Increasing Women's Political Participation in Ethiopia:
A Barriers Analysis of Women's Political Participation

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Executive Summary

This report uses a qualitative research approach to identify key barriers that affect women's political participation in Ethiopia. Unlike other studies, this project focuses specifically on obstacles to increased women's political participation in Ethiopia, rather than representation. This information is significant because it informs IRI's programming in Ethiopia leading up to the general elections.[1]

Ethiopia has made significant progress in recent years in bolstering women's political empowerment. In 2018, the Ethiopian parliament appointed the first woman to serve as president of the country. The international community applauded Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed when he appointed ten women to top ministerial positions, resulting in a gender-balanced cabinet. Despite these significant strides, however, several barriers remain for women who want to be involved politically at the grassroots level. IRI partnered with SAIS Women Lead in a research study to gain a better understanding of what these problems are.

Section 1 introduces the importance of the topic at hand, provides a brief background on the current political situation in Ethiopia, and presents the definition of women's political participation that will be used throughout the report. Section 2 examines existing literature related to women's political participation both in sub-Saharan Africa and in Ethiopia. Current literature on barriers to women's political participation in Ethiopia is heavily focused on women's political representation and has much to gain in paying as much attention to barriers related to women's civic engagement. As such, this study originates from a need to identify and explain the barriers faced by women who do not hold formal positions – elective or appointive in politics. Data collection instruments, including survey and interview guides, are in Appendices I and II.

Section 3 outlines the report's methodology and lessons learned. Research for this report was conducted in January 2020 in Addis Ababa and Jimma and included demographic surveys, focus group discussions (FGD), and semi-structured in-depth interviews (IDI). The team also conducted key informant interviews (KII) in both cities with civil society leaders and experts related to gender, women, and democracy. This section also includes lessons learned from this research that could serve as a foundation for future research.

Section 4 presents the key themes that emerged as barriers to women's political participation after conducting a qualitative analysis of the data. These barriers are divided into three key groups. First are individual level barriers such as time constraints, education, and political apathy. Second are structural and societal barriers such as norms, attitudes, and language. Lastly are political barriers

[1] The general elections, scheduled for August 2020, have been postponed primarily due to an interruption in planning and activities due to the COVID outbreak and concerns over social distancing measures. The government has yet to announce an updated timeline.

including fear of political violence, lack of agency in voting, and patronage. Section 5 outlines recommendations for three key actors concerning women's political participation: the government, political parties, and civil society organizations. Furthermore, these recommendations are made in relation to the future elections in Ethiopia.

Introduction

Women's political empowerment is a critical factor to a healthy and vibrant democracy. As Ballington writes, women's political empowerment is important not only to the development of greater and more expansive human rights, but a more inclusive democracy.[2] Furthermore, research shows that democracy and gender equality exist in a mutually reinforcing relationship. In essence, countries with higher levels of gender equality exhibit stronger, higher quality democracies, and higher quality democracies are necessary for improved gender parity.[3]

Ethiopia has made significant progress in recent years in bolstering women's political empowerment. In 2018, the Ethiopian parliament appointed the first woman to serve as president of the country.[4] The international community applauded Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed when he appointed ten women to top ministerial positions, resulting in a gender-balanced cabinet.[5] As one observer put it, "Ethiopia's new 50% women cabinet isn't just bold—it's smart."[6]

There is no doubt that women's political representation is a "smart" and critical step to increasing women's overall wellbeing. This, however, is a limited interpretation of women's political empowerment. While women's political representation typically acknowledges the impact and contributions of female politicians in government, it often limits political involvement to higher level forms of participation in politics. However, only a fraction of women can run for office and win, and in most cases, these women come from privilege, with advantages of status, class, education, and other socioeconomic factors. By contrast, women's political participation is a more inclusive concept, providing a significant portion of women with access and opportunity to influence the political process and power distribution, which ultimately shapes the nature of the state and society.

This research employs a broader interpretation of women's political participation, which defines political participation as a set of citizen activities spanning the spectrum from voting to civic and community engagement but excludes forms of political power contestation at all levels, as well as formal leadership roles.

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[2] Julie Ballington, "Empowering Women for Stronger Political Parties: A Guidebook to Promote Women's Political Participation," *Empowering Women for Stronger Political Parties: A Guidebook to Promote Women's Political Participation*. National Democratic Institute, February 2012. https://www.ndi.org/sites/default/files/Empowering-Women-Full-Case-Study-ENG.pdf, p. 6
[3] Ted Piccone, "Democracy, Gender Equality, and Security." Brookings Institute, September 2017. https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/fp_20170905_democracy_gender_security.pdf, p. 2
[4] Dahir, Abdi Latif. 2018. *Ethiopia's new 50% women cabinet isn't just bold—it's smart.* October 16. Accessed October 10, 2019. https://qz.com/africa/1426110/ethiopias-new-cabinet-is-50-women/.
[5] Ibid.
[6] Ibid.

Specifically, this report looks at the following actions and activities, taken from Teorell et al. and modified to align with IRI's programming focus:

- Electoral participation, which primarily involves voting, monitoring of national elections, women as participants in voter education initiatives.
- Consumer participation, which includes donating money to charity and signing petitions.
- Party activity, which includes membership of, donating to, or volunteering with a political party.
- Contact activity, which includes connecting with politicians, organizations, or public servants.

In light of the preceding discussion, the disparity between women's political participation and representation in Ethiopia becomes readily apparent. While women have made significant strides in securing leadership positions at the national level, they continue to face barriers to participation at the subnational and community levels. Ethiopia's elections, while postponed, nevertheless provide a timely opportunity to re-engage with these issues for two reasons. First, the expansion of political and civic space in Ethiopia has given its citizens, especially women, an opportunity to become more involved in the everyday decision-making of their government. In 2019, Ethiopia rescinded the 2009 Charities and Societies Proclamation No. 621, which imposed harsh government oversight on the activities and funding of civil society organizations. The new law, passed in March, seeks to create "an enabling environment to enhance the role of civil society organizations in the development and democratization of the country."[7] Second, Ethiopian women have always had some role in politics *despite* these barriers. The Ethiopian Women Lawyers Association (EWLA), for example, played a key role in changing the 2018 Family Law and advocating against aspects of the law that discriminated against women.[8] As civil society begins to open up after a decade of strict limitations, it will be essential to identify and map the boundaries of women's participation. Such information will be crucial to both domestic and international actors for developing strategies to advance women's status as full and equal citizens, and ultimately, contribute to a more cohesive and inclusive democracy.

This research aims to contribute to this important discussion. As the political and civic environment in Ethiopia has begun to open, how have the ways in which women engage in political and civic spaces evolved? What are the primary barriers facing women's political participation? What lessons of scale can be learned from the areas and periods in which women were successful in engaging politically within the state? In what ways do Ethiopia's social cleavages shape women's political participation? The research will conclude with recommendations for key stakeholders, including but not limited to donors, local civil society, international nongovernmental organizations, political parties, government, and more.

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[7]Degu, Noah. 2019. "Spotlight on Ethiopia: The New Charities and Societies Law and Trends." https://www.ngosource.org/blog/spotlight-on-ethiopia-the-new-charities-and-societies-law-and-trends.

[8] Cochrane, Logan and Betel Bekele Birhanu. 2018. "Pathways of Legal Advocacy for Change: Ethiopian Women Lawyers Association." *Forum for Development Studies* 347-365.

The Issue in Context

Women and Democracy in Ethiopia

Ethiopia is a relatively new democracy with a deep history of authoritarianism, violent political repression, and patrimonialism. It is within this context that both women and men currently must "redefine their rights"[9] by acknowledging the legitimacy and power of this nascent political space where they can join political organizations, vote, and even run for office. This type of engagement is especially important for women as it allows new opportunities to influence decisions on issues that directly impact them. Before the transition in the early 1990s, women could only join groups attached to larger political parties, and independent political organizations were actively repressed.[10] However, after 1991, women's organizations no longer had to rely on political parties and now could pick their leaders and agendas. A good example of this is the Addis Ababa Women's Association, which started as an arm of the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) and Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) government in 1994.[11]

After the 2005 elections**,** women's independent organizations, like others, were targeted. This repression was formally codified in Ethiopia's Charities and Societies Proclamation Law of 2009. During this period, gender equality initiatives were often passed over for economic reform as the country tried to improve the dismal conditions left from the Derg regime.[12] As such, no significant effort was made to change harmful traditional norms that continued to discourage women from the political sphere en masse. Ethiopia has also had voluntary gender quotas in politics since 2004.[13] However, gender quotas may not be as effective in inspiring action. Average citizens may view these women as substantially different than themselves or simply chosen to fulfill the quota. Clayton explained that the "inspirational effect"[14] may take longer than initially anticipated. This emphasizes that persistent barriers to women's political participation materialize in many different forms.

For our research, we divide up the existing literature on barriers to women's political participation in Ethiopia into three groups: psychological/motivational, economic, and sociocultural. The barriers discussed below are drawn from the literature relating to women as political actors, which includes women hoping to attain political office, but also as *social* actors.

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[9] Fallon, Kathleen. 2003. "Getting Out the Vote: Women's Democratic Political Mobilization in Ghana." *Mobilization: An International Quarterly* 8 (3): 273-296. doi:10.17813/maiq.8.3.1h361h3151806060. https://mobilizationjournal.org/doi/abs/10.17813/maiq.8.3.1h361h3151806060.

[10] Tripp, Aili Mari. 1999. "New Trends in Women's Political Participation in Africa.".

[11] Biseswar, Indrawatie. 2011. "The Role of Educated/Intellectual Women in Ethiopia in the Process of Change and Transformation Towards Gender Equality 1974-2005."University of South Africa.

[12] Ibid

[13] Donno, Daniela and Anne-Kathrin Kreft. 2018. "Analysis | Sometimes Autocrats Strengthen their Power by Expanding Women's Rights. Here's how that Works." *Washington Post*, Nov 23,. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2018/11/23/sometimes-autocrats-strengthen-their-power-by-expanding-womens-rights-heres-how-that-works/.

[14] Clayton, Amanda. 2015. "Women's Political Engagement Under Quota-Mandated Female Representation: Evidence from a Randomized Policy Experiment." *Comparative Political Studies* 48 (3): 333-369. doi:10.1177/0010414014548104. https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414014548104.

Psychological/Motivational Barriers

The civic voluntarism model describes psychological engagement as one of the critical components of political participation and argues that even with resources, individuals without psychological engagement are not willing to participate in politics.[15] Psychological engagement includes "interest in political issues, political efficacy, or the belief that one's actions will influence the political process, and a feeling of trust in political leaders and one's fellow citizens."[16] The belief that one's actions will influence the political process depends heavily on the perception of one's capabilities, self-efficacy, self-esteem,[17]and the political history of the country. Self-efficacy can be created from vicarious experiences. In regard to women's participation, women's political representation creates a vicarious experience for women. Evidence suggests that seeing women in positions of power motivates women to participate in politics.[18] In Rwanda and Uganda, increased women's political representation has translated to an increase in women's self-esteem. Women expressed their newfound aspiration and ability to run businesses and non-governmental organizations.[19]

Psychological engagement is also rooted in non-political settings, which can include family, school, or the greater community. Gender norms and social expectations have an influential role in how women view their abilities. Harmful norms that portray women as inferior are embedded in different elements of culture, including language. Shein Teferra, the co-founder of the Setaweet movement, highlights that across the major Ethiopian languages, gender-biased language is ingrained in daily communication, including the comparison of women to animals.[20] The perpetuation of the idea that women should be dependent on men and that women are of lower value through language diminishes the self-efficacy of women, and by extension, their psychological engagement.

Violence against women (VAW) is a violent manifestation of rigid gender roles, and it impedes women's psychological engagement with politics. In Ethiopia, research shows a prevalence and high tolerance of VAW in both rural and urban areas. According to a 2016 Demographic and Health Survey, 63% of Ethiopian women justify wife-beating in at least one of the following situations: burning food, arguing with their husband, going out without telling him, neglecting the children, or refusing sexual intercourse.[21] Women who experience VAW show signs of sadness or

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[15] Verba, Sidney, Kay Lehman Schlozman, and Henry E. Brady. 1995. *Voice and Equality: Civic Voluntarism in American Politics* Harvard University Press.
[16] Ibid
[17] Ibid
[18]Tripp, Aili Mari. 1999. "New Trends in Women's Political Participation in Africa."
[19] Ibid
[20]Bekele, Meti. 2018. *How Social Norms Relate to Gender Inequality in Ethiopia – Population Reference Bureau* Population Reference Bureau. https://www.prb.org/insight/how-social-norms-relate-to-gender-inequality-in-ethiopia/.
[21] Central Statistical Agency and ICF. 2017. *Ethiopia Demographic and Health Survey 2016*. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: CSA and ICF. http://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/FR328/FR328.pdf.

depression because of a feeling of worthlessness.[22] The feeling of worthlessness hampers women's voice and agency, which reduces the belief that they can influence any political action or process. Factors like language—as discussed in the previous paragraph—and violence against women enforce the idea that women and their voices are subordinate to men's, which attacks their psychological engagement, and thwart their willingness to participate politically.

Sociocultural Barriers

Kunovich et al. assert that sociocultural norms about women affect their levels of representation throughout the political process, from voters' decisions, to an individual's decision to enter politics, to a political party's selection of candidates.[23] Societal norms in Ethiopia emphasize a woman's role in the private sphere and encourage men's involvement in the public sphere. However, women who are interested in activities in the public sphere must still balance their responsibilities at home, which can hinder their ability to participate in politics.

Significant gaps in education between women and men pose another challenge to women's involvement in politics. Fifty-nine percent of men over 15 years old are literate compared to 44 percent of women. Data from UNESCO in 2017 on Ethiopia shows that as of 2015, 87.73% of males are enrolled in primary education compared to 81.45% of females. Ten percent of tertiary-aged men are enrolled and only 5.26% of women are enrolled at the same level. Education enables citizens to participate fully in society, and it is vital for changing attitudes towards accepting gender equality as a fundamental social value.[24] Without improvements in women's and girls' education, progress in political participation is also less likely.[25] Traditional and cultural beliefs reinforce gender stereotypes that give preference to boys over girls in access to education. Heavy workloads at home, the high probability of abduction or violence, and feelings of discomfort when trying to participate equally with men are also stumbling blocks for female students.[26] These all prevent girls from attending, remaining, and performing well in school.

Economic Barriers

Existing literature often notes the positive relationship between economic empowerment and women's political participation. Research outlining obstacles to women's political participation in Ethiopia finds that poverty, unemployment, and a lack of financial assets contribute to women's inability to engage fully in the democratic process.[27] In Ethiopia, the majority of women are

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[22] Regassa, Nigatu. 2012. "Intimate Partners Violence in Southern Ethiopia: Examining the Prevalence and Risk Factors in the Sidama Zone." *International Journal of Sociology and Anthropology* 4 (1): 13-22.

[23]Paxton, Pamela, Sheri Kunovich, and Melanie M. Hughes. 2007. "Gender in Politics." *Annual Review of Sociology* 33 (1): 263-284. doi:10.1146/annurev.soc.33.040406.131651. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.soc.33.040406.131651.

[24] Kabeer, Naila. 2005. "Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: A Critical Analysis of the Third Millennium Development Goal 1." *Gender & Development* 13 (1): 13-24.

[25]Dea, Mulatu. 2016. "The Prospectus, Challenges and Causes of Gender Disparity and its Implication for Ethiopia's Development: Qualitative Inquiry." *Journal of Education and Practice* 7 (4): 24-37.

[26]Wilder, Jennifer, B. Alemu, and M. Asnake. 2007. "Women's Empowerment in Ethiopia: New Solutions to Ancient Problems."

[27]Hailu, Eden Fissiha. 2017. "Who Speaks for Whom? Parliamentary Participation of Women in the Post-1991 Ethiopia." *Journal of Developing Societies* 33 (3): 352-375. doi:10.1177/0169796X17717003. https://doi.org/10.1177/0169796X17717003.

employed in either the agricultural or other informal sectors.[28] Additionally, women in Ethiopia seldom have control over financial resources. Kassa notes that while one might expect women outside of the formal labor force to be financially dependent on the men in their lives, working women have little to no authority over the money they earn because the head of the household is typically the father or the husband, and the "head" is the one who controls all finances.[29] Without the ability to manage their finances, women in every level of society— from a politician running a campaign to a woman asking for bus money to attend a political meeting— continue to face fiscal constraints.

Since 1991, the Ethiopian government has taken considerable measures to improve the economic standing of women. It has implemented numerous policies towards economic reform that sought to improve the livelihood of the most vulnerable members of society, particularly women.[30] In 2000, several legal obstacles that inhibited women's employment were eliminated from Ethiopia's family law, resulting in a steady rise in the number of women in the formal workforce.[31] Data from the Work Bank show that women's labor force participation currently stands at 46.6 percent, up from 43.1 percent in 1990.[32] This is compared to men, who make up 74.4 percent of the workforce.[33]

Interestingly, recent literature questions the correlation between women's economic participation and economic empowerment in nascent democracies. In northern Uganda, for example, women were instrumental in rebuilding the economy after the civil war, but their involvement has not translated to an increase in participation in politics.[34] Aelen, Kotsadam, and Villanger find similar evidence in Ethiopia. Their research asks whether women who are employed are more likely than women who are unemployed to attend local-level meetings. Overall, their research found that women who were employed were no more likely to participate in local-level meetings than women who were unemployed and reported a decrease in interest in politics along with high socioeconomic statuses.[35] Ultimately, women's economic empowerment is tied to a barrier discussed earlier in the literature: time constraints. While the literature might conclude that

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[28] Semela, Tesfaye, Hirut Bekele, and Rahel Abraham. 2019. "Women and Development in Ethiopia: A Sociohistorical Analysis." *Journal of Developing Societies* 35 (2): 230-255.
[29] Kassa, Shimelis. 2015. "Challenges and Opportunities of Women's Political Participation in Ethiopia." *Journal of Global Economics* 3 (4): 1-7.
[30] ibid
[31] Aalen, Lovise, Andreas Kotsadam, and Espen Villanger. 2019. "Family Law Reform, Employment, and Women's Political Participation in Ethiopia." *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State & Society* 26 (2): 299-323. doi:10.1093/sp/jxz010. https://doi.org/10.1093/sp/jxz010.
[32]World Bank Group. "Labor Force, Female (% of Total Labor Force) - Ethiopia.", https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.TLF.TOTL.FE.ZS?locations=ET&name_desc=false.
[33] World Bank Group. "Labor Force, Male (% of Total Labor Force) - Ethiopia.", https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.TLF.ACTI.1524.MA.ZS?locations=ET&name_desc=false.
[34] Amoateng, Acheampong Yaw, Ishmael Kalule-Sabiti, and Tim B. Heaton. 2014. "Gender and Changing Patterns of Political Participation in Sub-Saharan Africa: Evidence from Five Waves of the Afrobarometer Surveys." *Gender and Behaviour* 12 (3): 5897-5910.
[35] Aalen, Lovise, Andreas Kotsadam, and Espen Villanger. 2019. "Family Law Reform, Employment, and Women's Political Participation in Ethiopia." *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State & Society* 26 (2): 299-323. doi:10.1093/sp/jxz010. https://doi.org/10.1093/sp/jxz010.

women's economic empowerment decreases women's political participation, a common thread throughout is the idea that political engagement is a secondary priority to other responsibilities, many of which are determined by traditional gender norms.

Summary

As noted earlier, much of the literature on barriers to women's political participation in Ethiopia is heavily focused on women's political representation. It fails to make key distinctions to barriers related to women's civic engagement. This study originates from a need to explain the barriers faced by women who do not hold formal positions in politics. This involves two distinct groups of women. The first analyzes the women who are already actively engaged in politics, but do not hold formal office. The second looks at what prevents women from participating in politics, even at a less formal level. Our literature review offered a connection between the visibility of women in government and women's civic engagement. Extrapolating from barriers to women's political representation and literature on barriers to civic engagement in other countries in Africa, we identified a lack of self-efficacy, gender-based violence, language, time poverty, and fiscal constraints as possible barriers to women's civic engagement. Our field research aimed to examine if these factors are truly barriers in Ethiopia and identify other barriers that continue to impede women from participating in civic spaces.

Methodology and Results

This section outlines the methodology, results, and limitations of the study. See Appendices I and II for survey instruments, interview guides, and focus group discussion guides.

Study Setting

This study gleans its findings from demographic surveys, focus group discussions (FGD), semi-in-depth interviews (IDI), and key informant interviews (KII) conducted in Addis Ababa and Jimma in January 2020. Addis Ababa and Jimma are both ethnically diverse. Addis Ababa is the capital and its own administrative location, while Jimma is situated in the Oromia Region of Ethiopia. Addis Ababa and Jimma were selected to help provide information from women and men from ethnically and socioeconomically diverse backgrounds. Addis Ababa, being the capital, is the most economically advanced region and is home to many Ethiopian ethnicities, including Oromo, Tigrayan, Gurage, and Amhara, with Amharic being the most popular language spoken. Jimma is the capital city of the Oromia region, and comprises urban, semi-urban and rural communities, though it is notably less urban than Addis Ababa. This allowed us to identify how ethnicity, the urban/rural divide, and socioeconomic factors affect women's political participation.

Sample

The participants for the FGDs and semi-structured in-depth interviews were selected using a mix of purposive and random sampling techniques.

- *Addis Ababa:* We recruited thirty-seven women and 14 men through a local contact and the network associated with her organization. Additionally, we randomly selected four women and interviewed them in the marketplace. We conducted three FGDs with eight participants in each FGD and conducted semi-structured IDIs with 21 women and 10 men.
- *Jimma:* We recruited twenty-two women through a local contact in Jimma. We randomly selected participants from church groups, women's support groups (*idir*) and peer groups. We conducted two FGDs with 11 participants in each FGD. In addition, we conducted semi-structured IDI with 12 women. In Jimma, all the participants we recruited for the semi-structured IDI were from the FGD pool of participants.

Table 1: Summary of Participants

			Gender	
Location	**Interview Type**	**Age**	**Men**	**Women**
Addis Ababa	**FGD 1**	**18-29**		**8**
	FGD 2	**30 and above**		**8**
	FGD 3		**4**	**4**
	Semi-structured IDI		**10**	**21**
Jimma	**FGD 1**	**18-29**		**11**
	FGD2	**30 and above**		**11**
	Semi-structured IDI			**12**

Methods

Focus Group Discussion

We conducted five FGDs based on the discussion guide developed before we arrived in Ethiopia. Given that the primary purpose of the study is to understand the barriers women face in civic engagement, we conducted four same-sex focus groups and one mixed-sex focus group. There were two same-sex FGD with women aged 18-29 and two same-sex FGD with women aged 30 and above. The FGD were separated by age to encourage younger women to speak freely without the perceived fear of judgment from older women, and vice versa. They were also separated by age to analyze barriers relating to different age groups. We included a mixed-sex focus group to re-create a quasi-microcosm of society that reflects existing power relations and provides an understanding of how gender dynamics influence women's voice in society during this discussion. Each FGD took approximately one hour and a half with 8-12 participants on average. A team member and a translator facilitated the FGDs, which were conducted in Amharic. All the FGDs were audio-recorded with consent from participants, and a team member transcribed the responses after the FGDs. Each person was assigned a code to preserve the confidentiality of the participant.

Survey and Semi-Structured In-depth Interviews

The survey and semi-structured IDI allowed us to dive deeper into themes that were recurrent in FGDs. A survey preceded each semi-structured IDI. We conducted surveys and semi-IDIs with 36 women and 10 men, and all IDIs were audio-recorded with consent from each participant. We developed different guides for men and women, and some questions differed, to probe each group effectively. A team member and a translator conducted the demographic surveys and interviews, and each interview took approximately 30 to 45 minutes.

Key Informant Interviews

In addition to semi- structured IDI with women and men, 12 interviews were conducted in English with the following key stakeholders:

- Center for Advancement Right & Democracy (CARD)
- Ethiopian Women's Lawyers Association (EWLA)
- Initiative Africa
- Jimma University
- Network of Ethiopian Women's Association (NEWA)
- Safer Ethiopia
- Setaweet
- Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa (SIHA)
- Fanaye Gebrehiwot Feleke, Deputy Country Director and Senior Expert: Gender and Social Equity at Helvetas
- Cherer Aklilu Shaffo, Independent Researcher on Women's Rights
- National Electoral Board of Ethiopia
- Tsehai Berhane-Selassie, Independent Researcher on Women's Rights

These interviews included questions about perceived barriers to women's political participation, why barriers persist and recommended steps to overcome barriers. Each KII was conducted as a

group with one lead interviewer and one note-taker. The KIIs were audio-recorded with consent from each participant, and a team member transcribed responses after the interviews.

Limitations

Due to time and travel constraints, our research sites were limited to Addis Ababa and Jimma, which limited the number of participants we included in our FGDs and IDIs. Addis Ababa is its own region, and Jimma is part of the Oromia region, which does not allow us to have the perspectives of other regions in the country. This prevents us from generalizing the conclusions here to women's political participation in Ethiopia as a whole. A member of the team and a translator conducted all FGDs and IDIs. Some questions, phrases, or words were not easily translated to Amharic and vice versa. This, like most translated works, have possibilities of resulting in slightly different meanings or expressions than the participants expressed. Additionally, we recruited our participants in Addis Ababa from a network of self-help groups with the possibility of similarity in opinions and attitudes.

Analysis

The survey data was analyzed using simple descriptive quantitative analysis. The rest of the data were analyzed qualitatively using a multi-step manual coding process that included a deductive coding phase and, after that, an inductive coding phase using the primary data from the field research. The first stage of the data analysis was coding of the interview data using deductive codes generated through a combination of literature review and the research question. Gender norms, time constraints, self-efficacy, gender-biased language, education, financial resources are deductive codes identified during the first stage of the coding process. The second stage involved an inductive analysis of the data through multiple readings of the transcript, and we coded the data thematically - initially using open coding and finally axial coding. The third stage involved another coding process using the identified themes to ensure that they were consistent with the meanings in the data. Finally, we triangulated these themes with responses gathered from KIIs. Quotations that encapsulate the themes that emerged were extracted and presented in the key findings section.

Demographic Survey Results

The age of the participants ranged from 18 to 74 years, with most of the participants aged between 25-34 years. Participants aged between 65-74 years made up a significant portion of our sample as well. The formal education level of the participants ranged from no formal education to university completion. Most of the participants had some form of formal education, with secondary school being the most listed education level.

Figure 1: Age of Survey Respondents

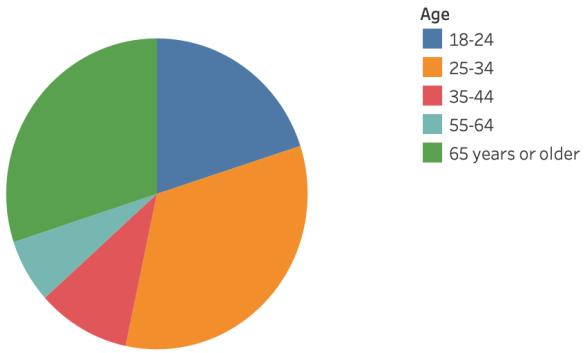
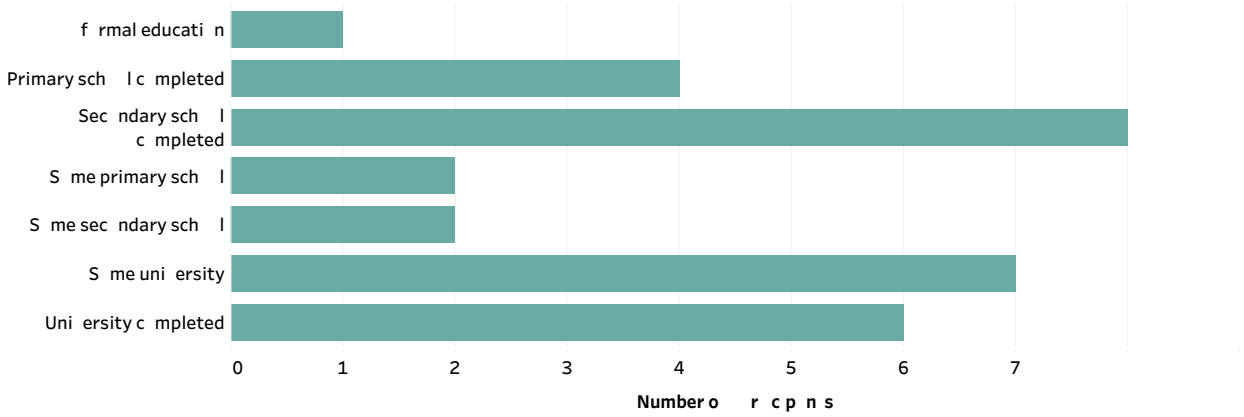
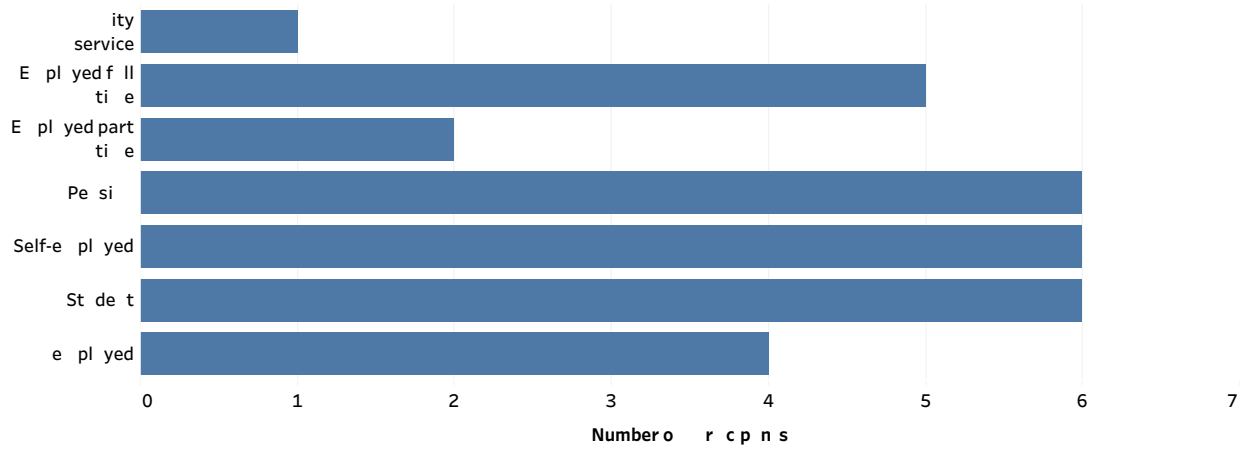


Figure 2 F r Educ ti n Leve



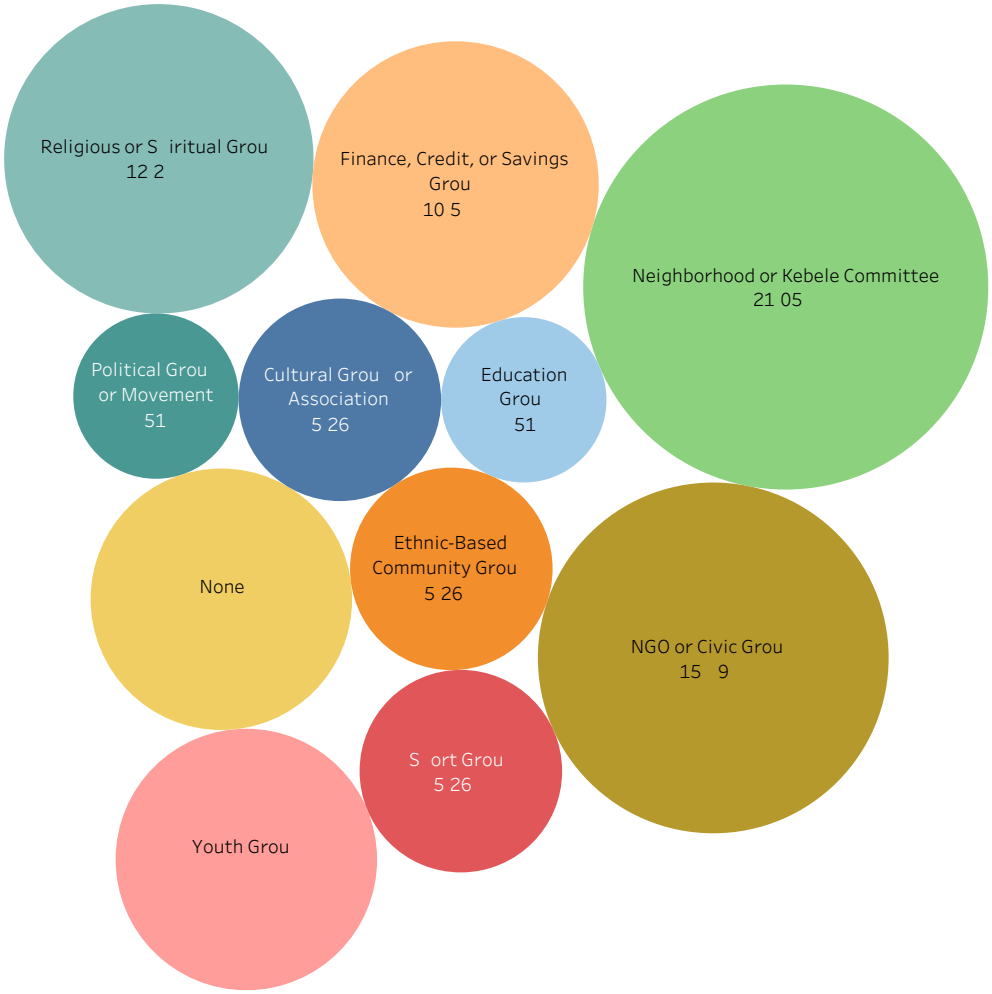
The employment status of the participants reflects the age range of our sample; the participants were mainly students, pensioners, or self-employed. Other participants were employed either part-time or full time, and one participant mentioned that they engaged in community service.

Figure 3 oy ent Status



Most of the participants were not involved in any political groups or movements. The most mentioned form of community involvement was neighborhood committee, NGO or civic group, and religious or spiritual group.

Figure 4 r u nv lvement



Key Findings

The research revealed three levels of barriers to women's political participation in Ethiopia. The table below summarizes the delineation of barriers to political participation that this research uncovered.

Table 2: Barriers to Women's Political Participation in Ethiopia

Level	Description	Types of Barriers
Societal	Refers generally to barriers that are overarching, interpersonal, present at a larger societal level in Ethiopia. These barriers limit gender equality more broadly, but also have specific impacts on women's political participation	● Norms and Attitudes ● Language
Political	Refers generally to both structural barriers that prevent women from participating as well as emotional and trauma associated with politics in Ethiopia	Fear and Political Violence ● Unpleasant Experiences in Politics ● Lack of Effectiveness of Politics ● Community Separation ● Lack of Role Models at the Local Level ● Lack of Agency in Voting ● Patronage
Individual	Refers generally to intrapersonal obstacles, including psychological barriers, that limit women's political participation	● Time constraints ● Education ● Individual Financial Situations ● Lack of Interest ● Lack of Hope

Societal-level barriers refer to barriers that are overarching, interpersonal, and present at a larger societal level in Ethiopia. These barriers limit gender equality more broadly, but also have specific impacts on women's political participation. They include barriers such as norms and attitudes, and language. Political-level barriers can be divided into two categories: structural barriers that prevent women from participating as well as emotional and trauma associated with politics in Ethiopia. The last level—individual—refers to intrapersonal obstacles, including psychological barriers that limit women's political participation.

Figure 5: Levels of Barriers

It is important to keep in mind that these barriers do not exist in isolation to each other. **Figure 5** illustrates this point. While we recognize that barriers at the individual level can impact barriers at the societal level as much as societal barriers can affect individual-level barriers, we present them in a hierarchical way for simplicity's sake.

Level 1: Societal Barriers

Norms and Attitudes: Most participants, men included, reported traditional norms and assumptions about women's roles as a barrier to political participation. Twenty-two participants across all interview types mentioned prevailing cultural norms and attitudes as a barrier. Participant responses revealed that women are associated with the home and expected to take care of the children and the home, while men are associated with the society and are expected to be involved in politics and take care of finances. During the interviews, some respondents said:

"women are told to keep quiet and sit down. It is better to stay at home at take care of children"

"women are put in the households, men are only allowed to go out and make money for the family"

"The traditional harmful sayings and tales like 'let the woman work/toil in the kitchen' became very hard obstacles for the women; the culture and the norms influenced women to remain back; the traditional sayings were having good sound for males but not for us."

These traditional assumptions often affect how women see themselves and prevent them from participating in politics. This view was reinforced by the director of Network Ethiopian Women Association (NEWA), she said,

"women do not want to do that [be politically active], some of them, because of course, the cultural taboos that why is she there, you know, she shouldn't be there it is the man's place, you know, starting from the community level. Even communal types of positions like eldership or religious positions, these positions are usually taken by men. So, positions like decision-making positions are not usually a woman's place."

As the responses indicate, women's roles have been defined along traditional and cultural lines and are crucial to understanding the perpetuation of women's unequal political participation. Despite the recognition that norms hamper women's political participation, there is an overall sense of optimism from women that norms and attitudes are changing regarding women's roles specifically because of the new opening up of space brought by the new administration. The following responses reflect the optimism shared by the participants:

"Now in the present women have increasing civic roles, and we can see that in different levels of government, from the presidency to local government."

"Currently, it is getting better, women are given equal opportunities...The previous setting was not ready to accept women into power or whatever, women were not coming into the forefront, it was hard for men to accept women"

"currently there are changes, the rules and regulations are changing from the previous government, the current government is improving its laws and bringing more women to politics and the likes."

Language:

Responses revealed that language could be a barrier in three ways: proverbs, gender-biased language, and political jargon. From the literature, derogatory Ethiopian proverbs against women were highlighted as a problematic cultural norm; however, only two participants mentioned discriminatory proverbs as a barrier to political participation. Other participants revealed that proverbs were previously a barrier, but now have minimal effect on women's self-perception because of progressive attitudes towards women.

Language and culture are closely linked, and language often reflects the norms and attitudes of people in a community. Like many other languages in the world, Ethiopian languages are gendered. Responses from our interviews revealed how the use of gendered language in society and the media is used to perpetuate the traditional gender roles. In response to 'how would you define a good Ethiopian citizen?', 15 out of 28 women[36] described a good Ethiopian citizen using the pronoun 'he' or 'him.' The following responses from women are examples of this finding:

*"One who is there for **his** community and those who are deprived of their rights."*

[36] We conducted IDIs with 33 women but only asked 28 women the question 'how would you define an Ethiopian citizen?'

*"Someone who respects culture respects Ethiopian culture and supportive of those around **him**…"*

*"...should have love for **his** country and **he** should see all ethnic groups equally and have love for **his** community"*

According to Befekadu Hailu Techanie of CARD, and Sehin Teferra, founder of Setaweet, almost all information about politics or governance is presented with masculine pronouns and language, and the use of masculine pronouns is standardized in legal writing in particular. This lack of neutrality of language can have an exclusionary effect on women. Techanie noted his role as Editor-in-Chief of one of the only feminist newspapers, and their intentional stance to use feminine forms of language in their work. Ozier and Jakiela, in their study of the effects of gendered language, found that gendered language correlates positively with traditional gender norms. In India and the four African countries– Kenya, Niger, Nigeria, and Uganda, they focused on; they found that the use of gendered language hurts women's opportunities.[37] Gendered language has profound effects on women's political participation in Ethiopia as it reinforces the idea that politics or governance is the responsibility of men.

Ethiopia's federal system makes for a high level of decentralization, with regional offices heading most political processes. Each region has its official language, and its people conduct all official and political business in that language. Therefore, migrants to regions who do not understand the regional language are not able to adequately participate in political processes. For example: although Amharic is widely spoken in Jimma, Jimma's regional language is Afaan Oromo, and therefore non-Afaan Oromo speakers are not able to participate politically without assistance. One woman in Jimma noted that she speaks only Amharic and not Afaan Oromo and has had difficulties participating in politics at the regional level. In Addis Ababa, there was no evidence of the regional language problem in the data.

Abiy's government announced in March 2020 the addition of four additional languages, namely Afaan Oromo, Tigrigna, Afar, and Somali. This move is an attempted remedy to the extreme ethnicism the country has experienced, especially in the previous year. While this may help inclusion with regards to administrative and official duties, it is an intervention that is best assessed in the long run. Additionally, the prospects for trickle-down to society to create social cohesion are mostly uncertain.

[37]Jakiela, Pamela and Owen Ozier. 2018. "Gendered Language." World Bank Policy Research Working Paper No. 8464.

Level 2: Political Barriers

A significant number of those interviewed—both women and men—discussed the positive impact that Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's appointment of a gender-equal cabinet had on their perception of women in politics. One man in Addis Ababa remarked that,

> *"The government is creating an enabling environment nowadays and the change is helping... we have a woman president and a women's ministry, and women are occupying higher positions. That is showing that there is change."*

The interview data is clear on the existence of an aspirational effect and show that its impacts are significant. For many women, seeing the number of women in government increase did create a positive impact, signaling that the government values women's participation, even if at least symbolically. Key informants often lauded the efforts of the Prime Minister of Ethiopia Abiy Ahmed, noting that Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's cabinet reshuffle has created positive momentum in terms of women's leadership.

However, the evidence on the idea that the government is "creating an enabling environment," as the above interview mentioned, is weak. The following section details several themes that came about during interviews, including how institutional political barriers limit women's ability to participate in politics.

Fear and Political Violence

While there have been positive changes in Ethiopia's political landscape in recent years, it is clear that the trauma of Ethiopia's almost two-decade long civil war and the political unrest of the last twenty years have made politics unappealing to both women and men. However, interviews with both men and women reveal that there is a gender divide in the extent to which this fear constrains political participation. For example, five women mentioned a fear of violence as the main reason why they were disinterested in politics, compared to no men.

Even those who have not experienced violence directly—or who were less involved politically in their communities—mentioned how the perception of politics as violent was a significant deterrent. Women indicated that violence was a reason for non-engagement even if they had never experienced violence personally. A female participant stated that "there is no guarantee that you won't put yourself at risk if you participate in politics," while another noted that "when it is called politics, everyone gets afraid of it because it is dangerous, especially [in Jimma]." Another woman in Addis stated that "men don't allow women to participate in politics if they see that violence could be an issue." These comments point to the general fear women feel in politics. For example, one participant mentioned that politics was not something that was generally talked about in public

space, noting that while her family talks about politics, they limit these discussions to family/private spaces:

"It would be dangerous to talk about politics at a café—you fear for yourself. You talk about the weather instead… The past, the government that led the Ethiopian country, we were also taught that they were not good in history, so people fear to talk about politics or government, especially in public areas because in the past, some people who disagree with the government may be punished for speaking out in public areas."

Unpleasant Experiences in Politics

Another interrelated reason mentioned consistently throughout interviews was women's unpleasant experiences in politics. Nine women—six in Addis and three in Jimma attributed their disinterest in engaging in politics to the unpleasant experiences in the past. For example, a female participant in Jimma, who was active in local party politics, stated that the opposition party jailed her for her involvement. During her time in jail, the opposition party seized her property and harassed her family members. Another participant stated:

"By the time of the election day I was going to vote holding a blue umbrella suddenly the police arrived at me and took me to somewhere telling me that I was initiating people to choose a party called "the blue party", but it was wrong someone came for me from the government and told then that I am at their side."

These experiences often have a multiplier effect. In a country like Ethiopia where women communicate through informal networks that are thick and extensive, these incidents not only impact the specific women who were involved, but they also impact other women in their families and communities.

Lack of Political Effectiveness

Besides the perceived and real endemic violence in politics, women also attributed their inclination for non-participation in politics to their opinion that politics is not effective. Of the women interviewed through focus groups or individual interviews, ten said that politics "gave them no hope," "made no difference," or "did not matter." At the root of these comments, however, is a general interpretation implying that whether or not they participated in politics, their involvement would not have an impact. One female participant noted that she had "…never been involved in elections, mainly because there was no hope in me giving my vote," while another in Jimma stated: "I didn't choose to vote because I thought my participation might not make a difference."

Community Separation

Another interesting theme that became apparent during interviews with women was that women often felt that their involvement in politics separated them from their community. Community

separation was generally discussed as a partisan divide or around a gender dynamic. Several women participants mentioned that becoming involved in politics meant that other groups would naturally see you either as an adversary or separate from the community, and others pointed to the gendered nature of said community separation:

"Whether you do good or bad, if you're in politics, people might think you are part of some group, and they hate you just because you're in that political party and you are different from, so… you will be separated from the community."

Another female participant mentioned that:

"if you are politically active especially by being a member or local leader of the ruling party you will be discriminated against by the community. Even people will stop talking if you are around. You will generally be hated, and this will affect your relation with your local community."

Besides, interviews also revealed that there was a gender dynamic to this community separation. "Women participating in political activities lack acceptance in society. If you see those women who are actively involved in local administration, it is well known that the community does not like them." Other female participants reinforced this point. One commented that "most women who participate in politics are considered snitches for the government… it was a challenge for me to be supported by the community."

Lack of Role Models at the Local Level

In addition to the negative perception of women involved in politics by the community, another barrier was the lack of role models within party politics. While many women and men talked about the positive impact that the increase of women's visibility in politics has had for them, others pointed out that women were less likely to be involved at lower levels of politics or relegated to administrative or symbolic positions. One participant said that because there is no woman involved in political activities in her community, it is hard to participate because she sees no role model who "does good things in the area."

Lack of Agency in Voting

A lack of agency in women's ability to vote was another clear-cut theme. In Ethiopia, it is not uncommon for people to decide who they are going to vote for as a family. As a result, husbands have a significant level of influence over who the women in their house vote for. Despite that, several other women discussed how they often feel pressure at the polls to support a candidate. For example, one woman suggested that women are often shown *who* to vote for, but not *how* to vote. "They tell you, 'you need to mark this thing, you need to vote this one," one woman recalled. Others say that the involvement of outside influences is more significant, with certain people even following them into the polling booth to ensure that they were voting for the "correct" candidate.

"In the past, there were people around the voting station who told me who to choose. I hate that day," a woman from Jimma said.

Monetary Compensation

Women's lack of political agency was also apparent through the monetary compensation many of them receive to participate in politics. In Ethiopia, political parties pay political members an allowance for their participation in politics, especially since women diversify their membership. While allowances did encourage women to become more involved in politics, it is clear that many of them participated in politics because the money was an incentive not because they believed their voices were valued in the political process. As one woman described it:

"I participated mainly because of the benefits, just because there were officials and the women in the neighborhood had called me to join them when they discussed security and political matters."

Level 3: Individual Barriers

Time constraints

Two of the women respondents were students and mentioned that they do not have time to engage in any civic activity because of their commitment to classes and studying. One participant from Jimma also noted that if women are joining hard science fields such as electrical engineering, "they give all their time to education."

In total, 15 participants mentioned household constraints as a barrier to participation. They do not have time to engage in political activity if they are the primary caregivers responsible for household chores, cleaning, looking after children, cooking, etc. The variance in responses reflected specificities of chores due to social provisioning and was not significantly different between Jimma and Addis Ababa.

Fourteen participants overall mentioned family values as the primary reason that they did not participate. In this category, there were two different types of responses: those who explicitly stated that they did not get involved because they wanted to take care of their children, and responses that addressed whether the woman had support from her family to get involved in politics. Within this second category, some women also responded that family pressures on a woman "above 18" to settle down and start a family prevents engagement in some cases. Over half of the respondents during both the KIIs and IDIs believed this represented "the biggest hardship" for women not to be involved politically or civically. Additionally, six women commented that women and the relationship with their husband influenced their ability to participate politically.

They responded that women must have tacit support from their husbands to participate. For example, one woman commented that,

"husbands don't encourage their wives to go out and try, they won't let them get involved not just in political things, but they won't let them go out and be involved in something public."

Education

In total, 30 respondents, including one male, mentioned education as a significant barrier to women's political participation. Of these results, 16 of these respondents were in Addis, and 14 were in Jimma, which represents the equal importance placed on educational attainment, receiving information about politics and political agendas, and education as a tool of empowerment for women across the surveyed areas. Education was broadly defined in two different ways: lack of information and lack of political knowledge. Some reported that they did not understand politics in general and therefore found it difficult to get involved. For example, one respondent from Jimma said: "I believe it is harder for women to participate, the reason is that previously I didn't get a chance to know about politics or have some knowledge of politics." Another participant from Addis stated that she and her family do not discuss politics at home due to lack of formal education: "they don't have knowledge about politics and in that way, they don't want to discuss politics in the home." When asked what could be done to increase women's political participation, a majority of women responded that both formal and civic education should be expanded and prioritized by the government, implicitly drawing a link between education and empowerment and confirming past literature on this subject.

Individual Finances

In total, 14 women reported that individual financial situations provided a barrier to participation. In Addis, 11 women mentioned this, and in Jimma, there were three. Several women said that not having enough income prevented them from participating. However, rarely was there an elaboration on this explicit link (whether it was due to high transportation costs, or the inability to leave work early to attend meetings, and other factors similar to these). A woman in Jimma also noted that a woman's low income could "breed dependence on [their] husband… this creates inferiority in challenging their husband concerning their right [in] expressing themselves, decision-making." A man in Addis also mentioned this, especially regarding women finding jobs to make enough money and support themselves without having to rely on their husbands as the sole breadwinner. According to him:

"Women are more dependent on men and poverty affects women rather than men, so... men can do any kind of job, and some women cannot do that kind of job because of culture and men sometimes have power to work, like being taxi drivers and they can just go for this…

there is a lot of construction going on nowadays and that men are asked for- young energetic men- so that women are not going for that type of work and this discourages them not be part of the employment thing so they will stay at home and they are waiting for a person to bring them something to eat, and women are becoming dependent on men."

Another issue raised in the interviews was that some women choose involvement with a certain party because of the financial benefits. One woman in Addis, for example, said she even thought about getting involved in politics just for the money. Employment as an explicit barrier was reported once during an FGD in Addis, but it ties into this theme of an association between economic empowerment and political engagement.

Political Apathy

Six women and two men reported that they do not want to get involved or even spend time learning more about politics in their country due to a lack of interest. There were slight variations in these responses. Some respondents did not get involved in politics because they were simply not interested in the direction that the political rhetoric or the landscape, in general, was shifting. For example, a woman reported that today's climate focuses too much on ethnic politics, and she is not interested in contributing to this. Others were dissatisfied with the current options regarding parties to join, people to vote for, or types of organizations to join.
A respondent said:

"I am not interested in being in any political organization and nothing pleases me. There is nothing to see in politics. Good things do not happen to people who are involved in politics."

Another stated that she did not vote in the last election because
"the previous government or party was not good and there was no good party to give my vote."

These types of stories are important to highlight because political interest is as much a barrier as personal preference for not participating, especially as these factors are not necessarily influenced by complex and deeply rooted gender norms that continue to affect Ethiopian society today.

Lack of Hope

In a similar vein, eight women reported that they simply lacked hope that voting or participating in civic space would change the current situation. Again, this points to a personal assessment of a situation that is not exclusively or necessarily hindered by gender roles or norms.

Suggestions for Further Research

As noted in our Methodology & Results section, the constraints on time, travel, and finances resulted in a less immersive field experience. Additionally, according to the United States travel advisories, the border regions with Somalia, Kenya, South Sudan, Sudan, and Eritrea were all not safe for travel. This limited our options in which regions and cities we could conduct our research. Other researchers with more resources are encouraged to i) conduct fieldwork for a more extended period to interview a larger pool of participants and also to better understand the social and political climate ii) expand the scope of fieldwork to include all the regions. This will provide for a more robust triangulation of findings.

From our results, a significant number of participants mentioned household duties as a reason for limited participation. Some of these elements of household responsibilities and their impact on women's political participation could be investigated in future research. For example, it may be of interest to investigate the correlation between the number of children a woman has and her level of participation. Another interesting area to explore would be if and how women can use their interpersonal and community networks to overcome these barriers to participation, like watching each other's children to go vote. Another interesting topic for further research would be if more women in power are influential at changing societal norms and if men support women in this way.

The impact of income also yielded inconclusive results from our fieldwork. Several participants expressed that lack of finances acted as a barrier. However, others, as well as multiple Key Informants, noted that the wealthier an individual, the less likely they are to participate politically. These conflicting responses warrant a more in-depth exploration of the relationship between income levels and women's political participation.

Recommendations for Stakeholders

Our recommendations target three specific audiences: the government of Ethiopia, political parties, and IRI, with the understanding that these could broadly be adopted by other CSOs interested in this area.

To the government

- One aspect that our report highlights is the aspirational effect is a powerful motivator for women. Not only does it help encourage women through representation, but it also provides a way in which women can imagine themselves assuming political responsibilities at many levels in the future. Therefore, the government–at the Federal and Regional levels–should prioritize managing this trickle-down effect. They should focus on not only promoting women to top-level positions, but also appointing women to middle and lower-level positions.
- Consider disaggregating voter data by gender and making this data readily available to the public in the spirit of transparency and progress.
- Currently, civic and voter education programs can only be undertaken by Ethiopian CSOs after receiving accreditation from the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia (NEBE) following a rigorous vetting process. This could limit the ability of some organizations to participate in addressing the great need for information dissemination and may inadvertently restrict other methods to distribute information about voter's and citizens' rights in Ethiopia. The government should consider ways to open the space further for CSOs to engage in these activities, perhaps by streamlining vetting procedures and requirements for voter's education and consider how to open up space for organizations to engage in civic education activities outside of the general election cycle.

To political parties

- Political parties are one of the most obvious vanguards of this political participation. They may very well be a popular avenue for women to access the political arena and, hence participate in politics. Therefore, political parties have an important imperative to actively encourage women's participation in these spaces and become more inclusive. To this end, more political parties should partner with organizations like Setaweet to continue gender-sensitivity training.
- Political parties are also encouraged to self-reflect on the impact they have on perpetuating gender norms through their actions and their structure. Therefore, it would be beneficial for parties to examine their internal structures and see if there are ways to increase women's participation within the party structure from the bottom-up. Examples could include incorporating women as office staff, managers, pollsters, financial officers, or other positions along these lines.

To IRI and other CSOs

- One significantly misunderstood and underrepresented area within Ethiopia is the rural area. Even if 80% of Ethiopia is rural, many national and international CSOs, government agencies, and political parties continue to exist, advocate for, and conduct outreach in urban areas, which potentially could aggravate the rural/urban divide. This divide is especially important to understand for women, who are more adversely affected by this and the complex socioeconomic barriers that limit women in rural areas. To this end, more outreach needs to be done to bring civic engagement and education to rural areas instead of having women from rural areas only migrate to urban areas. Not only would this help solidify democratic values as a whole by bringing them and embedding them in a larger part of the country, but it would do much to help rural women and to ease this divide between rural and urban communities.
- Consider collaborating with existing organizations like Setaweet or the Tigray Women's Association to build a more comprehensive women's democracy network. Within this network, there could be shared learning and exploration, including women's participation in more local decision-making positions, and increasing this participation beyond just election cycles. This network would be different from other more established ones like NEWA because it would specifically incorporate and support local, grassroots organizations without much funding.
- Within this expanded effort, there needs to be a larger concentrated effort made by already accredited organizations to make it easier for women to access voting information. After the election and thereafter, to pursue more avenues for women to learn about politics and organize activities about civic engagement. For example, coffee ceremonies are an easily accessible social gathering for people to learn about these opportunities in a safe, social setting. One important aspect that came out in interviews is that using "politics" is complicated and problematic in many social settings. For example, one respondent in Jimma reported that many people do not talk about politics in public because it is not safe. Therefore, using "politics" as a word and concept should be avoided, and "engaging in the community" or "civic engagement" should be considered instead.
- Finally, consider organizing a country-wide language awareness campaign. As was discovered in our research, many public announcements, news, and political outreach always use the male form of nouns, adjectives, and verbs in Amharic, Afaan Oromo, and other regional languages. The inbuilt gender bias in language that disadvantages women reifies their subjection and marginalizes women by discouraging representation. Therefore, a campaign with every noun, adjective, and verb in the female form could be an empowering experience, and overall a good campaign to bring attention to these types of marginalizing features that are still present in society. Additionally, a play-on-words campaign, twisting the words of the age-old derogatory proverbs to give new meanings to them that empower women, can also be explored.

Conclusion

One important theme that emerged from the data is hope for the future. Many of the women interviewees are hopeful about the situation of women and the growth of women's participation in Ethiopian democracy in the future. Our report is merely a snapshot of a transition within Ethiopia, and it acknowledges the challenges that women face, especially regarding accessing—perhaps for the first time— participatory politics. We hope that this report provides some clarity in the issues that continue to impact women and their ability to participate within their country.

Appendix I: Survey

Title of Research Project: Barriers to Women's Political Participation in Ethiopia

This consent form asks you to take part in a research project concerning women's political participation in your country, Ethiopia. The project is being carried out by Stephanie Arzate, Mabel Alamu, Zarina Bentum, and Samantha Camilletti. They are students from Johns Hopkins University - SAIS, with oversight from their professor, Dr. Chiedo Nwankwor.

Purpose of this study: This project seeks to understand and evaluate the barriers affecting women's political participation in Ethiopia.

What you will be asked to do: You will be asked to participate in an informal in-person interview for 30 minutes to one hour. You will be asked about your job, your understanding of political participation, and how active you think you are in civic engagement. Your participation is completely voluntary and non-binding. You are at liberty to withdraw consent and terminate participation at any time, for any reason.

How your confidentiality will be maintained: Should you choose to participate in an interview, your name will not be published or linked to any of your answers at any time. All answers presented in the project will be anonymous. The interview will be audio recorded, but all files will be destroyed after use and analysis. They will be stored anonymously without a link to your name.

Benefits and Risks: This study will not benefit you directly, and there is little risk.

If you have any questions, comments or concerns about this research, please contact Stephanie, Mabel, Zarina, or Samantha.

If you would like to participate, please fill in the lines below. Please keep an extra copy of this form so that you have this information also.

Name (printed)_____

Signature_____

Date _____

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SURVEY AND IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW PROTOCOL (WOMEN)
Interviewer's Name: _____ Interview Number: _____ Interviewee's City/Region of Residence: _____ Interview Date: _____ We are here as graduate students from SAIS Women Lead, looking into the role of women in political processes in Ethiopia as part of our final project for graduation. We'd like to ask you some questions about your thoughts and opinions regarding women in civic spaces. Please know that there are no right or wrong answers. We are only interested in your honest thoughts and opinions. Also, if there is a question that you don't feel comfortable answering, that's ok. You do not have to answer it. I will be taking notes to help me remember your responses and the interview will be audio recorded, but all audio files will be destroyed after use and analysis. I will be asking for your name but no names will be included in the report. You will not be identified in the report. Knowing all of this, are you willing to participate in this discussion? *(Assuming the prospective interviewee says, yes)*: Great, thank you!

I. Demographic Information ***In this section, we will ask you basic questions about yourself.***	
1.	What is your highest level of schooling? ( ) No formal education ( ) Some primary school ( ) Primary school completed ( ) Some secondary school ( ) Secondary school completed ( ) Some university ( ) University completed
2.	Are you married? ( ) Yes ( ) No

3.	How many children do you have? ( ) None ( ) 1-3 ( ) 4-6 ( ) More
4.	What is your age? ( ) 18-24 ( ) 25-34 ( ) 35-44 ( ) 45-54 ( ) 55-64 ( ) 65 years or older
5.	What is your current employment status? ( ) Employed full time ( ) Employed part time ( ) Unemployed ( ) Self- employed ( ) Student
6.	Please tell us the language you speak at home:
II. Community & Family Life ***In this section, we will ask you about your daily life in the community and at home.***	
7.	Do you belong to any group? ( ) Neighborhood/kebele committee ( ) Religious or spiritual group ( ) Political group or movement ( ) Cultural group or association (e.g., arts, music, theater)

	( ) Education group (e.g. parent-teacher association, school committee) ( ) Finance, credit or savings group ( ) Sports group ( ) Youth group ( ) NGO or civic group ( ) Other _____

Appendix II: Focus Group Discussions

BARRIER IDENTIFICATION GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE	
Introduction: Hello, my name is [facilitator name] and I am a graduate student at Johns Hopkins in Washington, D.C. Thank you for taking the time to participate in a focus group about interest in women's political participation. This focus group is part of a larger process that we are conducting to learn about barriers to women's political participation in Ethiopia. We want to understand more about women's political participation in Ethiopia, and specifically in [Addis/Jimma] During the focus group, please keep in mind the following: - There are no "right" or "wrong" answers to any question - We are looking for your honest feedback and encourage everyone to share their opinion. - The purpose is to stimulate conversation and hear the opinions of everyone in the room. I am a student and don't work for any of the organizations involved, so don't worry about offending me with negative feedback. Please note that this session will be recorded and [name] will be taking notes during the focus group to ensure we adequately capture your ideas during the conversation. However, the comments from the focus group will remain confidential and your name will not be attached to any comments you make. Do you have any questions before we begin?	
Activity/Questions	**Duration/ Facilitator Notes**
I'd like everyone to introduce themselves. What is a typical day for you? And when you are not busy what do you like to do for fun?	**15 mins**
General Opinion/Accessibility of Electoral Processes	
● Generally, what do you think about women participating in politics in Ethiopia ? ● How do you feel about your ability to participate in political processes? This could include voting. Do you feel that your ability to participate in political	**20 mins**

processes have changed in recent years? Why or why not?	
Accessibility/Types of Participation	
● What are some ways that you have participated in political processes? Again, this could be participation via voting, volunteering with political parties, donating to a political party, signing any petitions or anything else related to political participation. ● If you did not participate in any, please elaborate why. ● Can you provide specific examples of positive or negative experiences related to your participation in the political process? ● What do you think caused the experience to become positive or negative?	**20 mins** Ensure that all participants understand and know the question. If not, explain briefly. Clarify that last follow-up question requires participants to provide detailed information.
Barriers to Participation	
● Thinking back to the positive or negative experiences of participation we just discussed, what could have been done differently to make the experience better? Even if it was a positive one, what would have made it even better? ● Can you share specific examples of this?	**20 mins** Highlight specific experiences mentioned by participants, when asking questions.
Support to Participate	

• In your opinion, what do the institutions and stakeholders do to support and encourage women to participate in the political process? • What else could be done by these stakeholders to encourage and promote the participation of women in the electoral process?	**20 mins** Clarify that stakeholders could include but are not limited to government, electoral management bodies, political parties, civil society and the media.
Motivation to Participate	
• Why do you think women choose to participate, or not, in the political processes in Ethiopia? • Do you think those reasons are different from men? Why or why not?	**20 mins** Summary
Conclusion	
End Focus Group Discussion	**5 mins** Thank participants for their time Reiterate research objectives and confidentiality

Appendix III: In-depth Interview

Women

1. How would you define a good Ethiopian citizen?
    a. Do you think voting or participating in politics is important to be a good citizen?
2. Is your definition different for Ethiopian women?
3. How do you learn about the government and local politics?
    a. Do you talk about politics or government with your family, friends, or husband?
4. You mentioned you engage in civic activity, when you do, do you feel supported by your family, friends, or husband etc.?
5. Are you a member of any political organization? (community-based organization)
    a. If yes, in a month, how many hours do you dedicate to the organization?
    b. Do you feel like your opinion/voice is respected and valued?
    c. Are you comfortable expressing your opinions?
    d. Do you feel like men and women's opinions are respected/valued equally? Why or why not?
    e. If not, what is the main reason you are not a member of any organization?
6. You mentioned you are a member of a political organization, why are you a member of the political organization?
    a. Are benefits one of the reasons why you participate?
7. Do you think men and women have different roles in the civic space?
8. Do you think it is harder for women to participate in civic life? why or why not?
    a. Do you think it is harder for younger/older women like yourselves to participate?
9. Do you think there are skills required to participate in civic space?
    a. If so, what skills do you think are required?
    b. Do you think you possess the skills you mentioned?
10. Did you register to vote in the previous general elections?
    a. Are you going to register to vote for the upcoming 2020 elections? why or why not?
    b. Did you find it difficult to register to vote or vote in the previous election(s)? If so, why?
11. Do you think derogatory language (old sayings/ proverbs against women) impact women's self-efficacy and political/civic participation?
12. What changes would you like to see that would improve women's political participation?

Men

1. How would you define a good Ethiopian citizen?
2. Is your definition different for Ethiopian women?
3. Do you talk about politics or government with your wife, sister, or mother? Why or why not?
4. Do you feel like men and women's opinions are respected/valued equally? Why or why not?
5. Do you think men and women have different roles in the civic space?
6. Do you think it is harder for women to participate in civic life? why or why not?
7. Do you think there are skills required to participate in civic space?
    a. If yes, what skills do you think are required?
    b. Do you think that women in general possess the skills you mentioned?

Appendix IV: Key Informant Interviews

BARRIER IDENTIFICATION EXPERT INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Interviewer's Name: _____
Interview Number: _____
Interview Date: _____

Hi, we are graduate students in a program called the SAIS Women Lead Practicum. We are working on a project about women's political participation in Ethiopia. We are interested in talking with you about your opinions and ideas related to women's political participation in Ethiopia, specifically as it relates to women's electoral participation and civic engagement. We are trying to get a better sense of this across the country. We will use this information to write a report, which we will look to share with international development organizations.

We'd like to ask you some questions about your thoughts and opinions regarding women in civic spaces. Please know that there are no right or wrong answers. We are only interested in your honest thoughts and opinions. Also, if there is a question that you don't feel comfortable answering, that's ok. You do not have to answer it.

I will be taking notes to help me remember your responses. I will be asking for your name but no names will be included in the report. You will not be identified in the report. Knowing all of this, are you willing to participate in this discussion?

(Assuming the prospective interviewee says, yes): Great, thank you!

I. Political Participation

1. What do you think motivates women in Ethiopia to vote, in general?
    a. Do you think these are the same motives that men have? Why or why not?
    b. In your opinion, what are some reasons that women do NOT vote?
    c. Do you think these are the same reasons that men do NOT vote? Why or why not?
2. In your opinion, do election campaigns address issues that are important to women? Here I'm thinking about candidate messages, political party platforms, and that sort of thing.
    a. Why or why not?
    b. Do political campaigns make specific efforts to target/increase women voters? Why or why not?
3. Do you think that parties make specific efforts to include women in their voter outreach plans? Do you think that they should?
    a. Why or why not?
    b. If they do, what do these efforts look like?
4. In your opinion, do political parties make adequate efforts to include women in their processes and activities? Have you seen an increase in these efforts in recent years?
    a. What about recruiting women for meaningful positions within the party?
    b. What about involving women in pre-election and Election Day activities/campaigns?
    c. Do parties have active, meaningful women's wings? How are they integrated into other party efforts/activities?
5. What about women that are subjected to other types of marginalization (geography etc.)? How do you think their situation affects their decisions to participate, or not, in the electoral process?

a. As voters?
b. As members of political parties?
c. As members of a CSO engaged in democratic efforts?
d. As part of the
e. management/implementation team?
f. How do you think electoral stakeholders (parties, election commission, candidates) engage women that are also subjected to other types of marginalization?

II. Society and Media

Thank for you those insights. Next, I'd like you to ask you some questions about how women's electoral participation is perceived in society and the media.

1. Generally speaking, what opportunities are there for women to participate in the political process? For example, how easy is it for women to…
    a. Vote
    b. Volunteer for a political or advocacy campaign
    c. Join a political party
2. What challenges or barriers do you think women face in participating in the political process?
    a. What sorts of challenges or barriers do they face when voting?
    b. What sorts of challenges or barriers do they face when participating in a political or advocacy campaign?
    c. What sorts of challenges or barriers do they face when attempting to join a political party?
    d. Do you think young women face the same barriers as older women?
3. How do you think derogatory language (old sayings/ proverbs against women) impacts women's self-efficacy and political/civic participation?
4. Do you see any legal barriers to women's participation? Why or why not?
5. Generally, how does women's participation in electoral processes compared to men's participation?
6. In general, how does the media cover women who participate in the political process (as voters, party members)? Could you describe what you mean by that or give an example?
    a. Does it seem to be equitable as compared to media coverage of men involved in the electoral process?
    b. Does media coverage of one gender tend to be more negative or more positive?
7. Do you think the media adequately addresses issues of particular concern to women?
    a. Why or why not?

III. Wrap-Up: Thank you very much for those responses. Is there anything else that you'd like me to know about women's political participation?