

The Millennium Development Goals and the Status of Gender Disparity in Ethiopia: Achievements and Challenges

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Abstract

Recognising the magnitude of the global gender gap and its unbearable consequences, the UN included the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment as one of its eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which were declared in 2000. Ethiopia adopted the MDGs and has been incorporating them into its consecutive Core Strategic Policies, with the commitment to realise them by 2015. This study was intended to see whether Ethiopia is on track to meet the globally adopted goals by the deadline, with particular reference to gender, and to analyse the achievements Ethiopia has made so far and the challenges ahead in achieving gender equality. Both descriptive and analytical methods were employed and a triangular approach was used in analysing data. The status of the gender gap in Ethiopia was analysed using the Global Gender Gap Index. The study found that though Ethiopia may not be able to achieve the gender-related MDG by the deadline, it has made a significant progress in reducing gender disparity over the last decade. There is still limited enforcement capacity and gender disaggregated data; a significant gender gap at secondary and tertiary levels of education and political offices; and deeply rooted gender insensitive social values and political culture remain as challenges. It is argued that addressing these challenges and identifying practical and strategic gender needs at community level could be instrumental in narrowing the gap. Besides, strengthening the recently introduced gender responsive budgeting approach, enhancing the pro-poor policy in general and adopting the Gender and Development Policy approach in particular, could be instrumental in closing the gender gap in Ethiopia, in the near future.

Key words: Ethiopia, gender, Gender Policy, Global Gender Disparity Index, and Millennium Development Goals

Sumário

Reconhecendo a magnitude das desigualdades de gênero e suas consequências insuportáveis, a ONU incluiu a promoção da igualdade de gênero e empoderamento das mulheres como um dos seus oito Objectivos de Desenvolvimento do Milénio (ODM), que foram declarados em 2000.

A Etiópia adoptou os ODM e foram incorporados em suas Políticas Estratégicas com o compromisso de implementá-los até 2015. Este estudo visa analisar se a Etiópia está a caminho de cumprir com os ODM dentro do prazo, com especial referência ao gênero, e analisar as

realizações que a Etiópia alcançou até agora e os desafios futuros para alcançar a igualdade de gênero. Ambos os métodos descritivos e analíticos foram empregados e uma abordagem triangular foi usada na análise de dados. O status da desigualdade de gênero na Etiópia foi analisado utilizando o Global Gender Gap Index. O estudo constatou que, embora a Etiópia pode não ser capaz de atingir os ODM relacionados com a questão de igualdade de gênero dentro do prazo, o país tem feito um progresso significativo na redução das desigualdades de gênero ao longo da última década. Assim, pode se constatar que, ainda há uma capacidade limitada na aplicação e desagregação de dados sobre o gênero; há uma diferença de gênero significativa nos níveis secundário e terciário da educação e nos cargos políticos; os valores sociais ainda são insensíveis às questões do gênero profundamente enraizado na cultura política que ainda permanecem como desafios. Argumenta-se que enfrentar estes desafios e identificar as necessidades práticas e estratégicas para a emancipação de gênero ao nível comunitário poderia ser um instrumento para estreitar a lacuna. O reforço da abordagem de orçamentação sensível ao gênero recentemente introduzido, o reforço da política pró-pobres em geral e adoptar a abordagem de Políticas de Gênero e Desenvolvimento em particular, poderia ser um instrumento para permitir fechar o hiato de gênero na Etiópia, num futuro próximo.

Palavras-chave: Etiópia, gênero, política de gênero, índice global de desigualdade de gênero, e Objectivos de Desenvolvimento do Milênio

Introduction

Long before the MDGs were designed in 2000, the United Nations (UN) and its agencies had been working to narrow down the gender gap in the world, recognising that resources, power and knowledge have not been equally shared by the two sexes. Thus, when 189 UN member states adopted the Millennium Declaration in 2000, politicians and experts were clear that without incorporating a goal that brings down gender disparity, all sorts of plans, including eradicating poverty would be a futile exercise. Hence, during the drawing up of the eight MDGs, the UN included one goal on the *promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment* known as MDG3. It has one target on education and four indicators on women's empowerment and political representation. A target was set to eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education no later than 2015. And, the following are set as indicators: (a) Ratio of girls to boys in primary, secondary and tertiary education; (b) ratio of literate women to men 15-24 years old; (c) share of women in wage employment in the non-agriculture sector; and (d) proportion of seats held by women in national parliament (UNDG, 2010).

According to the joint report produced by the UN Country Team, the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, and the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development (FDRE-MoFED) in 2012, Ethiopia has made significant progress towards achieving the MDGs. Such progress can be attributed to Ethiopia's consistent pro-poor policy where more than 65% of its public expenditure

has been spent on education, water, health, roads, agriculture, housing and energy. Pro-poor expenditures are defined as those that target food security, increase agricultural production, support infrastructural development and provide support for delivery of basic services in the education and health sectors to the poor (UNIFEM, n.d).

As per the joint report mentioned above, six of the MDGs are already on track and strong efforts have been made by the FDRE government and its development partners to ensure that the remaining two (MDG 3 and 5) are brought on track by 2015 (MoFED and UNCT, 2012). While MDG 3 deals with promoting gender equality and women's empowerment, MDG 5 has the aim of improving maternal health (UNDG, 2010). As the goal indicates, MDG 5 is highly associated with MDG 3 in the sense that it deals with the gender reproductive role of women (see Moser, 1989).

To our knowledge so far, no systematic research has been carried out concerning the current status of gender disparity in Ethiopia, particularly using the Global Gender Gap Index (GGGI) developed by the World Economic Forum (WEF) in 2006. Thus, this study was intended to describe and analyse the achievements Ethiopia has made so far and the challenges ahead in achieving gender equality in general and the MDG 3 in particular, at macro level. Here, we would like to remind readers that although we are aware that Ethiopia is a federal country and a home to diverse nations, it was not the scope of this paper to assess the status of gender disparity in each federal state or national group. An in-depth study concerning gender disparity on the urban-rural divide would have also revealed a relatively different image. However, this too was not the scope of this paper. It is also important to note that the MDGs – the focus of this study – are set at national level.

Relevant national laws, policies and reports of the Ethiopian government, literature, UN agencies working documents and reports, UN agencies and Ethiopian government joint reports, and to some extent the personal observation of the researchers, were used as sources of data. Both descriptive and analytical methods were employed and a triangulation approach was used in analysing data, in which data was presented quantitatively and analysed through narrative means. Data generated through the *Global Green Growth Institute* (GGGI) was used in evaluating the gender gap in Ethiopia. Here, it is worth noting that looking at the MDG 3, gender equality is narrowly interpreted, and there has been a growing recognition that the target and the indicators that frame the goal are too limited. Nevertheless, half of the MDGs now have targets directly related to MDG 3. For example, MDG 1 has a target on decent work for women, MDG 2 on girl's education and MDG 5 on maternal mortality and sexual and reproductive health (UNDG, 2010). Thus, instead of the indicators developed by the United Nations Development Group (UNDG), the more comprehensive and sophisticated index developed by the *World Economic Forum* (WEF) and the GGGI, was used in evaluating the gender gap in Ethiopia. GGGI examines gender gap in four fundamental categories (sub-indexes): economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival and political empowerment. Each sub-index has its own indicators (for details how the sub-indexes are derived and operationalised, see WEF, 2013).

Apart from the introduction, the paper has three major sections. The first briefly discusses

the legal and policy frameworks as well as institutional mechanisms that have been introduced to tackle gender disparity in Ethiopia. The second part deals with the status of gender disparity in Ethiopia against the GGGI. The third section identifies the challenges Ethiopia is facing in narrowing the gender gap. Finally, the paper ends with concluding remarks and the way forward.

Laws, Policies and Institutional Mechanisms

Legal Frameworks

Global and Regional Conventions

Ethiopia has been introducing several legal instruments to address gender related issues. To start with, it has ratified a number of international and regional conventions adopted to protect the rights of women and promote gender equality. For example, Ethiopia is a signatory to the Universal Declarations of Human Rights (UDHR), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), the Convention on the Elimination of All Form of Discrimination Against Women, the Convention against Human Trafficking and the Exploitation of Prostitution of others, the African Union Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, which all guarantee the equality of women and men in general and the right of women in particular. Ethiopia has also ratified the Beijing Plan of Action and many other conventions adopted by international or regional organisations to empower women and ensure gender equality (WABEKON, 2006). Such conventions have been domesticated. For example, the fundamental rights and principles adopted by the UDHR, the ICCPR and the ICESCR are incorporated into the current Constitution of Ethiopia, in the form of human and democratic rights. They have also occasionally been communicated to the Ethiopian public through the State media. They have been incorporated into the curricula through civic and ethical education, a common course taught across all levels of education in Ethiopia.

Federal Constitution

The Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic (FDRE) of Ethiopia introduced an historic measure on gender equality in a country where history vexed with traditions and religious matters made women to suffer due to their gender. The Constitution not only guaranteed the equality of the two sexes but it also recognised the need for affirmative action for women to enable them to compete and participate in all spheres of life. Generally, under Article 35 sub-articles 1-8 of the Federal Constitution, the following gender-related issues are addressed: equal rights in marriage; entitlement to affirmative action/measures; protection from harmful traditional practices; the right to maternity leave with full pay; the right to consultation in projects affecting their lives; property rights (to acquire, administer, control, use and transfer); the right to equality in employment (promotion, pay, pension, entitlements); and the right of access to family planning education, information and capacity building. Besides, with the purpose of addressing gender disparity, relevant laws have been revised and/or newly adopted. A closer look at the following four different but interrelated revised or newly adopted laws will make this obvious.

Family Law

The Revised Federal Family Code, which came into effect on 4 July 2000, guarantees equality between the sexes in relation to marriage (Proc. No. 213/2000). Ethiopia's regional states have also issued their own Family Laws, which by and large are in line with the Federal Family Code. Both the Federal and Regional Family Codes have made the minimum marriage age 18 years for both sexes (WABEKBON, 2006).

Labour and Employment Laws

According to the Labour Law, (proclamation No. 377/2003 (Art. 87), women are not to be discriminated against with regards to employment and payment, on the grounds of gender. Moreover, through this law, special protection is accorded to pregnant women, including paid maternity leave. Similarly, according to the revised Public Servants Proclamation No. 262/2002 (Art. 13), sex-based discrimination is prohibited and female candidates are given preferential treatment to fill vacancies. Furthermore, following the amendment of the Public Servant Law of the 1962 (Art. 4) by Proc. No.190/99, widows and widowers have been given equal status in pensions, which was not the case before (WABEKBON, 2006).

Land Use Administration Law

The Federal Rural Land Administration Law (Proc. No. 89/97) ensures the equality of men and women regarding the use, administration, control, transferring and bequeathing holding rights of land. The proclamation also provides for the participation of women on decisions concerning land allocation. Furthermore, Art.6 (10) of this proclamation requires regional land administration laws to apply the equal rights of women regarding the use, administration, control, transferring and bequeathing holding rights of land. Consequently, land administrations laws have been promulgated in the Regional States of Ethiopia (Mehari, 2003). In most regional states, the minimum age requirement for rural land entitlement is equal both for female and male (18 years), except in the Tigray region, which lowers the age requirement for females to 16 years (WABEKBON, 2006).

Laws on Violence Against Women

The 1957 Penal Code was revised and enforced as of July 2004. The revised Penal Code incorporated provisions for violence against women. Under this Penal Code, issues like female genital mutilation and other Harmful Traditional Practices (HTP) are penalised and domestic violence is designated as HTP. Added to this, rape, sexual abuse, abduction, trafficking for prostitution purposes and forced labour have merited tougher and graver penalties under this Penal Code. Finally, it is worth noting that Ethiopia's regional states' Constitutions have also addressed the question of gender equality meticulously (WABEKBON, 2006).

Policies

In 1993, Ethiopia enacted the *National Policy on Women* (NPW). The NPW mapped out the problems of Ethiopian women in all fields of development and identified the patriarchal system as the root cause of gender-based political, economic and social discrimination, reinforced by traditional practices that give credence to cultural/religious norms and values (Transition Government of Ethiopia (TGE), 1993). The *National Population Policy* also called for the elimination of legal and customary practices undermining women's economic and social rights, including property rights and access to employment (TGE, 1993). In addition, the *Development and Social Welfare Policy*, adopted in 1996, recommended mainstreaming gender issues in all programmes, projects and services, including by designing women-specific components when appropriate (Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, 1996)

The Education and Training Policy designed by the TGE in 1994, had components included to ensure gender equality, which, among others, included enabling girls for education and changing the attitudes and values of the Ethiopian society towards girls' education. In 2004, the Ministry of Education (MoE) developed the National Girl's Education Strategy. In 2011, the MoE also developed a *Gender Mainstreaming Guideline* to be used at different levels of the education system (MoE, 2011). Generally, in the education sector, specific steps that favour female students and civil servants have been taken at teacher's training institutions, colleges and universities (Arowolo, 2010). For example, although it has varied from year to year, entry points (average point) to preparatory school (Grade 11 and 12), vocational training centres and higher education institutions, have been made less for female students compared to their male counterparts. Since recent times, female students have also been receiving special tutorial classes for courses such as Mathematics, English, etc. In some public universities (for example, Mekelle University, Addis Ababa University, and Haromaya University), a few female students were selected based on their economic background and have been receiving limited financial and material support. When it comes to employment, the cumulative grade point average required to teach in public universities, for example, have been made less for female candidates compared to their male counterparts. The same is true in terms of academic promotion and scholarship awards.

In 1997, Ethiopia adopted the *Micro and Small-scale Enterprises Development Strategy*, which particularly addresses gender inequality with regards to access to credit and saving services, entrepreneurial skill development training opportunities and technologies, as well as access to markets and information (WABEKBON, 2006).

In 2006, Ethiopia developed the *National Plan of Action for Gender-Equality* (NPA-GE). Here, the plight of women was assessed and the following were identified as Ethiopian women's gender-related problems: being more vulnerable to poverty; having limited or no access to and control over critical resources; lack of ownership of and decision-making rights over property; extended labour time and workload; vulnerability to traditional harmful practices; low status across social strata and subordination to men; low girls enrolment rates; and high chances of exposure to the HIV/Aids pandemic, etc. The Plan of Action also recognised the absence of appropriate and

viable institutional mechanisms as serious constraints that hamper efforts towards gender equality (WABEKBON, 2006; MoWA, 2006).

Since 2000, Ethiopia has been implementing three consecutive Core Strategic Plans (globally known as the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper) of a five-year term. While the first term (called *Sustainable Development and Poverty Reduction Program (SDPRP)*) was implemented from 2001/2-2004/5, the second term: the *Plan for Accelerated and Sustainable Development to End Poverty (PASDEP)* was executed from 2005/6-2009/10. The third one, known as the *Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP)* is ongoing (2010-2015). Across all the consecutive Strategic Plans, addressing gender disparity and empowering women has been included as one of the strategic pillars. For example, during the PASDEP period, the 'unleashing of the productive potential of Ethiopia's women' was identified as one of the pillars (UNIFEM, n.d; MoFED, 2010). Similarly, in the ongoing Strategic Plan, the GTP, 'promoting gender equality and empowering women and youth' is allocated as one of the strategic pillars (MoFED, 2010).

Across the three consecutive Core Strategic Plans mentioned above, and other documents, one can identify the following issues incorporated to promote gender equality and women's empowerment: (i) improving the lives of women and reducing their workload (example, by improving access to water supply, transportation and sanitation and labour-saving technologies); (ii) increasing girls' access to education; (iii) improving healthcare services access and facilities related to mothers and women's health; (iv) promotion of women's participation in development policies; (v) strengthening non-formal education programmes for women; (vi) eradicating traditional practices that are harmful to women's health; (vii) implementing gender-sensitive HIV/ Aids prevention; (viii) carrying out a massive and systematic training and awareness campaign on gender equality; (ix) adopting agricultural programmes and technical and vocational training for women; (x) ensuring the landholding rights of women; (xi) enhancing the political empowerment of women; and (xii) enhancing the economic empowerment of women (by increasing access to credit facilities, supporting women to establish micro- and small-scale enterprises, favouring goods and services supplied by women entrepreneurs or women's associations during public procurement, etc. (WABEKBON, 2006; MoFED, 2001, 2006 and 2010, and MoWA, 2006).

Ethiopia's Food Security Programme, adopted in 2003, also envisages provision of seed, fertiliser, and agricultural tools and extending credit services to destitute women to help them to develop sustainable livelihoods through cooperatives and other private sector initiatives; improving nutrition for children under five years of age, pregnant and lactating mothers. In the Food Security Programme, female-headed households have been given priority. Particular priority has been given to women in the Productive Safety Net Programme, which includes public work for the poor and distribution of food or cash (UNIFEM, n.d)

In 2008, the FDRE-MoFED developed *Guidelines* for mainstreaming gender in the budget process, usually known as Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB)¹. This guideline clearly identified GRB indicators (UNIFEM, n.d). Following the development of the guidelines, all sectors at federal and regional level have been required to introduce GRB plans. This, in turn, implies gender-

responsive reporting and accountability. Currently, not only gender is integrated into the annual plans of Federal and Regional Institutions (FRI), but also all FRI have budget lines for gender. Since 2010/2011, GRB has been more visible, particularly in the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Education, with the introduction of Programme Budgeting by the MoEED (ibid).

Finally, in 2014, the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia stipulated a percentage of women candidates in the parameter used to allocate public money for political parties, which is being implemented during the ongoing 2015 election. It is believed that such a policy will motivate political parties to recruit as many women members as possible, which in turn will increase the number of women in the political sphere in Ethiopia. It is common knowledge that political parties are the main institutions where future political leaders are trained.

Institutional Mechanisms

Since 1992, Ethiopia introduced institutional machineries mandated with ensuring gender equality, eliminating any form of discrimination and harmful traditional practices against women and girls and empowering women economically, politically and socially.

Federal level: Ministry of Women, Youth and Children Affairs

Since 1992/1993, there was a Women's Affairs Office under the Office of the Prime Minister (MoFED, 2005). Considering the gravity of gender-related problems, however, this Office was promoted to Ministerial level in 2005. Currently, this Ministerial Office is known as the Ministry of Women, Youth and Children Affairs (MoWYCA). Furthermore, the Women's Affairs Standing Committee in the House of People's Representatives (federal legislative body) is an institutional machine established to oversee the inclusion of women's needs on laws passed by the parliament and policies developed by the Prime Minister's Office and other sector-based ministers. Besides, all other parliamentary standing committees have at least one women member so that women's issues will be tabled in the deliberation of the committees. There has been a deliberate move of assigning a woman deputy chairperson to most standing committees as well. A women parliamentarian caucus was also established in 2005 (ibid).

Regional Level: the Bureau of Women, Youth and Children's Affairs

Currently, each regional state has a Bureau of Women, Youth and Children's Affairs (BoWYCA) previously known as Bureau of Women's Affairs (BoWA). The BoWYCA is mandated with mainstreaming gender issues and ensuring the equal opportunity of both sexes in their respective regions, including supervising the implementation of affirmative action, which was

1 GRB refers to drawing up the whole budget in which resources are allocated on the basis of the analysis done of the practical needs and strategic interests of women and men and the demands expressed by their representatives. It involves therefore an analysis of the entire budget in terms of its benefits for women and men and boys and girls (ILO, 2010 and ADBG, 2009).

introduced to bring women to an equal level from their long history of discrimination. Below regional level, a Women's Affairs/gender focal person has been established at zonal, district (*Wereda*) and sub-district (*Kebele*) levels (MGDF, 2013).

Sector Level: Gender Affairs Department (GAD)

To ensure that gender issues are mainstreamed and considered in each sector, since 2005, Ethiopia has been establishing Gender Affairs Department (GAD), often called the Women's Affairs Department (WAD) in every major federal region (ministries/agencies/commissioners and higher education institutions) and a gender focal person in regional bureaus (MoFED, 2010). The GADs/WADs are mandated with mainstreaming gender issues during formulation and implementation of development policies/plans, projects, programmes, etc. in their respective institutions. While the general objectives of the GADs/WADs are derived from the National Policy on Women, their specific objectives are formulated by harmonising the objectives of the specific institution with those of the national policy (UNIFEM, nd).

Finally, it is important to note that while GADs/WADs and WAB are accountable to their respective institution, they have working relationships with MoWYCA. They share their quarterly and annual reports with MoWTCA and the latter provides technical feedback and support to build their capacity (UNDAF, 2010)

The Status of Gender Disparity in Ethiopia

In the above section, we have tried to identify some of the revised or newly adopted laws, policies and institutions introduced in the last two decades, to ensure gender equality in Ethiopia. In the following section, we shall see the status of gender disparity in Ethiopia. We have consulted several government and development agencies' documents as well as literature produced by academics. Due to methodological conveniences and the availability of up-to-date data, however, we have decided to use the data generated by the World Economic Forum in 2013, using the four pillars of GGGI.

"The [GGGI] is a framework for capturing the magnitude and scope of gender-based disparities and tracking their progress. The Index benchmarks national gender gaps on economic, political, education and health criteria, and provides country rankings that allow for effective comparisons across regions and income groups, and over time" (WEF, 2013, p.3).

The GGGI examines the gap between men and women in four fundamental categories (sub-indexes): economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival and political empowerment. For example, economic participation and opportunity is measured by percentage

share of senior and professional positions, and power over economic resources as measured by estimated earned income (for details on how the sub-indexes function, see the WEF, 2013). The following table shows Ethiopia's gender parity index as of 2013.

Table 1: Economic Participation and Opportunity (Overall Rank – 93/136)

Economic Participation and Opportunity	Indicators	Progress		Female/Male Ratio	Rank/136 Countries
		Female	Male		
	Labour force participation	81	91	0.89	30
	Wage equality for similar work	-	-	0.65	73
	Estimated earned income (PPP US\$)	917	1360	0.67	38
	Legislators, senior officials and managers	16	84	0.19	93
	Professional and technical workers	33	67	0.49	101

Source: WEF, 2013, p. 196.

Economic development and social transformation is unthinkable without the engagement of women. This is to argue that women's economic empowerment is a prerequisite for sustainable development and the achievement of all MDGs (OECD, 2012). In the developing world, including Ethiopia, women's potential has been less exploited and utilised. This is due to the fact that development projects were male focused, and women were neglected from the formal employment sector.

According to the WEF Global Gender Gap Report (2013), the economic participation and opportunity of Ethiopian women is still low, although there has been a significant increase over time. For example, the estimated amount of income for females in 2013 was 917 USD/year whereas male's income was 1 360 USD. This indicates that Ethiopian men enjoy an extra income of close to half of the estimated income of their women counterparts. Furthermore, the number of female legislators, senior officials and managers at the federal level are five times less than their male counterparts. This demonstrates that women are not equally represented in the governmental structure. The report also indicates that females' employment opportunities in professional and technical work is 33% while the number of opportunities for males is 67%. Generally, from the report, we can conclude that women do not have equal economic participation and opportunity compared to men in the formal sector, especially in areas that require special skills. Therefore, Ethiopia needs to invest a considerable amount of resources to increase women's participation in political and economic activities by providing them with short- and long-term training to enhance their skills and competitiveness.

Table 2: Educational Attainment (Overall Rank – 131/136)

Educational Attainment	Indicators	Progress		Female/Male Ratio	Rank/136 Countries
		Female	Male		
	Literacy rate	29	49	0.59	129
	Enrolment in primary education	86	89	0.93	116
	Enrolment in secondary education	11	17	0.66 ²	116
	Enrolment in tertiary education	5	11	0.43	126

Source: WEF, 2013, p. 196.

Ethiopia has registered a remarkable achievement in expanding universal primary education and an increase in the total number of primary, secondary schools and tertiary education institutions. The achievement is attributed to the commitment of the Ethiopian government that has been demonstrated through a persistent increase in education expenditure (MoFED, 2010). Consequently, gender disparity at primary level has been reduced significantly. The gender disparity (ratio of girls to boys) in primary education has improved from 0.85 in 2006/2007 to 0.93 in 2011/2013 and from 0.59 in 2006/2007 to 0.83 in 2011/2012 in secondary education. In 2013, gender disparities stand at 0.88 and 0.66 in secondary education first cycle (Grade 9-10) and second cycle (Grade 11-12), respectively (MoE, 2012). As the above table indicates, the disparity between males and females in higher education remains very high generally; the country has almost eliminated gender disparities in primary education but more effort is required to raise progression from primary to secondary schools among girls in order to eliminate gender disparities at secondary and tertiary levels by 2015.

Table 3: Health and Survival (Overall Rank – 68/136)

Health and Survival	Indicators	Progress		Female/Male Ratio	Rank/136 Countries
		Female	Male		
	Gender ratio at birth (female/male)	-	-	0.97	1
	Life expectancy	51	49	1.04	85

Source: WEF, 2013, p.196.

Although females' life expectancy is estimated to be two years greater than males', Ethiopia has one of the highest rates of maternal mortality in Africa. Progress on reducing maternal

2. According to the FDRE, Ministry of Education (MoE) Education Statistical Annual Abstract, the gender parity gap for first cycle secondary education (Grades 9-10) for 2004 E.C (2011/2012) is 0.88 and for the second cycle (Grades 11-12) is 0.76. (MoE, 2012).

mortality has stalled since 2005 when the country managed to reduce the maternal mortality rate from 871 in 2000/2001 to 676 per 100 000 births in 2010/2011. This means that with the MDG target of 267 per 100 000 births by 2015, the country is clearly off-track on goal five (MoFED and UNCT, 2012).

There are a number of factors behind this dismal performance, namely: delays in seeking skilled emergency obstetric care; in providing the health facility; and the lack of timely as well as large proportions of unmet family planning needs among girls in child-bearing ages. For example, although the percentage of women (aged between 15 and 49) using modern contraception increased from 6.3% in 2000 to 18.7% in 2012 and contraceptive use prevalence rate for the same age group increased from 6% in 2000 to 29% in 2010/2011, these indicators are still very low compared to many African countries (EDHS, 2011). Similarly, the percentage of deliveries attended by skilled birth attendants was only 20.4% in 2012/2013 – much lower than the 74% and 44% deliveries attended by skilled birth attendants for urban and rural communities respectively in the southern and eastern African region (MoFED and UNCT, 2012).

Here, it is worth mentioning that the Ethiopian government has been increasing women-centred intervention aimed at reducing maternal mortality. These include increasing the number of women trained as extension service providers, and enhancing the quality and coverage of antenatal and post-natal services as well as increasing the awareness and distribution of contraceptives. Currently, the UN Country Team is working with the government of Ethiopia to apply the MDGs Acceleration Framework and to develop an action plan for accelerating progress on maternal health (MoFED and UNCT, 2012).

Table 4: Political Empowerment (Overall Rank – 66/136)

Political Empowerment	Indicators	Progress		Female/Male Ratio	Rank/136 Countries
		Female	Male		
	Women in parliament	28	72	0.39	35
	Women in ministerial positions	10	90	0.11	101
	Years with female head of state (last 50)	0	50	0.00	60

Source: WEF, 2013, p.196.

Active participation of women in politics plays a central role in bringing about sustainable socio-economic and political development in a given country. In other words, the participation of women at the national, regional and local levels of government as a key policy is decisive to address the diverse problems of a society from a gender perspective. Indeed, the decisions have a huge impact on the ways in which women and men lead their lives, on the rules they are expected to abide by, and on the structures that determine how political power should be distributed. They also

shape how public resources are allocated and whether the provision of social services takes into account the practical and strategic needs of each gender (for details, see below).

Historically, women have been the subjects of marginalisation in Ethiopian politics. However, their political participation, both at the federal and regional levels, has been increasing progressively since the seizure of power by the Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democracy (EPRDF) in 1991. Indeed, the government has put affirmative action in place as a policy strategy to improve the position of women in the political domain at all levels of government. As we can see from the above table, the representation of women in the federal legislature (House of Peoples Representatives) in 2013 (during the 2010-2015 term) is close to 30%, although their representation in the highest decision-making positions such as ministerial positions is still low. In fact, since 2005, there has been some progress on the political participation and representation of women in the federal and regional tiers of government. For example, although the gap was still huge, there was an increase in the participation of women during the fourth General Elections of 2010, where 100 (12.4%) of the total candidates that had run for the House of Peoples' Representatives (Federal Parliament) and 725 (15.3%) candidates that had done so for state councils were female. What is more is that among the voters registered in 2010, 15 252 240 (47.8%) were women (Ethiopian Human Rights Commission, 2011, p.60). Generally, however, although women constitute half of the total population of Ethiopia, they have been marginalised from political participation and interwoven socio-cultural and economic aspects have affected their performance. In this respect, there are three major factors (ibid).

The first factor that has negatively affected women's political participation is a male-dominated political culture. This prevalent masculine model of politics puts a stranglehold on the participation of women. Shvedova (1998, p.22) states that, "men dominate the political arena, men formulate the rules of the political game; and men define the standards for evaluation." Thus, political life has been organised according to male norms and values, and in some cases, even male lifestyles. Due to the prevalence of such a political environment, women are forced either to distance themselves from politics or leave all forms of political activity for men. Similarly, in Ethiopia, women perceive politics as a man's world, a domain exclusively constituted by, and for, men (Berouk, 2012).

Male domination in politics is also reflected in political parties, which are dominated by men who tend to resist greater participation of women in politics. Correspondingly, political parties are not pro-active in changing their structures in favour of women and supporting them to actively participate in political dialogue and debate. In spite of the fact that women play an important role in mobilising support for parties during an election campaign, they rarely occupy key positions within the structure of the parties (Henig and Henig, 2010). Moreover, the selection and nomination process within political parties is also biased against women in that 'male characteristics' are emphasised and often become the criteria for selecting candidates (Shredova and Skjeie, 2012). This results in an underestimation of women as politicians by those who provide money for election campaigns. Generally, this political culture and practice has significantly affected women's political participation and their performance in politics up till today, including in Ethiopia.

Here, however, it is worth noting that, as mentioned elsewhere, in the last two decades, there has been progress in the participation of women in politics in Ethiopia. Women have been assigned to ministerial and State minister levels. Currently, for example, besides a woman heads the Minister for Women, Youth and Children, the Ministry of Civil Service up. There are also several women State ministers under the various ministerial offices and women Speakers or Deputy Speakers of Regional Council in the regional states of Ethiopia. It is argued that the equal participation and contribution of female fighters during the Tigray People's Liberation Front struggle against the Derg regime has contributed a lot to today's participation of women in the Central Committee of the Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front, the ruling party, which in turn is helping them to take ministerial and deputy ministerial positions at national level.

The second factor is unemployment and poverty. In Ethiopia, the proportion of female workers in low or no skill jobs as seasonal and short-term contractual workers are found to be much higher than that of men (Selamawit, 2013). As a result, the average wages of women is lower than that of men; who mostly occupy the highly paid managerial and professional positions. Women with inadequate or no income have no time and energy to think about or work in the political arena. Some researchers indicate that Ethiopian women suffer more from poverty and unemployment compared to their men counterparts (Tigist, 2011). By implication, therefore, Ethiopian women are engaged in a variety of informal jobs to sustain their family. Like any woman elsewhere, Ethiopian women also invest much of their time and resources to reproductive, productive and community roles (Moser, 1989). Thus, even those women who are interested in politics will not have enough time to participate in public political discourse. As a result, their participation and representation in the federal and regional levels of government is not up to the expected level.

Illiteracy and limited access to higher education is the third factor that has affected the political participation of women. It is apparent that men and women have not had equal access to higher education, especially in the developing societies like Ethiopia (Tigist, 2011). Thus, due to their low level of education, women have been less competitive than men in politics.

Finally, women's perceptions of politics as a '*dirty game*' has discouraged them from playing a role in the political life of their society. Ethiopian women also used to say "*politics and electric wire should not be approached*" (Tigist, 2011, p.30). This is to show the risks associated with political participation. Also, more alarmingly, the few new bold women who have been elected or appointed by the government have not been able to share their experience, challenges and success stories (ibid).

Challenges and the Way Forward

Adapting and domesticating several international and regional conventions and declarations designed to ensure gender equality; recognising the equality of male and female citizens by the Constitution of the FDRE and other Ethiopian laws; and formulating several policies designed to narrow down gender gaps were meant to transform the deeply rooted gender-based discriminatory beliefs, values and practices in Ethiopia. To some extent, this has yielded results. For example,

in the last two decades, we have seen some progress on females' participation in politics and education. There has also been a struggle in minimising harmful practices such as early marriage; genital mutilation; and discrimination against females in land and other property ownership; as well as sending children to school, etc. Women's participation in the public services (including higher education institutions), the defence force and police, and in the economy too, has been increasing.

Nevertheless, there is still a need for further transformation of discriminatory attitudes towards in the workplace, in the public sphere and at home. The traditional patriarchy of Ethiopia, which remains buttressed by religion and culture, has caused gender differentials in access, participation, and service provision across the education, health, and economic sectors. Moreover, although the Ethiopian government has made big strides in setting the cornerstone of institutional machinery at federal, regional and sub-regional levels, these institutions have limited capacity to reach out to the predominantly agrarian and pastoral society of Ethiopia, where gender-based problems and gender disparity are highly pervasive.

The MoWYCA still has insufficient capacity to enforce changes towards gender-sensitive intervention among ministers and regional bureaus, despite the WADs and WABs that are in place. There is a lack of a strong coordinating mechanism among the institutions to promote gender equality and empower women with stakeholders and partners in the sector, which results in a duplication of efforts and resources. Due to capacity-related and other problems, national policies and legal instruments, continental and local protocols, conventions and declarations adopted to ensure gender equality and the human rights of the citizenry, have not been fully and strictly implemented (UNDAF, 2010). Particularly, the gender responsive budgeting adopted in 2008, which could have been instrumental in gender mainstreaming, is not fully operational across federal, regional and sub-regional level institutions. At present, gender responsive budgeting is only on pilot testing at higher education institutions. Today, federal, regional and sub-regional institutions suffer from a lack of up-to-date gender disaggregated data. The following specific and general challenges identified by WABEKBON (2006), UNDAF (2010), MoE (2012) and MoWYCA (2006) and other development agents at various times, still remain prevalent.

On Economic Participation and Opportunity: Women are bound by time-consuming household chores given that, especially in the rural environment, there is very limited presence of household technology that could help ease the burden of repetitive non-remunerated household tasks, thus freeing up time for studying and/or lucrative activities; women have limited access to markets, hampering their ability to decide on actions related to purchasing and selling at the right moment in time; women's contributions to the economy remain virtually invisible in national statistics and related reporting. This is due to the fact that women's economic activities focus on involvement in the informal sector and deeply rooted traditional values and attitudes, which impede access and control over resources and participation in politics for Ethiopian women (UNDAF, 2010).

On Educational Attainment: A gender gap is still persistent at all levels with the gap being positively correlated to the level of education (highest gap at tertiary level); the performance of female students generally lags behind that of males; gender-based violence negatively affects female students' enrolment and performance at all levels of education; female attrition is higher than that of male students within higher learning institutions; female participation in general secondary education (Grade 9-10) and preparatory secondary education (Grade 11-12) is still low; in many places, the distance from home to secondary schools is long for a great number of girls, which exposes them to all kinds of harassment and security threats; gender-sensitive leadership and management capacities in the education sector remains weak; and gender disparity in the adult literacy rate is widespread across Ethiopia (UNDAF, 2010; MoE, 2012).

On Health and Survival: Women's low awareness of many health issues due to low educational attainment, non-participation at meetings due to workload and cultural influence and inadequate penetration of the media; male supremacy and cultural barriers, making women unable to discuss what affects them, even revealing their pregnancy; religious beliefs that prevent women from using contraception; inadequate healthcare services due to shortage of staff and supplies, including contraception of choice; non-involvement of men in population issues including the use of contraception; high prevalence of harmful traditional practices/violence against women; and insufficient psycho-social and legal support services for victims and survivors of violent and harmful practices, etc. (UNDAF, 2010, WABEKBON, 2006).

On Political Empowerment: Women are still under-represented at all levels of government, particularly at the executive branch, with the gap being positively correlated to the level of governance; there is a low level of awareness about women's rights throughout society and government machinery; there is deeply rooted gender-insensitive socio-cultural norms, attitudes and values that are hindering the equal participation of women in politics; socio-culturally embedded attitudes and norms that condone practices that violate women's rights in the public space and workplaces, which push women away from participating in the political sphere; lack of assertiveness from the women's side to participate in politics; and lack of support and appreciation from their male counterparts; and the presence of gender insensitive political parties, are some of the challenges that need to be addressed (UNDAF, 2010).

The first important issue in addressing gender-related problems is to recognise the existence of the problem itself and to design legal instruments and policies that can address gender-specific and strategic needs as well as to identify policy approaches to realise them. In this regard, Ethiopia has made tremendous effort in revising existing laws and/or introducing new laws as well as policies intended to tackle gender-based problems throughout the last two decades. No doubt there has also been an attempt to identify Practical Gender Needs (PGN)³ and Strategic Gender Needs (SGN)⁴ throughout the various policy documents produced or projects or programmes designed

by the Ethiopian government alone or in collaboration with development agencies, in the last two decades. However, until 2010, where gender-related assistance from development agencies and national budgets were pooled together (see, UNDAF, 2010) there was a lack of coordinated engagement in addressing the PGN and SGN in Ethiopia. Moreover, whether the revised or newly introduced laws and policies that were implemented are strong and comprehensive enough to address the SGN in Ethiopia, requires an independent scientific inquiry.

Various policy approaches have been recommended by different scholars and development agents with the purpose of addressing PGN and SGN (see Moser, 1989). Ethiopia has been persistently applying the *Women Empowerment Approach*, including through affirmative action. However, the effectiveness of affirmative action in addressing SGN is now being questioned. For example, it has been argued that increasing the number of women in the political sphere is not the best way to address gender-based problems in a sustainable way (Fonjock and Endeley, 2013). It is true that since the 1970 and 80s, there has been an evolution on policy approaches developed to address gender disparity. Over time, however, the following three approaches captured the attention of academics and policy makers alike.

Women in Development (WID): This approach seeks to integrate women into the existing development programmes, but without transforming the existing unequal gender relationships. It does not question the relation of gender inequality and therefore tends to address the symptoms rather than the causes of gender inequality. Under this approach, no gender analysis was done to ensure that WID activities would meet the SGN and men were not to be consulted with regard to the projects/programmes designed to address gender-related problems (Vainio-Mattila, 1999). In a similar fashion, but focusing on efficiency, *the women and development (WAD)* approach was later developed as an alternative approach with particular focus on achieving more efficient and effective development through the integration of women into existing development processes (UN-HABITAT, 2008). WAD recognises that women have always been economic actors and emphasises structural change of the global political economy, but does not address the linkage between patriarchy and economic exploitation (Moser, 1989).

The third one, which is more comprehensive, is called the *Gender and Development (GAD)* approach. This approach looks at the unequal relations between the rich, the poor and the

advantaged and the disadvantaged, and the additional inequalities that women face in these contexts. It recognises that women, poor people and other disadvantaged groups are the victims of social structures that prevent equitable development. The ultimate goal of a GAD approach is to create equitable and sustainable development with women and men as equal decision-makers. The GAD approach takes into account the different practical and strategic needs of women and men at all stages of a project cycle. Rather than working exclusively with women, GAD involves both women and men, in recognition of the fact that efforts to promote gender equality require commitment and behavioural changes from both sexes (UN-HABITAT, 2008 and Moser, 1989).

Looking at the various approaches, although the women empowerment approach could be effective in the foreseeable future, GAD seems the only approach that can bring sustainable gender equality. If this is true, it is paramount that Ethiopia considers this approach in tackling gender disparity and gender-related problems in its future plans. In fact, one can argue that the pro-poor policy Ethiopia has been implementing for over a decade can be equated with the GAD approach. However, GAD requires more than designing a pro-poor policy in that it involves the generation of *gender disaggregated data and gender analysis*, which are instrumental for identifying PGN and SGN.

Concluding Remarks

To sum up, the evaluation made in this paper shows that Ethiopia has taken concrete steps in framing the global development agenda within the national context. The mainstreaming of MDGs in the GTP and its predecessor – the PASDEP – has significantly contributed to the fast progress on the MDGs as this enables the government to improve coordination of interventions across its ministries and departments.

Ethiopia's policy and programmatic measures in the areas of gender-mainstreaming and women's empowerment have started to yield positive results. Given its baseline, Ethiopia's performance with regard to MDGs 3 and 5 have been significant (MoFED and UNCT, 2012). As per the Global Gender Gap Report, even recently, Ethiopia's rank shifted from 122 (out of 136 countries) in 2008 to 118 in 2013. The gender disparities at all levels of education have narrowed down significantly and more so in primary education over the last decade. In addition, the proportions of women in formal employment and the number of seats held by women in parliament have increased. However, from our analysis, gender disparity has remained as one of the critical challenges of the government to achieve the MDGs. It is now crystal clear that Ethiopia is off-track with regards to MDGs 3 and 5 (MoFED and UNCT, 2012).

Based on the various reports (compiled by the Ethiopian government, UN's development agencies and other donors) we came across as well as our personal observation and what has been said elsewhere in this paper, the following could be helpful in narrowing gender disparity significantly in the near future: strengthening implementation follow-up of national laws and policies adopted to close the gender gap; strengthening the pro-poor policy approach that has a direct effect on narrowing gender disparity and minimising gender-related problems; strengthening

- 3 PGN are the needs that women identify in their socially accepted roles in society. Practical needs do not challenge the gender division of labour or women's subordinate position in society, although they arise from them. Practical gender needs are a response to immediate perceived necessity, identified within a specific context. They are practical in nature and are often concerned with inadequacies in living conditions such as water provision, healthcare and employment (Vainio-Mattila, 1999)
- 4 SGN are the needs women identify because of their subordinate position to men in their society. Strategic gender needs vary according to specific contexts. They relate to gender division of labour, power and control, and may include such issues as legal rights, combating domestic violence, equal wages, and women's control over their bodies. Meeting strategic gender needs helps women to achieve greater equality. It also changes existing roles and therefore challenges women's subordinate position (ibid).

collaboration with international and local development partners to have a common vision and demonstrate political commitment to support initiatives aimed at accelerating broad-based socio-economic development; coordinating gender-related funds allocated from the national budget and local and international development partners.

Furthermore, the following could also be helpful: increasing the quality and coverage of the various policies that have been introduced to advance the literacy rate and to narrow down gender disparity at secondary and tertiary levels of education across the country; enhancing the quality and coverage of female-friendly education, health and family planning services; exerting more effort to empower women through access to education, economic opportunities, provision of leadership and entrepreneurial skills as well as providing them with physical and financial resources; enhancing the incorporation of a gender perspective into the planning processes (particularly strengthening gender-responsive budgeting, monitoring, evaluation and accountability) in all ministerial sectors and regional bureaus – particularly those concerned with development planning, personnel policies, management, and legal affairs; providing tools and training in gender awareness, gender analysis and gender planning to decision-makers, senior managers and other key personnel; using sex-disaggregated data in statistical analysis to reveal how policies impact differently on women and men; and finally, focusing on the promotion of good governance, infrastructure and human development, inclusive growth and economic transformation in framing the next development agenda will contribute to closing the gender gap sooner than rather than later.

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