

# **The Government of Ethiopia**

**Response to the list of questions by the UN CSW**

**on the theme**

**Women's empowerment and the link to  
sustainable development**

**September 2020**

## **1. What measures have been taken to strengthen normative, legal and policy frameworks for the gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development?**

The Government of Ethiopia has shown its commitment towards the effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development through aligning its national development plans, particularly the Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP II) including SDGs, Goal 5 on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE) and other gender sensitive indicators in the SDGs. The government also sets aside budget (6 billion on a yearly basis) for SDGs implementation at federal and regional level. The Plan and Development Commission has been working towards the localization of the SDGs and has compiled Key Performance Indicators tailored to the Ethiopian context which have been validated by sector organization and have been used for the next phase of the country's development plan. The 10 Years Perspective Plan (2020-2030) which is under consultation before final adoption is also anchored in the SDGs including the Ministry of Women, Children and Youth sectoral plan.

There has been a revision of laws and policies as part of the Ethiopia's reform initiatives including those which expand women's rights and the benefit and participation of women and girls. The Labour Proclamation which governs employment relations in the private sector has been revised through Proclamation No. 1156/2019 and has increased the maternity leave available from 90 to 120 days similar to that in the civil service. It has also included a definition of sexual harassment and applicable punishments. The proclamation on the prevention and suppression of trafficking and smuggling of persons has also been revised under Proclamation 1178/2020 and as compared to the previous proclamation 909/2015 provides stricter punishment and better protection for women and children victims of trafficking. Ethiopia has also made revision to its electoral framework and enacted the Ethiopian Electoral, Political Parties Registration and Election's Code of Conduct (Proclamation 1162/2019). The proclamation states that gender representation should be ensured for appointment of election officials as well as observers. In addition, the amount of government support provided for political parties depends on the number of female candidates it presents and the number of female members and females in leadership positions in the party. The Civil Society Organization was also officially proclaimed in 2019 which has opened the space for civil society organizations working on GEWE to operate in more freedom.

## **2. What actions and investments have been made for financing gender equality and the empowerment of women?**

The Government of Ethiopia has integrated a Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) in the program budget process through the adoption of the Finance Proclamation No. 970/2016 which requires sectors to integrate gender perspectives into the preparation of budget programs in order to enhance the participation and benefit of women. Following the proclamation, the Ministry of Finance (MoF) has rolled out Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) Guidelines that facilitate the

efforts to increase and track national planning and budget allocations related to achieving GEWE and has trained relevant federal and regional sectors on the guidelines. These measures have led to sectors incorporating gender focused goals in their budget requests and the MoF considers gender as a criterion in considering and prioritizing budget allocations.

In the annual budget which mostly comes from domestic sources (80% in the 2019/20 budget), the largest proportion of the expenditure is allocated to poverty targeted sectors such as education, health, water and energy and agriculture and food security. For example, in the 2019/20 cycle, 21% of budget was allocated for education; 7.3% for water, resource and energy and 5.3% for health. The amount of budget allocated for these sectors has been showing an increase. Comparing the budget allocation in 2014/15 fiscal year and the 2019/20 budget, education has increased from 24.6 billion to 50.6 billion ETB; water and energy from 5 billion to 17.5 billion ETB and health from 5.1 billion to 12.8 billion ETB. The government also allocates 6 billion ETB every year for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Investment in these crucial sectors has led to an evident improvement in the lives of women and children in Ethiopia. The increase in girls' enrolment with less dropout rates and the decline in maternal and child mortality rates are the direct results of the increased budget allocation. The government's scheme to ensure for the provision of access to safe and clean water with one and half kilometer has saved women and girls from the heavy load and time spent on fetching water from long distances. There has also been an increased allocation of budget earmarked for the Ministry of Women, Children and Youth, its regional counterparts and gender offices in sector ministries which has enhanced the effective mainstreaming of gender.

Currently, development of a prototype budget tracking tool that would be a key instrument to make sure gender is an integral part of the budget process and measure the spending for GEWE is underway. Hence, the Ministry of Finance is in the process of developing tools and tracking mechanisms that would enable stakeholders to physically grasp areas of intervention and act accordingly.

### **3. What steps have been taken to bolster women's leadership and women's full and equal participation in decision-making in all areas of sustainable development?**

Ethiopia continues to make significant progress in enhancing women's equal participation in leadership and decision-making. Ethiopia currently has a female head of state, President of the Federal Supreme Court, head of the Electoral Board of Ethiopia and a cabinet with gender parity. Within the cabinet, women hold key positions including the Planning and Development Commissioner, who is responsible for the implementation of the SDGs. In addition, recently, the Ethiopian Investment Commission is also being led by a female. Recognizing the need to cascade these gains down to regional and local levels, the MoWCY has been providing successive trainings on Transformative Leadership and Decision-making for women in the lower and middle levels of leadership. In 2019 and 2020, 380 women from the federal and regional sectors have been provided with the training and there have been success stories where women

who have received the training have gained promotions. In order to gain the full picture about the situation of women's participation in leadership and decision-making as well as personal, institutional and structural impediment of women in leadership, the ministry in collaboration with UN Women has commissioned a nation-wide study which will be a valuable input for future interventions.

#### **4. What macroeconomic, labour and social policies have been put in place that promote full and productive employment and decent work for women, in response to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on women's employment and economic rights and independence?**

The COVID-19 pandemic has completely transformed the world that we live in. In addition to the heavy death toll and complex health impacts, it has also caused severe negative economic and social consequences. Although the pandemic affects both men and women, there is evidence that there are gendered differences in its impact. There is increasing evidence that shows women are more vulnerable to the economic and social impacts of the pandemic. Women are disproportionately represented in the informal sector, jobs with low pay and no social protection which the pandemic exasperates. Women's unpaid care work and domestic responsibilities have also increased due to the measures to prevent and control the pandemic.

In Ethiopia, since the first case has been reported in March, 2020, the government has been taking different measures to prevent the spread of the virus as well as address the economic and social impacts including on women. The government has established a national task force and prepared the 'National Emergency Response Plan'. The plan has mainstreamed gender into its sector specific intervention areas as well as considered the specific vulnerabilities of women and girls as it relates to health, GBV, unpaid care work and their role as frontline workers. In April 2020, the government has proclaimed a State of Emergency (SoE) for five months. The SoE Proclamation has imposed a ban on companies laying off employees and subsequently the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs has issued a COVID-19 Response Protocol with rules to protect workers. This has protected female employees in the private sector from being laid off. In addition, special works from home privileges were given for pregnant, lactation women and women who have health complications.

The government has also taken other important steps to protect employment and income through scaling up social security schemes, especially the safety net program. The Urban Productive Safety Net Program (UPSNP) has been expanded to provide temporary income support to households heavily affected by the pandemic which has reached many women in informal sector. Emergency food distribution has also been scaled up emergency food distribution to households vulnerable to food insecurity.

Numerous micro-economic and fiscal measures taken by the government are also considered to benefit women indirectly. These include the national bank availing 15 billion ETB for private banks to lend to their customers in need; banks giving foreign currency priority for those

importing goods related to COVID-19; tax exemptions for import materials and equipments; and directives on tax debt relief for those in the service, manufacturing exports, construction and finance sectors.

**5. What response and recovery measures to the COVID-19 pandemic have been taken to improve and expand social protection for women (e.g., healthcare coverage, unemployment benefits, paid sick leave, paid parental leave, maternity benefits, pensions, income support such as cash transfers)?**

One of the major areas of intervention that the Government of Ethiopia has focused on to mitigate the impact of the pandemic has been improving and expanding social protection. This includes interventions both in the health and social security sectors. The Ministry of Health has been putting in place critical response measures which include prevention (community awareness and behavioural changes), screening and treatment of cases, protection through quarantine centres, monitoring and providing daily updates, mobilizing resources and distributing necessary supplies. The ministry took important steps to ensure that its prevention and response measures were gender responsive including developing tailored messages on disproportionate impact of the pandemic on women and girls and disseminating these messages through different channels; repurposing staff to expand health care; re-enforcing the health response for survivors of sexual violence. Access to health care is ensured through coverage under the community based health insurance scheme or the Indigent Health Fee Waiver system which waives fees at public-sector facilities for those with low economic status. The government has bought life insurance for health professionals in direct contact with COVID-19 patients.

The productive safety net program remains one of the largest social protection programs in Ethiopia providing support for more than 8.5 million (over 8 million rural and over 600,000 urban) vulnerable people through cash transfers and food assistance either direct or as a return for participation in public works. During the pandemic, the government with support from development partners managed to provide temporary support for 550,000 additional households in 27 cities through the UPSNP. There have also been numerous initiatives to provide critical support in the form of food and sanitary products through the efforts of both governmental and non-governmental organizations both domestic and in the Diaspora.

As part of protection women's rights, although federal courts had remained closed until July, 2020, courts continued entertaining cases of domestic violence in recognition of the reports of increase of violence cases throughout the world.

**6. What actions have been taken to expand the availability and affordability of care services to address the increase in unpaid care and domestic work as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic (e.g., care subsidies, paid leave)?**

To reduce the spread of the COVID-19 the government has put in place different measures which the major one is declaring the state of emergency. The Council of Ministers has also introduced an Enforcement Regulation for the Emergency Proclamation No. 3/2020. The regulation states the prohibited activities and the obligations for all the citizens and institutions. The regulation provides protection to the employees of the private enterprises governed by the proclamation 1156/2019 stating that it is prohibited to reduce any employee without the knowledge of Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. The regulation also forces all the federal and regional [government](#) and private institutions to facilitate the necessary shifts in the working room or workplace and in the vehicles that is overfilled and unable to maintain physical distance to prevent the spread of the virus. It also states that it is the responsibility of the employer to reduce the number of workforces coming to the workplace and arrange others to work at home. [Mainly the government focussed to let pregnant and lactating women to stay away from the workplace and work at home.](#) Beside to the facilitation of the workplace and working conditions, it states that it is the employers' obligation to provide a paid leave to their workers to make them stay at home in the pandemic.

**7. What action has been taken to increase resources and support for women's and civil society organizations as they cope with the COVID-19 pandemic?**

The revision of the civil society law has re-invigorated the work of organizations working on women's rights and empowerment. Even in the difficult time of the pandemic, CSOs have been instrumental in providing support for vulnerable groups of the society. In addition to the general support, the Network of Ethiopian Women Associations (NEWA) have been strongly working on highlighting the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on women and girls. The association has been organizing bi-weekly policy platforms on issues related to women and COVID-19. The CSO sector has been heavily affected by the pandemic due to a decline in resource mobilization efforts and donations. In order to address this gap, the Agency for Civil Society Organization has been closely following up and consulting with the organizations. One important measure has been the extension of the deadline for the re-registration of organizations.

**8. What steps have been taken to improve gender-responsive data collection in the context of follow-up to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and to track and monitor the gender-specific impacts and response measures to the COVID-19 pandemic?**

The Ethiopian government has taken note of the importance of gender responsive data for the implementation of the SDGs. In order to modernize the monitoring and evaluation of the SDGs and ensure quality data collection and analysis, the Plan and Development Commission is in the process of setting a national SDG Dashboard in collaboration with the SDG Center in Africa and UN Women. All the equipments for the dashboard have been set-up and staff have been trained

to operationalize the dashboard which would include valuable SDG data for monitoring as aligned with the 10 Years Perspective Plan.

The health sector transformation plan II (2020/21- 2025/26) has been designed inclusive of gender as cross-cutting agenda in all the strategic outcomes and outputs. The revised EHIS disaggregate data by sex, age and conditions that evolved on the four transformation pillars of HSTP II that also put into account the SDGs. During the pandemic, the Ministry of Health in collaboration with the Ethiopian Public Health Institute has been providing updates on the pandemic. These daily updates and a dedicated web-site include gender disaggregated data on the related to the pandemic.