

Gender equality in digital policy in Ethiopia



In partnership with:



Enhanced Integrated Framework

Trade for LDC development

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Foreword



I am pleased to present the report on Gender Equality in Digital Policy in Ethiopia developed within the partnership with the Enhanced Integrated Framework (EIF) to enhance the digital ecosystem and digital skills for the economic empowerment of women in LDCs. This partnership looks to leverage technology as a driver of entrepreneurial support for women, by building capacity at the policy level, increasing ability to mainstream gender and information and communication technologies (ICTs), and expanding the horizons of girls and women in the textile and apparel sector in Ethiopia.

This country report provides an overview of the extent to which gender is addressed in Ethiopia's digital policies, strategies, and regulations, divided into categories such as international development instruments, national digital policies and strategies, and digital sector-related laws and regulations. The report includes a non-exhaustive list of specific programmes supporting digital inclusion in Ethiopia.

The five pillars considered for analysis of gender in ICT strategies, policies and regulations are access to digital technology, digital skills, financial inclusion, entrepreneurship and leadership and digital infrastructure. There are explicit references to digital gender equality in Ethiopia's digital policies and strategies.

Based on the findings from the study, the report has a set of recommendations to enhance policies, laws, and regulations. There is a comprehensive checklist of preliminary policy actions that will help narrow the gender gap in Ethiopia. These range from ensuring women's enrolment and completion of secondary and tertiary education to involving the private sector when making digital policies to facilitating women's access to international networks.

I invite all stakeholders including policymakers to use this report to understand and take stock of the status of gender in policymaking in Ethiopia and to engage with national entities in order to increase their impact in creating gender digital equality and bridging the gender divide through their work.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Cosmas Luckyson Zavazava".

Cosmas Luckyson Zavazava
Director, Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT)
International Telecommunication Union (ITU)

1 Main statistics on gender and ICT¹

According to UN Women, as of December 2020, only 37.7 per cent of indicators that are needed to monitor the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) from a gender perspective are available, with gaps in key areas such as the labour market, the gender pay gap, information and communications technology skills, and women in local government. Data for more than 62 per cent of the 72 gender-specific SDG indicators in the Women Count Data Hub SDG Dashboard are not available. Furthermore, 25 per cent of the existing data on these indicators are identified as “low performance”.² Some of these SDG-related data are available on Ethiopia’s Open Data for Africa portal.³

Recent efforts to improve the availability of gender statistics by Ethiopia’s National Statistics Office include a publication of a Gender Statistics Indicators Handbook and a booklet on how to produce, analyse and communicate gender statistics.⁴ The handbook will be shared with sector ministries and other national specialists to support further documentation of gender indicator statistics and to support strategies for filling gaps.

Women in Ethiopia represent 49.98 per cent of the total population. This share is slightly below the average for low-income countries (50.16 per cent) and for the sub-Saharan region (50.11 per cent).⁵

When it comes to business and entrepreneurship, 26.5 per cent of managerial positions are held by women and 21.1 per cent of senior and middle management positions.⁶ A woman in Ethiopia can, in the same way as a man, apply for a passport, register a business, and sign a contract, among other things. The law does not prohibit discrimination in access to credit based on gender.⁷ Different international development instruments recognise the importance of women-owned enterprises (e.g. Ethiopia’s industrial policy, micro and small-scale enterprise development strategy, the growth and transformation plans (I and II) to accelerate growth and reduce poverty, etc.).⁸

Significant achievement has been made in promoting women’s political participation and in the political empowerment of women. Women have been nominated to half of the seats in the cabinet of ministers and well over a third of seats in the House of Peoples’ Representatives.⁹ “In 2018, for the first time, a woman was elected as the president of country. As such, 2.2 years of

¹ This section presents a general snapshot on statistics on gender and (when possible) on ICT, available online from international organizations and from Ethiopia’s National Statistics Office. These statistics include gender-disaggregated data from organizations such as the World Bank, UNDP, the African Development Bank, the World Economic Forum, ITU, and GSMA. Figures presented in this section may not fully reflect the current situation of gender and ICT in the country since some data are not available or, if available, they are not the latest one. It is indicated in the text when data for a given theme are not available.

² UN WOMEN data, <https://data.unwomen.org/country/ethiopia>

³ <https://ethiopia.opendataforafrica.org/>

⁴ See <https://www.statsethiopia.gov.et/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Gender-Statistics-Indicators-Handbook-Final-14-05-2020-1.pdf> and <https://www.statsethiopia.gov.et/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Gender-Statistics-BOOKLET.pdf>

⁵ World Bank data, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL.FE.ZS?contextual=aggregate&end=2019&locations=ET&start=1960&view=chart>

⁶ UN WOMEN data, <https://data.unwomen.org/country/ethiopia>

⁷ World Bank, Gender Statistics, https://databank.worldbank.org/id/2ddc971b?Code=SG.LAW.CRDD.GR&report_name=Gender_Indicators_Report&populartype=series

⁸ Meressa, H. A. (2020). Growth of micro and small-scale enterprises and its driving factors: Empirical evidence from entrepreneurs in emerging region of Ethiopia. *Journal of Innovation and Entrepreneurship*, 9(11), 1–22.

⁹ UNDP Ethiopia 2018, <https://www.et.undp.org/content/ethiopia/en/home/gender-equality.html>

the last 50 have seen a woman as Head of State; however, this progress has been offset by a reduction of women in ministerial positions from 47.6 per cent to 40 per cent.”¹⁰

Compared to other countries in the sub-Saharan region, women are relatively more represented in parliament. Women represent 38.8 per cent of parliamentarians in the lower house and 32 per cent in the upper house (Senate). Ethiopia ranks joint 19 position (alongside Argentina) out of 192 countries on the world classification of women in national parliaments of the Inter-Parliamentary Union.¹¹

¹⁰ WEF, Global Gender Gap Report 2021, http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2021.pdf

¹¹ Inter-Parliamentary Union – Women in Parliament, <http://archive.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm> and <http://archive.ipu.org/iss-e/women.htm>

2 Gender in digital policies, strategies, regulations and programmes

This section assesses the extent to which gender is addressed in Ethiopia's digital policies, strategies and regulations. These documents are divided into three broad categories, namely: international development instruments (i.e. Diagnostic Trade Integration Study, Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, Investment Policy Review¹²); national digital policies and strategies; and digital sector-related laws and regulations. A description of the methodology used to assess these texts is available in the Annex. This section also includes a non-exhaustive list of specific programmes supporting digital inclusion in Ethiopia.

Overall, the digital policy and regulatory framework of Ethiopia includes in its texts references to gender. There are, however, differences across categories with most digital national digital policies and strategies stating actions towards gender equality. In contrast, international development instruments and national laws and regulations typically stay at the 'recognition' level (i.e. including some references to gender in those legal texts).

Five pillars were considered for the analysis of gender in ICT strategies, policies and regulations: Digital technology, digital skills, financial inclusion, entrepreneurship and leadership, and digital infrastructure (see Annex).

Table 1: Digital policy and regulatory texts with references to pillars of digital gender equality

Policy, strategy, regulation	Digital technologies	Digital skills	Financial inclusion	Entrepreneurship and leadership	Digital infrastructure and services
International development instruments					
Investment and Innovation Policy Review 2002	Yes*	Yes*		Yes*	Yes*
Diagnostic Trade Integration Study Update 2016	Yes*	Yes**	Yes	Yes*	Yes*
Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper 2005-2009	Yes	Yes**	Yes*	Yes**	Yes*
National digital policies and strategies					
Digital Ethiopia 2025	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
National ICT Policy and Strategy 2016	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes*	Yes

¹² Given that Ethiopia is acceding to the WTO, no Trade Policy Review is available.

Table 1: Digital policy and regulatory texts with references to pillars of digital gender equality (continued)

Policy, strategy, regulation	Digital technologies	Digital skills	Financial inclusion	Entrepreneurship and leadership	Digital infrastructure and services
Institutional ICT Policy for Higher Education in Ethiopia 2020	Yes*	Yes*	Yes*	Yes*	Yes*
Digital Skills Country Action Plan for higher Education and TVET (2021-2030)	Yes	Yes		Yes*	Yes*
Ethiopia's Digital Payments Strategy					
Universal Electrification Access Program 2019		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<u>Selected national laws and regulations</u>					
Proclamation for the Regulation of Communications Services 2019			Yes*		Yes*
Hate and Disinformation Prevention and Suppression Proclamation 2020					Yes**
Proclamation No. 718/2011 to provide for a National Payment System			Yes		
Electronic Signature Proclamation No.1072/2018					Yes
Telecom Fraud Offence Proclamation 2012					Yes

Table 1: Digital policy and regulatory texts with references to pillars of digital gender equality (continued)

Policy, strategy, regulation	Digital technologies	Digital skills	Financial inclusion	Entrepreneurship and leadership	Digital infrastructure and services
Criminal Code of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia 2004					Yes**

Note: * Pillar is referenced in ICT policy, strategy or regulation but it does not include a gender perspective.
 ** Pillar is referenced and includes a gender perspective but does not specifically apply to the ICT sector. The Computer Crime Proclamation No. 958/2016 is not included in the listing of laws and regulation because it has been amended.

2.1 International development instruments

International development instruments such as Ethiopia's Diagnostic Trade Integration Study, Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, and the country's Investment and Innovation Policy Review include references to the pillars of digital gender equality:

- The UNCTAD Investment and Innovation Policy Review of Ethiopia (2002) does include, to some extent references to ICT and four pillars (i.e. technology, digital skills, networks and digital infrastructure) but without reference of "gender equality" or "women".¹³
- *The Diagnostic Trade Integration Study of Ethiopia update 2016 includes references to five pillars with scant inclusion of gender: there are six references to women related to strengthening of human resources and innovation capacity and obtaining long-term bank credit.*¹⁴ *Actions proposed in these areas do not apply specifically to the ICT sector but to manufacturers and farmers.*
- *The Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper includes 130 references to women, 107 references to gender, and 55 references to telecommunications.*¹⁵

In addition, one of the pillar strategies of the five-year development plan refers to "Unleashing the potentials of Ethiopia's women". Access to digital technology is the only pillar of digital inclusion that includes a gender equality perspective. Other pillars are referred to in the document, but without specifically indicating the ICT sector (i.e. entrepreneurship and leaders, and education).

2.2 National digital policies and strategies

Ethiopia's national digital policies and strategies such as Digital Ethiopia 2025 and other policy documents include a substantive number of references to the pillars of digital gender equality.

- *Digital Ethiopia 2025* was approved by the Council of Ministers on 15 June 2020 as a national strategy and proposes an inclusive digital economy approach.¹⁶ This is an

¹³ UNCTAD 2002, Ethiopia's Investment and Innovation Policy Review, <https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/poiteipcm4.en.pdf>

¹⁴ EIF & UNCTAD 2016, Ethiopia's Diagnostic Trade Integration Study Update, https://enhancedif.org/system/files/uploads/dtis-update-june2016_ethiopia.pdf

¹⁵ Ethiopia's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) 2005-2009, when drafting this report, the document was available at: https://enhancedif.org/en/system/files/uploads/ethiopia_pasdep_final_english.pdf?file=1&type=node&id=2916

¹⁶ Digital Ethiopia Strategy 2025, <https://mint.gov.et/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Digital-Ethiopia-2025-Strategy-english-.pdf>

umbrella strategy from which sectors can design and create more specific strategies. It is in alignment with national and international commitments such as the Ten-Year Development Plan (2020-2030), the Home-grown Economic Reform Agenda and the African Union's Continental Digital Strategy.¹⁷ Gender and digital inclusion are an integral part of this strategy: 29 references to women, 6 references to gender; 10 references to inclusion; 101 reference to skills; 157 references to technology; 15 references to networks; 43 references to finance and 146 references to infrastructure. The strategy references the five pillars and includes, to a certain extent, a gender perspective. It includes a section on ensuring inclusivity and sets a potential timeline for implementation (i.e. from 18 month to 3 years).

- *Ethiopia's National Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Policy and Strategy of 2016*, makes youth and women one of its seven pillars -together with education and entrepreneurship.¹⁸ *ICT infrastructure, ICT human capital and ICT legal and regulatory environment are the three foundational elements of the policy. Although, the document does not include references to gender equality, it does refer to gender (3 times); to women (19 times); to business networks (3 times), and once to girls. The document also states actions addressing pillars of digital inclusion for gender equality.*
- *The Institutional ICT Policy for Higher Education in Ethiopia published by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education in 2020* does not include any reference to women, girls, inclusion or equality.¹⁹ It does include a reference to gender in a section on social media posts guidelines. The five pillars (i.e. digital technology, digital skills, finance, networks and digital infrastructure) are referred to throughout the document but without reference to gender.
- *Ethiopia's Digital Skills Country Action Plan for higher Education and TVET (2021-2030)* includes eight references to gender and three references to women, focusing on two pillars: access to technology, and digital skills. Promoting gender equality is embedded in its implementation strategy.²⁰
- *Ethiopia's Digital Payments Strategy* developed by the National Bank of Ethiopia, with support from the Better Than Cash Alliance. The strategy aims to adopt the value of digital transactions not only for e-government but also for tourism payments and cross-border remittances. Recently, laws relevant to e-transactions and payment instrument issuers were legislated as the first steps toward governing digital transactions.
- *The Universal Electrification Access Program 2019* is an initiative of the Government of Ethiopia to increase electricity to all regional states of the country.²¹ The program evaluation covered 9 regions of Ethiopia, 78 districts and over 1 250 villages. It includes a dedicated section on gender and citizen engagement, as well as 77 references to gender and 117 references to women. It also includes references to four out of five pillars of digital gender equality (i.e., digital skills, entrepreneurship, financial inclusion, and digital infrastructure).

Ethiopia has not developed a national cybersecurity strategy. Nevertheless, a sector specific strategy on interoperability exists as well as a data exchange interoperability framework in eHealth.²²

¹⁷ ITU 2021, The Road to Addis: Shaping the 2021 Digital Development Agenda, https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Conferences/WTDC/WTDC21/Documents/Speeches/WTDC_Road_to_Addis_Dr._Ahmedin_Remarks.pdf

¹⁸ Ethiopia's National Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Policy and Strategy 2016, <http://www.asta.gov.et/documents/10184/18126/The+National+Information+and++Communication+Technology++%28ICT%29+Policy+and+Strategy.pdf/2236ed90-0f78-467b-89fb-b4c2e317af83>

¹⁹ Ethiopia's Ministry of Science and Higher Education 2020, Institutional ICT Policy for Higher Education, <http://www.moshe.gov.et/files/1610812814562.pdf>

²⁰ Ethiopia's Ministry of Science and Higher Education 2020, Digital Skills Country Action Plan for higher Education and TVET, <https://www.moshe.gov.et/files/1610810983579.pdf>

²¹ National Electrification Program 2.0 Integrated Planning for Universal Access 2019, <https://www.powermag.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/ethiopia-national-electrification-program.pdf>

²² <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Ffdf4q3ux6e1gEXcRzuM-aEfdIPLLslsnUjhjH7XzS4/edit>

2.3 Digital inclusion in other national development policies

Ethiopia's 10 Year Development Plan (2020-2030)²³ has a pillar on ensuring equitable participation of women and children. Furthermore, innovation and technology are identified by the plan as an enabling sector, especially focusing on access to innovation and technological information and developing a digital economy.

Ethiopia's National Action Plan to implement the Beijing Platform for Action recognizes that the "lack of appropriate technology increases the burden of women and decreases the opportunity for income generating activities and limits their participation in development sectors."²⁴

Ethiopia's Homegrown Economic Reform Agenda (HERA)²⁵ released in 2019 focuses the reform agenda on building an inclusive digital economy through: expediting the telecom reform agenda and on-going work on digital ID system; sandbox regulatory approaches to support technology start-ups and incumbents; scaling up on-going government ICT initiatives such as e-governance, WoredaNet, the rural connectivity program, and rural public internet access centres; promoting e-commerce and digitalization of the financial and logistic sectors; developing ICT parks and fostering the development of the ICT ecosystem; and investing on ICT literacy and advanced vocational and tertiary education.

Other national development policies of Ethiopia not specifically dealing with the digital sector include references to the pillars of digital gender equality.

2.4 Selected national laws and regulations

Most of the selected national laws and regulations in Ethiopia refer to digital infrastructure and services pillar with few laws and regulations referring to the financial inclusion.

The *Proclamation for the Regulation of Communications Services* signed in 2019 introduced a new regulatory framework for the development of an open telecommunication market, while protecting national ICT assets such as infrastructure, and reinforcing consumer rights.²⁶ It provides for the establishment of an independent regulatory body, the Ethiopian Communication Authority (ECA), responsible for regulating the telecommunication sector and the technical elements of broadcasting, for granting licences to new operators and for overseeing regulatory issues linked, for instance, to the spread of mobile money.²⁷ The law includes one reference to gender.

In terms of safety, Ethiopia enacted the *Hate and Disinformation Prevention and Suppression Proclamation* in March 2020 to address hate speech and disinformation.²⁸ The text includes four references to gender.

²³ Ethiopia's 10 Years Development Plan (2020-2030), <https://europa.eu/capacity4dev/file/109230/download?token=rxippQKh>

²⁴ Ethiopia's National Policy on Women, <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/country/national/ethiopia.htm>

²⁵ <https://www.pmo.gov.et/initiatives/>

²⁶ <https://eca.et/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Communications-Service-Proclamation-No.-1148-2019.pdf>

²⁷ World Bank 2019, In Ethiopia, digital development just took a major leap forward, <https://blogs.worldbank.org/digital-development/ethiopia-digital-development-just-took-major-leap-forward>

²⁸ Ethiopia's Hate Speech and Disinformation Prevention and Suppression Proclamation 2020, <https://chilot.me/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/HATE-SPEECH-AND-DISINFORMATION-PREVENTION-AND-SUPPRESSION-PROCLAMATION.pdf>

Proclamation No. 718/2011 to provide for a National Payment System includes a reference to gender and to digital.²⁹ The Oversight of the National Payment System includes eight references to gender as well as a number of references to electronic money.³⁰

E-commerce legislation has been adopted covering electronic transactions and cybercrime.³¹ The *Electronic Signature Proclamation No.1072/2018* includes a reference to gender.³² The *Telecom Fraud Offence Proclamation 2012* also includes a reference to gender. The *Criminal Code of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia 2004* includes 11 references to women.³³

Consumer protection and data protection laws are not available, according to the UNCTAD Adoption of e-commerce legislation worldwide database.

Ethiopia is making amendments to its computer crime law (Computer Crime Proclamation No. 958/2016³⁴ and revising its Criminal Procedure Code Proclamation No. 185/1961. Overall, there is a need to update and modernize this law and to bring it in line with international good practice in areas such as definitions, computer- and content-related offences, investigatory measures.³⁵ The text of the Computer Crime Proclamation includes a reference to gender and but makes no reference to women.

2.5 Women's rights in national legislation

After the change of government in 1991, Ethiopia adopted a new constitution (in 1994), which placed a special emphasis on access to information, freedom of expression and human rights. Under Article 29 of the Constitution, "Everyone shall have the right to freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through other media of his choice."³⁶

The Constitution has a strong emphasis on equality between men and women: it includes 28 references to equal or equality and includes a full article on the rights of women (Article 35). Legislation aimed at improving respect for women's rights has been enacted, examples include:

- A National Action Plan for Gender Equality 2006-2010 adopted in 2005.
- The Family Law bill enables women to own property after marriage and removed the husband's right to dictate whether the wife can work outside the home.³⁷

²⁹ National Bank of Ethiopia 2011, <https://nbebank.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/nationalpaymentsystem.pdf>

³⁰ National Bank of Ethiopia 2021, <https://www.nbe.gov.et/wp-content/uploads/pdf/proclamation/oversight-the-national-payment-system.pdf>

³¹ UNCTAD 2021, Adoption of e-commerce legislation worldwide, <https://unctad.org/topic/ecommerce-and-digital-economy/ecommerce-law-reform/summary-adoption-e-commerce-legislation-worldwide>

³² <https://www.insa.gov.et/documents/20124/0/Proclamation-No.-1072-2018-Electronic-Signature-Proclamation.pdf/923ee17e-29bf-394c-cee4-f00d8c95e69d?t=1600929143553&download=true>

³³ <http://www.wipo.int/edocs/lexdocs/laws/en/et/et011en.pdf>

³⁴ Computer Crime Proclamation No. 958/2016, <https://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/docs/ELECTRONIC/103967/126636/F1922468791/ETH103967.pdf>

³⁵ https://www.coe.int/en/web/octopus/country-wiki-ap/-/asset_publisher/CmDb7M4RGb4Z/content/ethiopia/pop_up?_101_INSTANCE_CmDb7M4RGb4Z_viewMode=print&_101_INSTANCE_CmDb7M4RGb4Z_languageId=en_GB

³⁶ Global information society watch 2009, Ethiopia's regulatory framework, <https://www.giswatch.org/pt-br/node/29>

³⁷ African Development Bank, Gender Equality Index 2019, <https://www.afdb.org/en/documents/africa-gender-index-report-2019-analytical-report>

- The adoption of amendments to the Family Code in 2001 raised the minimum legal age for marriage to 18 for both men and women (art. 7); abolished the provision conferring marital power of the husband as the head of the family; and adds further grounds for divorce (art. 76) by mutual consent of the spouses.
- The Criminal Code in 2005 criminalizes several harmful traditional practices, such as abduction (art. 586), female circumcision, infibulations or other harmful practices (art. 565, 566 & 567), early and forced marriage (art. 648), widow inheritance and polygamy (art. 650). It also criminalizes domestic violence (art. 564).

2.6 Programmes and initiatives supporting digital inclusion³⁸

Ethiopia benefits from the support of donors such as the European Union and the United States. The Government also partners with the private sector to put in place a number of initiatives to foster digital inclusion in the country. International organizations and regional banks also contribute with programmes and initiatives.

Digital inclusion

- The World Bank Ethiopia Digital Foundations Project³⁹. As part of this project, World Bank allocates USD 200 million for digital economy in Ethiopia.⁴⁰
- European Commission, European Development Fund.⁴¹
- The Ministry of Innovation and Technology and the Internet Society Sign New Pact to Advance Digital Economy in Ethiopia.⁴²
- UNCDF, Inclusive Digital Economies Action in Ethiopia: Refugee Response.⁴³

Digital skills

- Global Partnership for Education in Ethiopia.⁴⁴
- Digital Ethiopia Learning (DEL) is a digital skills and literacy initiative designed to deliver digital skill trainings and courses around emerging technologies in IT as part of human skills development aimed to enable citizens use and work with the digital technology tools and services for realizing digital transformation vision of Ethiopia. The programme is led by the Digital Transformation Project Office of Ministry of Innovation and Technology. The DEL platform offers training, provides certification and prepares trainees for the future of work and life powered by digitalization.⁴⁵
- Ethiopia is included in the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), with the support of the African Union (AU) initiated programme to boost jobs and enhance digital skills. The overarching goal is to increase the number of young Africans in target countries able to access decent work in the digital economy.⁴⁶

³⁸ The list of programmes presented in this section is indicative; it is not an exhaustive list.

³⁹ <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/650161570436992486/pdf/Concept-Project-Information-Documents-PID-Ethiopia-Digital-Foundations-Project-P171034.pdf>

⁴⁰ <https://dig.watch/updates/world-bank-allocates-usd-200-million-digital-economy-ethiopia>

⁴¹ https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/where-we-work/ethiopia_en

⁴² <https://www.internetsociety.org/news/press-releases/2021/the-ministry-of-innovation-and-technology-and-the-internet-society-sign-new-pact-to-advance-digital-economy-in-ethiopia/>

⁴³ <https://www.uncdf.org/article/5695/rfa-inclusive-digital-economies-action-in-ethiopia-refugee-response>

⁴⁴ <https://www.globalpartnership.org/where-we-work/ethiopia>

⁴⁵ <https://del.gov.et/>

⁴⁶ ITU, ILO, AU project on boosting jobs and enhancing digital skills, <https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Regional-Presence/Africa/Pages/projects/2020/jobs-skills.aspx>

Financial inclusion

- Memorandum of understanding (MOU) signed between MINT and Mastercard.⁴⁷
- GIZ and Orange.⁴⁸
- European Union (EU), the Organization of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS) and UN Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) to Launch a New Programme on Digital Finance in Ethiopia.⁴⁹
- UN Technology bank for Least Developed Countries (LDCs). Current activities include science, technology and innovation reviews and technology needs assessments; promoting access to research and technical knowledge; and strengthening national academies of science in LDCs.⁵⁰
- Approval of a USD 2.33 million grant by the African Development Bank (AfDB) for EthSwitch, official backbone for e-payments providers and end-users in the country. It runs Ethiopay, the card scheme that helps Ethiopian banks issue payment cards. The AfDB grant to EthSwitch comes from the Africa Digital Financial Inclusion Facility (ADFI), a fund launched in 2019 in partnership with the French Development Agency, the French Treasury, the Ministry of Finance of the Government of Luxembourg, and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.⁵¹

Entrepreneurship and leadership

- World Bank incubator financing women, We-Fi⁵²
 - Affirmative Finance Action for Women in Africa (AFAWA): The African Development Bank (AfDB) We-Fi programme, AFAWA, seeks to improve women-led small business (WSME) access to finance across the African continent and overcoming institutional challenges constraining women's access to finance. By employing a holistic approach, the programme offers innovative and tailored financial products, including a credit enhancement instrument, specialized capacity building trainings to financial institutions and WSMEs, and targeted initiatives to transform the business-enabling environment for WSMEs. The programme will be implemented in multiple countries across Africa.
 - Implemented by the World Bank: Building a pipeline of women entrepreneurs in the digital space: Project to support Gebeya, a pan-Africa education technology company, to build a robust pipeline of women entrepreneurs in technology. Gebeya to train female software developers, provide technical and strategic guidance on business development and mentoring opportunities with more established entrepreneurs. Most promising women entrepreneurs to receive additional support from Gebeya's accelerator, including seed funding. (We-Fi funding allocated: USD 250 000; Total project size: USD 500 000).

⁴⁷ <https://newsroom.mastercard.com/nea/press-releases/mastercard-and-ministry-of-innovation-technology-sign-mou-to-fast-track-development-of-digital-economy-in-ethiopia/>

⁴⁸ <https://www.biztechafrika.com/article/first-digital-centre-launches-ethiopia-giz-and-ora/16445/>

⁴⁹ <https://www.uncdf.org/article/6852/eu-oacps-and-uncdf-to-launch-a-new-programme-on-digital-finance-services-in-ethiopia>

⁵⁰ <https://www.un.org/technologybank/>

⁵¹ <https://techcabal.com/2021/03/11/ethswitch-africa-development-bank-grant-ethiopia-epayments/>

⁵² <https://we-fi.org/where-we-work/>

Digital infrastructure and services

- African Development Bank USD 2.33 million grant to support the modernization of electronic payments infrastructure.⁵³
- GSMA Innovation Fund for Mobile Internet Adoption and Digital Inclusion Grantees.⁵⁴
- Universal Access and Service Framework and Universal Access Fund: Comments from civil society organisations and academia to the Ethiopian Communications Authority on the Universal Access and Service Framework and Universal Access Fund Regulation (no specific reference to women but focus on inclusion).⁵⁵

⁵³ <https://www.afdb.org/en/news-and-events/press-releases/ethiopia-african-development-bank-approves-233-million-grant-support-modernization-electronic-payments-infrastructure-42603>

⁵⁴ <https://www.gsma.com/mobilefordevelopment/m/africa-118/>

⁵⁵ <https://www.apc.org/en/pubs/comments-civil-society-organisations-and-academia-ethiopian-communications-authority-universal>

3 Digital gender equality in practice

This section offers publicly available gender-disaggregated data on five pillars of digital gender equality: access to digital technologies; digital skills; financial inclusion; entrepreneurship and leadership; and digital infrastructure and services.⁵⁶ These data are complemented with a short description of selected efforts to foster the five pillars. Also, boxes with examples of initiatives promoting digital inclusion are displayed throughout the section.

3.1 Access to digital technology

Although most people own a mobile phone, women are still less likely than men to own one. According to Ethiopia's Open Data for Africa portal 27 per cent of women and 54 per cent of men owned a mobile phone in 2016.⁵⁷

In Ethiopia mobile cellular networks cover 97 per cent of the population, 85 per cent with at least a 3G mobile network and 10 per cent with at least a 4G network, but few people own a computer. According to statistics, 5 per cent of population owned a computer in 2016 and 15.4 per cent of the population had Internet access at home.⁵⁸

Relatively few people use the Internet (17 per cent). From the total female population only 14 per cent use the internet in comparison to 20 per cent of the male population.⁵⁹

Box 1: Ten recommendations for reaching women with mobile across low- and middle-income countries.

Recommendations are based on GSMA experience working closely with mobile operators, these recommendations will also be useful for other organisations offering mobile-related products and services to women, including other industry players, policymakers, non-governmental organizations and the development community.

Include a focus on female customers at the organisational level

- 1) Set gender targets that are endorsed and communicated by leadership.
- 2) Nominate an appropriate department to champion reaching female customers and involve the wider organisation.

⁵⁶ Figures presented in this section may not fully reflect the current situation of gender and ICT in the country because some data are not available or, if available, they are not up-to-date. It is indicated in the text when data for a given theme are not available.

⁵⁷ <https://ethiopia.opendataforafrica.org/>

⁵⁸ ITU Statistics and ITU Digital development board, <https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Pages/stat/default.aspx>

⁵⁹ ITU Statistics and ITU Digital development board, [Digital Development \(itu.int\)](https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Pages/stat/default.aspx)

Box 1: Ten recommendations for reaching women with mobile across low- and middle-income countries. (Continued)

Understand the opportunity and challenge of reaching women

- 3) Get on top of your data, but don't let a lack of quality gender data prevent you from taking action.
- 4) Understand both women's aspirations and challenges in your market.
- 5) Establish the commercial opportunity from the outset, at both an organisational and project level.

Take action to reach women through new or existing initiatives

- 6) Ensure offerings holistically address women's barriers and aspirations in your market.
- 7) Consider whether adapting your mainstream products could reach female customers effectively rather than developing female-specific ones.
- 8) Proactively ensure your marketing and distribution are tailored to reach women as well as men.
- 9) Incorporate women in distribution activities to influence and on-board female customers.
- 10) Consider using partners to extend your reach or bring complementary strengths.

Source: GSMA Connected Women Programme, <https://www.gsma.com/mobilefordevelopment/reaching-women-with-mobile/>

3.2 Digital skills

Youth literacy rate of 15- to 24-year-olds is 72.8 per cent with women presenting a slightly lower rate than men (72 per cent versus 73.5 per cent). The literacy rate of 25- to 64-year-olds is 42.1 per cent with women showing a lower rate than men (31.1 per cent versus 53.3 per cent).⁶⁰ Overall, the expected number of years of schooling among women is lower than among men (8.3 versus 9.3).⁶¹

Enrolment and completion of education decrease across the three education levels and women perform slightly higher than men in pre-primary and upper secondary education. The enrolment ratio in pre-primary education is 44 per cent, with women showing a slightly lower rate than men (42.9 per cent versus 45.1 per cent for men). The completion rate of primary education is 52.1 per cent, with women showing a slightly higher rate than men (52.3 per cent versus 51.9 per cent for men). The completion rate of lower secondary education is 21.4 per cent, with women showing a slightly lower rate than men (21 per cent versus 21.9 per cent for men). Completion rate of upper secondary education is 13.1 per cent with women showing a slightly higher rate than men (13.7 per cent versus 12.3 per cent for men). Gross enrolment ratio for tertiary education is 8.1 per cent (2014), with women showing a lower rate than men (5.3 per cent

⁶⁰ UNESCO SDG 4 Country Tables 2016 and 2017, <http://tcg.uis.unesco.org/data-resources/>

⁶¹ UNDP, Gender Inequality Index, <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/gender-inequality-index-gii>

versus 10.9 per cent for men).⁶² The gender parity index of the gross enrolment ratio increased from 0.79 in 1990 to 0.95 in 2017.⁶³

Women are less likely than men to graduate from science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) programmes. A noticeable difference is encountered in terms of share of graduates from STEM programmes in tertiary education between women and men (17.3 per cent versus 82.7 per cent for men). The female share of employment in senior and middle management is 21.1 per cent.⁶⁴

Box 2: ITU Digital Skills Assessment Guidebook

The ITU Digital Skills Assessment Guidebook has been designed to serve as a comprehensive, practical step-by-step tool for national digital skills assessments. The guidebook can be used to determine the existing supply of a digitally skilled cohort at a national level, to assess skills demand from industry and other sectors, to identify skills gaps, and to develop policies to address future digital skills requirements. It is designed for use by policy-makers and other stakeholders, such as partners in the private sector, non-governmental organizations, and academia.

ITU Digital Skills Assessment Guidebook, <https://academy.itu.int/main-activities/research-publications/digital-skills-insights/digital-skills-assessment-guidebook>

Substantial achievements are recorded in enrolling girls in schools with high gross and net enrolment ratios. Furthermore, in terms of educational attainment, 85 per cent of the gap has been closed, which means that Ethiopia ranks among the bottom 35 countries on the World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Index for offering equal access to education to both boys and girls.⁶⁵

Box 3: A repository of information on projects, resources, and exemplary cases of digital skills

The EQUALS Digital Skills Hub is an online platform that functions as a repository of information on projects, resources, and exemplary cases of digital skills education for women and girls. It is the first of its kind resource hub where stakeholders can find information on projects, resources and success stories on efforts from around the world to bridge the gender digital skills gap, all in one convenient location. It aims to assist their efforts to develop, implement, and evaluate existing and new projects that expand digital skills for women and girls.

Source: EQUALS Digital Skills Hub, <https://equalspartnership.wixsite.com/digitalskillshub/about>

⁶² UNESCO SDG 4 Country Tables 2016 and 2017, <http://tcg.uis.unesco.org/data-resources/>

⁶³ UN LDCs, <https://www.un.org/ohrls/content/gender-parity-index-gross-enrolment-ratio-increased-079-1990-095-2017>

⁶⁴ UNDP, Gender Inequality Index, <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/gender-inequality-index-gii>

⁶⁵ World Economic Forum, Global Gender Gap Report 2021, http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2021.pdf

Despite these achievements, more work is needed to continue reducing the gaps in education. Participation of girls is still lower than that of boys and the national Gender Parity Index (GPI) for grades 1-8 were 0.90 in 2016/17.⁶⁶ According to the World Economic Forum, “just 44.4% of women are literate (versus 59% of men), and today almost 20% of girls are not enrolled in primary education. Although boys also are often excluded from primary education (12.3%), there is still a 7.2% gap to be bridged on such a basic educational requirement. In addition, gender gaps remain large in tertiary education, where only 5.3% of girls are enrolled, half the share of boys. Finally, women still suffer other forms of discrimination, in accessing financial services or inheritance, as well as security concerns: 28% of women have been subject to violence at least once in their lifetime.”⁶⁷

Use of technology in schools is at an early stage mainly due to limited ICT infrastructure development and a lack of trained human resources. Critical gaps in the use of digital technology include: “(a) building the capacity of in-service teachers in digital and pedagogical skills through continuous professional development (CPD); (b) reforming teacher education and training to augment the use of digital technology; (c) promoting social dialogue through the involvement of teachers in programme and policy design; and (d) securing funding to undertake these initiatives.”⁶⁸

Box 4: Actions at the company level for developing skills strategies for the new world

As part of its Future of Work project, the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD) partnered with GAN Global to understand why business action on skills development is important not just to deliver on business objectives, but also to achieve a more cohesive and equal society.

The guide sketches a number of actions that human resources officers can take to set their companies on a path to developing skills strategies for the new world of work:

- think long term about your skills development strategies;
- analyse your company situation and choose the best suited solution(s);
- empower and engage your employee base;
- build partnerships and collaborate;
- develop programmes that promote diversity, inclusion and access.

Source: GAN Network, Empowering Girls and Young Women in the ICT Sector, <https://www.gan-global.org/post/empowering-girls-and-young-women-in-the-information-and-communication-technologies-ict-sector>

⁶⁶ UNDP Ethiopia 2018, <https://www.et.undp.org/content/ethiopia/en/home/gender-equality.html>

⁶⁷ World Economic Forum, Global Gender Gap Report 2021, http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2021.pdf

⁶⁸ ILO 2021, Digitalization in teaching and education in Ethiopia, https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_dialogue/---sector/documents/publication/wcms_783664.pdf

Ethiopia is trying to network its education system with ICTs. In addition to developing a national ICT policy and strategy, two large ICT projects have been implemented: “the SchoolNet initiative, which aims to develop a wide-area network linking schools in the country by making internet and online education accessible, and the *General Education Quality Improvement Programme II (GEQIP II)*, which is an ICT intervention aimed at improving the learning environment in schools (Government of Ethiopia 2013).” An enabling environment has also been created through an updated National ICT Policy and Strategy (Government of Ethiopia 2016).⁶⁹

3.3 Financial inclusion

In 2017, only 1 per cent of adults had a bank account. Data for the same period shows that 13.36 million adults without bank accounts owned a mobile phone. In the past year, 13 per cent of adults received payments for agricultural products in cash only, representing an opportunity for mobile financial services in Ethiopia.⁷⁰

Women are less likely than men to own and use mobile money services. The proportion of adults (15 years and older) with an account at a financial institution or mobile-money-service provider is 29.08 per cent for women and 40.94 per cent for men.⁷¹

Among those adults with a bank account, in the past year 10 per cent who paid utility bills in cash also have a mobile phone. Of the 12 per cent of adults who made or received digital payments in the past year 8.2 per cent were women and 15.9 per cent were men).⁷² Among adults with an account, 11 per cent made or receive other digital payments.⁷³

Ownership of a credit card is limited. Only 0.3 per cent of people aged 15 or older owned a credit card in 2017 (women 0.2 per cent and men 0.3 per cent).⁷⁴

⁶⁹ ILO 2021, Digitalization in teaching and education in Ethiopia, https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_dialogue/---sector/documents/publication/wcms_783664.pdf

⁷⁰ World Bank, Global Findex: Access to fintech 2017, <https://globalfindex.worldbank.org/>

⁷¹ UN WOMEN data, <https://data.unwomen.org/country/ethiopia>

⁷² World Bank, Gender Statistics, <https://databank.worldbank.org/source/gender-statistics>

⁷³ World Bank, Global Findex: Access to fintech 2017, <https://globalfindex.worldbank.org/>

⁷⁴ World Bank, Gender Statistics, <https://databank.worldbank.org/source/gender-statistics>

Box 5: A 10-point action plan for prioritizing women's digital financial inclusion

A 10-point action plan for governments and businesses to rebuild stronger after COVID-19 by prioritizing women's digital financial inclusion:

- 1) Digitalize private sector payments.
- 2) Digitalize payments of government social benefits.
- 3) Outlaw discrimination against women.
- 4) Ensure universal access to identification.
- 5) End the gender gap in mobile phone ownership.
- 6) Employ more women in banks and mobile network operators.
- 7) Collect, analyse and use gender-disaggregated data.
- 8) Design appropriate and affordable financial products for women.
- 9) Help women benefit from e-commerce opportunities.
- 10) Create and enforce strong digital finance consumer protection mechanisms.

All ten actions are equally important. They are not sequential steps but mutually reinforcing actions for all stakeholders committed to reaching financial equality.

Source: UN financial inclusion initiative for LDCs: <https://www.uncdf.org/article/6553/reaching-financial-equality-for-women>

At the regulatory level, reforms focused on digital financial services are on-going. In the context of Ethiopia's Homegrown Economic Reform Agenda (HERA) the government, through the National Bank of Ethiopia (NBE), is currently focusing reforms on digitalizing financial services and bolstering the infrastructure of financial markets to support digital financial services (DFS). The goal is to foster innovation in the financial sector and leverage DFS to achieve financial inclusion and policy alleviation.⁷⁵

The UNCDF Policy Accelerator has been working with NBE on these initiatives since 2019. During the diagnostic work, the absence of a non-bank e-money issuing licensing regime was identified as an area of opportunity. Since then, NBE has drafted and released two directives (i.e. Licensing and Authorization of Payment Instrument Issuers Directive No. ONPS/01I2020; and Licensing and Authorization of Payment System Operators Directive No. ONPS/02I2020), creating opportunities for new kinds of financial service providers such as non-bank electronic money issuers and other types of DFS providers to operate. Furthermore, UNCDF is currently assisting NBE to develop tools to operationalize the directives as well as advising on planning and executing onsite and offsite tasks.⁷⁶

Some initiatives also promote practical digital inclusion of women. One example is the establishment of commercial banks with all-female branches. This is the case of the Commercial

⁷⁵ Some foreign operators expressed doubts over the mobile money regulation and political stability, see <https://www.ft.com/content/deabd4ae-4bc0-4b41-bb25-cebec2ddc560>

⁷⁶ UNCDF, Accelerating financial inclusion in Ethiopia, <https://policyaccelerator.uncdf.org/whats-new/financial-inclusion-ethiopia>

Bank of Ethiopia and the Dashen bank that has opened three all-female run branches since April 2019.⁷⁷

Another initiative is a bank for women by women. The Enat Bank, founded in 2011, was initiated by a group of 11 Ethiopian women who had a vision of creating a bank that was open to everyone, with a special focus on women and ensuring their access to credit. The bank stands out among African banks with women owning 64 per cent of its shares and holding leadership positions from senior bank management to the Board of Directors. Enat provides consumer and commercial banking services coupled with non-financial services such as capacity building workshops and financial literacy programmes for women. In the private banking industry, in terms of branch effectiveness, it is ranked second in Ethiopia.⁷⁸ Interestingly, the bank was already mentioned in Ethiopia's Diagnostic Trade Integration Study as an interesting private sector approach of collateral provision to solve the problem of ambiguous credit risk and resulting high borrowing costs.

3.4 Entrepreneurship and leadership

Ethiopia has a clear opportunity to boost its entrepreneurial activity according to the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor. In 2012, only 12 per cent of the adult population (18 to 64) were in the process of starting a new business or were running businesses that were 3.5 years old or less, compared to an average of 28 per cent for countries in the region. In addition, only around 8 per cent of adults were running established businesses in comparison with the regional average of 15 per cent.⁷⁹

Women are still less engaged than men in entrepreneurial activities. While 68 per cent of men perceive good business opportunities and 72 per cent believe they have the skills necessary to run a business, the figures for women fall to 62 per cent and 65 per cent, respectively, reducing the pool of potential female entrepreneurs. On the other hand, while 73 per cent of male early-stage entrepreneurs expect to create jobs in the future, the 64 per cent of women in business make such a forecast.⁸⁰

In 2018, the number of female sole proprietors reached 68 092 in contrast to 120 096 male sole proprietors. However, the number of start-up procedures to register a business is the same for both women and men and these procedures were reduced from 14 in 2016 to 11 in 2019⁸¹, increasing efficiency in the formalization process of business.

Women-related trade facilitation in Ethiopia is relatively lower to that of Eastern Africa but with a potential for growth (22.2 per cent versus 35.2 per cent). Similarly, small and medium-sized enterprise-related trade facilitation accounts for 6.7 per cent in Ethiopia and 21.1 per cent in Eastern Africa. A trade facilitation policy/strategy that incorporates special consideration of female trader has not been implemented yet. However, trade facilitation measures to benefit women involved in trade are being partially implemented.⁸²

⁷⁷ <https://www.addisinsight.net/dashen-inaugurates-all-female-run-branch/>

⁷⁸ Financial Alliance for Women, <https://financialallianceforwomen.org/news-events/new-member-spotlight-enat-bank-ethiopia/>

⁷⁹ Global entrepreneurship monitor, <https://www.gemconsortium.org/economy-profiles/ethiopia>

⁸⁰ Global entrepreneurship monitor, <https://www.gemconsortium.org/economy-profiles/ethiopia>

⁸¹ World Bank, Gender statistics, <https://databank.worldbank.org/source/gender-statistics>

⁸² United Nations Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation 2019, <https://untfsurvey.org/economy>

Women in business (not only in the digital sector) are less likely to be part of formal business networks, particularly international and regional networks. These networks are important as they offer training, information, advice, partnerships, encouragement and support.⁸³ Ethiopia is not the exception as “networking” is one of the 12 indicators of the Global Entrepreneurship Index as an area for continued development.⁸⁴ Furthermore, only 13.3 per cent of manufacturing firms cooperated with partners and 19.2 per cent stated that they engaged in innovation activities.⁸⁵

Box 6: Examples of diverse international networks in the digital sector

The UNCTAD eTrade for Women Communities network gives opportunities to female digital entrepreneurs to be inspired, empowered and make connections all around the globe.

eTrade for Women combines the transformative power of women entrepreneurship with the positive impact of digital technologies. It supports women entrepreneurs who are shaping the digital ecosystem in developing economies and economies in transition to thrive as business leaders and emerge as an influential voice in the public policy debate.

Source: eTradeForAll/WOMEN <https://etradeforall.org/et4women/>

The Partner2Connect Digital Coalition is a multi-stakeholders alliance launched by ITU to foster meaningful connectivity and digital transformation in the hardest-to-connect communities, including Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries, and Small Island Developing States.

Source: ITU <https://itu.int/itu-d/sites/partner2connect/>

The Network of Women (NoW) in ITU-D encourages gender balance and was especially active in the lead up to the World Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC) in 2021. The objectives of the network are:

- build, in the medium and long term, a community where female delegates support each other, expand their network, advocate and share experience and knowledge;
- promote the active participation of women in the activities of ITU and the sector in general;
- give visibility to women and empower them for larger responsibilities in their respective delegations, at international platforms such as the WTDC-21;
- encourage experienced female delegates to mentor ICT professionals in order to create a stronger base for women in the digital space.

Source: ITU <https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Conferences/WTDC/WTDC21/NoW/Pages/default.aspx>

⁸³ ITC 2015, Unlocking Markets for Women to Trade, https://www.intracen.org/uploadedFiles/intracenorg/Content/Publications/women_in_trade_web.pdf

⁸⁴ The Global Entrepreneurship and Development Institute (GEDi) 2020, <https://thegedi.org/tool/>

⁸⁵ UNESCO Institute of Statistics (focus on cultural employment), <http://uis.unesco.org/>

Possible reasons for this performance relate to country competitiveness and especially to micro, small and medium sized enterprises (MSMEs), a sector in which a large part of businesswomen are present. Few MSMEs in Ethiopia obtain international quality certification, and few small firms own foreign technology licences. Acquiring substantive managerial experience is another area with scope for improvement.⁸⁶

Box 7: Selected strategies to mitigate harmful unintended consequence of ICTs

ICT levers -motivating factors	Sample strategies
Engage and participate	Encourage and facilitate engagement and participation steadily from the most basic level to leadership.
For gender equality	Use of traditional media channels for campaigns, e.g. #MeToo, to raise awareness of gender-based violence and harassment.
In ICT-product life-cycles	Implement gender strategies that promote gender equality in the technical community and inform institutional messages about gender initiatives e.g. as implemented by LACNIC, the Internet addresses registry for Latin America and the Caribbean.
Gender stereotypes and role model	Promotion of gender equality in media along the lines, for example, of the UNITWIN Cooperation Programme established between UNESCO and the International Network on Gender, Media and ICTs; and promoted, for example, in (McCracken, FitzSimons, Priest, Girstmair, & Murphy, 2018).

Source: ITU 2020, Women, ICT and emergency telecommunications: opportunities and constraints, p.59, <https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Emergency-Telecommunications/Documents/events/2020/Women-ICT-ET/Full-report.pdf>

In 2020, Ethiopia was among the top five most-improved countries in the overall World Economic Forum (WEF) Global Gender Gap index 2020: Albania, Mali, Mexico Spain, and Ethiopia, have all closed their gaps by 3.4 percentage points or more, and they all share a substantial increase in women's presence in political institutions.

An Entrepreneurship Development Centre was established in 2013 with the support of UNDP offering entrepreneurship trainings, dedicated business development support and facilitating access to finance and markets. The centre has achieved key success milestones since its establishment including but not limited to: provision of entrepreneurship training for over 87 000 start-ups and existing entrepreneurs; provision of customized business development services for over 10 000 entrepreneurs to help them expand their businesses and create new Jobs; creation of over 83 800 jobs; and establishment of 6 450 new enterprises and helping over 7 330 businesses to realize their growth potential and improve their performance.⁸⁷

⁸⁶ ITC SME Competitiveness Outlook 2018 - Country profile:

⁸⁷ UNDP Ethiopia, <https://www.et.undp.org/content/ethiopia/en/home/presscenter/articles/2019/celebrating-entrepreneurship-in-ethiopia-.html>

Box 8: Women in Cyber Mentorship Programme (ITU)

The International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the Forum of Incident Response and Security Teams (FIRST) and EQUALS jointly organize the Women in Cyber Mentorship Programme to empower women in the cybersecurity sector. The programme engages role models and leaders in this field and connects them with talented women worldwide. The Women in Cyber Mentorship Programme builds on and benefits from the on-going efforts of the ITU Telecommunication Development Bureau (BDT) to close the digital gender divide, by mainstreaming gender-focused activities within different thematic priorities.

Source: ITU Women in Cyber, <https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Cybersecurity/Pages/Women-in-Cyber/Women-in-Cyber-Mentorship-Programme.aspx>

Improvements were made in regulations affecting women's economic empowerment. Actions are being implemented to promote gender representation in leadership, including board and management of the financial sector and institutions.⁸⁸ Ethiopia increased paid maternity leave from 90 to 120 days and guaranteed the right to three days of paid paternity leave for the first time. Currently, Ethiopia scores 100 in mobility (constraints on freedom of movement), workplace (laws affecting women's decision at work) and assets (gender differences in property and inheritance). Pay (laws and regulations affecting women's pay) is the area with opportunities for enhancement (score of 25).⁸⁹

Box 9: World Economic Forum Closing Gender Gap Accelerator

The WEF accelerator model helps focus the different existing efforts by bringing together relevant stakeholders onto one platform. The accelerator local leadership structure consists of two ministers and two to four CEOs as co-chairs, a country coordinator who runs the initiative locally, and 50 to 100 of a country's largest employers who drive the in-country change. Countries sign up to the model for three years and drive impact through a locally adapted action plan based on the WEF global framework. In addition to in-country work, countries join the Global Accelerators Learning Network, which helps create informal exchange on successful local initiatives between countries.

Source: World Economic Forum 2020, Global Gender Gap Report, <https://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2020/the-global-gender-gap-index-2020/box-2-closing-the-gender-gap-country-accelerators/>

⁸⁸ <https://www.uncdf.org/article/6553/reaching-financial-equality-for-women>

⁸⁹ World Bank, Women, Business and the Law 2021, <https://wbl.worldbank.org/en/wbl>

3.5 Digital infrastructure and services

In 2014, a lack of access to electricity was recorded for 71 million people of a population of 98 094 264 according to World Bank data.⁹⁰ The access to electricity divide had greatly improved by 2019 when 48.3 per cent of the population had access to electricity.⁹¹ A business survey conducted in 2018 confirms the impact as it reports that the electricity supply “seems to be a major challenge for companies and for the development of Ethiopia in general.”⁹²

According to ITU statistics, fixed-telephone subscriptions increased from 231 945 (0.35 per 100 inhabitants) in 2000 to 885 300 (0.74 per 100 inhabitants) in 2021. In contrast, mobile-cellular subscriptions increased extensively, going from 17 757 (0.03 per 100 inhabitants) in 2000 to 64 500 000 (53.6 per 100 inhabitants) in 2021. There were 57 fixed-broadband subscriptions (0.0 per cent per 100 inhabitants) in 2003 and increased up to 506 800 (0.42 per 100 inhabitants) in 2021. Mobile- broadband subscriptions went from 0.09 per 100 inhabitants in 2009 to 21.7 per cent per 100 inhabitants in 2021. International bandwidth went from 245 Mbit/s in 2007 to 27 400 in 2017 (latest data available on this indicator).⁹³

In terms of ICT prices, fixed broadband basket as a percentage of GNI per capita was 20.5 per cent following latest data available on ITU’s Digital Development Dashboard 2021. Mobile data and voice basket (high consumption) as a percentage of GNI per capita was 7.3 per cent. Mobile broadband basket as percentage of GNI per capita was 5.3 per cent. Mobile data and voice basket (low consumption) as percentage of GNI per capita is 3.0 per cent, and mobile cellular basket as a percentage of GNI per capita is 1.4 per cent.⁹⁴

Ethiopia has seen its Affordability Driver Index score rise from 2.31 in 2014 to 24.08 in 2021, spurred by the opening of its telecommunications market over the past two years.⁹⁵

Steps towards affordability and universality include the liberalization of Ethiopia’s telecommunication sector as part of the government 2019 Home Grown Economic Reform Agenda. The Ethiopian Communications Authority (ECA) opened a tender for international telecommunication operators to manage two new telecommunication licences in Ethiopia. On 22 May 2021 it was announced that “the Government of Ethiopia through the Ethiopian Communications Authority and the Ministry of Finance, awarded today the Global Partnership for Ethiopia, a consortium consisting of Vodafone of the United Kingdom, Safaricom of Kenya, Vodacom of South Africa, Sumitomo Corporation of Japan, CDC Group (United Kingdom’s development finance institution) and DFC (United States International Development Finance Corporation) a nationwide full-service Telecommunications Service Operator Licence. The process marks a new milestone in Ethiopia’s telecommunication service provision, by opening the sector to competition.”⁹⁶

⁹⁰ World Bank, State of Electricity Access Report 2017, <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/364571494517675149/pdf/114841-REVISED-JUNE12-FINAL-SEAR-web-REV-optimized.pdf>

⁹¹ World Bank data 2019, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/EG.ELC.ACCS.ZS?locations=ET>

⁹² ITC 2018, Ethiopia: Company perspectives – An ITC series on Non-Tariff Measures, https://www.intracen.org/uploadedFiles/intracenorg/Content/Publications/Ethiopia%20NTM%20survey_Low-res.pdf

⁹³ ITU statistics 2023, Country ICT data (latest data available), <https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Pages/stat/default.aspx>

⁹⁴ ITU Digital Development Dashboard 2023, Ethiopia, <https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Dashboards/Pages/Digital-Development.aspx>

⁹⁵ A4AI Affordability Report 2020: <https://a4ai.org/affordability-report/data/>

⁹⁶ <https://eca.et/2021/05/22/press-release-telecommunications-service-operator-license-award/>

ECA developed a legal and regulatory framework that aims to ensure that principles such as fair competition, consumer protection, and universal access are upheld in the public interest. It is expected that the new operators as well as building their own infrastructure will enter into infrastructure and facilities sharing arrangements with each other in order to deploy their network coverage quickly and cost effectively.⁹⁷

⁹⁷ Ethiopia's Communication authority, <https://eca.et/faq/>

4 Recommendations and preliminary policy actions

Digital gender equality is explicitly referred to in Ethiopia's digital policies and strategies. International development instruments such as the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper and the Diagnostic Trade Integration Study Update 2016, produced about 20 years ago, already included references to gender equality and the pillars of digital connectivity.

Gender is embedded in national digital policies and strategies as they include specific chapters or sections on gender equality and digital inclusion. Three documents include an extensive coverage of the five pillars of digital gender equality, namely: Digital Ethiopia 2025; National ICT Policy and Strategy 2016; Universal Electrification Access Program 2019.

Some policies and strategies were developed with the support of foreign partners such as the Pathways Commission or the Alliance. This is a sign that the international community is engaged in promoting digital gender equality in Ethiopia. New development projects can focus on monitoring the implementation of digital policies and strategies in place and on gathering data on indicators of digital gender equality (e.g. the five pillars defined by Equals).

References to gender in national laws and regulations could be enhanced. This indicates that policy implementation often lacks a gender dimension. Furthermore, national laws and digital sector regulations are still to be developed in some areas such as consumer protection and data protection laws. This is an opportunity to include specific references to gender equality in future legal texts.

Regulation can be further developed are interoperability and cybersecurity. In the case of interoperability, the existing data exchange interoperability framework in eHealth can serve as basis for developing an umbrella regulation that would cover the entire digital sector and that would ensure that women and men are targeted equally by new rights and obligations. As for cybersecurity, a first step is to develop a strategy. The ITU reference guide to developing a national cybersecurity strategy is an important tool in this regard.⁹⁸ The strategy could also focus on involving private sector formally recognising the important of women-owned enterprises from digital inclusion, building partnerships, cooperative frameworks and information sharing networks, and particularly include women associations and networks (i.e. "cooperative measures" were identified as an area of potential growth identified in the Global Cybersecurity Index 2020).

A detailed stocktaking exercise could be undertaken of existing programmes supporting digital inclusion. Such an analysis will identify areas where synergies across programmes can be promoted and established. In addition, this can serve to prioritize areas where development aid supporting digital inclusion has to be channelled. The EQUALS Digital Skills Hub⁹⁹ is a good example of developing repository portals for programmes in the five pillars of digital gender equality.

Focus efforts on updating existing data as well as on collecting additional data. Existing data on the five pillars of digital gender equality are limited and, in some cases, outdated. Efforts to reverse this situation should start by focusing on the collection of data on the number of women who work in the ICT sector.

⁹⁸ ITU National cybersecurity strategies, <https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Cybersecurity/Pages/cybersecurity-national-strategies.aspx>

⁹⁹ <https://www.eskills4girls.org/nofairytales-2/>

The collection of gender-disaggregated data on the five pillars of digital gender equality. A good start would be the identification of indicators related to the digital sector recently published by the Ethiopia National Statistics Office on how to produce, analyse and communicate gender statistics (Annex I Core Set of Gender Indicators in Sustainable Development Goals). Particular attention should be focused on indicators such as “population with basic, standard and advanced digital skills” (the three indicators of ITU Digital Development Dashboard are not available for Ethiopia). The gender statistics made available from the website of the Ethiopia National Statistics Office are a positive step in terms of dissemination of gender data.

Focus on updating and harmonising data on portals of international organizations. ‘Good data’ helps formulate appropriate and informed digital policies and makes for a more efficient evaluation of their impact. Investments should be made in terms of validating existing data as well as completing the missing data. Availability of gender-disaggregated data for each pillar will also help keep track of the level of implementation of the gender equality objectives of the digital policies and to implement, if necessary, corrective actions.

Table 2: Preliminary policy actions based on the findings on the current state of digital gender equality in the country

Pillars of digital gender equality	Recommended policy actions
<i>Access to digital technology</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the number of women owning computers, mobile phones and tablets
<i>Digital skills</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure women’s enrolment and completion of secondary and tertiary education • Increase graduation rate of women attending STEM programmes • Continue promoting the use of technology in schools
<i>Financial inclusion</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate access to credit cards, particularly for women • Continue implementing the digital payments strategy • Train women on how to make digital payments and on its benefits
<i>Entrepreneurship and leadership</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involve private sector in digital policy making • Advocate about the benefits of founding a company • Facilitate women’s engagement in entrepreneurial activities • Facilitate women’s access to international networks
<i>Digital infrastructure and services</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand the electricity coverage to improve in universality • Reduce the price of electricity to improve in affordability

Annex: Methodology for assessing policy documents and regulations

Gender in ICT policies and regulations were assessed with a qualitative approach, identifying references to keywords related to gender equality. Key words to be searched for include: "gender"; "gender equality"; "gender empowerment"; "women"; "girls"; "digital inclusion"; "STEM"; and "small businesses"¹⁰⁰.

References were analysed in terms of their relevance in the entire policy document or regulation (i.e. if there is an entire chapter dedicated to women or girls). The analysis also evaluated if a given reference is a mere statement or if it proposes a course of action, based on three criteria:

- (I) Recognition: the ICT policy, strategy or regulation includes direct a reference to gender and/or a gender equality perspective.
- (II) Action: the ICT policy, strategy or regulation states an action.
- (III) Adequacy: the ICT policy, strategy or regulation specifically addresses (one or more) the five pillars of digital inclusion for gender equality.

The following five pillars¹⁰¹ were considered for the analysis of gender in ICT strategies, policies and regulations:

1. Digital technology: women and girls' access to digital technology, connectivity and security.
2. Digital skills: women and girls' access to technical/professional studies, university, and particularly, to programmes equipping them with, at least, basic digital skills in the area of science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM).
3. Financial inclusion: availability of digital banking and digital payments (national and international), especially for women.
4. Entrepreneurship and leadership: women's access to networks, knowledge sharing platforms and associations, presence in decision-making roles within the ICT field, and possibility to share knowledge experiences.
5. Digital infrastructure: available, universal and affordable.

¹⁰⁰ Given that companies owned and/or led by women are typically small, ICT policies, strategies and regulations that specifically address small businesses are indirectly supporting women-led businesses.

¹⁰¹ These pillars include EQUALS' focus areas.

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