



How the Gender Equality Strategy for Ethiopia's Agriculture Sector can improve outcomes for all.

I. Introduction

The *Gender Equality Strategy for Ethiopia's Agriculture Sector* was finalized last year by the Women's Affairs Directorate of the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Resources (MoALR).¹ The strategy was prepared following a lengthy and highly consultative process. Published in both a long and short format, it sets out a national framework for addressing the significant inequalities facing Ethiopian women farmers.² The gender equality strategy is an important document that all development partners engaged in Ethiopia's agriculture sector need to put into practice.

Agriculture is the major livelihood of men and women in rural communities in Ethiopia, accounting for more than 80% of the labor force, of which 50% are women. The agriculture sector as a whole contributes to 46% of the nation's gross domestic product and 90% of its export earnings. It is estimated that women contribute to approximately 70% of the food production in Ethiopia, mainly as smallholder farmers and either as spouses or female household heads (FHH). Women also often carry the full unpaid burden of household management and caring for children.

Whilst women in married households contribute equally to agricultural activities, their contributions tend not to be fully recognized: they rarely participate equally in decision-making processes and do not get to share the benefits with their male counterparts. Key decisions from which women are excluded include deciding on input use, what and what not to sell, and how to use the income generated. Women farmers are also often excluded from equal access to inputs, technology and extension advice.

As well as being a human rights issue, there are strong economic reasons why gender equality needs to be promoted across the agriculture sector. Without access to agricultural inputs and support women are less productive, and their lower yields mean their households are more food insecure. Ethiopia's rapid population growth requires that all those working as crop farmers, or in pastoral and agro-pastoral areas, are successful and productive. According to FAO, providing women farmers equal access to productive resources could increase yields on their farms by 20–30% and could raise total agricultural output by between 2.5–4%.³

2. Background to the development of the gender equality strategy

Women and Development (WAD) became a key term in the second half of the 1970s, following the World Conference on Women held in Mexico City in 1975. WAD was also informed by the publication of the book 'Women's Role in Economic Development',⁴ which provided empirical results on how development was undermining or neglecting the value of women's work and status. WAD advocated that, rather than being simply passive recipients of development aid, women should be actively involved in development projects. Women-only development projects were proposed as a means to remove women from the patriarchal hegemony. This helped increase the representation of women in different activities but it still ignored the importance of power relations.

The Gender and Development (GAD) approach shifted the debate from development for women or with women, to empowerment and human rights of women, girls, boys and men equally. The term 'gender' was also formally defined: 'the social differences between females and males throughout the life cycle ... though deeply rooted in every culture, are changeable over time and have wide variations both within and between cultures'.⁵ Gender analysis tools proliferated and distinctions were made between strategic and practical gender needs. Conferences and workshops debated whether to consider gender as 'cross cutting' or 'mainstreaming' in all policies, programs and institutions.

Recent approaches include the Gender Champions Approach (GCA), which is a recognition of the high level of commitment needed from both men and women to advocate for gender equality. For example, USAID projects apply the gender champions approach to increase men and women's partnership within the household in order to improve nutrition outcomes.⁶ Male Engagement (ME), although not an approach in itself, shifts the emphasis towards engaging men and boys as a viable strategy. Encouraging men to engage in what are traditionally labeled as 'women's jobs', such as caring for children and other household chores, allows women to engage more in the economic and social activities of their choice. This in turn has major implications for the increment of family income and diversification of livelihoods activities.

To guide the development of *The Gender Equality Strategy for Ethiopia's Agriculture Sector* from inception to completion the Women's Affairs Directorate established a multi-institutional taskforce. Accommodating the diverging interests and views (including the use of different terminologies) of all the relevant institutions was a challenge. An additional issue was that, although Ethiopia has a number of legal frameworks for ensuring women's equality (including the National Policy on Women and a number of articles in the Constitution - see Box 1), and has signed up to women-related international regulations, the country lacks a comprehensive 'gender policy' from which strategies could be derived. The absence of such a framework meant that it took considerable time to agree on the major gender strategic pillars for the agriculture sector.

Box 1: Examples of the public sector instruments for advancing gender equality in Ethiopia

Constitutions: Ethiopia's third Constitution was adopted in 1987 during the Derg regime. Article 36 provides that men and women have equal rights and that the State shall make efforts to support women in education, training, employment and health matters. The fourth Constitution, adopted in 1995, is more progressive in terms of specifically addressing women's rights. Article 35 provides, among other issues, for equal rights of women with men, and for affirmative action to redress the discriminatory legacy in employment and equal pay. It also makes provisions for protecting women and girls from violence, harmful traditional practices and discriminations in accessing opportunities. Article 34, 42 and 89 also make other provisions for women.

Sector policies, strategies and programs: Ethiopia developed a National Policy on Women in 1993. The policy outlines the major economic, social and political concerns of Ethiopian women and indicates broad strategies and interventions. Since then all major programs are designed to be gender sensitive or have gender components. For example, the Agricultural Growth Program specifically targets women farmers with tailor made innovations, activities and technical assistance, and has set a target of 40% for female direct beneficiaries (both female head of household and married females).⁷ The Second Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP 2) commits the Government to ensuring gender equality in education, employment, creating a conducive environment for female students, increasing numbers of female teachers, enhancing ownership of land and other fixed assets, eradicating violence against women and children and harmful practices, and eliminating gender-based discrimination practices, political and decision-making processes. There are also specific targets for rural women farmers to benefit from extension services.⁸ The Productive Safety Net Program actively monitors and documents cash and food transfers that go to women and exempts them from public works at times of pregnancy and breastfeeding.

Institutions: The National Policy on Women led to the establishment of the Women's Affairs Office in the Prime Minister's Office with focal persons or Women's Affairs Desks in key ministries. Women's Affairs presently has a Ministerial portfolio and there are Regional Bureaus and Zonal Offices.⁹ The proliferation of both local and international NGOs has also contributed to the advancement of the gender agenda. However, while many African countries have adopted 'gender policy' as the appropriate concept, Ethiopia continues to use 'women policy'. National gender policies provide the vision, mission and framework for addressing gender inequality and form the basis for designing sectoral strategies.¹⁰

3. Specific gender issues in Ethiopian agriculture

The process of developing *The Gender Equality Strategy for Ethiopia's Agriculture Sector* involved a detailed situation analysis of the reasons for the gender productivity gap. Although the agriculture sector strategies, programs and projects in place in Ethiopia generally claim to be gender sensitive, their provisions are not comprehensive and a large number of specific gender issues and bottlenecks were identified. For example, frequently the strategies and programs do not differentiate between different categories of women—married women, FHH, female youth and pastoral women—which can lead to assumptions that these different categories of women farmers all have similar interests, priorities and development needs.

Examples of gender issues identified in crop value chains:

- Existing structures for input access, production and marketing are largely oriented towards the interests and needs of men farmers. They are based on the misguided perception that production inputs and technologies work equally for both men and women.
- Married women have fewer opportunities to empower their capacities, knowledge and skills compared to men; including less access to training, experience-sharing visits or other extension events. It is assumed that after men receive training they will trickle across the knowledge and skills to other family members, but they rarely do.
- Male dominance in decision making, resources and benefit control results in women having limited economic capacities and limited awareness for utilizing market opportunities.

Examples of gender issues identified in livestock value chains:

- Women and girls are involved in caring for livestock on a day-to-day basis, but remain in the unpaid production part of the value chain. A gender-blind value chain development system of input supply and technology development prevents women from accessing and utilizing inputs.
- Women lack access to livestock market information as it is mostly provided to men. Market infrastructures are poorly developed and may be unsuitable for women. Marketing cooperatives are few in number, weak in capacity and have few women members. Women are therefore often forced to sell their livestock products in the nearest market at lower prices.
- Livestock (beef, camel, mules/donkeys) are culturally considered male property. Married women have limited decision-making power when it comes to the purchase or sale of livestock and do not control the income gained. This perception is institutionalized both at community and implementer levels.



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The situation analysis on specific gender issues covered all aspects of the agriculture sector development agenda—including natural resource management, provision of research and extension, agricultural commercialization, food security, pastoral livelihoods, nutrition, climate change and disaster impacts.

Agricultural Technology — Limited access to agricultural technologies is one of the major issues that constrains the productivity levels of Ethiopian women farmers. By assuming that a particular technology serves the interests of both men and women farmers equally, women's specific needs are being ignored. Some technologies have contributed to helping relieve some of the time-consuming aspects of women's agricultural labor; for example herbicides have reduced time spent weeding, and milk churners and *enset* decorticators have also reduced women's labor time. However, the system is a long way from generating and promoting specific women-friendly technologies, such as energy-saving stoves.

Landholdings — Although laws are in place to ensure women (FHH in particular) have equal access to land, the average landholding size for a FHH is 1.1 ha (which is a 21% smaller farm size than that of Male Household Heads). Most FHHs are also often forced to share out or lease out their plots because they do not have adequate family labor, access to oxen, or the financial resources to hire the labor needed for plowing and managing their land.

After identifying specific details on gender shortcomings across the agriculture development sector, the gender equality strategy identified the overall systemic bottlenecks to achieving gender equality. Five areas were identified covering: lack of accountability in institutions and systems; lack of capacity to deliver gender-sensitive services; lack of economic empowerment for women; women's lack of voice and influence (see Box 2); and insufficient coordination and inter-sectoral linkages. These five focal areas became the core of the strategy.

Box 2: Women's unpaid work: A contribution to the national economy

Women spend much more of their time on unpaid work, while men are more likely to be engaged in productive work. The time women spend on unpaid work is time they cannot devote to paid work, education or health care. The lack of recognition of women's and girl's unpaid work significantly increases their higher rates of poverty, their risks of physical, social and psychological problems, and their dependency on their father, husband, or son who becomes the ruler of their lives. Lowering the burden of unpaid household responsibilities of women and girls enables them to engage in productive and remunerated activities, increases their self-esteem, allows attendance at education and health care services, and improves their participation in decision-making. Time spent on unpaid labor is a contribution to the national economy and should be recognized. Equitable shares in work, paid and unpaid, should be promoted through advocacy and awareness-raising campaigns.

Source: CSA, 2014, The Ethiopia Time Use Survey 2013.

4. The Gender Equality Strategy for Ethiopia's Agriculture Sector 2016-2020

Overall objective

To enable rural women and men farmers, pastoralists and agro-pastoralists to improve their food and nutrition security, to raise their incomes, and to strengthen their resilience to climate change by creating equitable and fair opportunities for men and women to participate in and benefit from agricultural development.

Strategic objectives

The strategy addresses both the supply and demand sides of the pathway to achieving gender equality through five strategic objectives. The objectives are to:

- Strengthen the policies, institutional structures and systems within the agriculture sector to address gender inequality;
- Increase capacity within MoALR to deliver the gender equality strategy;
- Strengthen gender responsiveness in the delivery of agricultural services to enable women and men farmers, pastoralists and agro-pastoralists to contribute to and benefit from profitable economic activities in agriculture (investment);
- Increase women's access to meaningful participation in decision-making instances, including at the household, community, civil society and state institution levels, that are relevant for their IGAs (e.g. agriculture) and the fulfillment of their rights;
- Develop and coordinate partnerships and collaborative efforts within MoALR structures and with relevant ministries and institutions to promote gender equality.

Examples of proposed interventions

Each of the strategic objectives has at least two outputs or deliverables for addressing the critical gender issues, together with a detailed set of targeted interventions. For example, in order to address the weaknesses in accountability and institutional structures, the strategy proposes strengthening the policies, institutional structures and systems within the agriculture sector through gender-responsive strategies, programs, procedures and budgeting. Establishing decentralized gender coordination structures; generating gender-responsive data, information and evidence to inform policy, research, and practices; and recognizing outstanding gender-transformative achievements by individuals and/or work teams are some of the means for achieving this.

In order to address capacity issues it will be necessary to enhance competence of MoALR management bodies and technical staff at federal, regional and lower levels to deliver more gender-responsive plans and quality gender-responsive services. Ensuring access to and control of resources will require, among other things, enhancing gender responsiveness in the delivery of agricultural services to enable women

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and men farmers, pastoralists and agro-pastoralists to contribute and benefit from profitable economic activities in agriculture value chains (production, processing and marketing).

Cultural norms and attitudes that hinder women's productivity should be improved by increasing women's participation in decision-making at household, community, civil society and state institution levels. Increased awareness among communities (including male and female farmers) is needed on:

- (i) women's and girls' rights and the impact of discriminatory and harmful practices against women and girls;
- (ii) the importance of a more equitable intra-household share in workloads, resources, income, food and nutrition, disaster risks and decision making;
- (iii) promoting greater participation and leadership by women in formal and informal social, political and economic organizations/institutional bodies; and
- (iv) increasing women and men's access to and use of appropriate gender-responsive technologies (for production, processing, marketing and information).

Approaches and indicators of success

The gender equality strategy includes both a Results Framework (Annex 1) and a Monitoring and Evaluation Framework (Annex 2) containing detailed indicators that will be used to determine whether the proposed outputs have been achieved. An Action Plan (Annex 3) defines which interventions should be undertaken in the short term (first year), middle term (second and third year) and longer term (fourth and fifth year). The strategy also identifies a set of operational approaches to be used as guidance, namely it:

- Uses the concept of **gender-transformative development** to emphasize the importance of working with both women and men to understand the causes and consequences of inequalities and to challenge and change power relationships
- Employs a **rights-based approach** that recognizes women's human rights to social, economic and political equality, and the prohibition of sex discrimination
- **Recognizes and builds on indigenous knowledge and promotes good practice**, and the sharing of knowledge and experience around good practice
- Ensures that the proposed interventions do not **exacerbate existing inequalities** or create negative effects, for example by increasing gender-based violence
- Focuses on **developing individual and system capacity** to achieve gender equality. This requires improving the knowledge, skills and attitudes of individuals working in the sector, but also improving the institutional capacity and policy environment to achieve gender quality.
- Builds on the strengths of **gender mainstreaming** in planning and designing interventions to consider the needs of both women and men and the likely impact of proposed activities, coupled with interventions to address women's empowerment
- **Focuses on results** to ensure that progress towards gender equality can be measured and evaluated.

5. Roadmap for implementation and the way forward

The Gender Equality Strategy for Ethiopia's Agriculture Sector identifies the need for a Gender Equality Steering Committee at national level to provide overall strategic direction, guidance and oversight of the strategy's implementation. It will be chaired by the Minister of MoALR and have representatives from the implementing units of MoALR, Pastoral Affairs, Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs, the Agricultural Transformation Agency, and affiliated agencies. The committee will closely liaise with the Agriculture Transformation Council and the Standing Committee for Gender Affairs in the House of Representatives of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. These measures are expected to address the weaknesses in intra- and inter-sectoral linkages, partnerships and collaboration. Chapter 5 of the gender equality strategy discusses the implementation modality in more detail.



At the time of writing this brief a process is underway to develop a roadmap for the implementation of the strategy. One of the first activities is expected to be creating awareness among government and non-government organization about the existence of the strategy. And secondly, to undertake an assessment of capacity requirements among these institutions to implement the strategy, perhaps with a recommendation for the minimum capacity (staffing and structure) needed to effectively implement the strategy. For the development sector as a whole implementation will require:

Rigorous gender analysis prior to developing programs and projects: Although there are a number of gender analysis tools, their application is not consistent across sub-sectors and institutions. For example, NGOs generally seem to take gender analysis more seriously than large public sector projects or programs. Without rigorous gender analysis there will be a mismatch between gender needs and strategies, and the programs designed to address them. Once programs and projects are designed and implementation commences, it is also important to carry out **gender compliance analysis** to ensure programs are meeting their gender objectives.^{11 12}

Aid effectiveness and gender equality: Ensuring gender equality makes good economic sense. According to the African Human Development Report (2016), gender inequality is costing sub-Saharan Africa on average \$US95 billion a year, peaking at US\$105 billion in 2014 – or 6% of the region's GDP. Furthermore, a 1% increase in gender inequality reduces a country's human development index by 0.75%.¹³ Ethiopia is no exception. Closing the gender gap in agriculture alone could increase productive by about 23%. Therefore aid effectiveness and gender equality are inseparable. The Paris Aid Effectiveness Declaration requires regular monitoring of Gender Responsive Budgeting (see Box 3). One such monitoring report for Ethiopia found that strategic ministries like agriculture lacked well defined gender responsive interventions and yet the sector is crucial for rural women's empowerment.¹⁴ This is a clear indication that policy makers need to do more to allocate responsive budgets if gender strategies and programs are to be successful.

Whilst the development of the gender equality strategy was a highly essential and ground-breaking process for the agriculture sector in Ethiopia, it is recognized that its existence alone will not be sufficient to bring about the step change that is needed. With over 80% of the population dependent on agriculture for their livelihood, addressing gender inequality is a nation-wide issue that critically needs to be addressed at all policy and technical levels across Ethiopia.

Box 3: Gender concepts and definitions

Gender is a set of culturally specific characteristics defining the social behavior of women and men and the relationship between them. Gender roles, status and relations vary according to place, groups, generations and stages of the lifecycle of individuals. Gender is not about women, but about the relationship between women and men.

Gender equality means that the different behaviors, aspirations and needs of women and men are considered, valued and favored equally. It does not mean that women and men are the same, but that their rights, responsibilities and opportunities are the same.

Gender equity means fairness of treatment for women and men, according to their respective needs. In the development context, a gender equity goal often requires built-in measures to compensate for the historical and social disadvantages of women.

Gender mainstreaming is a strategy for making women's, as well as men's, concerns and experiences an integral dimension in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programs.

Gender-responsive budgeting seeks to incorporate a gender equality perspective into the budgetary process to ensure an efficient allocation of resources based on identified needs and to restructure revenues and expenditures to strengthen gender equality and women's empowerment.

Gender-neutral approaches do not account for the differences between women and men and do not consider how women and men may be marginalized and harmed, or may not benefit from research, programs and policy.

Gender-aware (or responsive) approaches are designed to meet both women's and men's needs. These approaches ensure that both women and men will benefit, and neither will be harmed by research, programs and policies; for example, by interventions that would exacerbate their work burdens.

Gender-specific indicators make it possible to measure inequalities between women and men, for example as regards poverty, violence, education, HIV/AIDS and political representation.

Gender relations is a term that emphasizes the relationship between men and women as demonstrated by their respective roles in power sharing, decision making, the division of labor and returns to labor, both within the household and in society at large.

Gender analysis is a tool/set of tools to assist in strengthening development planning, implementation, and M&E, and to make programs and projects more efficient and relevant. Gender analysis helps us to frame questions about women's and men's roles and relations in order to avoid making assumptions about who does what, when and why.

Source: Annex 4 of the Gender Equality Strategy for Ethiopia's Agriculture Sector.

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Endnotes

- ¹ In 2018 the Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources changed its name to the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Resources.
- ² Women's Affairs Directorate of MoANR (2016) *Gender Equality Strategy for Ethiopia's Agriculture Sector*. Long version published September 2016, MoANR, Addis Ababa; Women's Affairs Directorate of MoANR (2017) *Gender Equality Strategy for Ethiopia's Agriculture Sector*. Short version published August 2017, MoANR, Addis Ababa.
- ³ Quoted (P5) in World Bank (2011). *Gender Equality and Development*. World Development Report 2012. World Bank. Washington, DC.
- ⁴ Boserup, E. (1970) *Woman's Role in Economic Development*. London: George Allen & Unwin.
- ⁵ Inter-Agency Standing Committee (2006). *Women, Girls, Boys and Men: Different needs – Equal opportunities*. Gender Handbook in Humanitarian Action, pages 1-2.
- ⁶ USAID (2017) *Couples as champions for gender equity: learning and recommendations from spring in Senegal*. USAID multi-sectoral nutrition project (www.spring-nutrition.project)
- ⁷ Ministry of Agriculture (2015) *Agricultural Growth Program 2: Program Implementation Manual* (page 2), Addis Ababa.
- ⁸ FDRE (2015) *The Second Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP II) (2015/16-2019/20) (Draft)*, National Planning Commission, Addis Ababa.
- ⁹ Women Affairs has seen continuous restructuring. The institutional mechanisms in different ministries used to be called Gender Directorates, now evolved to Women and Youth Affairs Directorate. The most recent circular being distributed now refers to Women, Children and Youth Affairs Directorates in each ministry.
- ¹⁰ The Ministry of Women, Children's and Youth Affairs has developed a national strategy for women and development packages for urban, rural and pastoral women.
- ¹¹ For a comprehensive checklist for assessing gender dimensions of various programs see IASC (2006) *Women, Girls, Boys, and Men: Different needs – Equal opportunities*. Gender Handbook in Humanitarian Action.
- ¹² Annex 6 of the Gender Equality Strategy also provides a checklist for monitoring gender outcomes in resilience projects in the Sahel.
- ¹³ UNDP (2016) *The African Human Development Report*.
- ¹⁴ Muteshi, J. and Tiruwork Tizazu (n.d.) *Integrating Gender Responsive Budgeting into the Aid Effectiveness Agenda: Ethiopia country report*. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia (page 7).