



CONSOLIDATED REPORT

**REVIEW OF THE NATIONAL POLICY ON
ETHIOPIAN WOMEN**

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Abstract

This consolidated report synthesises the key findings, conclusions, and recommendations from activities undertaken by Includovate as part of the NPEW review and the national and regional consultations. **The specific objective of this consolidated report is to provide a multidimensional understanding of the NPEW and its impact, and to document changes in the situation of women and gender relations in Ethiopia since the policy was first implemented in 1993.** By bringing together evidence and insights on the NPEW from multiple stakeholders, this report seeks to deepen our understanding of how the policy has contributed to improving women's situation and gender equality in Ethiopia as well as to provide insights on the limitations of policy interventions and legislative reform in the struggle to achieve equal rights and opportunities for women and men. It is expected that the analyses provided in this report will inform processes for gender policy formulation in future and contribute in a practical way to the development of a new gender policy in Ethiopia.

Acronyms

AIDS	acquired immune deficiency syndrome
BoWCY	Bureau(s) of Women, Children and Youth
CARE	CARE International UK
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women
CRPD	Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
CSOs	civil society organizations
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DFID	Department for International Development (UK)
FDRE	Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
FGM/C	female genital mutilation/cutting
GRB	gender-responsive budgeting
GBV	gender-based violence
GoE	Government of Ethiopia
HIV	human immunodeficiency virus
HTP	harmful traditional practice
IDI	in-depth individual interviews
KI	key informant
KII	key informant interview
KPI	Key performance indicator
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MoF	Ministry of Finance
MoWCY	Ministry of Women, Children and Youth Affairs
NGIS	National General Information System
NGO	non-governmental organisation
NPEW	National Policy on Ethiopian Women
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OPM	Office of the Prime Minister
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SGD	small group discussion
SME	Small and medium enterprise
SNNPR	Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' Region
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
WAB	Women's Affairs Bureau
WAD	Women's Affairs Department
WAO	Women's Affairs Office
WID	Women in development (approach)

Table of Contents

ABSTRACT	II
ACRONYMS	III
FOREWORD	VI
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	VII
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	VIII
1 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 BACKGROUND TO NPEW	2
1.1.1 <i>The National Context</i>	2
1.1.2 <i>The International Context</i>	3
1.2 POLICY AND LEGISLATIVE PROGRESS ON GENDER EQUALITY	4
2 METHODOLOGY	9
2.1 LIMITATIONS OF THE POLICY REVIEW AND DATA COLLECTION	10
3 ANALYSIS OF THE NPEW AND INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT FOR ITS IMPLEMENTATION	13
3.1 POLICY ANALYSIS	13
3.1.1 <i>Analysis of the NPEW Using the OECD DAC Evaluation Criteria</i>	13
3.1.2 <i>Factors Affecting Policy Appropriateness, Operationalisation, and Outcomes: Analysing the NPEW from a Transformational Authority Perspective</i>	15
3.1.3 <i>Dissecting the Category “Women”: Vulnerability Framework as a Lens to Analyse NPEW</i>	17
3.1.4 <i>Integrating Gender into Policies: The NPEW from a Gender Continuum Perspective</i>	18
3.2 CONTEXT ANALYSES	19
3.3 THE STRUCTURE OF THE MoWCY AND COORDINATION WITH OTHER MINISTRIES	20
3.3.1 <i>The Structure of MoWCY</i>	20
3.3.2 <i>MoWCY Coordination with Line Ministries</i>	24
3.4 GENDER-RESPONSIVE BUDGETING	26
3.5 KEY MESSAGES FROM THE NPEW POLICY AND CONTEXT ANALYSES	27
4 RESULTS FROM NATIONAL CONSULTATIONS IN 68 WOREDAS ON THE SITUATION OF WOMEN OVER THE PAST 25 YEARS	29
4.1 GENDER RELATIONS AND WOMEN’S EMPOWERMENT: PROGRESS AND CHALLENGES	29
4.1.1 <i>Perception of progress and changes experienced by Ethiopian women</i>	31
4.1.2 <i>Current challenges facing women in Ethiopia</i>	33
4.2 FACTORS STILL DRIVING AND CONTRIBUTING TO GENDER INEQUALITY	34
4.3 FUTURE PRIORITIES	37
5 RESULTS FROM CONSULTATION WITH FEDERAL AND REGIONAL GOVERNMENT STRUCTURES, CSOS AND NGOS	39
5.1 KNOWLEDGE OF THE NPEW BY GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS AND STAKEHOLDERS	39
5.2 PERCEPTIONS OF THE IMPACTS OF THE NPEW BY GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS AND STAKEHOLDERS	40
5.2.1 <i>NPEW impacts as perceived by Government Officials and Stakeholders</i>	40
5.2.2 <i>Unintended Outcomes of the NPEW Identified by Government Officials and Stakeholders</i>	42

5.3	POLICY GAPS AND IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED BY GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS AND STAKEHOLDERS	45
5.3.1	<i>Policy Gaps identified by government officials and stakeholders</i>	45
5.3.2	<i>Implementation Challenges identified by government officials and stakeholders</i>	46
5.4	KEY MESSAGES FROM REGIONAL CONSULTATIONS	48
6	DISCUSSION	49
6.1	POLICY FRAMEWORK	49
6.2	NPEW IMPLEMENTATION	50
6.3	CHANGES IN THE SITUATION OF WOMEN IN ETHIOPIA SINCE 1993	51
6.3.1	<i>Political participation</i>	51
6.3.2	<i>Economic empowerment</i>	51
6.3.3	<i>Access to services</i>	52
6.3.4	<i>Harmful Traditional Practices and Gender-Based Violence</i>	53
6.3.5	<i>Persistent inequality, backlash against the NPEW, and the way forward</i>	53
7	CONCLUSION	55
8	RECOMMENDATIONS	56
9	ACTION PLAN	62
10	REFERENCES	71
ANNEX 1		78
ANNEX 2		79
ANNEX 3		82
ANNEX 4		83
ANNEX 5		84

Foreword

In 2019, Ethiopia's Ministry of Women, Children and Youth Affairs (MoWCY), in partnership with the United Kingdom Department for International Development (DFID) and CARE Ethiopia (CARE), launched the "Seizing the Moment" project to build the MoWCY's institutional capacity to support and hold accountable other ministries in delivering gender-transformative outcomes. As a critical step for charting future policy and programmatic direction, the MoWCY identified the need to assess the achievements of the 1993 NPEW and to involve stakeholders in defining the strategic direction and intentions for gender-transformative change in line with other GoE priorities. As part of the "Seizing the Moment" project, Includovate was commissioned to carry out an overall review of the NPEW which entailed analyses of the NPEW, an assessment of how the policy fits into national, regional and international policy contexts, a context analysis of the functioning of the MoWCY and how it coordinates with other line ministries, and an assessment of how gender responsive budgeting is being used to support the implementation of the NPEW. Includovate was also contracted to conduct broad stakeholder consultations at national and regional levels to provide an assessment of stakeholders' perceptions of how women's lives have changed in the last 25 years, what interventions are helping to achieve gender equality, and priority areas for achieving gender equality and improving the situation of Ethiopian women.

Acknowledgement

Includovate would like to thank the women and men of Ethiopia who generously gave their time to participate in this study. COVID-19, conflict, floods, locust, and various other disasters repeatedly challenged this study. The strength of the research team, of around 200 in number, and the research participants prevailed to bring you this report. Includovate would like to thank the tremendous support and openness of MoWCY, in particular Ato Seleshi Tadesse, to furthering the mission of women, children, and youth inclusion through guiding this study. Officials from regional, zonal, and woreda level women, children, and youth offices also contributed greatly to the accomplishment of this project. Our gratitude goes to the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and Irish Aid for funding this project and the steering committee who carefully invested in the study's methodology and outcomes. We are grateful to the core team composed of different non-government stakeholders that provided the research team with technical direction and guidance. Last but not least, many thanks to CARE Ethiopia and the program manager Ms. Misrach Mekonnen and Includovate's lead researcher Ms. Kiya Gezahegne, who dedicated a year and a half of their life to ensure that the future of girls and women in Ethiopia is more assured.

Executive Summary

1. Introduction

In 1993, the Transitional Government of Ethiopia developed the National Policy on Ethiopian Women (NPEW) to institutionalise women’s political, economic, and social rights by seeking to advance equality between men and women, eliminate gender-based prejudice and discrimination, and facilitate women’s participation in all aspects of life. While the NPEW was a notable achievement in 1993 – one that reflects the foresight of a government prior to the global attention to women’s empowerment enacted by the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action – the policy is no longer relevant to many of the critical issues facing Ethiopia, such as climate change, women as internally displaced persons and refugees, migration and human trafficking, conflict and violence, and macroeconomic instability. Further, in the decades following the adoption of the NPEW, the Government of Ethiopia (GoE) entered into key international and regional gender equality commitments that more fully reflected the multidimensionality of inequalities facing women and the critical importance of addressing discriminatory social norms. Against this background, a strategic review of the NPEW is required to inform the GoE in its efforts to develop a new direction for gender-transformative change in the country.

2. Background

In 2019, Ethiopia’s Ministry of Women, Children and Youth Affairs (MoWCY), in partnership with the United Kingdom Department for International Development (DFID) and CARE Ethiopia (CARE), launched the “Seizing the Moment” project to build the MoWCY’s institutional capacity to support and hold accountable other ministries in delivering gender-transformative outcomes. As a critical step for charting future policy and programmatic direction, the MoWCY identified the need to assess the achievements of the 1993 NPEW and to involve stakeholders in defining the strategic direction and intentions for gender-transformative change in line with other GoE priorities. A key component of the “Seizing the Moment” Project was an overall review of the NPEW including analyses of the policy, an assessment of how the NPEW fits into national, regional, and international policy contexts, a context analysis of the functioning of the MoWCY and how it coordinates with other line ministries, and an assessment of how gender responsive budgeting is being used to support the implementation of the NPEW and an assessment of stakeholders’ perceptions of how women’s lives have changed in the last 25 years, what interventions are helping to achieve gender equality, and priority areas for achieving gender equality and improving the situation of Ethiopian women. Between September 2019 and January 2021, Includovate carried out an overall review of the NPEW and broad stakeholder consultations at national and regional levels.

This consolidated report synthesises the key findings, conclusions, and recommendations from activities undertaken by Includovate as part of the NPEW review and the national and regional consultations. The specific objective of this consolidated report is to provide a multidimensional understanding of the NPEW and its impact, and to document changes in the situation of women and gender relations in Ethiopia since the policy was first implemented in 1993. By bringing together evidence and insights on the NPEW from multiple stakeholders, this report seeks to deepen our understanding of how the policy has contributed to improving women’s situation and

gender equality in Ethiopia as well as to provide insights on the limitations of policy interventions and legislative reform in the struggle to achieve equal rights and opportunities for women and men. It is expected that the analyses provided in this report will inform processes for gender policy formulation in future and contribute in a practical way to the development of a new gender policy in Ethiopia.

3. Methodology

To review the NPEW and how it was implemented and to assess changes in the situation of women and gender relations since 1993, Includovate carried out the following 6 discrete research activities using multiple qualitative data collection methods:

- An analysis of the NPEW drawing on four independent frameworks to provide a comprehensive assessment of the policy's significance, strengths, and limitations;
- Analysis of international, regional, and national policies and legal frameworks on gender equality of relevance to Ethiopia to identify policy and legal frameworks that support gender equality in Ethiopia and assess how they have been influenced by international and regional policies and legal frameworks;
- Two context analyses, one of the MoWCY and the other on coordination between the MoWCY and line ministries;
- An assessment of gender responsive budgeting (GRB) practices in the public sector to document existing GRB practices and assess whether the budget allocation of resources for the MoWCY by the Ministry of Finance and donor organisations is in alignment with the NPEW and other relevant policies;
- Consultations with a diversity of Ethiopians to review the situation of women and the impact of the NPEW in 68 woredas across all zones and the country's 10 regions and compile case studies of projects and programs targeting women and girls and addressing gender inequality to showcase successful local initiatives and document good practices that could be replicated.
- Consultations with senior government officials from 8 regional and 1 city administration and at the federal level with parliamentarians, the management team from the MoWCY, line ministry officials, and representatives from CSOs and international and local NGOs to assess their perception of the NPEW and its implementation, challenges associated with efforts to achieve gender equality in the country, and existing opportunities.

4. Analysis of the NPEW

Our analysis of the NPEW concludes that, while the policy was ground-breaking in 1993, it is now outdated and unsuited to the current political, economic, and social environment in Ethiopia and globally. The NPEW was grounded in a Women in Development (WID) approach, which identifies women's exclusion from social and economic activities and political systems as the root cause of gender inequality. The policy focused on integrating women into national development processes through programmatic and legislative interventions and on improving their situation in the context of existing structures and social

relations. Because the NPEW did not acknowledge and address the factors contributing to gender inequality, notably unequal power relations between men and women in Ethiopian society, gendered social norms, and the multiple identities and contexts that shape the lives of women and men, its potential to transform gender inequality has been limited. By emphasising women's reproductive roles, the NPEW reinforced rather than challenged traditional gender roles and norms in Ethiopian society. Moreover, while strategies and programmes influenced by the NPEW have sought to address the unique challenges faced by rural women, for the most part they did not consider how disability, age, class, marital status, migration status, and other identities intersect with location and gender to structure exclusion. With regard to legislative processes, the NPEW aligned with the core elements of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) but because it was formulated over 25 years ago, is out of step with recent international, regional, and national frameworks. For example, the policy is silent on environmental issues, an issue of growing concern in Ethiopia and one that has major implications for gender equality.

5. Context analysis of the MoWCY

Though the NPEW established institutional machineries for implementing gender-responsive policies at all levels of government, the implementing offices (i.e., what is now the MoWCY and the gender directorates within line ministries) have lacked the authority to hold other offices accountable. Limited financial resources and low technical and coordination capacities within the MoWCY have hindered the proper implementation of the NPEW. Non-uniformity of regional structures results in different reporting and accountability lines. The lack of clear implementation plans, monitoring mechanisms, and a system for tracking the MoWCY's performance make it difficult to assess the measurable impacts of the NPEW and its institutional machineries. The operations of the MoWCY need to be streamlined, and more transparency and consultation is needed in its internal processes. Coordination and communication between the MoWCY and other line ministries is largely limited to quarterly and annual planning and reporting. In the absence of a strong accountability system, the quality of the reporting process varies between ministries. Despite these gaps and challenges, the MoWCY is well positioned to drive an inclusive gender policy reform agenda, a process that will require substantial commitment from senior ministry officials and new strategic resources.

6. Gender responsive budgeting (GRB)

Overall, Ethiopia's performance on GRB can be characterised as "gender sensitive," meaning that public institutions tend to acknowledge gender in their budgeting but do not always allocate funds to address gender-related issues. Nonetheless, it should be noted that levels of commitment to gender integration and GRB vary between line ministries. Ultimately, limited and uneven use of GRB can be attributed to a lack of both strong leadership and the political will to realise gender equality commitments.

7. Results from National Consultations in 68 Woredas

Both men and women informants in all participating woredas felt that the situation for women had improved during the past 25 years. Areas of change observed by research

participants in all regions include women's increased agency in choosing a marriage partner, women's increased involvement in household decision-making, greater access to credit and other types of financial resources, and improved access to services, particularly sexual and reproductive health services and education. The main factors informants identified as having contributed to improving the situation of women and progressing gender inequality are an improved awareness of women's rights, increased access to resources and decision-making at the household level, and improved access to services for women.

Women's and girls' responsibility for unpaid domestic and care work contributes to a power imbalance between men and women that perpetuates women's disadvantage in many areas. For example, the need to attend to household chores may discourage parents from sending girls to school and women may face limited employment opportunities or the time poverty and "double duty" of balancing economic and household labour demands. Over the long term, such constraints to women's education and economic opportunities will likely reduce their access to economic resources and decent, meaningful work.

Ethiopian women play an important role in productive activities outside of the home (e.g., farming, pastoralism), yet their contribution in this sphere is not fully recognised by either women or men. This lack of recognition is grounded in the traditional association of men with the external world and the cash economy and the association of women with the reproductive domain.

Despite, this sharp dichotomy in the perception of men's and women's roles in Ethiopian society, the majority of informants believed that men and women deserve equal rights and opportunities. These beliefs were based on the recognition that society stands to benefit by investing in women and girls. Informants agreed that women can perform just as well as men in all spheres of life if given the opportunity. In this connection, it is encouraging that of the 56 gender-related interventions profiled in the case studies collected during the national consultations, the majority were initiated at the local level by NGOs (39%), associations (18%), and local government (7%). International NGOs and projects funded by multilateral donor institutions accounted for 27% and 9%, respectively, of case studies. This suggests that Ethiopians are taking initiative to address gender inequality and the country has many locally initiated gender equality approaches to learn from and scale.

Despite progress made in improving gender inequality, informants identified several factors that continue to drive and contribute to gender inequalities in their respective locations. Significant challenges to progress were identified across the research sites, notably:

Entrenched discriminatory social norms, risks and vulnerabilities: Across all regions, informants acknowledged that patriarchal social norms rooted in culture and religion limit women's decision-making powers and agency, erode their self-confidence, and keep women from enjoying the same opportunities as men.

Communities across all regions identified children, orphans, adolescents, internally displaced people, girls and women with disabilities, poor and illiterate women, sex workers, and the elderly as the most vulnerable groups. However, as pointed out by both male and female research participants across all regions of the country, the single most common experience shared by women residing in Ethiopia is the lack of safety. This is mainly because gender-based violence

(GBV) is rampant, with women and girls being victims of multiple forms of GBV, ranging from sexual harassment to rape. Aside from the trauma associated with these crimes, it results in the movement of adolescent girls and women being curtailed and has dire effects on their physical and mental health and ability to engage in business/employment opportunities.

Limited access to quality services, programmes, and infrastructure: Lack of access to water and electricity are among the chief difficulties that result in situations where women become exposed to GBV, particularly in rural areas. Rural parts of the country are also affected by poor roads and transportation, which means that remote areas are disconnected from nearby towns and cities and women’s access to health care and other services is reduced. Poor roads and transportation also pose a barrier to girls’ and boys’ access to education. Across regions, women’s access to financial services is very limited.

Challenges in implementing policies and administrative processes: Many research participants were critical of the BoWCY’s effectiveness in supporting women’s empowerment and perceived the federal, regional, zonal, and woreda-level WAOs as being largely preoccupied with treating problems after they have already happened, instead of addressing the root causes. Woreda-level consultations show that there is widespread distrust of the police and judicial services to protect women and to uphold their rights under the laws. In particular people are dissatisfied with justice received by rape survivors, because court cases take a long time and rapists are given short prison sentences. Women’s access to legal services is particularly limited in rural parts of the country. In remote areas, traditional courts (e.g., *Shengo* in the Amhara Region) serve to settle disputes in the community but tend to be biased toward men as they are rooted in traditional patriarchal norms. The formal legal system also administers inadequate punishment towards perpetrators of abuse against women.

Consultations with a diversity of Ethiopians highlighted several key themes and drew attention to priority areas that need to be addressed to strengthen women’s empowerment and improve gender equality in Ethiopia. The consultations also confirmed the intersectional nature of gendered inequalities by identifying girls and young women—particularly those in rural areas, older women, disabled women, and women in poor households—as the most vulnerable groups across all regions. The most pressing priorities identified by research participants are as follows:

- The persistence of discriminatory gender norms and customary practices that harm and hinder women
- The need for more support for girls’ education
- Ensuring women’s participation in leadership and political decision-making
- Strengthening police and judicial protection for women
- Increasing access to infrastructure and services
- Enhancing women’s economic opportunities and employment
- A new or revised national policy to support gender equality.

8. Regional consultations

Even several decades after it was formulated, knowledge of the NPEW is uneven among policymakers at all levels. Nonetheless, research participants at the regional and federal level

acknowledged successes of the policy, specifically in terms of empowering women through improving their access to employment and educational opportunities. The senior officials consulted agreed that the implementation of the NPEW has been hampered by attitudinal, capacity, accountability, coordination, and structural challenges. They drew attention to the unintended backlash against affirmative action and women's rights policies contributing to tension between traditional norms and women's access to rights. Research participants agreed that a revision of the NPEW should be evidence-based to ensure that it targets current and pressing issues. Promotion of cross-sectoral gender equality initiatives, support for male allyship, and strengthening attention to GBV, particularly among migrant and refugee populations, reflect many of the pressing challenges. Senior officials called for process of policy formulation and implementation to address the challenge of balancing respect for cultural rights and respect for women's human rights, particularly with regard to protecting women and girls against negative social and cultural practices that are harmful to their well-being, dignity, and health.

9. Conclusion

The NPEW has undoubtedly shifted the landscape for women in Ethiopia in a positive direction. The results of the data collected from 68 woredas and key stakeholders at the national and regional levels highlight that significant progress has been made, especially in the areas of women's access to resources through increased employment opportunities and land ownership; decision-making power within the household; reducing the incidence of HTPs and GBV; increasing women's access to health, education, infrastructure, and credit services; and building community awareness around gender equality. However, without a baseline or rigorous evaluation, it is impossible to isolate the contribution of one policy to such changes.

NPEW must now serve as a foundation for the next stage of women's empowerment in Ethiopia, a stage that reflects modern approaches to inclusivity and intersectionality and is equipped to address challenges posed by entrenched discriminatory social norms and the daily challenges facing women, whether these challenges reflect continuing or emerging issues. The views expressed by a broad cross-section of stakeholders consulted across the country in this study support replacing the NPEW with a gender policy based on a gender-transformative approach that analyses the structural drivers of gender inequality, recognises the diverse experiences and needs of Ethiopian women, and works toward changing existing unequal gender power structures, social norms, roles, responsibilities, and opportunities. Importantly, a gender policy will not just focus on women, but will support men and boys to challenge gender norms in their homes, workplaces, and communities and redefine masculinity. This bold new agenda should be evidence-based and adopt an inclusive and participatory policy formulation process to manage contradictions between gender equality principles and the cultural norms of different ethnic groups in Ethiopia. By undertaking this next step in developing a gender policy, Ethiopia will establish itself as a leader in Africa and the world in gender-transformative development.

Progress enabled by the NPEW cannot be denied; however, now it must serve as a foundation for an inclusive, intersectional, and gender-transformative gender equality policy that will address entrenched patriarchal social norms and engage communities directly to prevent the spread of backlash against gender equality and women's human rights. Primary among this is to involve traditional and religious leaders and men and boys as allies to directly tackle the role of traditional

masculinity and patriarchal norms in perpetrating GBV, assigning undue domestic workloads on women, and forging a national gender equality strategy that is based on human rights and sustainable progress for all Ethiopians.

1 Introduction

In 1993, the Transitional Government of Ethiopia developed the National Policy on Ethiopian Women (NPEW) to institutionalise women’s political, economic, and social rights (Office of the Prime Minister (OPM, 1993). The policy aimed to advance equality between men and women, eliminate gender-based prejudice and discrimination, and facilitate women’s participation in all aspects of life. The NPEW was the first policy in the history of Ethiopia that solely focused on women’s equality and laid the foundation for a range of future policies, strategies, plans, and programmatic initiatives that incorporated women’s rights and gender equality considerations.

While the NPEW was a notable achievement in 1993 – one that reflects the foresight of a government prior to the global attention to women’s empowerment enacted by the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action – the policy is no longer relevant to many of the critical issues facing Ethiopia, such as climate change, women as internally displaced persons and refugees, migration and human trafficking, conflict and violence, and macroeconomic instability. Further, in the decades following the adoption of the NPEW, the Government of Ethiopia (GoE) entered into key international and regional gender equality commitments that more fully reflected the multidimensionality of inequalities facing women and the critical importance of addressing discriminatory social norms.

Women make up more than half of Ethiopia’s population and make important contributions to the country’s socioeconomic development. They represent 47% of the general labour force in Ethiopia (World Bank, 2020), 41% percent of the agricultural labour force,¹ and are also primarily responsible for the care and nutrition of their families. Despite the efforts of the NPEW, Ethiopian women continue to experience huge inequities and discrimination because of their gender, suffering harmful traditional practices (HTPs), such as child marriage and female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C), and experiencing high levels of gender-based violence (GBV). The continuation of these practices illustrates women’s low status and the unequal power relations between men and women in the country. According to the World Economic Forum (2019) *Global Gender Gap Report 2020*, Ethiopia ranked 82nd among 153 countries in the Global Gender Gap Index, despite being among the top 5 most-improved countries in the past year.

This report provides a comprehensive overview of the findings of a multi-part, strategic review of the NPEW to inform the GoE in its efforts to develop a new direction for gender-transformative change in the country. This report is divided into 7 sections. Following this introduction, Section 2 offers a description of the methodologies used in the policy review and consultations. Section 3 discusses the findings of the policy and context analyses. Results from national and regional consultations are analysed in Sections 4 and 5, respectively. A discussion of the findings is presented in Section 6, followed by a concluding section in Section 7. Finally, Section 8, outlines an action plan and recommendations for developing a revised policy.

¹ World Bank Data Indicators, 2019 Available at: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator>

1.1 Background to NPEW

1.1.1 The National Context

In Ethiopia, the beginning of the state's focus on "women's affairs" through formal and fully-fledged policies and institutional structures dates back only to the early 1990s. The Imperial (1930–1974) and Derg (1974–1991) ruling regimes largely considered women's affairs the purview of organisations and associations outside of formal government structures. During the Imperial period, the royal family established many women's associations, but members were concentrated in Addis Ababa (Emebet, 2010). These associations were principally organisations of urban elites and were therefore limited in their scope and coverage (Burgess, 2013). Women's participation in Ethiopian political affairs was limited to a very few women with a royal family background (Ashenafi, 2009).

The Provisional Military Government of Socialist Ethiopia (also known as the Derg) instigated some progress in partly institutionalising women's affairs through different associations, such as workers' parties, peasant associations, trade unions, and professional associations. In 1980, the Derg established the Revolutionary Ethiopia Women's Association. The association, with five million members, "contributed to the establishment of various development projects such as handicrafts, retail shops, flour mills, and the expansion of kindergarten, aiming to produce a new generation with 'revolutionary morale'" (Burgess, 2013: pp.99–100). It was, however, criticised for being "political machinery" designed to ensure support for the military regime rather than benefit women. The political participation of women was also limited, with "little or no impact on government policies, laws, and regulations" (Burgess, 2013: p.100).

Existing legal documents during the Imperial and Derg regimes did not ensure the protection of women's rights. The 1960 Civil Code of Ethiopia largely codified existing patriarchal ideology on family and marriage matters. The Code not only recognized the husband as the head of the family but also gave him the power to guide the conduct of his wife.² The Derg went further to recognise the equality of men and women in the 1987 constitution, which granted affirmative action and reproductive health services for women.³ However, these constitutional provisions remained largely unimplemented due to internal political turmoil at the time (Sisay, 2017).

Following the downfall of the Derg in 1991, the Transitional Government of Ethiopia (1991-1995) adopted a transitional period charter that supported democratic rights, a transition to a democratic order, and political and socioeconomic reforms, such as adopting the NPEW in 1993. The adoption of the NPEW was part of recognising the role of women in bringing about the transition to a new form of government, particularly their participation in the armed struggle against the Derg regime (Burgess, 2013). The NPEW became the first policy in the country's history that solely focused on women's affairs. In addition to endorsing the NPEW, the transitional government also established offices responsible for dealing with women's affairs at

² See the 1960 Civil Code of Ethiopia, Articles 635, 637, 641, 644, and 646. These articles were repealed by the Revised Family Code of Ethiopia Proclamation No. 213/2000.

³ See the Constitution of the People's Democratic Republic of Ethiopia of 1987, Article 36 (§1–3) and Article 37 (§1).

different levels of government and mandated gender mainstreaming in planning and implementation of intervention.

At the highest level, the Women's Affairs Office (WAO) was established under the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) in 1993 to coordinate, facilitate, and monitor women's affairs nationally. At the regional level, Women's Affairs Bureaus (WABs) were established in each of the regions (Burgess, 2013). Women's Affairs Departments (WADs) were established in government organizations both at federal and regional levels to implement the mission specified by the WAO. In 2005, the WAO became the Ministry of Women's Affairs and in 2010 the name was changed to the Ministry of Women, Children and Youth Affairs (MoWCY). At the regional level, WABs are now called the Bureau of Women, Children and Youth Affairs (BoWCY).

The NPEW recognised the contributions of women in the economic, social, cultural, and political aspects of the Ethiopian society. In recognition of women's productive and reproductive roles and contributions, it aimed to create opportunities for women to participate in all facets of life and receive benefits on equal terms with men. Specifically, the NPEW had three key objectives (OPM, 1993: Section 2):

1. To facilitate conditions to expedite equality between men and women so that women can participate in the political, social, and economic life of their country on equal terms with men, and ensuring that their right to own property as well as their other human rights are respected and that they are not excluded from the enjoyment of the fruits of their labour or from performing public functions and being decision-makers;
2. To facilitate the necessary conditions whereby rural women can have access to basic social services and to ways and means of lightening their workload, including domestic and care work; and
3. To eliminate, step by step, prejudices as well as customary and other practices that are based on the idea of male supremacy and enabling women to hold public office and to participate in the decision-making process at all levels.

As Ethiopia's first national policy dedicated to advancing equality between women and men, the NPEW had both a significant symbolic importance and a meaningful, if limited, impact by affirming government commitment to women's rights and providing a foundation for further legal reforms and programmatic interventions. Further, it created "an enabling environment for the promotion of gender equality" (Ogato, 2015:p.369) and established "a strong basis for women's empowerment and advancement" (Drucza & Rodriguez, 2018:p.35).

1.1.2 The International Context

Prior to the formulation of the NPEW in 1993, the most important gender-related instrument in Ethiopia was the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).⁴ CEDAW signatories are bound to ensure the full development and advancement of women and are monitored to ensure implementation of gender equality and non-discrimination

⁴ Ethiopia signed the CEDAW in 1980 and ratified it in 1981.

provisions. Ethiopia's commitment to CEDAW formed a critical foundation in the formulation of the NPEW. Ethiopia also signed the Convention on the Rights of Children (CRC) in 1991, one of whose core principles is non-discrimination of children based on the sex of their parents or guardians and other statuses.

Since the inception of NPEW, Ethiopia has committed to additional international and regional frameworks. In 1993, Ethiopia ratified the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and other major human rights treaties. During this time, multiple international frameworks for development and human rights have shaped the global agenda on gender equality, including the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995), the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)(2000), the Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) (2006) and, most recently, Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (2015).

Ethiopia is also signatory to many regional commitments on gender equality: the 2003 Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (the Maputo Protocol), the 2004 African Union Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa (SDGEA), the 2009 Banjul Declaration on the Strategies for Accelerating the Implementation of the Dakar and Beijing Platforms for Action, and the African Union's Agenda 2063. The regional gender equality commitments in Africa have identified various key areas for action, including GBV, women's economic empowerment, women, peace, and security, development and good governance, representation and participation of women in decision-making, sexual reproductive health and HIV/AIDS, climate change, environmental and sustainable development, food security, and rural/agriculture development.

Ethiopia's activity in joining regional and international frameworks, however, has not established a direct line to progress. Importantly, Article 9 of the 1995 FDRE Constitution provides that, "All international agreements ratified by Ethiopia are an integral part of the law of the land." Yet, legislation in Ethiopia is effective only after it is published in the *Federal Negarit Gazeta*. Since many of the international and regional agreements on gender equality ratified by Ethiopia have not been published in the *Federal Negarit Gazeta*, the issue of their status remains ambiguous and a subject of academic debate (Biseswar, 2008). This constitutional provision requires clarity if Ethiopian women are to benefit from the practical implementation of international and regional agreements on gender equality that the country has ratified.

1.2 Policy and Legislative Progress on Gender Equality

Policy frameworks play an important role in efforts to achieve gender equality. Over the years, in addition to the NPEW, the GoE has introduced important policy and legislative frameworks to promote development goals and achieve gender equality. NPEW took a strong stance in promoting legal reforms and affirming women's human rights, attempting institutional integration of women's affairs across all sectors and levels of government, and committing to realising women's full participation in all spheres of life.

The desk review of gender-related national policies identified 7 national legal frameworks, laws, and proclamations of particular relevance to gender equality that were enacted after 1993 (Table I).

Table I: National legal frameworks, laws, and proclamations of relevance for gender equality

Framework	Key provisions
Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (1995)	Article 7 states that whatever applies to the masculine gender “shall also apply to the feminine gender.” Article 25 provides equality to all persons before the law and their entitlement to equal protection of the law without discrimination on grounds of sex and other statuses. Article 34 (1-2) gives equal rights to men and women on marital issues. Article 35 concerns the rights of women and includes a comprehensive list of women’s rights (including marital, property, maternity, affirmative action, personal protection, reproductive health, employment/pay, participation in development policies) that actively engage the state in respecting gender equality. As stated in article 89, women shall have equal participation with men in all economic and social development endeavors.
Federal Rural Land Administration Proclamation No. 89/1997	Ensures equality between men and women with regard to the use, administration, control, transfer, and bequeathing of holding rights for land. All land administration committees at the <i>kebele</i> level (the smallest administrative unit) are required to have at least one female member.
Family Law (2000)	Fixes the minimum age of marriage at 18 years, requires the consent of both spouses for marriage to take place, and

	requires an equal division of property between spouses in the event of divorce.
Criminal Law (2005)	Criminalises specific forms of discrimination against women—in the form of violence against women and girls, this includes rape, trafficking/abduction, prostitution, FGM/C, sexual exploitation, early marriage, physical violence within marriage or in an irregular union, bigamy, sexual exploitation, trafficking, early marriage, and harassment.
Federal Civil Servants Proclamation No. 1064/2017	Article 13(2) prohibits discrimination against job seekers or civil servants based on sex, ethnic origin, religion, political outlook, disability, HIV/AIDS status, or any other discriminatory grounds. Article 42 grants 4 months paid maternity and 10 days paid paternity leaves. It also grants maternity leave for a civil servant who encounters a miscarriage. Article 48 entitles women to affirmative actions in recruitment, promotion, transfer, redeployment, education and training and calls on government institutions to take affirmative actions that enable women civil servants to improve their competence and assume decision making positions. The proclamation also states that government institutions shall establish a nursery where female civil servants could breastfeed and take care of their babies. Article 70 (13) prohibits sexual harassment at work place.
The Public Servants’ Pension Proclamation No. 714/2011 and the Private Organization Employees’ Pension Proclamation No. 715/2012	Protects the pension rights of women working in the public and private sectors, including granting pension rights to both widows and widowers.
Labour Proclamation No. 1156/2019	Ensures women’s rights in employment contracts, prohibits sex-based

	discrimination in compensation and employment, prohibits sexual harassment and violence in the workplace, grants paid maternity leave, and prohibits working conditions that are harmful to women’s health.
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Since the early 1990s, the GoE has implemented several major policies and development plans aimed at promoting gender equality. These include the:

- National Population Policy (1993) which recommended vigorous government measures to remove social and cultural impediments to women’s full enjoyment of their human rights. This policy devoted a section to assessing the status of Ethiopian women so as to understand the prevailing high fertility rate in the country.
- Development and Social Welfare Policy (1996), which focused on mainstreaming gender issues by incorporating women-specific components in all development and social welfare activities;
- National Action Plans for Gender Equality (NAP-GE) 2002-2006 and 2006–2010 identified critical areas that need to be addressed in support of gender equality (e.g., poverty and economic empowerment of women and girls, education and training of women and girls, reproductive rights, health and HIV/AIDS, human rights and violence against women and girls, empowering women in decision-making, and women and the environment);
- Plan for Accelerated and Sustained Development to End Poverty (PASDEP) 2005/06–2009/10, which included a gender strategy to support the NAP-GE areas of intervention;
- Growth and Transformation Plan I (GTP I) 2011–2015, Ethiopia’s national development plan, which included a specific pillar on women and youth empowerment;
- Growth and Transformation Plan II (GTP II) 2015/16–2019/20, which incorporated the SDGs, supported the elimination of HTPs affecting women and girls (e.g., FGM/C, early marriage, GBV, forced marriage, wife inheritance), and supported gender parity at all educational levels;
- Gender Equality Strategy for Ethiopia’s Agricultural Sector (2017), which establishes specific strategic objectives to promote gender equality and opportunities for women in the agricultural sector; and
- National Plan of Action for the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities (2012–2021), which has as one of its objectives the full participation and equality of women with disabilities.
- Development and Change Package of Ethiopian Women (2017), which aims to ensure the active participation of women in the developmental, social, political and decision making spheres and their equal benefits.
- Education and Training Policy (1994), which aims to raise the participation of women in education in general and gives special attention to women’s inclusion in the recruitment, training and assignment of teachers and educational management.
- The Health Policy of Ethiopia (1993), which emphasises the need for special attention to women’s health needs. The policy also promotes family planning, maternal health care, maternal nutrition, and paternal involvement in family health.

In addition to domestic policies, Ethiopia has adopted additional international and regional commitments on gender equality (as outlined in Section 5.1.2). These commitments continue to play an important and positive role in influencing Ethiopia's progress on gender equality, including developing gender-responsive national policies, plans, and strategies. Finally, starting in 2018, there has been a dynamic period of institutional and legislative change, a period during which MoWCY has increased its mandate for accountability, providing the opportunity and necessity for a fresh examination of the NPEW.

2 Methodology

The methodology for the review of the NPEW was designed to analyse the policy’s implementation, overall alignment with Ethiopia’s legislative context, and to assess changes in the situation of women and gender relations since 1993. To meet these objectives, Includovate carried out six discrete research activities between September 2019 and January 2021 using multiple qualitative data collection methods. Table 2 summarises the six research activities, their objectives, and the data collection methods used. The methodology and findings of each research activities are summarised in the following sections of the report.

Table 2: Summary of research activities undertaken as part of the review of the NPEW, their objectives, and the data collection methods used

Activity	Objectives	Data collection methods	Timeframe
Analysis of the NPEW (Includovate, 2020d)	Assess the significance, contributions, and limitations of the NPEW from a historical and legislative perspective; provide recommendations to inform the development of a new national gender-transformative policy	Policy analysis based on a multidimensional analytical framework	March-Nov. 2020
Analysis of international, regional, and national policies and legal frameworks on gender equality of relevance to Ethiopia (Includovate, 2019)	Identify policy and legal frameworks that support gender equality in Ethiopia and assess how they have been influenced by international and regional policies and legal frameworks	Desk review of relevant policies, laws, conventions, treaties	Oct.-Dec. 2019
Analysis of the MoWCY structure and functioning (context analysis I) and coordination of gender affairs with other line ministries (context analysis II) (Includovate, 2020a, Includovate, 2020c)	Analyse the roles, responsibilities, and relationships between and among units/directorates of the MoWCY; document the internal processes of the MoWCY, including human resource processes and administrative arrangements; assess the effectiveness of the existing MoWCY structure, including inter- and intra-organisational dependencies; assess the mandates and mechanisms for coordination and collaboration between the MoWCY and other line ministries	KIIs, focus group discussions, questionnaires, validation workshop	April 2020 (context analysis I) March-Sept. 2020 (context analysis II)

	that have a mandate to work on gender equality		
Review of GRB (Includovate, 2020b)	Document existing GRB practices; assess whether the budget allocation of resources for the MoWCY by the Ministry of Finance and donor organisations is in alignment with the NPEW and other relevant policies	Kills	Feb.-Sept.2020
National consultations across 68 woredas (Includovate, 2020e, Includovate, 2020f)	Provide an assessment of the current situation of women and gender relations in Ethiopia as perceived by different stakeholders (ordinary citizens, representatives of local institutions, civil society actors); document perceived changes since 1993 in the situation of women and gender relations and identify factors that have contributed to those changes; identify causes of gender inequality; provide feedback on the implementation of the NPEW and its impact	Kill informant interviews with institutional representatives; focus group discussions, IDIs, community conversations (CC), and SGDs with women only, men only, and mixed-sex groups; case studies that showcase efforts by mainly local organisations to promote gender equality and women's empowerment	Feb.–Nov., 2020 (7 woredas) June–Dec. 2020 (18 woredas) Sept. 2020–Jan. 2021 (43 woredas)
Consultations with senior government officials and stakeholders at regional and federal level	Provide an assessment of how government officials and other high-level stakeholders perceive the NPEW and its implementation, provide feedback on their perception of challenges associated with efforts to achieve gender equality in the country and existing opportunities	Workshops held with senior regional government officials in 8 regions and 1 city administration; federal level officials from parliament, the MoWCY and line ministries and representatives of CSOs, international organisations and international and national NGOs	Sept. 2020 - Jan. 2021

2.1 Limitations of the policy review and data collection

In undertaking the various components of this review of the NPEW, researchers faced a number of challenges and limitations. The policy analysis was limited by the availability of source materials, as key government records on NPEW formulation, implementation, and associated budgetary

allocations were not available for review. Similarly, the analysis of gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) was hampered by researchers' lack of access to budget documents. In addition, the amount of time that has passed since the NPEW's implementation in 1993 and the complexity of factors—including national and international events and developments—affecting gender equality and women's empowerment make it difficult to attribute changes in the status of women to any one policy or intervention.

Data collection was severely impacted by the imposition of a state of emergency in March 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, which led to government office closures and the introduction of physical distancing measures. The sample size for the GRB study had to be reduced to 3 key informant interviews (KIIs) conducted over the phone and by email. Similarly, the data collection methods for the context analysis of line ministries were changed from in-person interviews to phone or email interviews. The sample sizes were also reduced to 11 in-depth phone interviews and 3 email interviews with officials from gender mainstreaming directorate offices of different line ministries. During the second phase of national consultations, in-depth individual interviews (IDIs) and small group discussions (SGDs) replaced the planned focus group discussions and community conversations, and all interviews had to be conducted by telephone. While these changes were necessary to ensure the safety of respondents and to comply with government guidelines, the reliance on mobile phones was a challenge as power cuts and network failures delayed data collection. Lack of familiarity with phone interviews was also a challenge for many informants and facilitators to openly discuss their views and put their trust in the researchers who were conducting the interviews.

To minimize the impact of lack of face-to-face contact and enhance the quality of data, strong facilitators who could identify appropriate research participants and do the necessary interview facilitation processes were identified and selected through the assistance of BoWCY woreda offices. The facilitators were degree holders who had some knowledge about research. They were also provided training by researchers on facilitating phone conversation between researchers and interviewees. Prior briefing of the project by facilitators and introductory warm up chats helped ease any difficulty in transitioning to virtual interview formats experienced by either researchers or participants. In cases where the facilitators failed to bring appropriate research participants, the researchers cancelled the interviews and arranged other interviews to get quality data. Triangulation of data collected through different methods also helped to determine the quality of data. Furthermore, literature and documentary analysis helped to complement the data collected through phone interviews, particularly for the GRB. The facilitators not only assisted the collection of quality data but also served as a critical link to establish rapport between the researchers and the interviewees.

Additionally, conflict in Dire Dawa and Tigray, floods in Gambella and Afar, locusts in parts of Amhara and other data collection challenges delayed data collection for the national consultations. In the woredas where such challenges were faced, it was difficult to locate participants, particularly key informants, and in some cases facilitators. Continuous phone calls and relentless effort by Includovate researchers to reach out to facilitators and come up with innovative ways to fit the circumstances made data collection possible in those times. Home visits to government officials by facilitators, providing transportation to areas where it was safe to have interviews and building personal relationships with individual informants made it possible to do

interviews under such challenges. However, internal conflict in Tigray and Oromia interrupted data collection, which, as a result, could not be completed in 3 woredas in Tigray and one woreda in Oromia. Despite these challenges, the research team collected data using multiple methods in every region in the country, providing robust coverage of different stakeholder groups in diverse communities.

3 Analysis of the NPEW and institutional context for its implementation

The foundation for the NPEW review process was an analysis of the policy itself, as well as analyses of the government bodies responsible for its implementation. This section summarizes the findings from: a multi-framework analysis of the NPEW; two context analyses of the MoWCY and its coordination with other line ministries; and an examination of the government's implementation of GRB.

3.1 Policy analysis

The analysis of the NPEW (Includovate, 2020d) drew on four independent frameworks to provide a comprehensive assessment of the policy's significance, strengths, and limitations in order to inform the development of a new, gender-transformative policy:

1. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC) evaluation criteria to assess policy effectiveness, coherence, relevance, efficiency, impact, and sustainability.
2. The transformational authority framework focuses on policy characteristics needed to transform structures that perpetuate gender inequality.
3. The vulnerability framework considers how policy addresses different root causes of gender inequality and injustice.
4. The gender continuum framework assesses policy against a scale from “gender-harmful” to “gender-transformative” approaches.

These frameworks offer complementary perspectives that layer and intersect to allow the analysis to cover policy design, implementation, and impact in the context of Ethiopia and to identify gaps and recommendations for future policy development. Additionally, to assess how the NPEW and other gender related national policies have been influenced by international and regional policies and legal frameworks, researchers conducted a desk review of international, regional, and national policies and legal frameworks on gender equality. It is important to note that the analysis of NWEF sought to strike a balance between assessing the policy against the conceptual and theoretical standards of its time, while at the same time pointing out gaps and weaknesses in the context of current thinking around gender. The analytical results derived from each framework are presented below.

3.1.1 Analysis of the NPEW Using the OECD DAC Evaluation Criteria

The OECD DAC evaluation criteria for development interventions cover six components: coherence, relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability (OECD, 2019). The evaluation of the NPEW against these criteria focused on those elements that could be addressed through analysis of NPEW content and yield relevant insights to inform future policy development.

Coherence: Policy coherence refers to consistency with international and regional norms and standards, and alignment and complementarity with other national policies and initiatives (OECD, 2019). While Ethiopia's commitment to CEDAW formed a foundation for development of the NPEW, the policy is not coherent with current approaches to gender equality and international and regional gender equality frameworks that Ethiopia ratified after 1993. The NPEW justified the necessity for gender equality in terms of women's contribution to society in terms of social, political, and economic spheres rather than taking women as rights holders regardless of these contributions. The policy's coherence with different national sector-specific policies and strategies also varies. For example, like the NPEW, both GTP I and GTP II focused on women-only activities rather than aiming to transform gendered economic systems (MoTI & UNDP Ethiopia, 2018). By contrast, the 2017 Gender Equality Strategy for the Agriculture Sector followed a structural approach to gender equality and framed women as potential agents of transformation rather than mere beneficiaries (Drucza & Rodriguez, 2018). Thus, there is a need to align the policy with current approaches to gender inequality and recent regional and international gender equality frameworks, creating a foundation for a consistent approach to gender equality in Ethiopia's national policies and strategies.

Relevance: Relevance addresses policy responsiveness to the current reality, needs, and priorities of women and girls, and policy elements that are missing or need updating. Despite progress achieved since the implementation of NPEW, many challenges and inequalities identified by NPEW remain relevant, including access to services in rural areas, women's unpaid domestic work burden (Drucza & Rodriguez, 2018), and gendered inequalities in both agricultural and formal sector employment and wages (MoTI & UNDP Ethiopia, 2018; FAO, 2019). While some of the key issues identified in the NPEW remain relevant, shifting economic, demographic, social, political, and economic trends over the past three decades require updated policy approaches. A more nuanced situational analysis based on timely, quality sex-disaggregated data is required to inform relevant policy interventions that effectively respond new developments, emerging challenges, and contemporary priorities.

Efficiency: An efficient intervention delivers results in a cost-effective and timely manner (OECD, 2019). The NPEW does not include specific resource allocations, results indicators, or monitoring timelines. The policy tasks the WAO in the prime minister's office with coordinating "financial and material aids to be secured from various sources" (OPM, 2013: p.18), without specifying the extent or type of resources required, over what period of time, or from what sources. Inadequate resource allocation has been identified as a challenge in implementing the NPEW (Sosena & Tsahai 2008). However, government budget records related to NPEW implementation are unavailable, making it difficult to assess the cost-effectiveness of NPEW implementation in relation to results achieved. These gaps in both the policy's original design and subsequent record-keeping suggest that the NPEW policy did not establish effective monitoring systems for measuring implementation efficiency.

Effectiveness: Effectiveness refers to the extent to which an intervention is achieving its objectives (OECD, 2019). The NPEW led to the establishment of an institutional machinery for incorporating women's affairs into all levels of government, marking a significant milestone in the

formalisation and institutionalisation of women's affairs in Ethiopia (Ogato, 2013). This policy together with the 1995 constitution also spurred legal and policy reforms that guaranteed women's rights to own property, form and join organisations, and participate in the political process. Specifically, the NPEW provided a basis for legal reforms in many sectors including the federal land administration law in 1997, family law in 2000, labour law in 2003, criminal law in 2005, and the federal civil servants' law in 2007 (FDRE, 2015b: p.14). However, the lack of clear and achievable objectives, expected results, targets, and indicators in the NPEW makes it hard to comprehensively assess the policy's effectiveness in delivering on its objectives.

Impact: Impact goes beyond effectiveness in achieving objectives to examine longer-term, "higher-level" effects with broad reach (OECD, 2019), including both intended and unintended outcomes. Section 6 presents a detailed discussion of the NPEW's impact in the context of national progress in the areas of political participation, economic empowerment, health and education, and eradication of HTPs and GBV.

Sustainability: Sustainability refers to the likelihood that benefits from an intervention will last, paying attention to resilience and risks over time (OECD, 2019). The NPEW represented progressive advancement of women's rights in Ethiopia, and the policy has persisted for almost 3 decades. The policy's sustainability is dependent not only on continued political will, but also on the capacity of key government ministries and departments. Limited institutional capacity and insufficient financial commitments have been key constraints affecting the NPEW's sustainability. The gender directorates in the MoWCY are constrained by inadequate resources, leadership commitment, and staff competence (Includovate, 2020b). The capacity and accessibility of government structures and processes is particularly limited in rural areas and at lower levels of government, resulting in significant sustainability challenges at these levels (Includovate, 2020a; Tefera, 2014). The NPEW itself lacks details on budgeting or funding for future implementation (Sosena and Tsahai, 2008).

3.1.2 Factors Affecting Policy Appropriateness, Operationalisation, and Outcomes: Analysing the NPEW from a Transformational Authority Perspective

The transformational authority framework focuses on the conditions needed to transform the structures and systems that perpetuate gender inequality: acceptability, authority/capacity, accountability, empowerment, and transformation.

Acceptability: Acceptability to stakeholders is one of the factors affecting the likelihood a policy will be adopted and implemented (Morestin, 2012; Bardach & Patashnik, 2019). The NPEW reflects the political realities and priorities facing Ethiopia in 1993, more than any international gender discourse at the time (Biseswar, 2008). The policy cites women's "unique role during the civil war" as a justification for "giving special attention to women," and positions the realisation of women's rights as part of the democratic process that followed "the downfall of the justice-flouting and belligerent Derg" (OPM, 1993: p.3). These rationales no longer reflect current realities and, hence, cannot form the basis for public acceptability of the policy today. Throughout the policy there are other judgements and generalisations that are unlikely to be considered appropriate in a policy document today, such as the accusation that young women migrating from

rural to urban areas become “prostitutes” and “delinquents,” or the description of women’s health as “pathetic” (OPM, 1993: p.9). Using appropriate discourse is important for public acceptability.

Authority/Capacity: Successful policy adoption and implementation rests on the authority and capacity of the actors responsible. The NPEW entrusted the primary responsibility for implementing the policy to government structures, specifically the WAO, WABs and WADs⁵ (OPM, 1993: p.18). These institutions lack the capacity to effectively implement the policy and this erodes their authority and power within government and with the public. There is weak coordination between gender directorates in the MoWCY and between MoWCY and other line ministries. These capacity problems are more critical at local woreda and kebele levels (Includovate, 2020c). The NPEW does not address the roles of actors outside government s in implementing the policy, and therefore fails to provide a framework for cooperation and coordination among different actors.

Accountability: Gender mainstreaming and institutional transformation require strong mechanisms of accountability, including both upwards accountability to strong leadership and formal institutional commitments, as well as downwards accountability to those who are directly affected (EIGE, 2016; Wong et al., 2019). The establishment of dedicated institutional structures (e.g., WAO, WABs, WADs) with responsibility for NPEW implementation supported direct accountability, but also siloed gender issues within these structures rather than fully mainstreaming implementation and accountability into line ministries (Mulugeta, 2011). Over the course of time, the WAO evolved into MoWCY, which currently coordinates, facilitates, and monitors women’s affairs activities at the national level. MoWCY is accountable to the Council of Ministers. Other federal and regional offices are accountable to the MoWCY when it comes to implementing the NPEW. At the regional level, a Bureau of Women, Children and Youth (BoWCY) is accountable to the relevant regional council. Various accountability challenges are preventing proper implementation of the policy both at ministerial and sectoral levels, including: variable understandings of responsibilities and lines of accountability; inconsistent approaches; and, the lack of effective tools and processes, such as an effective management information system or database for monitoring and evaluation (Includovate, 2020c; 2020a).

Empowerment: Women’s empowerment refers to the processes by which women gain power and control over their own lives and the ability to make strategic life choices (Kabeer, 2005; EIGE, 2020). Empowerment can occur at personal, relational, and societal levels (Huis et al., 2017). Though the NPEW purported to build the capacity of women, based on best practice at the time, it lacked a framework that promoted the role of agency, relations, and structures to facilitate empowerment and did not provide clear strategies for tackling structures, practices, and norms—particularly at a grassroots level—that undermine women’s rights and perpetuate gender inequality. The policy committed the government to exert “maximum effort” to eliminate discriminatory practices based on “the idea that women are inferior to men” but did not articulate what this effort would entail nor any specific strategies for overcoming prohibitive gender norms.

⁵ The WAO is termed the “Women’s Affairs Sector” in the NPEW, and the regional women’s affairs bureaus (WABs) are termed the “Regional Women’s Affairs Sector” in the NPEW (OPM, 1993: p.18–19).

The policy targeted macro-level change following a top-down approach, which tends to ignore and underestimate grassroots norms that shape the roles and position of women in society.

Transformation: Gender-transformative approaches became increasingly prominent in the early 2000s (Rutgers, 2018). These approaches “move beyond individual self-improvement among women and toward transforming the power dynamics and structures that serve to reinforce gendered inequalities” (Hillenbrand et al. 2014: p.5). In line with prevailing approaches at the time, the NPEW aimed to bring women into the existing opportunity structures enjoyed by men, rather than acknowledging and seeking to transform the structural roots of gender inequality. While the policy’s final line noted that “the welfare of women is, after all, every Ethiopian’s concern,” it did not address the potential role of men and boys in transforming gendered relations at all levels.

3.1.3 Dissecting the Category “Women”: Vulnerability Framework as a Lens to Analyse NPEW

The vulnerability framework brings together the concepts of intersectionality, risks across the life cycles of women, and power relations and environmental issues to interrogate the extent to which the NPEW engages with and responds to the drivers of vulnerability that shape the lives of women and girls.

Intersectionality: Intersectionality is an analytical tool used to understand and respond to the way gender intersects with other structural identities and interlocking systems of power and oppression to shape the forms of inequality experienced by women (Hankivsky & Cormier, 2011; Cooper, 2016). Women and girls experience overlapping forms of discrimination based on their gender, race, class, sexual identity, religion, marital status, disability, age, geography, migration status, and other identity and contextual factors (UN Women, 2018). The NPEW did not explicitly employ an intersectional lens, but did acknowledge that “discrimination against women is perpetuated in various ways - depending on their ethnic background, culture, and religion” (OPM, 1993:p.12), and specifically noted that the practice of HTPs varied between cultures, ethnic groups, and regions. The policy also committed to paying “special attention” to rural women because they faced “particular problems and shoulder a heavier burden” (OPM, 1993: p.15). However, the policy made no mention women with disabilities. Nor did it mention other factors that shape women’s opportunities and experiences, such as migration status, displacement, social status, age, and marital status.

Life Cycle Analysis: A lifecycle perspective recognises that, “gender inequality is experienced differently by women and girls across the life cycle” (UN Women & the World Bank, 2018). The NPEW mainly focused on the needs of women of working and reproductive age, addressing access to employment opportunities, career advice, equal pay, agricultural labour, reproductive health services, and maternity leave (OPM, 1993: p.4). Girls, young adults, and older adults received limited attention in the policy. A lifecycle perspective highlights the importance of mutually reinforcing interventions to address gender inequality across the different stages of life. Early years interventions to support equitable health care, development, and education of girls are factors in shaping women’s later health, reproductive, and economic outcomes (UNICEF, 2011). In turn, adult women’s ability to assert agency, decision-making, and control over income

in the household has impacts on nutrition, education attainment, and age of marriage of girl children (UNICEF, 2011).

Power and environment: Power relations and power differentials shape the nature of women's vulnerabilities and their resilience and resistance in the face of environmental change (BRACED, 2019). The NPEW identified deeply embedded beliefs about male superiority as a source of women's exclusion from full participation in community life. However, it did not link discriminatory beliefs and practices to inequitable patterns in the distribution of power in society. The NPEW indicated that women and children were the most vulnerable groups in events of "natural and manmade disasters such as war, famine, displacement, and emigration" (OPM, 1993: p.12), but it did not provide an analysis of either the gendered impacts of such disasters or strategies to build women's resilience to them. The policy did not discuss climate change, environmental degradation, or sustainable development. Thus, these issues have not been prioritised in subsequent gender equality plans, strategies, and programmes. The NPEW was not grounded in an analysis of power relations, and therefore did not offer strategies to transform these relations and empower women.

3.1.4 Integrating Gender into Policies: The NPEW from a Gender Continuum Perspective

The gender continuum analytical framework assesses approaches to gender integration in policy and programming along a continuum from "gender harmful" to "gender-transformative" by assessing the intervention's gender analysis, strategies or activities, participatory processes, and monitoring and evaluation approach (CARE, 2019).

Gender Analysis: To achieve gender-transformative outcomes, an intervention should be based on an in-depth gender analysis of "the different roles, responsibilities, needs, capacities, vulnerabilities, and priorities" of women, men, girls, and boys, including the most marginalised (CARE, 2020a: p.2). The NPEW included an overview of "the condition of Ethiopian women" across working conditions, social services, and the law. The analysis was limited in scope and detail, with limited data on key indicators and the potentially wide variations that existed within and between different regions of the country. Additionally, the policy reinforced stereotypes about reproductive labour being the purview of women, declaring that "as child-bearers" women were primarily responsible for influencing children in "the key role they play as mothers" (OPM, 1993: p.4). While intended to highlight women's important role in society, this framing reinforced, rather than challenged, traditional gender roles, and precluded any consideration of the role of men in childrearing and other domestic labour.

Strategies: The gender continuum framework considers the extent to which interventions advance gender equality by building individual agency, changing gender relations, and transforming structures (CARE 2019). The policy's intent to "modify or abolish existing laws, regulations, customs and practices which aggravate discrimination against women" provided a foundation for structural change. The NPEW strategies, however, focused on building the collective and individual capacities of women through improved access to education, training, and career guidance; encouraging the formation of women's associations; and increased political

participation. These strategies were not a sufficient response to the distinct needs and barriers faced by different groups based on ability, age, geography, class, and other dimensions of power.

Participation: To move beyond a gender-neutral approach, women, men, girls, and boys need to be meaningfully engaged in decision-making, feedback, and relevant processes (CARE, 2019). The NPEW promotes women’s participation but gave no details about the participation of women during the formulation of the policy and written records from the time are not available. The implementation section of the policy pointed to a few potential mechanisms for engaging women in information sharing and feedback mechanisms but did not specify clear processes for participation. The responsibilities of the regional WABs outlined in the policy included “encourage[ing] women to make active participation in various activities” and “monitor[ing] the degree of their participation in every bureau” (OPM, 1993: p.19-20). Despite this rhetorical support for women’s participation in decision-making, the policy lacked clear actions, mechanisms, and indicators for ensuring the meaningful participation of diverse women in the policy process.

Monitoring and Evaluation Approach: Assessing changes in gender equality over time requires monitoring systems to collect and analyse sex- and age-disaggregated data, and to address changes in gender roles and relations, unintended consequences, and changing needs (CARE 2019). The implementation section of the NPEW tasked the WAO in the prime minister’s office with monitoring the realisation of “women’s affairs policy” within the government and “the country in general” (OPM, 1993: p.18). Despite this directive, the policy failed to specify which indicators were to be monitored, how data were to be collected or reported, or how the policy would be evaluated. Without a specific monitoring and evaluation framework for the policy, it was difficult to assess how the strategies and responsibilities indicated in the policy would be assessed over time.

3.2 Context analyses

To understand the institutional arrangements for implementation of the NPEW, and the current functioning of key government bodies, two context analyses were carried out.

The first context analysis analysed the roles, responsibilities, and relationships between and among units/directorates of the MoWCY, examined the internal processes of the MoWCY, including human resource processes and administrative arrangements and assessed the effectiveness of the existing MoWCY structure. Data were collected from 17 key informant interviews and three FGDs involving MoWCY staff from the different directorates.

The second context analysis examined inter-ministerial coordination between the MoWCY and line ministries for gender equality. To assess the mandates and mechanisms for coordination and collaboration between the MoWCY and 14 line ministries⁶ that have a mandate to work on

⁶ The 14 line ministries interviewed for the context analysis are: Ministry of Health; Ministry of Education; Ministry of Agriculture; Ministry of Transport; Ministry of Water, Irrigation and Energy; Ministry of Trade and Industry; Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs; Attorney General; Ministry of Culture and Tourism; Ministry of Innovation and Technology; Federal Civil Service Ministry;

gender equality, the research team interviewed 14 purposively selected key informants (KIs) from gender directorates, 11 by telephone and 3 through a questionnaire administered by email.

3.3 The Structure of the MoWCY and Coordination with Other Ministries

The effectiveness of Ethiopia's move towards gender transformation through the implementation of the NPEW is largely dependent on the presence of robust public institutions and structural mechanisms. In this context, it is necessary to analyse the structure of the MoWCY to assess its performance and determine its capacity to lead gender-transformative change within the public sector and more broadly.

3.3.1 The Structure of MoWCY

Organisational and Physical Structure: The WAO was established under the Office of the Prime Minister in 1993 to coordinate, facilitate, and monitor women's affairs activities at the national level. The organisation has since been restructured many times, at different times resulting in either the constriction or extension of its mandate. The Women's Affairs Sector was changed to the Ministry of Women's Affairs in 2005 (Proclamation No. 471/2005). In 2010 it was changed to the Ministry of Women, Children and Youth Affairs (MoWCY) with Proclamation No. 691/2010. In 2015, Proclamation No. 916/2015 saw the ministry renamed to the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, with youth affairs being integrated into the Sport Commission. Proclamation No. 1097/2018 brought youth back to the women's affairs ministry. The current MoWCY has various internal units and directorates under the 3 sectors of Women, Children, and Youth (see Figure 1).

This constant restructuring of the ministry responsible for women's affairs has led to a sense of fatigue among the organisation's workers, with the restructuring often taking place without sufficient evidence behind the decision-making. Informants consulted as part of the context analysis (i.e., study participants) recommended the addition of new units to the existing structure, for example, an emergency/humanitarian unit (to proactively respond to emergencies such as internal displacement), a research unit (to inform evidence-based decision-making), and a budget mobilising unit (to mobilises and mainstream budgets across the three sectors).

Though fatigued by the constant restructuring, some informants still advocated for separating the women's sector from children and youth. This is because they feel that the women's sector overshadows the other sectors and monopolises resources. The government prioritises women's affairs and they get more funding from donor organisations. The high visibility of the women's sector as the face of the MoWCY has created disharmony within the ministry, thereby contributing to a lack of cross-sectoral coordination.

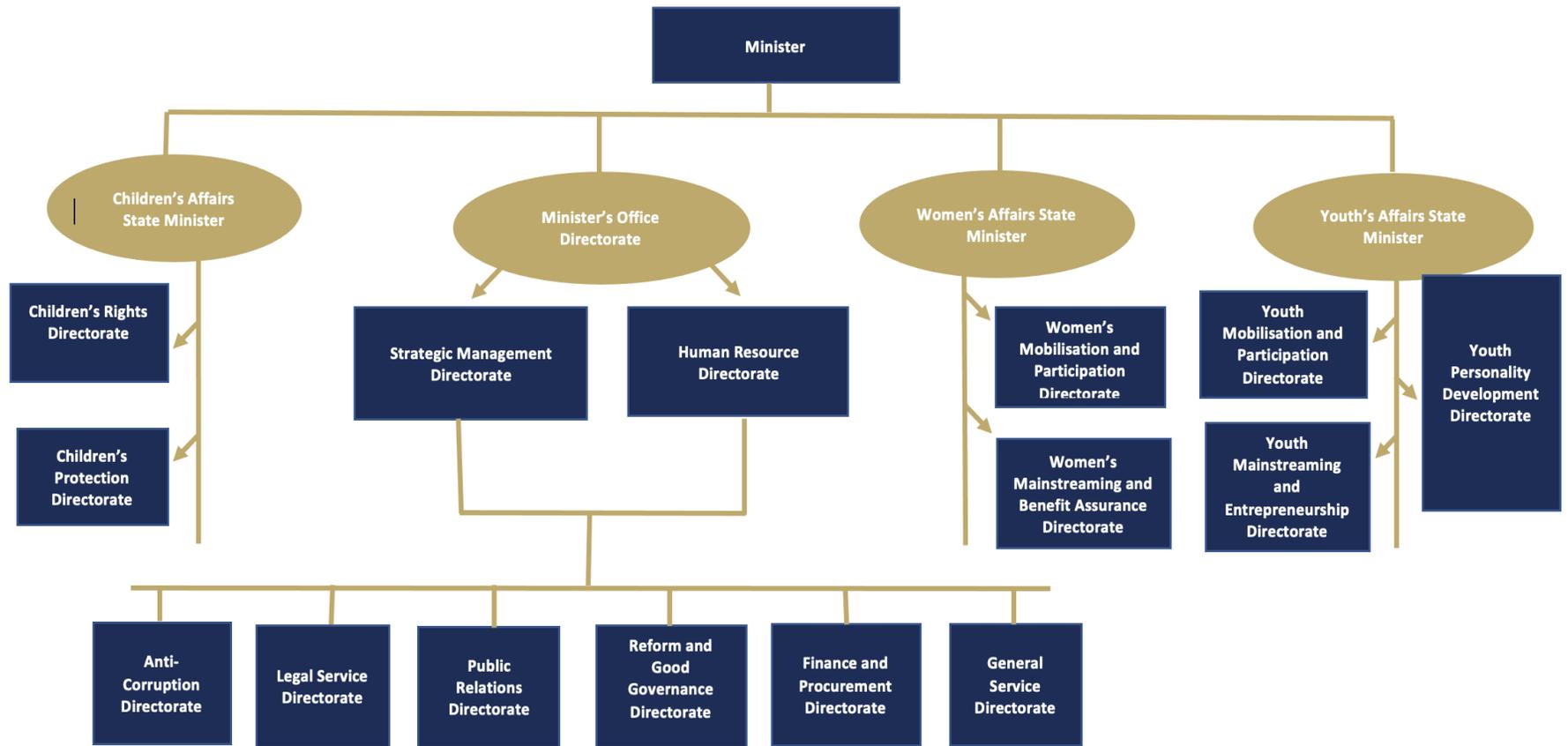
There is also non-uniformity of regional structures. For example, in the Tigray regional state, each of the 3 sectors (women, children, youth) operate under separate institutions. The children's

Ministry of Urban Development and Construction; Commissioner of National Planning; Ministry of Finance and Economic Development

Sector is under Labour and Social Affairs, the youth sector is under the Sport Commission, and the women's sector operates separately. Informants who took part in the context analysis indicated that this poses a major obstacle in the implementation of the Ministry's core activities. Moreover, ensuring accountability becomes problematic as those sectors under different structures are accountable to separate organs.

The physical structure of the working place is also problematic. The desks and computers used are of poor quality. Above all, the 3 sectors under the ministry are in separate buildings, with the women's sector housed in the biggest and newest building. This physical segregation is time and energy inefficient and further reduces communication and coordination between the sectors.

Figure I: MoWCY Organisational Structure



Internal Communication and Coordination: Though there are instances where the sectors in the MoWCY worked together on projects and accomplished a desired result, internal communication and coordination among the units and directorates is typically limited. The only time the directorates work in coordination is during quarterly planning and annual evaluations. Cross-sectoral collaboration among the directorates is confined to these times. Communication among the directorates even during planning is said to be insufficient, as noted by study participants.

Accountability: The ministry has not put in place strong mechanisms to follow up on and evaluate the activities of the various units. Units most often act autonomously, with no system to track their performance. Though the Ministry has conducted internal evaluations and observed gaps in the unit's operational activities, no corrective measures have yet been taken. Thus, there is a need for a formal mechanism of checks and balances to monitor the activities of the various units of the MoWCY.

Human and Financial Constraints on Function: The roles within the MoWCY require 417 employees, but, as of 2019, 143 positions were vacant. Compounding these staffing shortages, the Ministry lacks sufficient employees with the appropriate skills and specialised knowledge on gender issues for the implementation of its core activities. The provision of training and orientation for staff regarding their roles, and to the organisational structure and missions and visions of the Ministry is limited. Further, in the absence of effective human resource policies and staff development plans, there is a tendency to send the same people for training, with little consideration of needs and gaps in staff capacity. Some research participants stated that work is not allocated according to the agreed plans and that management and/or team leaders assign tasks to whomever they like. Capacity-based task allocation is not implemented and, consequently, some staff are overburdened with work while others have little work to do. These task allocation practices have become a demotivating factor for staff within the MoWCY. Hence, many of the research participants emphasised the need for reforming the whole human resources system.

Leadership capacity and performance is limited because most of the top management and leadership positions are filled by political appointees who lack the expertise and passion for gender-related work. Some study participants mentioned gender discrimination occurs within the MoWCY—considering this, it is clear that cultural change is required within the MoWCY before it can hold other ministries to account. Some women informants indicated that asking for women's rights in the workplace resulted in them being accused of having an ulterior, self-fulfilling agenda. Informants also indicate that women in leadership roles are more harshly judged than men in equivalent positions.

The MoWCY gets budgetary support from the GoE and project funding from non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and UN agencies. There was a general feeling from respondents that decisions on how budgets were allocated between and within sectors (i.e. the three units within the MoWCY: women, children, youth) did not follow an evidence-based approach. Respondents pointed out the need for a central budget mobilisation unit within the Ministry that can coordinate

the funds received from both sources, thereby bringing together the different sectors to increase efficiency and coordination in the attainment of the ministry's core objectives. Other respondents requested a more transparent setting of fiscal targets, and for expenditure policies to be designed and resources allocated in alignment with these targets. Crosschecks for efficiency and performance should follow in order to ascertain the fairness and uniformity of the budget allocation. However, the participants stated that the Ministry has no viable system in place to check and track the progress made in financial efficiency.

3.3.2 MoWCY Coordination with Line Ministries

Proclamation No. 1097/2018 empowered the MoWCY to hold other line ministries responsible for their works relating to women, children, and youth affairs. This means coordination between the MoWCY and other line ministries is of the utmost importance if the MoWCY is to fulfill its core objectives. The line ministries have established gender directorates⁷ that deal with gender issues in their respective ministries.

The Roles and Responsibilities of Gender Directorates: The gender directorates in each of the line ministries are tasked with 5 major responsibilities: gender mainstreaming, policy implementation, training and awareness creation, research, and empowerment. They are required to send quarterly performance reports to the MoWCY and receive feedback. The gender directorates support other directorates in their respective ministries to mainstream gender in their plans and activities, generate sex-disaggregated data, and ensure women's benefits in general. In this regard, they assisted many ministries (such as the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Trade and Industry, the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Water, Irrigation and Energy) to develop sector specific gender mainstreaming manuals, guidelines, and strategies. But not all gender directorates across the different ministries approach these tasks with the same rigour. For instance, directorates are expected to collect sex-disaggregated data for their respective ministries, but performance in this regard varies from ministry to ministry. The gender directorates are also required to make use of the NPEW and other national and international legal frameworks in their efforts to ensure gender equality. But gender directorates within the national ministries are not equipped with enough financial, technical, and human resources to fulfil their mandate. Moreover, the gender directorates are side-lined within the ministries as they are not considered a core unit and consequently have limited influence over their ministry and little engagement with the minister.

Communication and Coordination: Annual planning, quarterly meetings and reports, and training workshops constitute the main mechanisms of coordination and communication between the MoWCY and the gender directorates within other line ministries. The quarterly meetings serve as a forum to evaluate activity reports of the directorates and for the MoWCY to provide feedback. But these meetings and reports lack uniformity and enforcement mechanisms. Some line ministries do not regularly submit their performance reports, while others complain that they do not receive feedback from the MoWCY when they do submit the reports. The extent

⁷ The offices responsible for women's issues within the line ministries have undergone multiple name changes, including shifts between "women's offices" and "gender directorates." For clarity, in this report "women's offices" is used to represent these bodies.

and intensity of coordination between the various line ministry directorates and the MoWCY is inconsistent—few ministries have frequent communications with the MoWCY and others do not adequately communicate or do not communicate with the MoWCY at all. Active engagement between gender directorates and non-government stakeholders is limited due to lack of clarity in Proclamation No. 1097/2018 about the nature of the relation between governmental and non-governmental organisations.

Capacity and Leadership Commitment: The gender directorates in the line ministries face various challenges relating to capacity and leadership: gender directorates are understaffed (most have 4 staff, including the director), they lack competent professionals with gender expertise, and they have high rates of staff turnover. The MoWCY provides capacity building support to the directorates through training events and workshops, though this is hampered by budget limitations. Senior ministry officials often perceive the gender directorates as support units and allocate fewer human and financial resources to them. Thus, study participants maintained that the MoWCY should seek funding for the directorates in other line ministries.

Accountability: The line ministries are each accountable for mainstreaming gender in their respective sectors and mandated areas. However, the reality is that the visions and missions of the line ministries do not adequately address gender equality. Overlapping mandates between line ministries has been a factor that constrains accountability, as in situations where more than one ministry is delegated with the responsibility of implementing the same task. For instance, the Planning Commission and MoWCY both have a mandate to monitor performance reports of gender mainstreaming directorates of the line ministries and report back to the parliament but there is a lack of clarity about which ministry is the most accountable. Though Proclamation No. 1097/2018 invested the MoWCY with the power to hold other line ministries accountable, the MoWCY still relies on the other ministries to implement its agenda. In this context, strengthening inter-ministerial collaboration improves accountability. Informants stated that there needs to be a balance between MoWCY telling line ministries and gender directorates what they should do and report on, and the ministries developing their own gender plans that align with national interest and policy.

Monitoring: In Ethiopia, women's affairs activities are monitored by the MoWCY and the Planning Commission. The MoWCY uses quarterly meetings and performance reports to monitor the activities of the gender directorates of the line ministries. The Planning Commission uses key performance indicators (KPIs) to hold the line ministries accountable. Effective monitoring of women's affairs activities is challenging due to several problems, including the conflicting mandates of the MoWCY and Planning Commission, the ineffectiveness of meetings and reporting, and the lack of an effective management information system within MoWCY and the line ministries. A National General Information System (NGIS) launched by MoWCY in 2020 with support from UNICEF, UN Women, and the African Development Bank, has not yet been implemented due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The MoWCY has developed levelling tools to evaluate the engagement of line ministries in attaining gender transformative change. However, this monitoring mechanism does not include

any 'follow on' consequences. The directorates would like more support around what to do differently, not just where they sit in comparison to other ministries.

3.4 Gender-Responsive Budgeting

In 2011, the Ministry of Finance (MoF) and Network of Ethiopian Women's Associations (NEWA), with support from the British Council, initiated the GRB project to promote the equal engagement of women in resource allocation. The GRB project aimed to understand how gender considerations could be integrated into the economic policy process, particularly focussing on the budgetary process (ESAP2, 2014 p.10). The GRB project included introduction of guidelines for government ministries to mainstream gender into the budget process, GRB awareness raising projects for female civil society groups, and a GRB monitoring tool.

Specific tasks undertaken as part of the GRB project to introduce GRB to Ethiopia were:

- training of federal and regional government parliamentarians on GRB by the MoF;
- GRB guidelines for planners developed by MoF and the British Council in partnership with UN Women;
- With the support of UN Women, the Poverty Action Network in Ethiopia (PANE) built the capacity of local governments on GRB and social accountability. The project was implemented in one woreda in each of the following four regions: Amhara, Oromiya, SNNP and Dire Dawa City Administration;
- Training for middle level management of all sectors on GRB, and Training of Trainers in the regions and two city administrations. This led to the establishment of task forces made up of the middle managers that were trained on GRB (ESAP2, 2014 p.10).

In the GRB project, civil society groups like NEWA focused on GRB literacy and awareness creation for women occupying offices that influence the budgetary process at sub-national level (MoFED, 2012). The MoF's Gender Affairs Directorate makes its own gender-balanced budgetary submissions for internal resource allocation and reviews the submission of other line ministries to check their alignment with GRB guidelines.

The review of GRB assessed GRB practices in the public sector and investigated whether the budget allocation of resources for the MoWCY by the Ministry of Finance (MoF) and donor organisations is in alignment with the NPEW and other relevant policies. The research team conducted in-depth interviews in person and over the phone with 3 officials from MoWCY and MoF. Questions related to GRB were included in key informant interviews carried out as part of the 2nd context analysis with officials from 14 line ministries. While GRB guidelines that are aligned with national policies on women and with international GRB best practices do exist in Ethiopia, gaps exist that limit the effectiveness of the GRB process.

Awareness, knowledge and use of GRB: Awareness and knowledge of GRB is low among public institutions in Ethiopia. A ministry official pointed out that most public officials involved with budget related matters in line ministries are unaware of the GRB guidelines. Notable variability in gender inclusivity exists among public institutions which accounts for the limited use of GRB.

According to a senior government informant, most line ministries do not integrate GRB plans into their budgets, and where GRB is practised (e.g., in the Ministry of Water, Irrigation and Energy), it tends to be poorly implemented. Even though the MoWCY is a key champion of GRB, its own GRB processes need improvement.

Budget allocation process: The budget allocation process in Ethiopia incorporates some measures for GRB accountability. However, inadequate budgetary allocation for gender related programming by MoF has been identified as a major challenge. Other issues that hinder the GRB process include the lack of capacity in line ministries, MoF, and the House of Peoples Representatives for integrating gender at each stage of the budget allocation, and a lack of coordination between ministries, especially between the MoWCY and MoF. Due to lack of access to documents, the review was unable to assess how budgetary allocation for the MoWCY aligns with national gender equality agendas, plans, and strategies.

Overall, Ethiopia's performance on GRB can be characterised as "gender sensitive," meaning that public institutions tend to acknowledge gender in their budgeting but do not always allocate funds to address gender-related issues. Nonetheless, it should be noted that levels of commitment to gender integration and GRB vary between line ministries. Ultimately, limited and uneven use of GRB can be attributed to a lack of both strong leadership and the political will to realise gender equality commitments.

3.5 Key messages from the NPEW policy and context analyses

Our analysis of the NPEW concludes that, while the policy was ground-breaking in 1993, it is now outdated and unsuited to the current political, economic, and social environment in Ethiopia and globally. The NPEW was grounded in the Women in Development (WID) approach that was prominent at the time. The WID approach identifies women's exclusion from social and economic activities and political systems as the cause of inequality rather than the result of unequal gender norms. Consequently, the policy focused on integrating women into national development processes through programmatic and legislative interventions and on improving their situation in the context of existing structures and social relations (known as the 'add women and stir' approach). The NPEW did not acknowledge and address the factors contributing to gender inequality, notably unequal power relations between men and women in Ethiopian society, gendered social norms, and the multiple identities and contexts that shape the lives of women and men, and as a result, its potential to transform gender inequality has been limited.

By emphasising women's reproductive roles, the NPEW reinforced rather than challenged traditional gender roles and norms in Ethiopian society. Moreover, while strategies and programmes influenced by the NPEW have sought to address the unique challenges faced by rural women, for the most part they did not consider how disability, age, class, marital status, migration status, and other identities intersect with location and gender to structure exclusion. With regard to legislative processes, the NPEW aligned with the core elements of CEDAW but because it was formulated over 25 years ago, is out of step with recent international, regional, and national frameworks. For example, the policy is silent on environmental issues, an issue of growing concern in Ethiopia and one that has major implications for gender equality.

Though the NPEW established institutional machineries for implementing gender-responsive policies at all levels of government, the implementing offices (i.e., what is now the MoWCY and the gender directorates within line ministries) have lacked the authority to hold other offices accountable. Limited financial resources and low technical and coordination capacities within the MoWCY have hindered the proper implementation of the NPEW. Non-uniformity of regional structures results in different reporting and accountability lines. The lack of clear implementation plans, monitoring mechanisms, and a system for tracking the MoWCY's performance make it difficult to assess the measurable impacts of the NPEW and its institutional machineries.

The operations of the MoWCY need to be streamlined, and more transparency and consultation in its internal processes is needed. In the absence of a strong accountability system, the quality of the reporting process varies between ministries and is largely limited to quarterly and annual planning and reporting. Despite these gaps and challenges, the MoWCY is well positioned to drive an inclusive gender policy reform agenda, a process that will require substantial commitment from senior ministry officials and new strategic resources.

4 Results from National Consultations in 68 Woredas on the Situation of Women Over the Past 25 Years

The national consultations conducted for this review spanned 68⁸ woredas across 10 regional states and two city administrations in Ethiopia and documented the perceptions of a diversity of Ethiopians on changes to women’s lives since 1993 and what interventions have helped to achieve gender equality (Includovate, 2020e; Includovate 2020f). In each region and in two city administrations (Dire Dawa and Addis Ababa), one woreda was purposively selected from each zone based on the selection criteria of high population count, religious composition, and urban–rural composition. Livelihood diversification, the prevalence of conflict and GBV, and proximity to national border areas were also considered in the selection process. Researchers used 4 methods to collect data in each woreda:

- key informant interviews (KIIs) with institutional representatives
- in-depth individual interviews (IDIs) with community members
- small group discussions (SGDs), including both single-sex and mixed-sex groups, with community members, and
- case studies of projects and programs targeting women and girls and addressing gender inequality to showcase successful local initiatives and highlight promising practices that could be replicated.

National consultations were carried out in 3 phases, the 1st phase covering 7 woredas, the 2nd phase covering 18 woredas, and the 3rd phase 43 woredas. Across the woredas, the consultations included 637 KIIs, 717 SGDs, 1697 IDIs, and 6 community conversations.⁹ Transcripts of KIIs, SGDs, and IDIs were translated into English and analysed in NVivo qualitative analysis software, using a coding tree to ensure a consistent approach to thematic analysis. The 68 woredas selected for analysis are listed in Annex 1. Annex 2 provides a breakdown of all data collection methods by woreda and region. Annex 3 provides a breakdown of the sex of stakeholders consulted across locations by data collection method. Annex 4 provides a summary of 60 case studies.

4.1 Gender Relations and Women’s Empowerment: Progress and Challenges

The national consultations highlighted important changes in the situation of Ethiopian women and improvements in gender relations seen in all regions since 1993. Gender roles are similar across the country, with women having primary responsibility for domestic work, while men’s activities

⁸ The total number of woredas targeted was 68, however due to insecurity, data collection was not completed in 4 woredas.

⁹ Totals are based on the total number of transcripts received from each woreda. In woredas where data collection was interrupted or halted due to conflict, it was not always possible to confirm the total number of data collection activities carried out. The community conversations were carried out in the initial phase of data collection, prior to COVID-19 restrictions that necessitated a replacement of community conversations with IDIs.

are primarily in the economic productive sector. Ethiopian women play an important role in productive activities outside of the home (e.g., farming, pastoralism), yet their contribution in this sphere is not fully recognised by either women or men. The majority of respondents' views are based on the traditional association of men with the external world and the cash economy and the association of women with the home and the reproductive domain.

Women's and girls' responsibility for unpaid domestic and care work contributes to a power imbalance between men and women that perpetuates women's disadvantage in many areas. For example, the need to attend to household chores may discourage parents from sending girls to school and women may face limited employment opportunities or time poverty associated with the "double duty" of balancing employment and household labour demands. Over the long term, such constraints to women's education and economic opportunities will likely reduce their access to economic resources and decent, meaningful work.

Despite, this sharp dichotomy in the perception of men's and women's roles in Ethiopian society, the majority of informants believed that men and women deserve equal rights and opportunities. These beliefs were based on the recognition that society stands to benefit by investing in women and girls and allowing them to contribute fully to society. Informants agreed that women can perform just as well as men in all spheres of life, if given the opportunity.

When identifying empowered women in their communities, informants listed many kinds of successful women, including entrepreneurial women, educated women, community organisers and leaders, and women employed in white-collar jobs. However, women who work and are independent continue to face stigma in rural and remote towns of the country. For example, in the Tigray Region, women prefer not to get involved in politics or leadership positions because the community labels such women as misbehaved and uncultured. Similarly, in Oromia Region, most cultural values that are associated with a good wife and mother require women to stay at home and be less outspoken in the community.

A large portion of Ethiopian society still holds on to cultural values that undermine women's empowerment. Changing attitudes that currently disempower women requires the innovative integration of community and religious leaders to achieve community buy-in. Many informants did not distinguish between the concepts of sex and gender¹⁰ and subscribed to the view that male and female identities are based on biological attributes and, for some respondents, further prescribed by religion. A minority of informants had responses that aligned with contemporary thinking around gender as a socially constructed concept that defines the roles and responsibilities of men and women in society. The distinction between sex and gender is an important foundation for gender-transformative approaches because while sex is biologically determined, gender is socially constructed and therefore gender-based roles and norms change over time and between cultural contexts (UNICEF, 2017).

¹⁰ Sex refers to a set of biological attributes that make women and men different, whereas gender refers to the socially constructed roles, behaviours, expressions and identities associated with what it means to be a man or a woman in a given society.

Although there are government and non-government initiatives to educate, train, and financially enable women, social norms limit women's representation in local politics as well as their involvement in other socio-political and economic activities. Across the country, various groups, including civil society organisations (CSOs), international organisations, and state machineries, are working to change gendered social norms and empower women. At the national level, government offices give women management training courses and encourage them to take on leadership roles. Different financial institutions also foster a culture of forming associations and saving to help economically empower women and improve their access and ownership over resources. As a result of these efforts, women role models from different social, political, and economic spheres were able to come to the fore in all woredas covered in the consultations. These women serve as an example to young girls and the larger community of women's potential (see Case Study 1).

Successful gender equality interventions were found in every woreda covered during the national consultations. Of the 56 gender-related interventions profiled in the case studies collected during the national consultations¹¹ (Annex 4), the majority were initiated at the local level by NGOs (39%), associations (18%), and local government (7%). International NGOs and projects funded by multilateral donor institutions accounted for 27% and 9%, respectively, of case studies. This suggests that Ethiopia has many locally initiated gender equality approaches to learn from and scale.

4.1.1 Perception of progress and changes experienced by Ethiopian women

Both men and women informants in all woredas covered felt that the situation for women had improved during the past 25 years and had similar, but in some ways different, views on the most significant changes experienced by Ethiopian women in the past 25 years. A significant proportion of women and men key informants interviewed in 5 regions¹² identified increased access to education (69% of women and 78% of men) and reduced workload (47% of women and 56% of men) as important changes. A similar though lower proportion of men and women mentioned a reduction in forced marriage (43% of women and 48% of men) and FGM/C (42% of women and 38% of men). However, a significantly higher percent of women compared to men identified women's increased access to health services as an area of change (69% of women compared to 31% of men), while 59% of men compared to 41% of women highlighted women's increased political participation and involvement in leadership. Though some of these gender differences are minor and others are more significant, they highlight the importance of consulting both men and women in research and policy formulation.

Given that informants were asked to assess and reflect on nearly 3 decades of progress, it is unsurprising that they did not often attribute perceived improvements for women to the NPEW. Nevertheless, while respondents in some localities, such as Lare and Jigjiga woredas, were either not aware of the NPEW or chose not to mention it at all, in other woredas (e.g., Dembia, Dibate, Qwarit, Kelafo, and Gog) the NPEW was attributed with catalysing progress. Kelafo and Gog

¹¹ Of the 60 case studies compiled, 56 were included in this analysis as 4 involved individual project beneficiaries and the organisational affiliation of 1 could not be identified.

¹² A total of 386 women and 366 men were interviewed in 5 regions (Somali, Amhara, Oromia, Afar and SNNP).

respondents noted the impact of NPEW specifically for reducing child marriage practices. The main factors informants identified as having contributed to improving the situation of women and progressing gender inequality are an improved awareness of women's rights, increased access to resources and decision-making at the household level, and improved access to services for women.

Awareness of women's rights: Across regions, informants repeatedly highlighted an improved awareness by both men and women of women's rights and credited the NPEW with helping to raise this level of awareness. One area of change observed by research participants in all regions was women's increased agency in choosing a marriage partner.

Respondents highlighted that there are two critical pathways through which awareness of women's rights has increased. First, awareness has increased because of the activities of BoWCY, other government agencies, and NGOs. According to research participants, BoWCY offices have recorded success in reducing FGM/C in different regions such as Somali and Amhara. They have also reduced the incidence of other HTPs in the country, particularly abduction and early marriage. Second, informants identified the key role played by family members, especially husbands, in supporting women's empowerment.

Women's government machineries in different sectors at the woreda level have coordinated with different partners and sectors to improve women's access to services and resources. Regarding women's rights in the form of governance and redress, BoWCY have played a role in organising women into associations, providing them with livelihoods through capacity-building programmes, increasing the community's understanding of gender equality, reducing GBV, and increasing women's participation in schools and universities. While most informants identified the BoWCY as a major force in prioritising and working on women's empowerment, many were critical of the bureaus' effectiveness.

Access to resources and decision making at the household level: Women's increased involvement in household decision-making and greater access to credit and other types of financial resources are all noted in the woreda analyses. In many locations, informants described trends where husbands increasingly consult their wives when making household decisions.

Despite this progress, however, the lack of effective promotion of women's access to financial resources remains a barrier to women's economic opportunities in many woredas. The guarantees and protections of women's right to equally own and inherit property set in the NPEW and the 1997 Federal Rural Land Administration Proclamation No. 89/1997, have not been strongly or evenly implemented across the country. As a result, equitable ownership and distribution of land and other assets remains uneven and subject to strong social norms. Reports from Dembia, Aneded, Kelafo, and Bare especially noted community resistance to increasing married women's access to land and other resources. These social norms bestow husbands with power and prescribe socially appropriate behaviours for wives. It is crucial that married women's access to resources, employment, and additional opportunities is ensured, along with the direct promotion of the rights of married women and women's rights in divorce.

Access to services: Across all regions, women have benefited from improved access to services, particularly sexual and reproductive health services, and education. Notably, increases in the number of community-based health workers, health centres, and related services (e.g., ambulances) have greatly improved women's access to contraception and chances of having a safe pregnancy and delivery. However, lack of quality, accessible, and reliable infrastructure (i.e., roads and electricity) is a major barrier to the ability of women to use these services. Informants in some woredas (e.g., Dembia, Jigiga, Harar, and Assosa) specifically linked the lack of safe infrastructure to increased risk of GBV and decreasing access to education for women and girls.

4.1.2 Current challenges facing women in Ethiopia

Women and men had somewhat different views on what were the biggest challenges facing women in Ethiopian society. Based on results from SGDs conducted in 5 regions with single sex groups,¹³ the key issues for both men and women as shown in frequency of responses were women's low participation and representation in local political decision-making and leadership (reported by 65% of women and 58% of men) and women's heavy workload (reported by 62% of women and 65% of men). The emphasis on women's local political participation appears to signify Ethiopians' recognition of the role political activism and legislation plays in the fight for gender equality. This shared evaluation by both women and men highlights progress and impact in the awareness efforts around women's inequalities and perception of women's roles even where no behavioural shifts have been reported.

After women's participation and representation in local political decision-making and leadership and women's heavy workload, the issues most commonly reported by women were: women not being considered equal to men by society (reported by 61% of informants), GBV (60%) and limited reproductive rights and access to sexual and reproductive services and facilities (59%).¹⁴ Male informants identified no additional issues.

Both genders identified GBV as a major societal challenge, although more women than men mentioned this problem (60% of women compared to 51% of men). Similarly, more women than men were concerned about early marriage (56% of women and 44% of male informants) and FGM/C (41% of female and 36% of male informants). Taboos about speaking in public group settings about FGM/C, especially by older people, as well as the acceptance of this practice, may be one reason for the relatively small proportion of both women and men informants who mentioned this practice.

Notably but unsurprisingly, a higher proportion of women compared to men considered perceptions of women as not being equal to men to be a challenge (61% of women compared to 48% of men), but nearly half of male informants (47% compared to 54% of women) identified discriminatory norms against women as a challenge. Some male informants of any age, and elderly women particularly in rural areas, were sceptical about the occurrence of gender-based injustices.

¹³ A total of 95 women's SGDs and 96 men's SDGs were conducted in 5 regions (Somali, Amhara, Oromia, Afar and SNNP).

¹⁴ As identified by research participants, women's reproductive rights and access to sexual and reproductive services and facilities covers a broad range of issues including, but not limited to, knowledge about and freedom to use contraceptives, availability of services and facilities for accessing contraceptives, treating sexually transmitted diseases and menstrual hygiene management (e.g., providing girls with sanitary products, appropriate sanitation facilities in schools).

These respondents were against efforts to eliminate gender inequality because they believed that gender inequality is natural and based on religious and cultural norms.

4.2 Factors still driving and contributing to gender inequality

Despite progress made in improving gender inequality, informants identified several factors that continue to drive and contribute to gender inequalities in their respective locations. Significant challenges to progress were identified across the research sites, notably:

- entrenched discriminatory social norms, risks, and vulnerabilities,
- limited access to quality services, programmes, and infrastructure, and
- challenges in implementing policies and administrative processes.

Entrenched social norms: Across all regions, informants acknowledged that patriarchal social norms rooted in culture and religion limit women’s decision-making powers and agency, erode their self-confidence, and keep women from enjoying the same opportunities as men. This trend was strongly noted in several woredas (e.g., Aneded, Qwarit, Bare, Assosa, Jikawo, Kelafo, Dire Dawa, Dibate, Yeka) indicating that social norms are decreasing progress in many geographical locations. Further, analysis of responses from some woredas (e.g., Amibara, Jiggiga, Harar Town, Debate, Assosa, and Bare) directly indicated that family support is integral to women’s empowerment, thus creating a direct pathway between addressing discriminatory social norms and improved outcomes for women.

Strong normative traditions around women’s roles in the household continue to hinder women’s opportunities and capacities to undertake educational, economic, and social roles in the community. Notably, time poverty resulting from women’s multiple – productive and reproductive – roles is strongly implicated as a barrier to increasing women’s access to and participation in public life. In addition to strengthening efforts to redistribute domestic work within the household, key informants recommended the provision of childcare services in the public sector to enable a reduction in women’s household duties. Research participants in Tigray and the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples’ Region (SNNPR) attributed the low representation of women in lower levels of leadership at the woreda level – which offer a steppingstone to additional representational roles and enhance women’s visibility in leadership roles in the community – to the existing work burden at home, in addition to the reluctance of men to support women in decision-making, and negative public perception of women leaders.

Additionally, measures that can help redraw the gender lines separating household responsibilities and employment are needed. Such measures include strengthening employee leave policies to enable a better balance of domestic duties with paid employment, encouraging fathers to also take such opportunities, and the public provision of quality, accessible, and affordable childcare services.

Risks and vulnerabilities: Communities across all regions identified children, orphans, adolescents, internally displaced people, girls and women with disabilities, poor and illiterate women, sex workers, and the elderly as the most vulnerable groups. However, as pointed out by both male and female research participants across all regions of the country, the single most common

experience shared by women residing in Ethiopia is the lack of safety. Whether living in a small town in Benishangul-Gumuz Region, a rural village in Amhara Region, or in the capital city Addis Ababa, Ethiopian women do not feel safe. This is mainly because GBV is rampant.

Consultations across the country show that women and girls are victims of multiple forms of GBV, ranging from sexual harassment to rape. Girls are exposed to HTPs, such as FGM/C, early marriage, and abduction, while a high percentage of married women experience domestic violence and marital rape. The latter is not regarded as a criminal offence under the Ethiopian Criminal Code. Furthermore, cultural stigma prevents women from coming forward to report sexual abuse. Illiterate women and women living in rural areas often do not know their rights and, hence, fail to recognise gender-based offences or the role of the legal system in holding perpetrators accountable.

In several areas, issues of impunity for perpetrators of sexual violence under the current justice system, have caused a lack of faith in the system by victims of violence, and emboldened perpetrators. Corruption and lack of gender-responsive processes by police officers and judicial actors, cultural stigma around reporting violence, and women's lack of access to resources to pursue legal actions all contribute to minimizing women's bodily rights and security under the law.

Government and NGO initiatives to reduce these practices exist in most regions (see Case Studies 2 and 3). Significantly, a quarter of the case studies documented during the national consultations focus on eradicating HTPs and/or GBV. Change in these practices is slow because they are rooted in layers of culture and social norms. In regions like Gambella and SNNPR, for example, community and government organisers as well as religious and traditional leaders expressed that they support HTPs thus offering mixed messages from community leaders and national laws around women's rights and treatment.

Existing political instability across many regions of the country has also left internally displaced women vulnerable to abuse and depravity. However, international organizations are playing their part to integrate these women back into the community's socioeconomic life and ensure their empowerment (see Case Study 4).

Limited access to quality services, programmes, and infrastructure: Lack of access to water and electricity are among the chief difficulties that result in situations where women become exposed to GBV, particularly in rural areas of Ethiopia. Lack of access to such services also adds to the domestic burden of girls and women, who are tasked with collecting firewood and fetching water. The long hours spent doing these tasks prevent girls and women from engaging in productive activities or going to school. There are several government and non-government initiatives underway to curb these problems, while ensuring environmentally sustainable access to such services by women.

Rural parts of the country are also affected by poor roads and transportation, which means that remote areas are disconnected from nearby towns and cities and women's access to health care and other services is reduced. It also poses a barrier to girls' and boys' access to education. Regarding education, many schools, particularly those in rural areas, lack computers, libraries,

and sanitation facilities. In all regions, and particularly in rural areas, social norms persist that prioritise boys' access to school while restricting girls' education.

Across regions, women's access to formal financial services is very limited. Government and community-led programmes, such as small and medium enterprise (SME) development programs and savings and loan arrangements, have proven crucial to the financial support of women-led start-ups (see Case Study 5). Traditional savings and loans institutions, such as *edir* and *equb*, have long played a critical role in supporting women's economic independence and self-reliance but only a few offers sufficient capital for women to grow their micro businesses. Helping women (who often lack collateral) access formal finance of a size commensurable to growing a business is needed.

Policy implementation and administrative processes: As noted previously, many research participants were critical of the BoWCY's effectiveness in supporting women's empowerment. In particular, informants in several locations (e.g., Aneded, Jigjiga, Bare) pointed out BoWCY's lack of power and mandate to address women's problems and gender inequality and to hold other agencies accountable (particularly the police and judicial system). The federal, regional, zonal, and woreda-level WAOs are largely seen by the public as being preoccupied with treating problems after they have already happened, instead of addressing the root causes.

Woreda-level consultations show that there is widespread distrust of the police and judicial services to protect women and to uphold their rights under the laws. A significant number of informants across different woredas drew attention to bias or discrimination in the police and judicial systems that denies women access to their rights and protections. The behaviour of police and court officials in many areas is hindering women's access to justice, especially in the case of GBV. Through such actions, these institutions act as key barriers to building women's empowerment and gender equality in the community. Given the extent to which threats of violence and harassment keep women and girls from attending schools, working outside of the home, and taking on other roles in public life (such as political and leadership positions), strengthening the capacity of these departments to reliably and effectively address crimes against women is key.

Women's access to legal services is particularly limited in rural parts of the country. In remote areas, traditional courts (e.g., *Shengo* in Amhara Region) serve to settle disputes in the community. These courts also resolve conflicts between husbands and wives, and handle issues of property ownership during a divorce. These services, however, tend to be biased toward men as they are rooted in traditional patriarchal norms. The formal legal system also administers inadequate punishment towards perpetrators of abuse against women. Although the situation is much better in the cities, people are still dissatisfied with justice received by rape survivors, because court cases take a long time and rapists are given short prison sentences. Rape culture and victim blaming are very common among members of the police force, and survivors of sexual violence are often referred to the BoWCY instead of receiving due process through the law. Fortunately, in cities like Addis Ababa, women's rights movement are active stakeholders in protecting women's rights and holding perpetrators of sexual violence accountable.

4.3 Future Priorities

The national consultation with community members, representing 68 woredas across the country, provided an exploration of the situation of women in the country. The consultation highlighted several key themes and drew attention to priority areas that need to be addressed to strengthen women's empowerment and improve gender equality in Ethiopia. The consultation also confirmed the intersectional nature of gendered inequalities by identifying girls and young women—particularly those in rural areas, older women, disabled women, and women in poor households—as the most vulnerable groups across all regions. The most pressing priorities identified by research participants and collated by the authors are as follows:

- The persistence of discriminatory gender norms and customary practices that harm and hinder women;
- The need for more support for girls' education;
- Ensuring women's participation in leadership and political decision-making;
- Strengthening police and judicial protection for women;
- Increasing access to infrastructure and services;
- Enhancing women's economic opportunities and employment; and
- A new or revised national policy to support gender equality.

Discriminatory gender norms and customary practices: Community awareness of gender equality is low, and attitudes are often hostile towards women's empowerment. Women's lack of agency was repeatedly raised during consultations, which was attributed to cultural norms and exacerbated by women's financial dependence on men, lack of knowledge about their rights, and limited access to education. Importantly, cultural norms play a key role in continuing and normalising violence against women and girls. Initiatives to transform discriminatory gender norms and customary practices should be led by local organisations and developed and implemented with community buy-in. Such efforts should not only focus on women and girls but also target men and boys and adopt a multidimensional approach, focused on individuals, households, and communities.

Support for girls' education: Especially in rural areas, more governmental support for girls' education is needed. Quality, reliable, and safe educational environments that respect and support girls, provide gender-appropriate sanitation facilities, and harassment-free classrooms are key to improving girls' access to education. Additional measures to reduce child marriage and to provide safe roads and transportation infrastructure are also necessary.

Women's participation in leadership and political decision-making: There is a clear need for the GoE strengthen systems that encourage women's participation in local political decision-making. This will require a greater investment in bringing women to decision-making positions and putting in place a system of checks and balances at lower levels of governance. Awareness-raising efforts to counter traditional attitudes towards women's involvement in politics and leadership can also prove beneficial in overcoming discriminatory social norms and expanding women's options for engagement in local communities. While leadership and political decision-making is reported to be a critical component of women's empowerment in Ethiopia, women are often barred from

such opportunities on account of their household responsibilities and norms around proper behaviour for married women, both of which can restrict women's ability to move freely and appear in public. In addition, to respond to reports of women's representation being manipulated or maintained in a "tokenistic" fashion in some cases, efforts are needed to strengthen women's participation so that it is meaningful.

Police and judicial protection: Women's access to police and judicial protection must be strengthened, as the lack of gender-responsive actions and services is undermining efforts to eradicate GBV. How the overall legal system and individuals within it deliver justice needs to be improved. Capacity and knowledge in the areas of GBV need to be developed, and institutional support needs to be provided so that girls and women can know their rights and feel empowered to report crimes of sexual violence.

Infrastructure and services: Ensuring that women and girls have access to quality, reliable, and affordable infrastructure (including water and sanitation services, electricity, and road infrastructure) is key to improving women's involvement in all spheres of public life and decreasing their vulnerability to GBV. To this end, opportunities for capacity and resource development should be identified, created, and reinforced for all stakeholders within communities. This includes health care professionals, the general public, and decision- and policymakers within government public offices.

Economic opportunities and employment: Enhancing support for women's economic opportunities will require increasing government support for an enabling entrepreneurial ecosystem in terms of gender-responsive regulations, financial services, and training. It will also require enabling policies that facilitate the reduction and redistribution of women's care responsibilities, namely through the public provision of quality, accessible, and affordable child care and strengthening of family leave policies (including maternity, paternity, and family care provisions). It is crucial to develop government systems that make it easier for women to get business licenses and access loans. Initiatives that support micro- and small enterprises operated by women and youths need to be scaled in both urban and rural areas to strengthen women's economic empowerment and curtail urban migration and female trafficking.

New/revised national policy to support gender equality: Many research participants lamented that government officials spend most of their time talking about the NPEW and related strategies, guidelines, and programmes, but put in little to no effort to implement these plans. To this end, informants recommended for all responsible government bodies to engage in building the capacity of women with consistency and diligence through the development of a revised policy for women. Informants proposed that the revised policy give due emphasis to societal awareness-creation efforts through education and capacity building to overcome gender bias and discrimination. Other suggestions made by research participants include strengthening mechanisms to boost women's participation in leadership, even at lower levels of decision-making offices; instituting gender quotas in leadership; and supporting maternity leave and daycare centres in places of employment. It was also discussed by respondents in all woredas that the policy should be inclusive of disadvantaged and marginalised women and address issues pertaining to them (such as access to resources), and that the government should invest sufficient time and resources in the policy's implementation to maximise its success.

5 Results from Consultation with Federal and Regional Government Structures, CSOs and NGOs

As part of the review of the NPEW, consultations were held with senior government officials from eight regional states (Amhara, Benishangul-Gumuz, Gambella, Harari, Oromia, Sidama, SNNPR, and Tigray) and one city administration (Dire Dawa)¹⁵ and at the federal level with parliamentarians, the management team from the MoWCY, line ministry officials, and representatives from CSOs and international and local NGOs. The purpose of these consultations was to provide an assessment of how government officials and other high-level stakeholders perceive the NPEW and its implementation, provide feedback on their perception of challenges associated with efforts to achieve gender equality in the country and existing opportunities. Annex 4 provides a list of regional, federal and CSOs and NGOs consultations.

5.1 Knowledge of the NPEW by Government Officials and Stakeholders

Consultations with government officials and stakeholders from the different regional states showed that they knew about the NPEW but their level of knowledge of the content of the policy varied by place of work and position. BoWCY participants, by virtue of their responsibility to oversee the policy's implementation, and workers in other offices that were focused on women's issues were the most familiar with the NPEW. People in leadership positions tended to be more knowledgeable about the policy than other workers in sector bureaus. Specific training on the NPEW provided to sectoral bureaus seemed limited, however, as the majority of the regional consultation participants did not report that their knowledge about the policy had been derived from trainings. It therefore appears that for many government officials, knowledge about the NPEW has mainly come from its implementation through sector-specific gender activity guidelines and strategies as well as working relationships with BoWCY, rather than from first-hand knowledge of the contents of the policy itself.

The NPEW was well known among the staff of the gender directorates in each of the line ministries. This was mostly due to the initiative taken by staffers to integrate the policy into their sector plans and activities. However, knowledge about the policy among other department staffs and top management in the line ministries was very limited. These findings support previous reports of weak capacity of the women's machinery to implement the NPEW effectively as well as a lack of collaboration, gender mainstreaming, and cross-sector initiatives. Although this challenge was recognized in the Proclamation No. 1097/2018, which expanded the powers and

¹⁵ Regional consultations were not held with officials from Afar and Somali regional states and Addis Ababa city administration.

duties of MoWCY to hold other offices accountable, this change may be too recent to register with informants and to enact sufficient capacity to alter perceptions of MoWCY's authority.

Nearly all CSO and NGO representatives were knowledgeable about NPEW and its content even though they experience difficulty accessing the NPEW and other policy documents. Members of the general public -- despite showing general knowledge about gender equality -- are not aware about the contents of the NPEW. This indicates that MoWCY has not used the media to effectively disseminate knowledge about the policy.

5.2 Perceptions of the impacts of the NPEW by government officials and stakeholders

5.2.1 NPEW impacts as perceived by Government Officials and Stakeholders

Women's empowerment: Regional consultations show that implementation of the NPEW strongly contributed to progress and empowerment for women, including, among other elements, improvements to the provision of health and education services, echoing the views of informants involved in the national consultations. Interestingly, multiple discussants from line ministries observed that changes for rural women had been more pronounced than for the urban women.

Unlike in the past when they were confined to the domestic sphere, many women are now working outside homes, although employment activities have not eased the labour burden of women's domestic and care activities. Widening access to education and affirmative action policies have helped women to join government institutions as civil servants in increasing numbers.

The regional consultations indicated that clear progress has been made in women's participation in public life, including political leadership. Discussions with line ministries indicated that this progress resulted from the structure of NPEW that ensured that women's appointment to leadership was not reliant on the goodwill of top management but was mandated through policy. In many places, specific efforts at the regional level were reported to target increases the number of women leaders. Notable examples include:

- In Oromia, women hold multiple leadership positions, including in multiple sectoral bureaus and as mayors of major towns.
- The Amhara regional government provides training for women to enhance their leadership skills and confidence through collaborations with regional universities and UN Women.
- In Benishangul-Gumuz, women are made leaders of many of the health centres to make health services accessible to women. The region has also created women leaders' fora for experience sharing.

Under the NPEW, women enjoy equal legal entitlements to land with men and an equal share of household property during divorce. However, practical limitations to these rights persist due to

discriminatory social norms, leaving women disadvantaged relative to men in their access to land in some areas (e.g., Amhara and Oromia regions).

Social Services: The post 1991 political and policy environment, including the formulation and adoption of NPEW, paved the way for government organizations and NGOs to expand different social services to women.

Education services: Girls' access to education has significantly increased in all regions. The GoE has managed to increase girls' school attendance, particularly at the primary level, through expanding schools and community awareness works. Women development groups and teachers have participated in mobilising communities to send their children to schools, be they girls or boys. Girls have also benefited from affirmative action when taking university entrance exams, with the grades required of girls to join colleges and universities being lower than that of boys. In Dire Dawa, for example, girls historically left school after grade 8 for marriage. In response, the city administration built hostels to encourage rural girls to continue their education beyond grade 8, which has brought encouraging results in educational attainment in this area.

Health services: Access to health services has greatly improved due to the expansion of health infrastructure like the building of health centres and the assignment of health extension workers to kebeles. Women have benefited from family planning and health education services due to the expansion of health extension works. Ambulance services to mothers giving birth has improved, though the underdeveloped road infrastructure has hindered access to these services in many places. Despite these challenges, partnerships between different healthcare actors and community members have had strong impacts. In Amhara Region, for example, cooperation between health extension workers and the wider community has positioned local women's health groups as key contributors to the implementation of government health packages that led to region-wide reductions in maternal and infant mortality rates.

Financial services: The provision of loan services to women's groups was reported mainly in the Oromia and Amhara regions. Finance-focused group initiatives aimed at women (e.g., women's self-help groups and women's saving groups) have become instrumental in empowering women economically at the local level. These groups help women to save money and enable their members to get loans to support small businesses. The groups also serve as a forum where women discuss and solve their social problems.

Other self-help women's organisations have integrated programme designs that create space for dialogues on the challenges women face, to enable financial inclusion by increasing women's access to saving and credit services, and for building women's entrepreneurial skills.

Women's organisations: NGOs working in Ethiopia have carried out replicable good practices that target vulnerable women to empower them socially and economically. For instance, Action Aid has "women watch groups" to protect women against violence and HTPs. Oxfam has "female food heroes" to empower women in the agricultural sector. They also have activities to recognise the burden of unpaid domestic work on women and ensure its fair distribution across both sexes, with the aim to unleash women's potential to participate in the social, economic, and political spheres.

The implementation of the NPEW also facilitated the establishment of various women-based organisations, such as women's leagues, women's associations, and women's federations. Women's development groups were also formed in the communities. In Sidama and SNNPR, women's development groups helped to mobilise women, encouraging them to give birth at health centres and to send their daughters to school. In certain zones of Oromia Region, women's development armies played a similarly critical role by mobilising women in communities to use health extension packages (e.g., family planning services) and send their children to school. However, Oromia regional consultation participants commented that the increasing state politicisation of women's groups had undermined their role in economic empowerment.

Access to Justice and Services for Survivors of GBV: The regional consultations indicate that the provision of justice services to victims of GBV is not adequate in many regions. The perpetrators of GBV are often unpunished or lightly punished in ways that are not commensurate with the crimes committed. The BoWCY depends on the combined efforts of the police, healthcare, and legal services these actors to ensure the provision of appropriate justice services to the victims of GBV. This process is often lengthy, and some cases never see a courtroom due to insufficient evidence or resources, indicating a need to increase coordination among these actors.

One innovation in this regard has been the establishment of one-stop centres that provide rape survivors with necessary services in one location instead of requiring survivors to seek assistance in multiple places. One-stop centres are currently operating in Addis Ababa, Hawassa, and Adama. Participants in the Oromia regional consultation indicated that women and girls from this region can access to the Adama one-stop centre where survivors of GBV can access services of the police, legal services, and hospitals.

In the areas where these centres do not exist, shelters that have been established in regional states to provide support and reintegration services to women and girls who have survived violence. Accordingly, Addis Ababa has 5 such shelters, Benishangul-Gumuz and Oromia each have 2, and Amhara, SNNPR, and Dire Dawa City each have 1. The shelter in Dire Dawa is fully funded and run by the government while the other shelters get support from non-governmental organizations (UN Women, 2016). Shelters often provide skills training to survivors of violence.

5.2.2 Unintended Outcomes of the NPEW Identified by Government Officials and Stakeholders

Affirmative Action: The GoE has been supporting women and girls' access to employment and educational opportunities through affirmative action. However, informants suggest that, in many areas (e.g., Amhara, Harari and Oromia), this process is developing unintentional feelings of backlash against what is perceived as unnecessary and unfair favouritism towards women. As such, many argue for these policies to be discontinued both because they are no longer needed to support women and because of the negative perceptions that women who benefit from these policies are not equally capable. By extension, even where women earned leadership positions because they were competent, people continue to portray them as incompetent and given a position that was not fairly earned.

Instead of ensuring that qualified women were not overlooked, informants reported that such policies have provided a foundation to further undermine perceptions of girls' and women's abilities. One woman discussant said that this negative portrayal may discourage competent women from seeking and assuming leadership roles. Two discussants from Amhara reported that progress in women's rights has established the belief that women and girls should compete on an equal basis with men. Where women and girls perform well in school, the belief is that this is because of affirmative action and not because the women are competent.

Such unintended outcomes were not uniformly reported, and for many informants, they did not outweigh the need to continue to apply affirmative action policies until women's equal position in society is attained.

Opposition to the affirmative action is rooted in patriarchal societal assumptions about the inferiority of women to men. The unintended consequence of affirmative action is that this presumption of inferiority is not being counteracted but strengthened through the messaging perceived by community members that women need extra help or special treatment to achieve what men achieve.

Challenges with local cultural traditions: Consultation with the management team of the MoWCY shows that the inherent contradictions between the principles of the NPEW and those of the cultures of different ethnic groups in Ethiopia have disturbed the established gender relations at the local level. A second feeling of backlash against women's empowerment is reported in the perception that women's social and economic advancement is fuelling a breakdown of traditional family structures, especially marriage. As a female regional consultation participant from Oromia observed:

When the policy talks about equality it should not disturb the existing culture-based respect but should protect it. When we see the practical context, not only new things like divorce but also killing each other has come. Resisting each other has come. There is the case that one knows her rights and the other fails to respect that right. In our society there is the saying that a husband is the head of his wife. There is the tendency not being able to let such a thing go. Because of this, people kill each other, especially killing women. The things we are seeing recently has come not because of the policy but the way it is implemented. There is conflict because of this. The society has taken that women are not equal to men for so long and thus fails to accept equality. It has created this situation.

Some of the participants asserted that divorce is on the rise mainly because of the perceived contradiction between the state policy that allows divorce (in the interest of the individual) and cultural norms that extremely limit it (to maintain social and structural cohesion). Community members use their cultural norms as a weapon to resist the implementation of the policy at the grassroots level, thereby limiting the impact of NPEW on women in these areas.

Regional consultation participants from Oromia, SNNPR, Sidama, and Harari reported a similar tension between the rights granted by NPEW and local cultural traditions. Consultation participants from Oromia indicated that the visions of equality that the policy advocates contradict the community's traditional foundations which are the foundation of community

cohesion. Consultation participants from Harari indicated the local society felt that the implementation of the NPEW and associated rights had led women in an inappropriate direction. During divorce, for example, Muslim women are expected to go to a Sharia court, where women are not allotted an equal share with her husband. When Muslim women seek these rights in the secular state courts, they must shoulder accusations of disloyalty to their religion. In short, the policy requires additional structures that address the cultural and religious tensions facing women in realizing these rights across Ethiopia's different regions. This view has previously been voiced by parliamentary members of the Women and Children Affairs Standing Committee.

Among participants from CSOs and NGOs, the primary issue of concern is the lack of inclusivity in the women-centric rhetoric. While NPEW reflects the best practices of 1993, when the global focus was directed at women-only initiatives, this view has been challenged by lessons learned in the intervening years. They argued that the focus of a revised policy should address gender relations and power dynamics, with specific attention to the central role of men and boys in addressing these issues. Participants from the MoWCY shared this viewpoint and stressed the necessity of a more inclusive revised policy. Emphasising the limitations of such a women-centric approach of the NPEW, one regional consultation participant from Amhara noted that, "If they [women] walk alone, the result will be poor."

This analysis suggests that there are lessons to be learned from the unintended consequences of the NPEW and the sense of backlash against the cause of women's empowerment in multiple areas. As such, the revised NPEW should be harmonised with societal cultures at the local level through focused and vigorous awareness-raising activities that include the men in the community. A national consultation discussant from Amhara region explained:

There are many clubs in schools ... There are, for example, farmers' training centres. It is better if there are gender training centres in the countryside and in the city that give training to men and women on gender issues. I have watched a programme on Al Jazeera TV about Sierra Leone. Men felt discriminated because of affirmative action to women and the programme showed how they organised father's training centre to explain that helping women in return will help the country and others. They get weekly training about gender. We can take this experience and bring it to our country.

This discussion of positive and unintended outcomes of NPEW highlights the need to develop effective approaches and strategies that will enhance the rights of women and girls in ways that minimize the daily tensions women's rights to well-being, dignity, and health with the social and cultural practices that contradict them. At the state level, the GoE needs a strong position that will support this balance between respecting cultural rights and protecting women's human rights.

The regional consultations suggest that intergovernmental organisations and civil society (including national and international NGOs) must play a crucial role in tackling discrimination against women in cultural life. Specific recommendations for progress include building male allyships at the national and community levels and working closely with religious establishments as mechanisms in the fight against gender-based discrimination. Partnerships with these organizations and enabling a more inclusive process will situate the GoE to effectively establish

that gender issues are not just the purview of women but are central issues within communities and to require adjustments in outdated social norms and traditions.

5.3 Policy Gaps and Implementation Challenges Identified by Government Officials and Stakeholders

5.3.1 Policy Gaps identified by government officials and stakeholders

All participants involved in regional and federal consultations acknowledged that the NPEW is outdated and needs revision. Not only has the socioeconomic context at the time the policy was formulated changed, but major political, and technological changes have also taken place nationally and globally, which include:

- Evolution in the concepts and best practices around gender issues, and their intersection with critical development goals (especially those related to progress in health, education, and security).
- Strong support for evidence-based policymaking and advancements in the mechanisms for collecting gender-disaggregated data and monitoring policy implementation and impacts.
- Development of language that is inclusive and intersectional.
- Maturation in the structural and legal frameworks within the GoE (e.g., adoption of the FDRE constitution, and a bevy of legislative and policy changes) that can inform a revised NPEW.

Informants from CSOs and NGOs stressed that a revised NPEW that embodies a feminist and transformational lens would be a useful, powerful tool that would serve to inform their organisational strategies. Further, MoWCY informants stressed that such a revision should stress the importance of tackling GBV and expand the typologies of GBV addressed by the policy to increase relevance to the experiences of men and women in the current social, economic, and political contexts. For example, GBV that is perpetrated against men has been particularly noted in urban areas. In addition, the GBV against migrant women and refugee women is a critical issue that is often invisible yet threatens a stable peace and security.

Moving forward, informants from the MoWCY suggest that any new policy should recognize that women is a heterogeneous category and that there are different vulnerability contexts that shape the lives of women across each of the regional states in Ethiopia. Current government structures mean that the mandate for dealing with intersectional inequalities can be unclear, for example between the responsibilities of MoWCY and those of the Social Affairs Bureau. It is recommended that a new policy effectively incorporate the multitude of issues that affect women, including across the life cycle, imprisoned women and women working in the private sector. For example, NGO and CSO consultation participants indicated that efforts to expand women's economic opportunities must ensure equal attention to the promotion policies for fair pay, decent work, and safe working environments.

An updated policy should also be prepared to address the conflict and security issues that impact the country. One informant highlighted women are differentially affected in conflict situations, but interventions designed to address internal displacements resulting from conflict situations are

often gender-blind. As the NPEW did not address issues relating to refugees and migrants, there is a need to provide clear guidance in the revision considering the increasing immediacy of these issues.

Taken together, this section highlights that the mandate for a new national gender policy must be cross-sectoral to strengthen the approach to gender as a cross-cutting issue. The NPEW mandated MoWCY to guide and oversee policy implementation, however this has led to a lack of gender mainstreaming across government sectors, which could strengthen implementation. Informants from Oromia region and the federal line ministries specifically stressed the need to mandate the implementation of NPEW across government sectors. Importantly, such an approach would contribute to integrating gender outside of the “women’s machinery.”

5.3.2 Implementation Challenges identified by government officials and stakeholders

Both the regional and federal level consultations revealed that the implementation of the NPEW faced several attitudinal, coordination, accountability, structural, and capacity challenges. In addition, line ministry informants indicated that NPEW implementation is challenged across all sectors.

Attitudinal challenges: The NPEW was not valued enough by stakeholders and it was the shared belief among participants that this attitude was a barrier to effective implementation. In most line ministries, women’s offices have been viewed as support staff (rather than as operational staff) and not taken seriously. In many instances, this perception has resulted in the undermining of the goals and priorities of women’s offices and discouraged qualified personnel from working on women’s issues. Staff members who do work in these positions are often discouraged by their managers and colleagues who spread messages about gender issues being separate from – rather than integral to – the core goals of the line ministries. Thus, women’s office staff members eagerly await opportunities to transfer to other departments. Sectoral offices at the regional level also perceive women’s affairs as extra work and give it less attention, although the sectoral offices include women participation and benefits in their annual plans.

Women’s issues are commonly siloed, with responsibility for action being limited to women staff members and women-focused organizations. Informants from the line ministries report the additional tendency to view issues of gender and women as a political issue rather than as an issue of human rights. Because of this tendency, most ministry staff—as well as the general public—chooses not to get involved. To make a difference, the informants stated support for strengthening approaches that promote widespread responsibility and ownership of gender equality, especially through promoting male allyship and cross sectoral partnerships for improving the situation of women.

Coordination challenges: The formal hierarchical structures put in place to implement the NPEW - from the federal level to the local level – are notably weak and uncoordinated across sectors. For example, activities at the federal-level MoWCY and activities at the regional-level BoWCY have largely been only loosely coordinated.

These coordination challenges are intensified by the lack of aligned oversight of these activities as well as lack of capacity. For example, the BoWCY report to their respective regional state

governments rather than to the central MoWCY. In addition, at the regional level, BoWCY themselves have lacked the necessary coordination and capacity to effectively implement the NPEW. This lack of capacity is intensified as there is weak and uneven coordination between the BoWCY and other regional sector bureaus. Regional consultation participants stated that coordination between BoWCY and other sectors depends on the political will of the office leaders rather than being codified within ministry procedures at all levels.

Structural challenges: The weakness of the MoWCY, the regional BoWCY, and the associated zonal and woreda-level bureaus is also structural. Primary among these challenges is the combination of the women's machinery with the machinery for children and youth. As a result, MoWCY is overburdened and may face contradictory mandates when tasked to promote progress and protection for the majority of the population. Regional consultant participants recommended splitting the MoWCY and the BoWCY into specific entities for women, youth, and children, respectively. Participants also proposed strengthening the mandates of these structures at the zonal and woreda levels to improve coordination and structural weaknesses.

Capacity challenges: The regional consultation participants emphasised that the BoWCY have worked to address the needs of more than 70% of the country's population (i.e., women, youths, and children) but have not had the structural, financial, and human resource capabilities to properly deliver services.

Political will impacts capacity, as those in leadership roles may focus resources on popular political activities at the expense of mandated responsibilities. In addition, leadership assignments to BoWCY and other political offices are often not determined by subject matter expertise and motivation, but on political inclination.

Insufficient budgets are an additional capacity challenge that limit the human resource expertise and scope of work that is achievable. For example, informants report that the BoWCY is short of gender specialists and cannot fulfil their mandate due to lack of adequate financing. In the face of these structural, financial, and human resource constraints, the BoWCY lacks the power and capacity to effectively implement the NPEW.

Accountability challenges: Despite being the driver of NPEW, the MoWCY has not effectively held other line ministries accountable for implementing the policy. In addition, the MoWCY lacks a proper system to evaluate and strengthen the gender sensitivity of the line ministries' activities. Every line ministry informant emphasised this point, stressing how the accountability of stakeholders needs to be improved. Regional informants also highlighted the lack of a proper accountability system, indicating the systemic nature of this problem and its centrality to NPEW's poor implementation. For example, the BoWCY also did not hold other sectors accountable for their failure to mainstream gender in their respective sectors.

Regional informants further indicated that the inclusion of women's issues in sectoral office annual plans has become tokenistic and that the lack of gender-specific achievements is directly related to the lack of planning and outcome mechanisms aimed at gender targets. Relatedly, annual sector performance reports on gender have been generic and lacking in performance

indicators. The BoWCY does not have proper data keeping mechanisms and, therefore, it has not been possible for them to evaluate gender-specific achievements. The lack of quality, sex-disaggregated data is also a barrier to tracking improvements over time. Any future policy must include a strong monitoring and evaluation system with clear indicators and an adequate budget for data collection.

5.4 Key Messages from regional consultations

The key messages that emerged from the regional consultations can be summarised as follows:

- Knowledge of the NPEW is uneven among policymakers at all levels. While those working within the MoWCY and BoWCY have adequate knowledge of the NPEW, staff members of line ministries and sectoral offices do not. There is a need to improve the training of ministerial and regional sector bureau staffs on the NPEW to increase their knowledge of the policy.
- The implementation of the NPEW has brought encouraging results in terms of empowering women through improving their access to employment and educational opportunities. However, the unintended backlash against affirmative action and women's rights policies threaten to heighten the tension between traditional norms and women's access to rights.
- The implementation of the NPEW has been hampered by attitudinal, capacity, accountability, coordination, and structural challenges. These challenges can be addressed by putting in place an effective monitoring and evaluation system, including collection of sex-disaggregated data; reorganising the MoWCY and BoWCY and ensuring these offices have both the political will and sufficient resources to work effectively; and strengthening partnerships with NGOs, CSOs, and international donors to maximise access to established grassroots services and technical and financial support.
- A revision of the NPEW should be evidence-based to ensure that it targets current and pressing issues. Promotion of cross-sectoral gender equality initiatives, support for male allyship, and strengthening attention to GBV, particularly among migrant and refugee populations, reflect many of the pressing challenges.
- The process of policy formulation and implementation should address the challenge of balancing respect for cultural rights and respect for women's human rights, particularly regarding protecting women and girls against negative social and cultural practices that are harmful to their well-being, dignity, and health.

6 Discussion

Taken together, the different components of this policy review illustrate both the remarkable advances towards realising women's rights in Ethiopia over the past three decades, and the persistence of patriarchal social norms and attitudinal, institutional, and structural barriers to achieving gender equality. The findings from the national and regional consultations validated and added nuance and context to the conclusions from the policy analysis and context analyses. Ethiopia is a large, diverse nation, and different regions and communities highlighted specific challenges and local successes in addressing gender inequality. Nonetheless, key themes consistently emerged across the country, from different levels of government, and from civil society stakeholders regarding the strengths and limitations of the NPEW, and its implementation and impact.

6.1 Policy Framework

Our analysis of the NPEW concludes that, while the policy was ground-breaking in 1993, it is now outdated and unsuited to the current political, economic, and social environment in Ethiopia and globally. Participants in the regional and federal consultations strongly support a revised and updated NPEW to lay the foundation for gender-transformative change in Ethiopia.

The analysis of NPEW and the current situation of women in Ethiopia presented in this report provide a foundation for building future solutions to address women's empowerment and gender equality. The NPEW policy analysis results, derived from the application of analytical frameworks considering the transformational potential, gender continuum criteria, intersectionality, and lifecycle approaches underscore NPEW's limitations. The NPEW presents inequality between men and women as a matter of women's exclusion from the social, economic, and political systems that make up the public realm, and from the benefits enjoyed by men in these spaces. The policy does not conceptualise the subordination of women as related to socially constructed gender roles and relations. Nor does it consider the multidimensional forms of inequality that shape women's lives, apart from the particular challenges experienced by rural women.

Both government and civil society consultation participants identified the importance of an intersectional analysis as a foundation for a gender-transformative policy, reinforcing the findings of the policy analysis. Informants from MoWCY argued for the importance of recognizing that 'women' is a heterogeneous category and that women's lives and experiences are shaped by a multitude of individual and contextual factors. This input echoes the findings from the vulnerability framework analysis of the NPEW which underscored the importance of taking an intersectional, lifecycle approach, grounded in an analysis of power, to understand drivers of vulnerability and resilience among diverse groups of women. Regional consultation participants reinforced the findings of the desk-based analysis of the transformational potential of the NPEW, arguing for a shift from women-centric rhetoric to a focus on gender relations, power dynamics, and the central role of men and boys in addressing inequality.

6.2 NPEW Implementation

The NPEW was not only a symbolic expression of the government's commitment to addressing inequality between women and men. The policy also initiated the establishment of institutional machinery dedicated to advancing women's affairs within all ministries and at multiple levels of government. The establishment of this institutional home for women's affairs was a remarkable achievement, but also limited engagement with stakeholders outside government. The NPEW almost exclusively concentrated power and responsibility for implementation in the hands of government actors, thereby excluding potentially important CSOs, the private sector, and the local communities (Bekana, 2020). In this regard, the policy has been criticised as a mechanism for state control of the gender machinery and for preventing a more radical and innovative discourse on gender (Biseswar, 2008; Blystad, Haukanes & Zeneba, 2014).

A 2nd outcome of this limited engagement is that the effectiveness of NPEW implementation is largely dependent on the robustness of public institutions and structural mechanisms. Findings from the context analyses of the MoWCY and other ministries highlighted that financial, technical, and institutional capacity challenges have undermined the full implementation of the policy (Includovate 2020a, 2020c). Both the regional and federal level consultations reinforced these findings, and further illustrated the attitudinal, coordination, accountability, and structural challenges affecting NPEW implementation across all sectors. For example, regional consultation participants noted that the mandate to cover women, children and youth covers more than 70% of Ethiopia's population, but the MoWCY and BoWCY have not had access to the structural, financial, and human resources to properly deliver this scope of services.

The national consultations provided insight into the experiences of diverse community members with this government machinery at local levels. On the one hand, consultation participants identified local BoWCY as a major force in advancing women's empowerment through organising women's associations, providing capacity-building programmes, increasing public understanding of gender equality, and promoting girls' and women's participation in education. On the other hand, many informants were critical of the bureaus' effectiveness, particularly in terms of addressing root causes of inequality (Includovate 2020e, 2020f).

Finally, implementation of NPEW was strongly challenged by the lack of a clear, regular, and resourced implementation plan and monitoring framework. The 2002 and 2006 NAP-GEs provided action plans, but these were not fully aligned with the NPEW and suffered their own implementation challenges (Sosena and Tsahai, 2008). Even within different government ministries, a clear understanding of responsibilities under the NPEW varied. Some directorates identified the NPEW with internal affirmative action, while others saw their responsibilities as limited to creating awareness (Includovate, 2020c). Without clear expected results, targets, timelines, and review mechanisms, the NPEW did not establish the tools and systems to support efficient use of resources, mutual accountability, and leadership authority and capacity to deliver gender-transformative results (Includovate 2020d).

6.3 Changes in the situation of women in Ethiopia since 1993

Given the breadth of issues and strategies covered in the NPEW and subsequent plans and policies, the full scope of potential impacts (including secondary and indirect effects) is far-reaching and difficult to assess. However, the national and regional consultations provided valuable insight into how Ethiopians perceive changes in the situation of women in their communities over the past 3 decades. A review of national achievements on critical development indicators based on documentary and statistical evidence provides an assessment of the impacts of the NPEW and subsequent legislation and programming, complementing the findings from the national consultations.

6.3.1 Political participation

The regional consultations indicated that clear progress has been made in women's participation in public life, including political leadership. Informants in line ministries credited the NPEW with ensuring that women's advancement into leadership positions within the government was a matter of policy, including targeted efforts at regional level. Figures on women's political participation in the federal government also reflect a significant change since the 1990s. In 1995 women held 3% of the 547 seats in the FDRE House of People's Representatives (UN Women, 2014). When Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed came to power in 2018, the country ranked 52nd in the world on women's political empowerment (World Economic Forum, 2018) and 18th in the world in women's participation in parliament, with women making up 39% of the lower house and 32% of the upper house (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2019). The appointment of 10 female ministers that same year led to gender parity in the cabinet. In 2019 women held 39% of seats in parliament (World Economic Forum, 2019) and Ethiopia ranked 16th among 153 countries for women's political participation, a 36-point improvement from its position in 2018 (World Economic Forum, 2019).

6.3.2 Economic empowerment

National consultation participants across woredas described women's increased access to credit and other types of financial resources. Women's self-help groups, savings groups, and micro-finance institutions were identified in national and regional consultations as instrumental in empowering women economically at the local level. Despite this progress, however, the lack of effective promotion of women's access to financial resources was identified as a barrier to women's economic opportunities in many woredas.

At a macro level, Ethiopia has achieved substantial gains in national poverty reduction, moving from a situation where over 45% of the population was living in poverty in 1995 to 24% in 2016 (Planning and Development Commission, 2018). However, improvements in women's economic empowerment have been slow. Studies indicate there has been a modest positive effect of joint land certification (established by Federal Rural Land Administration Proclamation No. 89/1997) on female agricultural productivity (Bezabih and Holden, 2010) and women have greater influence in land rental decisions in regions where rental contracts required the consent of a male or female spouse (Holden and Tefera, 2008).

Ethiopia's impressive industrial growth and development, particularly in the manufacturing sector, has not benefited women significantly. The proportion of women in the workforce at large and in large- and medium-scale manufacturing in 2015 remained at the same level as it was in the early 1990s (30%). Women make up a minority of skilled workers and managers and senior officials in Ethiopia (33% and 27% respectively; World Economic Forum, 2019). Industrial parks attract many young women looking for work (MoTI & UNDP Ethiopia, 2018), but women's employment in the manufacturing sector is associated with exploitative wages and poor and discriminatory working conditions (Mitta, 2019). Further, a significant wage gap between men and women persists in Ethiopia, with women earning 77% of what men earn after adjusting for education and experience (MoTI & UNDP Ethiopia, 2018:11).

6.3.3 Access to services

The NPEW, and the gender-responsive policy environment created by the NPEW, prioritised improved access to health, education, and other basic services for women and girls. Across all regions, national consultation participants noted that over the past 25 years, women have benefited from improved access to services, particularly sexual and reproductive health services and education. The GoE, BoWCY, WADs in different sectors at woreda level, and women's groups were credited by participants with increasing women's access to services, with particularly improvements in girls' school attendance at primary level, and rural access to health services. However, in both national and regional consultations lack of quality, accessible, and reliable infrastructure is a major barrier to the ability of women to use these services.

Both these improvements and ongoing challenges in providing access to quality services are reflected in key national indicators on health and education. The maternal mortality rate dropped from approximately 870 deaths per 100,000 live births in the early 1990s to 400 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2015 (World Bank, 2015:30). However, it is still far from the SDG target of less than 70 deaths per 100,000 live births. The Health Extension Program, initiated by the Ministry of Health a decade after the NPEW, is credited with the progress made in improving maternal health services in rural areas (Jackson, Kilsby & Hailemariam, 2018). Ethiopia has also made great strides in closing the gender gap in health, as evident by the achievement of gender parity on the Health and Survival subindex of the 2020 Global Gender Gap Index (World Economic Forum, 2019). Despite these achievements, much still needs to be done to ensure women and girls enjoy good health. For example, only 27% of births are attended by professional health care providers (World Economic Forum, 2019), and an estimated 22% of married women are unable to access family planning services (UNECA, 2019), although rates vary widely across the country.

Ethiopia has also made significant strides towards gender parity in education and improving girls' access to education. Whereas Ministry of Education statistics from 1989 show that girls made up only 23% of the total student population in the country (30% at the primary level and only 6% at the post-graduate level; OPM, 1993: 11), the gender gap in primary and secondary school enrolment has closed through affirmative action policies. By 2015, the country had reached

gender parity in primary school enrolment.¹⁶ Despite this achievement, the country is still struggling to ensure that all children have access to quality formal education. For example, nearly 20% of girls and 12% of boys are not receiving a formal primary education (World Economic Forum, 2019). There are significant gendered education disparities between rural and urban areas and between regions. The national consultations found that while barriers to education access were identified in all regions, girls' access to education in rural areas is particularly impeded by poor infrastructure and discriminatory social norms.

6.3.4 Harmful Traditional Practices and Gender-Based Violence

National consultation participants credited the NPEW with increasing awareness by men and women of women's rights and linked this awareness to decreases in HTPs. Both the consultation findings and case studies call attention to successful interventions by BoWCY, NGOs, women's associations, and other local actors in reducing GBV, FGM/C, and other HTPs. One-stop service centres for survivors of sexual violence were one of the promising practices identified in response to the inadequacy of justice services for victims of GBV in many regions.

Nationally, Ethiopia has made progress towards eradicating GBV and HTPs. National child marriage rates have decreased, from nearly 70% in 1990 to 40% in 2015 (UNICEF, 2018: 8). The prevalence of FGM/C among girls aged 15 to 19 years has seen a similar decrease, falling from 77% in 1990 to 47% by 2015 (UNICEF, 2020: 16). Issues associated with the unavailability and quality of data on GBV in the 1990s make it difficult to assess changes in the prevalence of the multiple forms of GBV, especially intimate partner violence. According to the 2016 Ethiopia Demographic and Health Survey, 33% of women aged 15–49 have experienced physical or sexual violence (Central Statistical Agency and ICF, 2016). As with other indicators, huge disparities exist in the prevalence of GBV and HTPs across regions and between rural and urban areas, and in the progress made to eradicate these practices.

6.3.5 Persistent inequality, backlash against the NPEW, and the way forward

Empowerment is a complex and multi-dimensional process. Evidence suggests that progress in women's empowerment across Ethiopia has been uneven, with women's marital status and residence providing consistent intersectional inequalities. A national study of women's empowerment in Ethiopia found that unmarried women's empowerment has shown constant, incremental improvement in all the regional states in Ethiopia except SNNPR while the situation for women in unions has been more disparate (MoWCY & UNICEF Ethiopia, 2019). Additionally, much larger differences in the proportions of empowered women are found between the regional states. The proportion of women in union empowered in at least 80% of the indicators in the Women's Empowerment Index was highest in Addis Ababa (34.4%), Harari (12.7%), Gambella (11.5%) and Direedawa (10.9%), while Somali (1%) and Benishamngul Gumuz (3.3%) have much lower proportions of empowered women. The proportions of women not in union who are empowered based on the index are higher across the country, but still vary widely; Addis Ababa

¹⁶ To assess gender equality in education, it is important to distinguish between school enrolment, attendance and completion rates for girls and boys. Even when a country has attained gender parity in school enrolment at the primary or higher level, girls may lag behind in education because, disproportionately, they face more obstacles than boys in attending school regularly and in completing school, particularly beyond the primary level.

(43.2%), Harari (31%) and Diredawa (23.6%) lead in the proportion of women not in union who are empowered while Somali (5.3%) and SNNPR (7.2%) have much lower rates of empowerment among women not in union (MoWCY & UNICEF Ethiopia, 2019).

The national consultations identified a number of factors driving persistent inequality, including: patriarchal social norms, traditions, and gender roles; risks and vulnerabilities experienced by particular groups; limited access to quality services, programmes, and infrastructure; and shortcomings in policy implementation and administrative process. The regional consultations further called attention to a concerning backlash against the NPEW, and strategies and achievements in changing gender dynamics. Informants suggested that across multiple regions of the country, affirmative action by government to support women and girls' access to employment and education was having the unintended consequence of undermining public perception of girls' and women's abilities and legitimacy in leadership positions. Additionally, some participants asserted that women's empowerment is being blamed for perceived breakdown of traditional family structures and norms.

These results highlight the limitations of policy processes in addressing and transforming gendered social norms and values, which are the root causes of gender inequality. Because it did not analyse the structural drivers of gender inequality, the NPEW failed to effectively tackle these root causes and the ways in which gender intersects with other forms of marginalisation. Regional consultation participants recommended increased attention to the crucial role of male allies at both national and community levels in working closely with religious and cultural leaders to address gender-based discrimination. Additionally, partnerships between government, civil society and intergovernmental organizations will be critical in establishing inclusive approaches that establish gender inequality as a central issue for all community members, rather than the exclusive purview of women.

7 Conclusion

In 1993, the NPEW highlighted a ground-breaking and forward-thinking approach towards women's empowerment by the GoE that predated the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action by 2 years. As Ethiopia's first national policy dedicated to advancing equality between women and men, the NPEW had both significant symbolic importance and a meaningful, if limited, impact by affirming the government's commitment to women's rights and providing a foundation for further legal reforms and programmatic interventions.

After nearly 3 decades, however, the NPEW is now outdated in its treatment of gender equality and unsuited to the current political, economic, and social environment in Ethiopia and globally. Despite ambitious aspirations, the policy did not fully integrate a rights-based approach. Rather, the NPEW emphasised instrumentalist arguments for women's contributions to society as justification for gender equality, rather than grounding equality in the concept that all women are entitled to fundamental human rights.

Without a human rights framing, progress for women in Ethiopia continues to face stark challenges from discriminatory social norms that do not recognise women's equality. This tension is experienced by individual women across the country, who must decide whether to challenge traditional customs by demanding equal land ownership or inheritance, or who may be pressured by family and community members to seek redress in traditional or religious justice systems where they are not afforded their full legal rights as they would be under the NPEW. For this reason, greater inclusion of family members, especially husbands, is warranted to help address these areas of tension and to offer a pragmatic approach to, first, improving women's exercise of their rights and, second, shifting discriminatory social norms within family and community structures.

The NPEW has undoubtedly shifted the landscape for women in Ethiopia in a positive direction. The results of the data collected from 68 woredas and key stakeholders at the national and regional levels highlight that significant progress has been made, especially in the areas of women's access to resources through increased employment opportunities and land ownership; decision-making power within the household; reducing the incidence of HTPs and GBV; increasing women's access to health, education, infrastructure, and credit services; and building community awareness around gender equality.

This progress cannot be denied. However, now it must serve as a foundation for the next stage of women's empowerment in Ethiopia, a stage that reflects modern approaches to inclusivity and intersectionality and is equipped to address challenges posed by entrenched discriminatory social norms and the daily challenges facing women, whether these challenges reflect continuing or emerging issues. To achieve this, more data, disaggregated by sex, is needed to increase understanding of intersectional inequalities, especially in the context of, among others, women with disabilities, women across the lifespan (i.e., girls and older women), women from remote and rural areas, refugees, migrants, and women in the private sector.

As revealed by the nationwide study, further attention should be paid to those areas of the country where progress has been uneven. Despite a widespread increase in women's access to resources since 1993, social norms around male breadwinning persist, as evidenced in the existing gender pay gap and weak implementation of women's rights to land ownership and inheritance. The lack of gender-responsive judicial and police services procedures limits women's capacity to access the rights and protections provided under the NPEW. Progress in women's education, health, and access to services (including credit) is limited by women's capacity to have control over and confidence in these skills and resources. For example, women's heavy workload and disproportionate responsibility for care work and domestic labour remains a barrier to women's access to quality infrastructure and services.

Despite notable progress in community awareness around gender equality, gaps remain, particularly with translating this awareness to changes in individual behaviour and community norms. Worryingly, this analysis uncovered multiple areas where there is a nascent backlash or sense of injustice regarding efforts towards women's empowerment, particularly around affirmative action policies and divorce rates. Future efforts must recognise this trend, strengthen efforts to address negative perceptions surrounding women's changing roles, and engage community-wide mechanisms to keep the backlash from growing.

As such, partnerships with NGO and CSO operations should be strengthened. Participatory mechanisms should be employed in the development of any revised policy that draw from the experiences of NGOs and CSOs, which are often front-line service providers (i.e., in the areas of women's livelihoods, awareness building, and working in specialised populations such as women with disabilities and refugees). This analysis indicates that NGO staffs are very much aware of the NPEW and its contents and they are invested in the creation of a revised policy strong enough to serve as foundation for their future work. Further, given the increased participation of women in community and grassroots organisations, government partnerships can not only benefit from the operational and participatory knowledge of these organisations, but can also increase the visibility and influence of these organisations and, by extension, that of the women who lead their work. This will require a focused effort to make any revised policy accessible to the public and ensure widespread dissemination to key stakeholders, including women's organisations, religious leaders, and other relevant actors.

8 Recommendations

Policy revision

- Policy framework
 - **Align with international frameworks and commitments:** Align policy objectives, priorities, and targets with key international commitments to which Ethiopia is party, including but not limited to the SDGs, CPRD and Agenda 2063. (PA, 68WR)
 - **Agenda for rights-based, gender-transformative change:** Consider adopting a rights-based, gender-transformative approach and committing to developing a new national gender policy in line with this approach. Articulate a bold vision for Ethiopia to become a leader in gender transformative development. Create guidelines that promote political will and action for all ministry staff and ensure sufficient, gender-responsive financing and budgeting (PA, GRB, 68WR)
 - **Intersectional analysis:** Ground policy in an intersectional analysis of multidimensional forms of exclusion and inequality and their interactions with gender inequality. Develop strategies that address the multiple identities and contexts that shape women's lives, including a comprehensive package of strategies and supports to address the needs of all women (including women with disabilities, women in remote and rural areas, migrant women, and refugee women) across the lifecycle. (PA, 7WR, 18WR, 68WR)
- Focus areas
 - **Access to gender-responsive services:** Improve women's access to services in all areas including the provision of basic services and facilities such as water, electricity, health centers etc. Facilitate the reduction and redistribution of women's care responsibilities, namely through public provision of quality, accessible, and affordable childcare and strengthening of family leave policies (including maternity, paternity, and family care provisions). (7WR, 18 WR, 68WR)
 - **Employment opportunities:** Enhance support for women's economic opportunities through promoting gender-responsive regulations for business and financial institutions (including business registration procedures, access to financial services, and establishing networking and training opportunities). (7WR, 18WR, 68 WR)
 - **Education:** Promote quality, reliable and safe educational environments, including appropriate sanitation facilities and harassment-free classrooms, to build girls' access to education. Additional measures to reduce child marriage and to ensure safe roads and transportation infrastructure are also necessary. (7WR, 18WR, 68WR)
 - **Women's empowerment and participation in decision-making:** Increase women's meaningful participation at different levels of public life and decision-making. Publicly address social norms that restrict women's opportunities to be

decision-makers in the community and keep women from management roles at work. (18WR, 7WR, 68WR)

- **Violence against women:** Strengthen access to police action and judicial services. Build capacity and institutional support within these services to ensure an adequate response towards violence against women. Educate community members – especially women – on their rights and procedures for accessing justice in cases of harassment, GBV, and HTPs. (7WR, 18WR, 68 WR)

Policy implementation and government infrastructure (GRB, capacity building, inter-ministerial collaboration)

- **Ensure legislative validity in alignment with Article 9 of the 1995 FDRE Constitution:** As legislation in Ethiopia is effective only after it is published in the Federal Negarit Gazeta, all gender-relevant international commitments, existing policies, and future policies/ policy revisions must be published in a timely manner.
- MEL and Accountability
 - **Reflection, accountability, and improvement:** Develop clear but flexible accountability mechanisms across stakeholders that include upward accountability to high-level commitments and strong leadership, outward accountability across line ministries, downward accountability to policy beneficiaries and stakeholders. (PA, CAI)
 - **Responsiveness:** Establish flexibility mechanisms to respond to changing circumstances and emerging issues. Build a culture of learning and improvement to facilitate course corrections and adjustments based on emerging evidence. (PA)
 - **Monitoring, evaluation, and learning framework:** Define goals, objectives, and indicators of change. Establish an ongoing process for monitoring, set intervals for evaluating processes and outcomes, and establish mechanisms for responding to lessons from the monitoring and evaluation. **Instigate a cross-sectoral taskforce** to improve practices, monitor progress, and ensure accountability within the MoWCY and across line ministries. (PA CAI)
 - **Establish a multi stakeholder gender advisory panel,** including academic experts, community members, and representatives of marginalized communities, to promote participatory policy review and accountability. (CAI, PA)
- GRB
 - **Take stock of current GRB capacity among government entities:** Analyse current technical capacity and available data indicators and create protocols and tools to build capacity and implement GRB activities in all government ministries. (GRB)
 - **GRB guidelines and accountability:** Review and revise GRB guidelines to ensure alignment to current policies and international best practice. Cultivate political will, coordination, and ownership from all ministries and government actors - at all levels -through establishing clear accountability frameworks and monitoring mechanisms. (GRB)

- **Improve record keeping systems:** Establish a systematic information management system for all budget related documents to create transparency and ensure GRB reporting. (GRB)
- Capacity building
 - **Capacity building within government:** Work with donors and academic institutions to develop technical support, tools, and resources and provide ongoing support to national and local branches of government. (PA, CA2)
 - **Commission a government-wide gender audit and practices for integrating gender analysis at all levels.** Utilize the gender audit to mainstream, coordinate and prioritize gender equality as a cross-cutting priority central to all sectors and ministries. This should be followed by a capacity building plan that includes induction, e-learning and on-the-job-trainings, focuses on building leadership and management skills and introducing a mentoring program. (PA)
- Resourcing
 - **Emphasize implementation through dedicated and adequate resourcing:** Develop budgets for implementation and ensure dedicated resources that are sufficient to meet policy objectives and to ensure a maximized success of the implementation of the NWP. 7WR, P
 - **Ensure continuity of resources through fundraising strategy:** Once the new transformative gender policy is developed, cost the initiatives proposed and develop a fundraising strategy with each line ministry. (CA2)
- Communications
 - **Dissemination and visibility of the policy and state actions towards gender equality:** Create a clear, comprehensive communications strategy that promotes wide dissemination for gender policies at levels of government and to external stakeholders, including at community level. (PA, CA1)
 - **Publicly promote gender equality:** Position the government as a leader in gender equality through educating the public about harmful social norms and raise awareness for women's rights through continuous information flows. Media campaigns, public service messages, and public events are all important tools. (CA1, CA2)
- Implementation
 - **Clear, comprehensive implementation plan:** Any policy should be accompanied by short-, medium-, and long-term action plans outlining clear roles and responsibilities for implementation at all levels of government, achievable objectives, targets, and timelines. (PA, CA1)
 - **Establish a strategic gender unit** to sit in the Prime Minister's office for maximum 4 years. This unit will establish strong inter-ministerial coordination, oversee the new gender policy development, and implement accountability mechanisms. The unit should report to OPM and include seconded senior members of MoWCY, MoF, MoE, Planning commission, MoH and Civil Service

Commission, in addition to an independent donor-funded gender and governance adviser. (CA2)

Stakeholder collaboration and Partnerships

- Stakeholder analysis
 - **Mapping of relevant stakeholders and their capability.** Identify diverse stakeholders with roles to play in advancing gender equality policy throughout the country (i.e., from government, private sector, CSOs, etc). Establish coordination mechanisms with and among the different stakeholders and support continuous dialogue with key stakeholders to increase accountability and mutual goals. (CA2, PA)
 - **Establish Inclusive and transparent policy formulation process through regular stakeholder consultations:** Design and implement a participatory policy development process involving stakeholders from government, the private sector, academic institutions and think-tanks, civil society, women's organisations and associations, and the general public, with particular focus on engaging marginalized populations. Identify and mitigate potential barriers to participation and ensure the representation of women and girls experiencing multiple forms of exclusion. (PA)
 - **Pilot social accountability mechanisms** such as public hearings to increase downward accountability to citizens for gender equality outcomes and the new gender policy. (CA2)
- Partnerships
 - **Build partnerships and collaboration between government and civil society organizations:** Such partnerships will help MoWCY extend services provision related to women's rights, progress, and empowerment to all communities in ways that strengthen the inclusivity of services and provide efficient, real-time feedback to the government around the status of women and girls. (18WR)
 - **Participatory and inclusive decision-making** process should be introduced by senior management, including on task allocation across and within the units. Consider a community score card/public hearing type of approach (internal and external). These methods can also be used to improve the transparency and justification for budget allocations. (CA1)
 - **Establish partnerships to strengthen the engagement of men and boys:** Utilize partners to identify and support the roles that men and boys can play in implementing the policy and challenging gender norms and beliefs in their homes, workplaces, and communities. (PA)
- Cross-cutting
 - Ensure regular collection, analysis and dissemination of sex-disaggregated data (evidence-based policy, M&E, infrastructure (NSO), stakeholders, international frameworks)

- **Align with international frameworks:** Align data collection and indicators with international frameworks, especially the SDGs.
 - **Ensure technical capacity and sufficient resourcing for the national statistical office** to facilitate regular data collection, analysis, and reporting of data disaggregated by sex, age, location, disability status, migration status, and other important factors to track national progress. Seek opportunities to fund and upskill NSO from UN partners and other relevant international organizations.
 - Review the **National General Information System (NGIS)** and recommend additional MIS functionality for MoWCY. Adapt the prototype once the new transformation policy is endorsed. (CA2)
 - **Meaningful indicators and disaggregated data:** Develop inclusive and gender-sensitive key performance indicators across all government activities and thematic areas (i.e., economic performance, employment, environmental activities, healthcare, etc.). Build capacity to collect, compile, and analyse data disaggregated by sex, age and other key variables across all ministries and at all levels of data collection and analysis. (PA, CAI).
- Areas of concern for gender equality and ensuring women’s rights need to be addressed. Some of the areas, among many, identified in the national consultation includes
 - **Education:** Quality, reliable and safe educational environments, including appropriate sanitation facilities and harassment-free classrooms, are key to building girls’ access to education. Additional measure to reduce child marriage and to ensure safe roads and transportation infrastructure are also necessary.
 - **Health:** Quality and women friendly health services need to be made accessible to women putting into consideration the different needs of women (based on age, marital status, economic wellbeing and social standing) within a society.
 - **Violence against women:** Access to police action and judicial protections must be strengthened, as the lack of gender responsive actions and services are weakening progress and maintaining harmful gender norms.
 - **Women’s empowerment and participation in decision-making:** Efforts are needed to strengthen women’s meaningful participation that respond to the reports of efforts to manipulate or maintain women’s ‘tokenistic’ representation in some cases.
 - **Employment opportunities:** Enhancing support for women’s economic opportunities will not only require increasing government support for an enabling entrepreneurial ecosystem (in terms of gender responsive regulations, financial services, and training) but will also need enabling policies to facilitate the reduction and redistribution of women’s care responsibilities, namely through public provision of quality, accessible, and affordable child care and strengthening of family leave policies (including maternity, paternity, and family care provisions).
 - **Women with Special Needs:** There is a clear need to include these groups (young girls, persons (especially girls and women) with disabilities, the economically underprivileged, elderly people, orphans, and street kids) in the country’s development endeavors and to benefits them along with the rest of the

community. The government, in collaboration with local NGOs, needs to work on making basic facilities and services more accessible to these groups.

- **Build partnerships and collaboration between MoWCY and civil society organizations:** Increasing partnerships between BoWCY and civil society organizations is necessary to increase women's empowerment and gender equality, especially in the rural areas. Through partnerships, BoWCY can extend services provision related to women's rights, progress, and empowerment to additional areas to support implementation of the NWP and associated objectives nation-wide. Such collaborations are also notable for their ability to strengthen the inclusivity of services and to provide efficient, real-time feedback to the government in terms of the status of women and girls.

9 Action Plan

1. Foundation

Scale	Length
Short term	0 - 1 year
Medium term	1.1 - 3 years
Long term	3.1 - 5 years

Action	Responsible Actors and Stakeholders	Timeline	Additional Information
<p>a) Conduct gender focused review</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review existing policies and legal frameworks and identify policy gaps and new/remaining needs of women in the country. 	<p>Primary: MoWCY Stakeholders: CARE Ethiopia and Includovate</p>	Finished	Finalised by Includovate
<p>b) Secure finances for the policy formulation process</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a timeline for the policy process, understand the cost requirements and secure finances. Audit all MoWCY financial documents (from GoE, donors, NGOs). Ask donors to fund a highly experienced gender and governance adviser to sit in the PMO office to facilitate a timely and smooth acceptance of the new policy. 	<p>Primary: MoF Stakeholders: Planning and Development commission; PMO; MoWCY</p>	Short-term	Stakeholder consultations/ convening require funds
<p>c) Establish a strategic gender unit</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To sit in the Prime Minister’s office for a minimum of 2 and maximum 4 years. This unit will establish strong inter-ministerial coordination, oversee the new gender policy development, and implement accountability mechanisms. The unit should report to the PMO and include senior members of MoWCY, MoF, Planning and Development commission, and Civil Service Commission, in addition to the donor-funded gender and governance adviser. 	<p>Primary: PMO Stakeholders: MoWCY; MoF; Planning and Development commission; Civil Service Commission</p>	Short-term	

<p>d) Publish all signed gender-relevant international commitments in the Federal Negarit Gazeta</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure legislative validity of signed gender-relevant international commitments in alignment with Article 9 of the 1995 FDRE Constitution • Certain gender-relevant international commitments (such as; Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, and Convention on the Political Rights of Women) have not been published in the Federal Negarit Gazeta and this is required so the policy can align with them. 	<p>Primary: General Attorney Stakeholders: MoWCY</p>	<p>Short-term</p>	<p>Legislation in Ethiopia is effective <i>only</i> after it is published in the Federal Negarit Gazeta.</p>
<p>e) Proclamation guideline</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create detailed regulations to guide and outline the responsibility of MoWCY to hold other line ministries accountable under proclamation No 1097/2018. • This will also be used to promote political will and maintain upward accountability to high-level commitments and strong leadership. 	<p>Primary: Strategic Gender Unit Stakeholders: General Attorney</p>	<p>Short-term</p>	<p>Proclamations by their nature are general and need detailed regulation so that MoWCY can exercise its mandate effectively.</p>
<p>f) Develop the vision, framework and agenda for change</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Articulate a bold vision for Ethiopia to become a leader in gender-transformative development. • Move from a women’s policy to a gender transformative policy that compliments the national development plan by creating synergies and filling gender gaps. • Adopt a rights-based, lifecycle approach. • Include intersectionality by focusing on multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and exclusion. • Emphasise the need to focus on gender norms including hyper-masculinity and GBV. 	<p>Primary: MoWCY</p>	<p>Short-term</p>	<p>Provide the framework and vision for the new policy</p>
<p>g) Reach consensus on the need for policy change, the new areas/topics of concern and map stakeholders</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultations on review findings with stakeholders from government, the private sector, academic institutions and 	<p>Primary: MoWCY Stakeholders: All concerned stakeholders</p>	<p>Short-term</p>	<p>These consultations with the different stakeholders,</p>

<p>think-tanks, civil society, women’s organisations and associations, and the general public.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the representation of women and girls experiencing multiple forms of exclusion across the lifecycle in these consultations (including women and girls with disabilities, living in remote and rural areas, return migrants and domestic workers, female headed households, refugees, adolescent brides and others). • Include a discussion on socially constructed gender norms that are harmful to achieving gender transformation. • Include a section on masculinity and the role of men as allies and on hyper-masculine norms that perpetuate violence against women. • During consultations, map relevant stakeholders and their capability/power/interest per key area of concern identified. • Reach consensus on the areas of concern for the new policy and have it endorsed by HPR. 			<p>should be repeated to evaluate the new policy.</p>
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2. Policy Design and Content

Action	Responsible Actors and Stakeholders	Timeline	Additional Information
<p>a) Establish multi-stakeholder gender advisory coordination mechanisms</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish mechanisms (e.g. task force/ committee) with members from the stakeholder map (i.e., from government, private sector, representatives of marginalised communities, CSOs, academics, etc) to guide the development of key areas of concern for the new policy. 	<p>Primary: Strategic Gender Unit Stakeholders: Plan and Development Commission; Research Institutes; Gender mainstreaming directorates of line ministries; regional BoWCY; Academic/research institutions; NGOs; Women Associations; Elderly Associations (national level); Disability</p>	<p>Short-term</p>	<p>Include male focused NGOs, GBV survivors and NGOS/lawyers that offer them support.</p> <p>Donors should also be involved in these mechanisms (if they</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● One mechanism/key area of concern needs to be around masculinity, sexual harassment and gender-based violence: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The effects of violence against women are hurting entire families across the lifecycle and destroying communities. A concerted effort is required to stop the cycle. ● All mechanisms should include an intersectional analysis of the multidimensional forms of exclusion and inequality across all key areas of concern. ● These mechanisms should continue into the new policy's implementation process. 	Organisations (national level); BoWCY at zonal and woreda level		<p>have evaluations and evidence of gaps).</p> <p>Ensure the representation of women and girls experiencing multiple forms of exclusion across the lifecycle in these mechanisms</p>
<p>b) Align the key areas of concern and the new policy with international frameworks and commitments and with the national development plan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Align policy objectives, priorities, and targets with key international commitments to which Ethiopia is party, including but not limited to the SDGs, CEDAW, CPRD and Agenda 2063. ● Commit to a transformative policy agenda that compliments the national development plan. 	<p>Primary: Strategic Gender Unit Stakeholders: MoWCY; HPR; Plan and Development Commission; Gender Mainstreaming Directorates of line ministries; Policy Studies Institute (PSI)</p>	Short-term	Frequent and effective communication between MoWCY and the Attorney General is needed.
<p>c) Include a toolkit with indicators as an annex to the policy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● This will help to operationalise the policy and make sense of key terms used. ● The toolkit should include indicators for all key areas of concern. ● Once the policy is approved, these indicators will be included in all programs and policy evaluations in the country. 	<p>Primary: Plan and Development Commission Stakeholders: MoWCY, General Attorney; HPR; Plan and Development Commission; Gender Mainstreaming Directorates of line ministries; regional BoWCY; BoWCY at zonal level</p>	Med-term	Donors will be expected to use these indicators in their country program evaluations as well and should be consulted on the way these are developed.

<p>d) Cost the policy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To ensure adequate resources are allocated to the gender policy and to ensure it is set up for success, the costs of delivering the policy and any shortfall should be clearly stated. This will help MoF allocate the right funds per ministry and assist with accountability and gender responsive budgeting. 	<p>Primary: Ministry of Finance Stakeholders: MoWCY, General Attorney; HPR; Plan and Development Commission; Gender Mainstreaming Directorates of line ministries; regional BoWCY; BoWCY at zonal level</p>	<p>Med-term</p>	<p>Donors should be involved so they can assist with costing and understanding budget shortfalls.</p>
<p>e) Adopt a new transformative rights-based gender policy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finalise the new gender transformative policy's design and have it approved by parliament. 	<p>Primary: MoWCY Stakeholders: Council of Ministers and HPR; Plan and Development Commission; Policy Studies Institute (PSI)</p>	<p>Med-term</p>	

3. Implementation

Action	Responsible Actors and Stakeholders	Timeline	Additional Information
<p>a) Develop a comprehensive implementation plan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create short-, medium-, and long-term action plans with timelines outlining clear roles and responsibilities for implementation of the policy at all levels of government. Align the implementation plan with the 10 year strategic plan of MoWCY. 	<p>Primary: Strategic Gender Unit Stakeholders: All concerned stakeholders</p>	<p>Med-term</p>	
<p>b) Dedicate resources to implementation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Once the new transformative gender policy is approved and costed, MoF needs to secure the resources for implementation. 	<p>Primary: MoF Stakeholders: MoWCY; Plan and Development Commission; NGOs;</p>	<p>Med-term</p>	<p>Ongoing training on policy content and implementation. Media engagement and resource mobilisation is also necessary.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure there is enough budget for skilled human resources, capacity building and implementation of projects. • Develop a fundraising strategy participatory of each line ministries and regional bureaus. 	<p>Media; UN agencies; Gender Mainstreaming Directorates of line ministries; regional BoWCY; BoWCY at zonal level</p>		
<p>c) Create a comprehensive communications strategy and promote wide dissemination of the policy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a communications strategy that promotes wide dissemination of the gender policy at all levels of government and to external stakeholders, including all citizens, even at the kebele level. • This should increase visibility of the policy and state actions towards gender transformation. • Develop a behaviour change campaign that aligns with the key areas of concern and emphasises/communicates the need for change. 	<p>Primary: MoWCY Stakeholders: Gender Mainstreaming Directorates of line ministries; NGOs; UN agencies; Media; regional BoWCY; BoWCY at zonal and woreda level; Women and Youth Associations</p>	<p>Med-Long term</p>	<p>Publishing materials, involving community leaders and CSOs/CBOs working on gender equality, aggressive media campaigning can bring visibility.</p>
<p>d) Commission a government-wide gender and capacity audit to identify promising practices and gaps</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document the promising practices, gaps and key lessons learnt through developing knowledge products and briefs. • Utilise the gender audit to reinforce and prioritise gender transformation as a cross-cutting issue central to all sectors and ministries. 	<p>Primary: Strategic Gender Unit Stakeholders: Line ministries, BoWCY regional level</p>	<p>Med-Long term</p>	<p>This should occur throughout all line ministries down to the woreda level. It should be repeated every 5 years.</p>
<p>e) Develop an inclusive gender leadership training program</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the results of the first gender audit to develop a capacity building plan that includes induction, e-learning and on-the-job-trainings, focuses on building leadership and management skills and 	<p>Primary: Civil Service Commission Stakeholders: Plan and Development Commission</p>	<p>Med-term</p>	

<p>introducing an inclusive leadership mentoring and peer-to-peer learning program.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These activities are linked to performance reviews and human resource processes such as promotions. 			
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4. Evaluation and accountability

Action	Responsible Actors and Stakeholders	Timeline	Additional Information
<p>a) Develop and implement a monitoring, evaluation, and learning framework</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine frequency of evaluations of the gender policy and set the quality of evaluations/framework to be used. • Establish an ongoing process for monitoring. • Develop inclusive and gender-sensitive key performance indicators across all government activities that are sex disaggregated. • Establish mechanisms for responding to lessons from monitoring and evaluation activities. • All ministries should collect and be responsible to collect sex-disaggregated data. • Redo the stakeholder map every 2-3 years when evaluations of the policy are done. 	<p>Primary: Plan and Development Commission Stakeholders: Strategic Gender Unit; MoWCY; Gender Mainstreaming Directorates of line ministries; regional BoWCY; BoWCY at zonal and woreda level</p>	Med-Long term	There should be effective and frequent communication between the different offices and a two-way reporting system
<p>b) Mandate the collection of sex disaggregated data</p>	<p>Primary: Central Statistics Agency Stakeholders: MoWCY; Gender</p>		

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Build capacity to collect, compile, and analyse data disaggregated by sex, age and other intersectional variables across all ministries and at all levels of data collection and analysis. 	Mainstreaming Directorates of line ministries		
<p>c) Implement participatory and inclusive decision-making and social accountability processes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Social accountability tools such as public hearings and citizen scorecards should be used to communicate progress with the public and to aid accountability. ● This will help communicate a strong MoWCY, will raise awareness for gender equality and will ensure the necessary community dialogues are facilitated on the key issues of concern. ● A similar process/tools can be used within ministries, across levels of government as well as with the public. 	<p>Primary: MoWCY Stakeholders: Gender Mainstreaming Directorates of line ministries; regional BoWCY; BoWCY at zonal and woreda level; all citizens</p>	Med-term	Consider a community score card/public hearing type of approach (internal and external). These methods can also be used to improve the transparency and justification for budget allocations. Regular consultation with the public (of different backgrounds) is important. Representation of minorities and excluded groups should also be ensured in these social accountability processes.
<p>d) Establish the GRB guidelines and implementation of GRB activities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Review and revise GRB guidelines to ensure alignment to the new gender transformative policy and international best practice. ● Create protocols and tools to build capacity and implement GRB activities in all government ministries after analysing current technical capacity and available data/reports. ● Build upon the existing information management system (IMS) and allow for gender tagging and annual GRB reporting. ● Establish clear GRB accountability and monitoring mechanisms that includes annual reviews of commitments promised. 	<p>Primary: MoF Stakeholders: MoWCY; Gender Mainstreaming Directorates of line ministries; Plan and Development Commission; regional BoWCY</p>	Med-Long term	This can be done by effectively utilising the already existing inter-ministerial committee.

<p>e) MoWCY Responsiveness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build a culture of learning and improvement to facilitate course corrections and adjustments based on emerging evidence through continuous dialogue with academic experts, NGOs, community members, regional, zonal and woreda level officers. • These learning events happen at least twice per year within Gender Mainstreaming Directorates of line ministries and across all units of MoWCY and in advance of budget submissions. • This culture is also built through social accountability processes and through evaluations. 	<p>Primary: Strategic Gender Unit Stakeholders: MoWCY; Gender Mainstreaming Directorates of line ministries; regional BoWCY; Research institutes; NGOs; BoWCY at zonal and woreda level</p>	<p>Med-Long term</p>	

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Annex I

List of the woredas where national consultations were conducted¹⁷

Region	Woredas
Afar	Amibara, Dubti, Berhale, Dalifage
Amhara	Dembia, Aneded, Qwarit, Qalu, Simada, Kobo, Kewet, Dehena, Guangua
Benishangul Gumuz	Debate, Asossa
Gambella	Gog, Jikawo, Lare
Harari	Harar City
Oromia	Haromaya, Dendi, Girja, Menesibu, Chora, Dera, Boset, Robe, Habiro, Ginir, Moyale, Ameya, Arsi Negele, Guduru, Limu Kosa, Gida Ayana and Kirmu
SNNPR	Enemorina Eaner, Misrak Badawacho, Tembaro, Yirgachefe, Boloso Sore, Debub Ari, Yeki, Chena, Bonke, Debub Bench, Yem Special, Amaro, Burji, Konso, Derashe, Mareka, Basketo, Konta, Silti, Alaba
Sidama	Dale ¹⁸
Somali	Jigjiga, Kelafo, Bare, Degehabur, Dolo Odo
Tigray	Raya Azebo, Tselemti, Ahferom
Dire Dawa City Administration	Dire Dawa
Addis Ababa City Administration	Kolfe Keranyo, Yeka sub-cities

¹⁷ The total number of woredas targeted was 68, however data collection was not completed in the following 4 woredas: Ahiferom, Gulo Meheda, and Wolkayit in Tigray, and Dale Webera in Oromia.

¹⁸ At the start of the national consultation in January 2020, Sidama was part of SNNPR but became a separate region in June 2020.

Annex 2

List of Data Collection Completed by Region and Woreda

Region	Woreda	KII	SGD	IDI	CC
Addis Ababa City Admin.	Kolfe Keranyo	11	11	30	
	Yeka	8	12	16	
	Addis Ababa Subtotal	19	23	46	0
Afar	Berhaile	10	12	30	
	Dalifage	8	1	14	
	Amibara	9	12	30	
	Afar Subtotal	27	25	74	0
Amhara	Simada	10	12	30	
	Kewet	10	12	30	
	Kobo	10	8	29	
	Guangua	10	12	30	
	Dehena	10	10	26	
	Aneded	10	11	30	
	Qwarit,	10	12	30	
	Kalu	7	12	27	
	Dembia	11	12	29	
	Amhara Subtotal	88	101	261	0
Benishangul Gumuz	Dibate	9	12	28	
	Asossa	9	9	30	
	Benishangul Gumuz Subtotal	18	21	58	0
Dire Dawa City Admin.	Dire Dawa	10	10	30	
	Dire Dawa Subtotal	10	10	30	
Gambella	Gog	10	12	30	
	Jikawo	10	12	30	
	Lare	10	12	30	
	Gambella Subtotal	30	36	90	0
Harai	Harar	10	13	30	
	Harar Subtotal	10	13	30	

Oromia	Ameya	10	12	30	
	Arsi Negele	10	12	30	
	Ginir	10	12	30	
	Limu Kosa	10	12	30	
	Moyale	10	12	30	
	Guduru	10	12	30	
	Boset	10	12	30	
	Dera	10	12	30	
	Dale Wabera	None	None	None	
	Habiro	10	12	30	
	Menebisu	10	12	30	
	Gidakirmu	10	12	30	
	Chora	10	12	30	
	Robe	10	12	30	
	Girja**	10	12	30	
	Haromaya*	10	6		3
	Dendi*	10	6		3
Oromia Subtotal	160	180	420	6	
SNNP	Amaro	10	12	30	
	Konta	10	12	30	
	Yigarchefe	10	12	30	
	Bolos Sore	10	12	30	
	Tembaro	10	12	30	
	Dersahe	10	12	30	
	Misrak Badawacho	10	12	30	
	Alaba	10	12	30	
	Silti	10	12	30	
	Chena	10	12	30	
	Debub Bench	10	12	30	
	Yeki	10	12	30	
	Debub Ari	10	12	30	
	Burji	10	12	30	
SNNP	Konso	10	12	30	

	Mareka	10	12	30	
	Bonke	10	12	30	
	Dale*	10	6		3
	Eenor*	10	6		3
	SNNP Subtotal	190	216	510	6
Somali	Degehabur	10	12	30	
	Dolo Odo	10	12	30	
	Jigiga	10	12	30	
	Kelafo	10	12	24	
	Bare	10	13	30	
	Somali Subtotal	50	61	144	0
Tigray	Welkayat	5	7	23	
	Gulo Meheda	Need to confirm	Need to confirm	Need to confirm	
	Ahiferom	10	12	11	
	Raya Azebo*	10	6		3
	Tselemti*	10	6		3
	Tigray Subtotal	35	31	34	6
	TOTAL	637	717	1697	18

Annex 3

Numbers of stakeholders consulted on the National Women's Policy by research method, by *woreda*, by sex (Phase 2, 18 *woredas*)

Region	Woreda	Key informants		Individual in-depth interviews		Small group discussions (number of groups)		
		Male	Female	Male	Female	Male only	Female only	Mixed
Amhara	Dembia	5	2	9	13	7	5	0
	Aneded	4	3	7	8	5	7	0
	Qwarit	8	2	17	13	6	6	0
	Qalu	5	2	14	12	6	6	0
Afar	Amibara	3	3	13	15	5	3	4
Somali	Jijiga	5	5	12	18	5	5	0
	Kelafo	6	4	13	9	7	2	0
	Bare	6	4	19	11	4	5	1
Gambella	Gog	5	5	15	15	5	3	4
	Jikawo	9	1	18	12	0	0	12
	Lare	8	2	17	13	5	7	0
Harari	Harar	9	1	15	15	3	5	4
Benishangul Gumuz	Debate	4	5	13	15	6	4	2
	Assosa	3	4	19	11	1	0	8
Dire Dawa City Admin.	Dire Dawa	4	6	16	14	4	4	4
Addis Ababa City Admin.	Kolfe Keranyo	4	5	14	15	3	3	5
	Yeka	4	3	3	13	4	4	3
Total		92	57	234	222	76	69	47

Annex 4

List of Regional, Federal, CSOs and NGOs Consultations and dates

Participants	Date of Consultation
Consultation with Tigray region senior government officials	October 5, 2020
Consultation with Oromia region senior government officials	October 31, 2020
Consultation with Amhara region senior government officials	December 15, 2020
Consultation with Benishangul Gumuz region senior government officials	December 15, 2020
Consultation with Gambella region senior government officials	December 15, 2020
Consultation with Harari region senior government officials	December 15, 2020
Consultation with Sidama region senior government officials	December 15, 2020
Consultation with SNNP region senior government officials	September 21, 2020
Consultation with Dire Dawa city government senior government officials	December 15, 2020
Plenary consultation with participants from different regions (Dire Dawa, Harari, Benishangul, SNNPR, Sidama and Amhara)	December 15, 2020
Consultation with senior government officials from line ministries	January 6, 2021
Consultation with management team of MoWCY	January 6, 2021
Consultation with parliament members of Women and Children Affairs Standing Committee	January 6, 2021
Consultation with representatives of CSOs and NGOs	January 6, 2021
Consultation with Sector Ministries	May 21, 2021

Annex 5

Summary of selected case studies compiled during national consultations

Name of organization	Type of organization	Area of coverage	Focus of initiatives	Challenges	Lessons learned
Afar Region					
Akkeno Association	Local association	Amibara Woreda	Business development/support	Inconsistent milk supply from pastoralist communities, lack of transportation to collect milk from remote locations	Women's associations require ongoing support to navigate barriers and changing circumstances
Oxfam, AMREF-Ethiopia	International NGO	Delifage Woreda	Capacity development	Labour-intensive activities such as lifting heavy rocks to irrigate the fields women face challenges with herding	The key to success was empowering and instilling a sense of ownership in the locals, providing material support (cattle) and skills training
Save the Children	International NGO	Berahile Woreda	FGM/C, child marriage	Distrust of the program by the local community who suspected it was a move towards converting or eliminating their religion and customs	Respect for local culture is important; recruiting local staff who speak the local (Afar) language helped the project get closer to the community
Harari Region					
Save the Children	International NGO	Harari Region	Child marriage, FGM/C	Resistance by communities to addressing child marriage and FGM/C	The key to success was grassroots implementation that took a broad, all-inclusive community approach and involved a wide range of local institutions (e.g., schools and religious organisations) and stakeholders

Oromia Region					
Siiqqee Women Development Association	Local association	Ameya Woreda	HTPs, business development/support	Communities' reluctance to participate in awareness creation on HTPs, the persistence of FGM/C, and youth unemployment	The power of small amounts of resources to accomplish big tasks through effective community engagement including mobilization of women around savings and credit services as well as empowered them to discuss and defend their rights (by going to the Police and Court)
Menschen fur Menschen	International NGO/charity	Dera Woreda	Charity, savings, loans	Women's inability to pay back their loans on time	The need to increase the amount of credit available to local women, mainly the most disadvantaged in the society, to ensure profitability in business areas
Save the Children	International NGO	Gida Ayana	Business development/support	Inadequate support schemes for uneducated / illiterate women who lack business skills or are unable to follow instructions in handling their cattle, vegetables, and profits	The importance of women's financial independence, institutional and peer-support systems, routine follow-ups, and sharing experiences
Sihayti Livestock Association	Local association	Limu Kosa Woreda	Business development/support	Major challenges include low financial capital of the association, members need to use the profit for household consumption, and sheep market competition among associations	Coordination of group work helps to strengthen and improve effectiveness in undertaking activities for profit making; identification of the best products for marketing in the local area helps business growth

Project on resilience strengthening through promotion of a climate smart livelihood	Local NGO	Ginir Woreda	Capacity development	The political insecurity made free movement difficult for project officers; the mobile nature of the pastoralists made the monitoring of the activities very difficult	Getting community support is vital, working together with stakeholders and community representatives like religious and <i>gada</i> leaders helped with implementing activities on time
World Vision	International NGO	Habro Woreda	Savings, loans	Dropouts from savings groups due to management problems and disunity among groups	Built on the saving culture of the Harar Oromo to help women start their own business, build houses and address the needs of their children
Abay Dabus Synod Women's Empowerment	Local NGO (church)	Menesibu Woreda	Gender sensitization/training, educational support (school supplies)	The security problem in the area hindered the project staff from freely moving in the community, and a high staff turnover constrained proper coordination	Knowledge of the local context is essential for success; good rapport and cooperation with key stakeholders must be cultivated
Care for Child and Family Organization	Local NGO	Boset Woreda	Capacity development	Unwillingness of husbands to allow their wives to attend training activities	If women were provided a training more consistently, they could engage in work to improve their families' livelihoods

Meki Catholic Church Development Commission	Local NGO (church)	Arsi Negele Woreda	Girls' empowerment	Attitudinal and structural hindrance, financial constraints, and political instability	Focus on age-specific empowerment, awareness creation and training programs, suitable learning environments, community engagement, the betterment of women's property rights, saving culture, and stakeholder participation, as well as the promotion of mutual trust, teamwork, sense of ownership, and inclusivity in projects designs
Name unknown	Women's association	Moyale	Women's economic empowerment	Inflation and the COVID-19 pandemic	Provide financial/material assistance for young unemployed women, mentorship under the local BoWCYA, promote effective training programs and encourage a savings culture to support women's economic empowerment
Gurmu Guduru	Local NGO	Guduru Woreda	Capacity development	Men's reluctance to accept women's participation in associations	Working with women's associations helps women improve personal and family well-being
Rift Valley Children and Women Development Organization	Local NGO	Girja Woreda	Capacity Development	Lack of infrastructure, and deeply rooted gender norms that limit women's participation in public affairs	Because of empowerment training, women find it easier to speak up and have an equal voice in ownership of resources, understand their legal rights and responsibilities and stand up to instances of abuse.

Hunde	Local NGO	Dendi Woreda	Business development/support	Insecurity in target areas made implementation difficult	The initiative took advantage of mobilizing local community representatives (<i>abba gadas, qallus</i>) during awareness creation campaigns on HTPs to focus on women's economic empowerment
Oromia Development Association (ODA)	Local NGO	Haromaya Woreda	GBV, reproductive health	People considered uterine prolapse as a curse that is untreatable	Participatory approaches can be used in sexual and gender-based violence projects to bring about change was in community attitudes about uterine prolapse
Agricultural Growth Program, Ministry of Agriculture	Government Institution	Chora Woreda	Business development/support	Major challenges include lack of credit services, the disorganization of the work due to the mobility of local youth, and the lack of a sense of ownership of work by the project's stakeholders	Accepting that change is gradual; the importance of facilitating and monitoring associations and common savings accounts for farmers
Somali Region					
Save the Children	International NGO	Degahabour Woreda	FGM/C, child marriage	Some community members opposed the project's advocacy work	Reduction in the prevalence of FGM/C and child marriage, and increased number of girls enrolled in school
Regional Development Protection Program Tear Australia	International NGO	Dollo Odo Woreda	Capacity development	Inconsistent attendance and the high dropout rate from training	The importance of recognizing women's domestic work burden, their courage, and their capacity to excel in their work if given life-skill training

Name unknown	Local NGO	Ahiferom Woreda	Business development/support	Implementation challenges	Providing women with cattle and encouraging them to save is effective in strengthening women's economic empowerment and financial independence
BoWCYA	Local government institution	Kelafo	GBV	Resolving marital and family disputes	The key to successes was the adoption of grassroots level conflict resolutions approaches, working with elders, providing humanitarian/financial assistance and promoting transparency
SNNP Region					
Omo Micro Finance Association	Local association	Misrak Woreda	Business development/support	Inflation (like rising price of edible oil, sugar and flour) affected the income of the cooperative groups, and the livelihoods of members. Division of profits caused of dissension	Developing women's entrepreneurial capacity helped them to increase their incomes
Women Empowerment Action	Local NGO	Ari Woreda	GBV, business development/support	Initially, men rejected the project stating that 'our wives would go to other men if they get money', some <i>woreda</i> officials downplayed legal cases related to rape and GBV	The importance of mobilizing different actors to work collaboratively to solve gender related problems. Women's empowerment requires economic wellbeing, decision making power, and self-confidence of women

AMREF Health Africa	International NGO	Derashe Woreda	Capacity Development	Resistance from some community members	Ensuring a sense of ownership over the project by the community and relevant government bodies is important for managing community resistance
Gender Equality Program	Unidentified	Boloso Sore Woreda	Gender sensitization/support of destitute people	The project's restriction to a confined area due to limited funding; resistance to change by community members; disputes among project staff	Monitoring financial constraints and seeking support from <i>woreda</i> level organisations helped financial sustainability; integrating the views of the concerned stakeholders (including local farmers) at all levels of project planning tasks are important
Gender Equality Empowerment Initiative	Local association	Bonkea Woreda	Savings, loans	Absenteeism from work by some women; some women not having specific workplaces	Using small groups is an effective way to support women's economic empowerment
Kale Hiwot Church Self-Help Association	Local association	Burji Woreda	Business development/support	Members of other religions felt excluded as it initially considered only church members	The model used was effective in strengthening collective decision making to improve women's livelihood
Send a Cow Project	International NGO	Mareka Woreda	Business development/support	Unrealistic expectations (cash handouts) by beneficiaries hindered project implementation	Effective time and budget management skills as well as honesty and loyalty are vital qualities

Agriculture Growth Program (AGP) funded by the World Bank	Government institution	Konta Woreda	Agriculture	Frequent turnover of women from a group/cooperative union	Little attention was given to mechanized agriculture for increased productivity; Developing financial independence for women through improved productivity of farmlands and livestock products
Agriculture Growth Program (AGP) funded by the World Bank	Government institution	Yeki Woreda	Agriculture	Adapting to change	Start up materials, financial support, continuous training and supervision, and involvement of men contributed to increasing women's participation in agriculture
Implementer unknown, funded by United Nations Development Program (UNDP)	Government institution	Yirgachefe Woreda	Charity, capacity development	Financial constraints as the allocated budget could not match the growing need on the ground	Giving priority to internally displaced people (IDP) and very poor women
Aynage Children and Family Development (ACFD) Association	Local association	Silte Woreda	Business development/support, educational support	The risk of perpetuating dependency by project beneficiaries	Give ownership of the initiative to religious and traditional leaders to enable effective and lasting difference in the community

WEEMA International	International NGO	Tembaro Woreda	Gender sensitization/training, access to basic services	Financial constraints did not allow the project to build enough water pipes	The key to success was the collaboration between the local government actors and community stakeholders in conducting community conversations through participatory methods.
Center of Concern	Local NGO	Halaba Woreda	Capacity development/awareness training	Instability and the subsequent restructuring of the government prevented the project from starting at the planned time.	The use of approaches that were effective in raising women's awareness of climate change; diversifying women's livelihood; holding different governmental bodies and stakeholders accountable to improving societal awareness of climate change
Save the Children	International NGO	Amaro	Capacity development	Lack of infrastructure (like roads) and restricted access to electricity supply and network services caused disruption of communication in the project areas	Local partners not only significantly contributed to the success of the project but also continued to work even after the project ended.
Agricultural Growth Program, funded by the World Bank	Government institution	Chena Woreda	Agriculture	Undue delays of construction activities	Effectively identifying the root causes of problems and solving problems at community level

BoWCY	Local government institution	Dehub Bench Woreda	HTP, educational support (school supplies, school fees)	Limited resources to support vulnerable groups; lack of commitment and efficiency in project implementation	The need to collaborate with stakeholders to eliminate HTPs, promote women's economic empowerment, and improve child nutrition
Meseret Humanitarian Project	Local NGO	Konso Woreda	Capacity development	Communication gaps between project managers in Addis Ababa and field officers in the <i>woreda</i> ; poor infrastructure in the <i>woreda</i> , delays in budgetary allocation	Using local, ecologically friendly resources such as eco-friendly stoves to mitigate the adversities of climate change on local farmers and women
World Vision Ethiopia	International NGO	Enemorina Eaner Woreda	Gender sensitization/ training	Male resistance to gender equality	To ensure gender equality through trainings and advocacy work should target all community members
Amhara Region					
Individual beneficiary	A model farmer	Simada Woreda	Gender advocacy	Local people saw the project's activities as a way of making money and did not pay much attention to the focus on fighting child marriage	A committed woman can serve as an example to many women and work as a change agent at grassroots level
Valued Chain Development Project	Local NGO	Guanghua Woreda	Savings and loan, business development/support	Lack of a savings habit, and strong perceptions by men about the gender division of labour. e.g., bee keeping is a male only domain	Positive changes in the <i>woreda</i> attracted neighboring <i>woreda</i> administrators who visited/observed achievements and implemented the same project in their <i>woredas</i>

Organization for Rehabilitation and Development in Amhara (ORDA)	Local NGO	Dehina Woreda	Capacity development	Due to the remoteness of the <i>woreda</i> and lack of roads, project officers had to travel long distances on foot	Improving nutrition among pregnant and lactating women, eradicating infant and maternal death through increasing the number of mothers giving birth at health centers and monitored the growth of babies
AMREF Health Africa	International NGO	Kewet Woreda	HTP, child marriage	Victims avoided reporting perpetrators to the police due to social and family pressure; Absence of methods to ascertain the real age of girls involved in arranged marriages	Due to contextual and cultural similarities, approaches used successfully in this project can be replicated in other areas of the country such as Afar, Somali and Benishangul Gumuz regions where HTP and child marriage prevail
Professional Alliance for Development	Local NGO	Kobo Woreda	GBV, capacity development	Frequent changes of local government officers led to slower implementation because of the time needed for them to learn the system	Collaboration between multiple stakeholders such as community-based association, local government structures and international organizations was key reasons to success
Save the Children	International NGO	Qalu Woreda	Child marriage, FGM/C	Mistrust towards NGOs, financial constraints, and corruption	The need to promote grass-root approaches, women's associations, multi-stakeholder participation, continuous awareness creation/monitoring, material/technical assistance, and experience sharing

Andinet Association	Local association	Qwarit	Savings and loans	The program did not have a lasting effect; when it ended, women beneficiaries went back to being commercial sex workers and children dropped out of schools	The need for sustainable approaches for supporting savings and credit services, programs to provide material support for children's schooling, and more effective ways to collaborate with the BoWCY
Kokeb Birhan	Local NGO	Aneded	Savings and loans	Unidentified	Key strengths have been savings and rotating credit services, financial/material support for women, all-inclusive and broadening program designs, and collaboration with local courts, schools, Kebele administration, BoWCYA, and ACSI
Benishangul Gumuz Region					
Mujujuka organization	Local NGO	Dibate Woreda	GBV, business development/support	Cultural beliefs about women's roles, the lack of openness, and transportation	Key strengths have been the adoption of a multisectoral approach, continuous awareness creation, treatment/reintegration of female victims
Mejejguwa Development Women's Association	Local NGO	Metekel Woreda	HTPs	Change in local leadership and the poor record keeping on project activities	Key strengths was ensuring safe births, the eradication of HTPs, accessibility of schools and domestic violence shelters, community engagement, and collaboration with UNFPA, UN Women, and the Embassy of Japan

Tigray Region					
Name unknown	Local NGO	Ahiferom Woreda	Business development/ support	None identified in report but hinted at implementation problems	The importance of providing women with cattle and encouraging them to develop the habit of saving
“Together we stand”	Local association	Tselemti Woreda	Savings and loans, business development/ support	Poor market linkages created difficulty with selling products	Women financial empowerment through working with women’s association motivated the establishment of other women’s associations
Individual beneficiary	Hotel owner	Raya Azebo Woreda	Savings and loan, business development/ support	High staff turnover	Access to financial support from banks and government institutions is important for inclusive financial services
Individual beneficiary	Shop owner	Raya Azebo Woreda	Business development/ support	The bureaucracy of local government and involved corruption made it difficult to access loans through government supports	Despite local challenges, a determined woman can grow their small business into a big one that improve their livelihoods
A ray of hope	Financial association/local NGO	Tselemti	Savings and loans, business development/ support	The lack of employment opportunities and the shortage of land made investment on land difficult	Financial management is vital: young people should take necessary trainings on money borrowing, saving and investing their money to succeed in their business
Gambella Region					

International Medical Corps	International NGO	Lare Woreda	GBV	Reluctance to partake in training events	The necessity of strong awareness creation, sensitization, and women participation, reduction of violence, innovative community engagement, partnership with local elders, administrative offices, and UNICEF, and the promotion of contextual project designs
Dire Dawa City Administration					
Dire Dawa City Administration Girls' Hostel	City administration	Dire Dawa city administration	Educational support (hostel, school supplies, school fees)	Budgetary constraints which limited the amount of school supplies available for distribution	Encouraging women and girls to share experiences with each other was an important element; collaboration with UNICEF and the local Bureau of Education
Dire Dawa City Administration Community Conversation Groups	City Administration	Dire Dawa City Administration	GBV, child exploitation/trafficking	Short prison sentencing, fear of reprisal, child exploitation, and constant postponement of meetings	Main strengths include the cultural sensitivity of social groups for community engagement and social services, the promotion of the rule of law, and collaboration with the local BoWCYA
Addis Ababa City Administration					

Fikir le histanat	Local NGO	Kolfe Sub City Administration	Capacity development	Inconsistency of training events	Key lessons were the need for flexibility, cultural sensitivity, and follow-up, effective training programs, the need for full-time staff, partnerships with local NGOs and the Ministry of Labour
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