

Women Empowerment Programmes in Ethiopia - Extensive Review

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Abstract: Ethiopia is the second most populous nation in Africa, possesses the fastest growing economy in the region and is also one of the poorest countries. Women's empowerment is an intrinsic human rights goal that has implications for the health and well-being of women and their children. The major objectives of the Women's Empowerment Program (WEP) in Ethiopia include fostering an environment that calls forth women's leadership and agency at the local level as well as expanding economic opportunities for women in rural households. USAID invests in empowering women and girls in Ethiopia by promoting equal access to education, health, and economic opportunities. Empowering women to participate fully in economic life across all sectors is essential to build stronger economies, achieve internationally agreed goals of development and would improve the quality of life for women, men, families and communities. The BORGEM Project Girls education in Ethiopia is largely impact on the present poverty, gender-based violence, early marriage, and teenage pregnancy that greatly affect girls' and women's access to, and completion of, education. In Ethiopia, 80 percent of the population resides in rural areas and women provide the majority of the agricultural labor in these communities. There is a joint programme undertaken by six UN agencies (UNDP, UNICEF, ILO, UNFPA, UNWOMEN and UNESCO) in order to support national policy and strategy on gender equality and women empowerment at both federal and regional level. To this end, primary and secondary data was collected through document reviews. Finally, constitute some inherent problems and their implementation. The aim of this paper is to assess detailed information regarding women empowerment programmes and how The United Nations and other NGO's are helping to empowering women of Ethiopia.

Key Words: Women Empowerment, Discrimination, Economy, Teenage Pregnancy.

Date of Submission: 02-01-2019

Date of acceptance: 17-01-2019

Abbreviations: AIDS: acquired immunodeficiency syndrome; CEDAW: Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women; FGM: Female Genital Mutilation; GDP: Gross Domestic Product; GTP: Growth and Transformation Plan; HIV: human immunodeficiency virus; ILO: International Labour Organization; MoWCYA: Ministry of Women, Children and Youth Affairs; NGO stands for non-governmental organization; PEPFAR: President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief; UNDP-United Nations Development Programme; UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization; UNFPA: United Nations Population Fund; UNICEF: United Nations Children's Fund; UN WOMEN: United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women; USAID: United States Agency for International Development; WEP: Women's Empowerment Program.

I. INTRODUCTION:

Ethiopia is the second most populous nation in Africa, possesses the fastest growing economy in the region and is also one of the poorest countries. Ethiopia has put different policies, legal framework, rules and regulations to enhance gender parity. Women's empowerment is an intrinsic human rights goal that has implications for the health and well-being of women and their children. The major objectives of the Women's Empowerment Program (WEP) in Ethiopia include fostering an environment that calls forth women's leadership and agency at the local level as well as expanding economic opportunities for women in rural households. USAID invests in empowering women and girls in Ethiopia by promoting equal access to education, health, and economic opportunities. Empowering women to participate fully in economic life across all sectors is essential to build stronger economies, achieve internationally agreed goals of development and would improve the quality of life for women, men, families and communities. The BORGEM Project Girls education in Ethiopia is largely

impact on the present poverty, gender-based violence, early marriage, and teenage pregnancy that greatly affect girls' and women's access to, and completion of, education. In Ethiopia, 80 percent of the population resides in rural areas and women provide the majority of the agricultural labor in these communities. There is a joint programme undertaken by six UN agencies (UNDP, UNICEF, ILO, UNFPA, UNWOMEN and UNESCO) in order to support national policy and strategy on gender equality and women empowerment at both federal and regional level. The aim of this paper is to assess detailed information regarding women empowerment programmes under various headings.

II. GENDER ROLES IN ETHIOPIA

Ethiopia has very defined gender roles embedded within their culture. For the most part, the African nation has seen very traditional gender roles as seen in other nations. Like in many other nations, they have a mainly patriarchal society. With the use of religion and culture, men have been able to keep women in subordinate roles for most of their history. Due to the patriarchal nature of the country, women are disadvantaged economically, socially, and when it comes to raising families.

Some of the Features of Gender Role:

- Ethiopia is a developing country
- Agriculture amounts to 80% of the GDP
- Given their status, women are generally poorer than men
- Women earn less which also fuels the poverty rate in women
- Women are less educated
- This could be from Muslim religions, access to education, and ability to pay for education
- Women do not decide the number and spacing of their children. This is true for most women in Ethiopia and it is mainly the man's decision.
- Women are quickly becoming the heads of households
- Women do not have the means and resources to support their children and themselves

"I had severe period pain, and my labor was a life and death situation," says Fatuma Abdu, 28, who had undergone Type III FGM/C as a child. The UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme has been working in collaboration with Bureau of Women and Children Affairs (BoWCA) to accelerate the abandonment of FGM/C in Afar region since November 2008. Though Given their inferior status in Ethiopia, Women are clearly disadvantaged. Also, women actually form less than half of the population in Ethiopia. By being clearly outnumbered by men, we see several harmful and discriminatory practices are occurring in Ethiopia.

These Include:

- Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)
- Involves removing parts or the whole of external female genitalia
- Commonly performed by medical practitioners in Ethiopia in households by using razor blades, knives, or pieces of broken glass
- Causes high death rates in young women and is a suspected cause in the population of men to women
- It is believed that nearly 80 – 100% of women in Ethiopia are mutilated
- Food is usually allocated to men and boys
- Men work and provide most of the income for the household and therefore receive the food.
- Causes deaths of infant females
- Early marriage of girls
 - Starting as young as 7-8 years old!
 - Abuse, rape and abduction of women are prevalent in Ethiopia

Everything from FGM to food allocation was discussed and can be seen in practice in Ethiopia. Along with that, we see that HIV/AIDS is spreading across the country. This affects both men and women. Furthermore we see that life expectancy rates are dropping in Ethiopia because of HIV/AIDS.

Ethiopia's harmful practices towards women can only spell danger in the future years. In light of changing views in and around the country, so much is being done to help empower women – it's only a matter of time for social change to begin.

Socio Economic Situation of Women in Ethiopia:

Women's share of the division of labour differs from place to place and from culture to culture, their average working day is believed to vary between 13 and 17 hours per day [2].

Women Status: (a) are generally poorer than men because they earn less; (b) are less educated; (c) are increasingly becoming heads of households, with no resources to support their dependents; (d) do not enjoy due acknowledgment for their labour contribution, particularly in agriculture, and (e) do not have decision making power. Ethiopia is a patriarchal society that keeps women at a subordinate position, using religion and culture as an excuse. These excuses have for many years, supported by laws and legislation that uphold patriarchy and women's subordination. This has brought about and maintained disparities between men and women, in division of labour, share of benefits, in law and state, in how households are organized, and how these are interrelated [3].

International and National Legal Framework for Gender Equality:

Ethiopia's constitution and national policies are consistent with international legal instruments on gender equality, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW); the most comprehensive treaty on women's human rights, which came into force in 1981, has been ratified or acceded to by 165 states worldwide. It calls for equality between women and men in all civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights and it emphasizes the importance of equal participation of women with men in public life [7]. States that are parties to the Convention are obligated to ensure women equal opportunities in the right to vote and be eligible for election, the Beijing Platform of Action which focused on full recognition of women's rights and fundamental freedoms, and demands for progress towards gender equality in education and health care, in work and the family, and in the public sphere (ibid). The African Charter on Human and People Rights, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Ethiopian constitution guarantees the rights of women as equal to those of men in all spheres including equality in marriage, the right to equal employment, and rights to maternity leave with pay, the right to acquire, administer, control, use and transfer property, with emphasis on land and inheritance issues and the right to access family planning and education. Ethiopia is therefore making several efforts to strengthen national structures for achieving gender parity [8]. In this regard the former South African president Nelson Mandela argues that "Freedom cannot be achieved unless the women have been emancipated from all forms of oppression. All of us take this on board that the objective of reconstruction and development programme will not have been realized unless we see in visible practical terms that the condition of women in our country has radically changed for better and that they have been empowered to intervene in all aspects of life equal with any other member of the society" [9]. Likewise the government of Ethiopia should work a lot to close gender gap in the country and to bring women at the center of policy making and development. Equality between men and women, and boys and girls, is one of the central pillars of the Growth and Transformation Plan: the Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP) the five year national development plan for Ethiopia and the Development Plan for Women and Children (2011-2028) have included specific commitments to increasing women's participation in political life and decision making, promoting women's economic empowerment and reducing violence against women [10].

III. USAID PROGRAMMES:

USAID invests in empowering women and girls in Ethiopia across all of our programs by promoting equal access to education, health, and economic opportunities. In doing so, we help create opportunities for more equitable participation in society for females across the country. We also address the root causes of gender-based violence, child marriage, and female genital mutilation.

Increasing Female Educational Opportunities

Although the primary school enrollment rate of girls in Ethiopia has climbed from 21 to 91 percent in the last three decades, the majority are unable to transition to secondary and tertiary school due to distance, personal security and economic challenges. As girls grow older, academic participation becomes increasingly difficult as it takes time away from essential income generating activities. Only 35 percent of undergraduate university students are female and five percent drop out in the first year. At the same time, female-led instruction at the university level is extremely low at only 11 percent. To tackle these challenges and better support the continued education of the next generation of female Ethiopian leaders, our Reading for Ethiopia's Achievement Developed activity focuses on improving reading skills in primary schools. We provide supplementary reading materials and purposefully support girls' participation in reading clubs to enhance learning performance and increase retention.

Expanding Economic Opportunities for Women

Women often face different and more basic economic constraints than men, including less access to credit and limited market access. To support women's ability to create businesses and secure their own livelihoods, we encourage financing for female-owned businesses through the Development Credit Authority. To support women in agriculture under the Feed the Future initiative, we empower women in decision-making about production, the use of resources like land, water, or capital, and control over income. We support women in chronically food insecure households by boosting access to improved farming inputs and creating income earning agricultural activities.

Promoting the Health and Safety of Women and Girls

According to the Ethiopian Demographic and Health Survey in 2016, 30 percent of Ethiopian women do not make decisions on individual and family issues. Instead, their husbands make decisions for them on choices including the option to use birth control methods, and whether to give birth in a health facility or seek the assistance of a trained provider. Additionally, harmful traditional practices—early marriage and childbearing, female genital mutilation and gender-based violence—all having adverse effects on Ethiopian women. Through the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), we address the HIV risks associated with early marriage. We also provide medical assistance for women and girls suffering from fistula—a birth injury common in very young mothers—and educate communities about the health risks of female genital mutilation. To boost maternal and newborn health, we support primary health care to end preventable child and maternal deaths and teach women about nutrition.

IV. JOINT PROGRAMME UNDERTAKEN BY SIX UN AGENCIES:

A joint programme undertaken by six UN agencies (UNDP, UNICEF, ILO, UNFPA, UNWOMEN and UNESCO) in order to support national policy and strategy on gender equality and women empowerment at both federal and regional level. About 6 sector line ministries and 4 regional states have adapted and developed, on gender mainstreaming, gender sensitive budgeting and gender auditing and adaptation of the tools by key ministries and regional states.

They accomplished:

- About 12 sector line ministries and 4 regional states have adapted and started to use three standard tools, (developed with the support of UNDP) on gender mainstreaming, gender sensitive budgeting and gender auditing and adaptation of the tools by key ministries and regional states;
- As part of the capacity building, awareness on gender equality and women empowerment is increasingly progressing both at regional and local levels through the support of GEWE programme. A number of capacity building trainings have been provided for gender experts and officials, including training of 100 parliamentarians. The capacity building activities were very helpful in enhancing the technical expertise and skills of the government staffs working at all levels that helped sectoral bureaus to better mainstream gender in their plans, programmes and strategies.
- Systems were put in place at federal and regional levels to monitor performance on gender related commitments. The performance leveling tool on gender has been validated by all sectors and endorsed by MoWCYA management; implementation has already been started by sectoral ministries. Moreover, knowledge networks on gender equality and women's empowerment have been strengthened at federal and regional levels.
- With UNDP support, Ethiopia was able to conduct a comprehensive national capacity assessment of the gender machineries. Following the assessment, a report was produced that allowed for a capacity development response. UNDP has also supported the conduct of gap assessment in 21 key ministries on the generation and use of sex disaggregated data.

V. THE BORGAN PROJECT:

Ethiopia is the second most populous nation in Africa, possesses the fastest growing economy in the region and is also one of the poorest countries. Girl's education in Ethiopia is largely affected by the present poverty; in fact, it is one of the main barriers to girls' and women's education. There are socio-cultural factors — social norms and traditional practices — gender-based violence, early marriage, and teenage pregnancy that greatly affect girls' and women's access to, and completion of, education.

Offering basic education is one effective way of providing girls with power, autonomy and independence to make genuine choices over the lives, their families and their community. These top ten facts about girls

education in Ethiopia address the difficulties these girls face, as well as the improvements in recent years that benefit Ethiopia as a whole.

Top 10 Facts About Girls Education in Ethiopia:

1. For every hundred boys in secondary school, there are only seventy-seven girls.
2. Only 17 percent of women are literate, whereas 42 percent of men can read and write.
3. Females only make up 27 percent of the university population, a quarter of whom will drop out before graduation.
4. The fear of sexual favoritism limits girls' freedom of participation and interaction with others in school settings.
5. Primary school attendance rates have risen from 30.2 percent in 2000/01 to 64.5 percent in 2010/11.
6. The primary school enrollment rate of girls has increased from 21 to 49 percent in the last two decades.
7. The education of girls contributes to higher economic activity as Ethiopian women are more likely to give back to their communities.
8. The education of girls results in lower infant mortality and morbidity, lower fertility rates and the attainment of longer life expectancy for both men and women.
9. There is a greater likelihood that the children of educated girls will become educated themselves.
10. Receiving an education means girls can avoid long work hours and work towards a better future, instilling self-empowerment.

These top ten facts about girls' education in Ethiopia shed light on the importance of education for the well-being of these girls and this region. An educated girl in Ethiopia is more likely to avoid early marriage, seek healthcare and become a more independent and well-off individual. With this independence, a girl will become more involved in her community and prepared for future decision-making. She will also have an increased chance of being accepted into a higher-paying job and could then reinvest 80-90 percent of her wages back into her family and community, aiding in breaking the cycle of poverty. Girls and women in Ethiopia have seen successes due in part to organizations such as Girl Up — the United Nations Foundation's adolescent girl campaign. The organization aims to give adolescent girls in developing countries an equal chance for education, health, social and economic opportunities and a life free from violence. Since refugee families in Ethiopia are not allowed to work, girls are oftentimes unable to attend school as families cannot afford the costs of school uniforms and books. With the help of Girl Up, the United Nations is working to make sure that Somali refugee girls in Ethiopia are healthy, safe and educated. This program not only provides Ethiopian girls with school materials, solar lamps to study at night, toilets and access to water, but it also provides scholarships for girls to attend school.

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RELATED NEWS AND INTERNET RESOURCES:

- Empowering Women Through Agricultural Development in Ethiopia -Transforming Lives.
- Ending Child Marriage & Meeting the Needs of Married Children: The USAID Vision for Action.
- [https://borgenproject.org/the-rise-and-fall-of-girls-education-in-ethiopia\(Angelina Gillispie\)](https://borgenproject.org/the-rise-and-fall-of-girls-education-in-ethiopia(Angelina Gillispie))
- <http://www.sida.se/Publications/Import/pdf/sv/Towards-Gender-Equality-in-Ethiopia.pdf>
- JICA Japan International Cooperation Agency (2006), *Ethiopia: Country Gender Profile*.
- *Livestock Production: Empowering Women in Ethiopia*.
- *USAID Gender Equality and Female Empowerment Policy [PDF, 2.8MB]*
- *Video: Promoting the Inclusion of More Women Members in Farmers' Cooperatives*
Video: Women's Land Rights: A Ripple Effect.

Beyene Seleshi. " Women Empowerment Programmes in Ethiopia - Extensive Review. " IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science (IOSR-JHSS). vol. 24 no. 1, 2019, pp. 09-14.