorce\textsuperscript{79}. The State has taken steps to implement its violence against women legislation by establishing victim-friendly benches in federal courts and special units to prosecute crimes against women. Training sessions on women’s rights and violence against women are being provided to judges, prosecutors and police officers. In 2009-10, 1,041 cases of violence against women were prosecuted, with 781 convicted\textsuperscript{80}.

Though the practice of female genital mutilation (FGM) is declining, particularly in urban areas, it remains a concern. In 2005, 62.1\% of 15-19 year olds had undergone FGM, compared to 81\% of women aged 35-39\textsuperscript{81}. FGM has been made illegal but critics say the penalties are too lenient. It is estimated that four out of five women in the Somali region and three out of five in the Afar region have undergone infibulation\textsuperscript{82}.

There have been reports of women being raped by members of the Ethiopian Armed Forces in the Somali and Gambella regions. Human Rights Watch argues that the Gambella attacks are part of the government’s resettlement policy to clear traditional lands for commercial farms. Those who resist resettlement and their families are allegedly subject to arrest, torture and rape\textsuperscript{83}. The State has denied that it is involved\textsuperscript{84}.

**CLIMATE CHANGE**

The importance of agriculture and other natural resource based activities for the livelihoods of the majority of Ethiopians makes mitigating and adapting to climate change vital to ongoing poverty reduction and development efforts. Ethiopia’s ability to respond to climate change is significantly constrained by resource and capacity shortages\textsuperscript{85}. As a result of global warming, Ethiopia is predicted to experience heightened rainfall variability with both increased flooding and droughts\textsuperscript{86}. National policies are being developed to this end. The Growth and Transformation Plan stipulates a “climate resistant green economy” by 2025, and various other policies and programs indirectly address climate change\textsuperscript{87}. In order to fulfill its goal of a green economy, it is estimated that Ethiopia will need to invest US$1.2-1.5 billion per year to maintain the current level of growth\textsuperscript{88}.

Women’s restricted access to resources, lack of education, and limited mobility and decision-making authority leaves them with a heightened vulnerability to the economic impacts of climate change. Gendered divisions of labour increase pressure on women, as men migrate for employment, leaving women to provide for the elderly and children. Girls are more likely to be taken out of school to work for cash during periods of droughts\textsuperscript{89}. Though early policies such as the Environmental Policy of Ethiopia (1997) failed to translate gender considerations into the implementation stage, gender and social considerations are important components of the current policy framework, Ethiopia’s Program of Adaptation to Climate Change (EPA-CC).
CIVIL SOCIETY AND WOMEN’S MOVEMENTS

Historically, civil society organizations in Ethiopia emerged to meet community needs during periods of drought and famine. Though the international community has responded strongly to the crisis-based mandate of these organizations, the sector is relatively young and weak, still largely focused on providing services and crisis response. Local NGOs tend to be small and have little support from the population, who perceive their staff as being overpaid.

With the end of the military regime in 1991, Ethiopia became more open to civil society organizations, with increased political space for oppositional voices. However, following disturbances around the 2005 election, the government has restricted activities and movements that it perceives as possibly building opposition to its policies. While the Government officially supports the roles of CSOs for service delivery and citizen engagement, in 2009, the Charities and Societies Proclamation (CSO law) was enacted for the purpose of restricting foreign influences in Ethiopian politics. The Government argues that the law will enhance the contribution of domestic organizations to Ethiopia’s development, ensure transparency, and avoid dependence on foreign funds and the influence of foreign donors. Under the law, an organization undertaking human rights advocacy may receive no more than 10% of their funding from foreign sources. Further, organizations must be overseen by a relevant government body, which critics argue compromises their independence. This law has resulted in the closure of, among other organizations, the Ethiopian Human Rights Council and the Ethiopian Women Lawyers Association, two of the strongest human rights organizations in the country.
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