



CARD

የመብት እና ዲሞክራሲ ሰዎች ማዕከል
CENTER FOR THE ADVANCEMENT
OF RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY

**INSIGHTS INTO THE INCLUSIVENESS
OF THE NATIONAL DIALOGUE PROCESS
IN ETHIOPIA: ONLINE CONVERSATIONS
REGARDING INCLUSION OF WOMEN**

MAY - JULY 2025



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary	1
Key Findings	2
Introduction.....	8
Objective	10
Methodology.....	11
A Concise Concept of National Dialogue	12
Inclusiveness in National Dialogues	16
Understanding Gender-Inclusive Dialogues.....	19
Gender-Inclusive Dialogue Spectrum	21
Ensuring Women's Inclusion in National Dialogue Phases.....	24
Social Media Conversations and Women's Inclusion	31
Sentiment Analysis.....	55
Conclusion	57
Recommendations.....	59
Bibliography	63

Note: The Center for Advancement of Rights and Democracy (CARD) wishes to clarify that it does not take positions on policy matters. This report is solely based on the monitoring and analysis of social media conversations related to the Ethiopian national dialogue process. CARD neither endorses nor opposes the views expressed in the content featured in this report. The materials included are presented exclusively to inform stakeholders about the nature and tone of discussions occurring within the digital media space. This report reflects online conversations observed between May - July 2025.

For More Info:

Center for Advancement of Rights and Democracy (CARD)

Website: www.cardeth.org

Email – info@cardeth.org

P.O.Box- 30174



This report, entitled “Insights into the Inclusiveness of the National Dialogue Process in Ethiopia: Online Conversations Regarding the Inclusion of Women,” is funded by the German Government and supported by Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH.

Executive Summary

This is the second report on a series of monitoring conversations on social media regarding the ongoing national dialogue process in Ethiopia. It is intended to monitor and analyse online activities with a special focus on gender inclusiveness of the National Dialogue process in Ethiopia. The report examined online conversations from individual accounts to news outlets and public institutions. While the monitoring was conducted between late May and late July 2025, the content gathered from the online platforms extended to the early days of the national dialogue. Hence, the report was able to show the nature of conversations across the different stages of the dialogue process and gender inclusion, the main element in national dialogue processes, was found to be one of the topics for netizens.

While most of the conversations monitored for this report emanated from organized groups such as CSOs, the ENDG, and news outlets, individual posts and comments were also highly relevant to understand the issue of online discourse in the online space.

Similar to the limited online interactions with the topic of national dialogue, with posts rarely getting 100 reactions, the issue of inclusion saw limited online engagement. But with all the limited engagements, conversations concerning the national dialogue saw positive, negative, and neutral sentiments. Unlike other forms of inclusion, gender conversations saw a strong negative sentiment online because some thought participation and inclusion should not be gendered, while

feminist organizations and others demanded conscious inclusion of women in the process. Positive or neutral engagements were also observed towards women's engagement in the dialogue process, mainly from formal institutions such as the media, the ENDC, the Coalition of Women's Voice in the National Dialogue, women's federations, and government organizations. But some comments under these posts exhibited negative sentiments.

While the online space enabled netizens to express their views and ideas as well as mobilize followers towards the national dialogue process, the actual impact of these conversations on the participation of women has to be studied further.

Key Findings

1. Online engagement on gender inclusion was limited yet highly polarized.

While the overall volume of online conversation about the national dialogue process was modest, the specific issue of women's inclusion provoked strong and divergent opinions. The report indicates that posts on the topic of national dialogue that rarely exceeded 100 reactions, the gendered content that did appear generated a dynamic mix of positive, negative, and neutral sentiments from organized groups, official bodies, and individual social media users. This is mainly seen in the comments sections.

2. The national dialogue process was met with initial and significant criticism regarding the gender imbalance of the Commission.

The conversations began on a largely negative note, specifically triggered by the appointment of the Ethiopian National Dialogue Commission (ENDC). With only three women among the 11 commissioners, women's groups and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) immediately criticized the outcome as a violation of Article 12 (3) of the National Dialogue Proclamation, which explicitly requires consideration for gender and other forms of pluralism.

3. A fundamental disagreement over the principle of gender-based inclusion emerged in public online discourse.

A clear ideological split was visible in social media comments. On one side, CSOs, feminist organizations, and official institutions advocated for the conscious and planned inclusion of women. On the other side, a vocal segment of netizens argued that participation should be based solely on merit, dismissing gender quotas with comments like, "This is not a gender competition," and asserting that competence should be the only factor in a process of national importance.

4. Women's Civil Society Organizations played a central and highly organized role in advocating for substantive inclusion

Rather than only reacting, women's CSOs took a proactive and structured approach. The Coalition for Women's Voice in the National Dialogue (CWWND) was a key actor, conducting extensive grassroots consultations with over 6,000 women across multiple regions. This effort culminated in a tangible outcome: a consolidated 10-point women's agenda that was formally submitted to the ENDC for consideration in the dialogue.

5. Official promotion of women's participation often contrasted sharply with skeptical and negative public reactions online.

A notable disconnect was observed between the messaging from official sources and the reception from the public. While government-affiliated bureaus and the ENDC itself posted content promoting women's involvement, the comment sections under these posts often contained negative or dismissive views. Some users downplayed the importance of gender inclusion or argued that other national issues, such as security, should be the sole priority. This disconnect threatens the credibility of institutional commitments to gender inclusion and risks signaling to women that their participation is secondary or symbolic. To counter this, gender equity must be reframed as central to national resilience, supported by intentional dialogue and responsive facilitation that bridges public skepticism.

6. Online sentiment shifted positively in response to specific, measurable commitments to enhance women's participation.

Tangible actions and clear targets were effective in generating positive engagement. The report shows that when the ENDC announced a concrete plan to increase women's participation to 45%, the public reaction was largely supportive. Similarly, posts from women's federations celebrating the successful submission of their agendas to the commission were met with encouraging and affirmative comments. The Federation's agenda organized in eight general and 25 specific agenda items submitted to the Commission received largely positive reactions from netizens, although some went off the rail and criticized it as "efforts of expanding homosexuality" in the country imposed by the West. Similarly, the agenda by the CWVND and efforts for enhanced participation of women received criticisms as exclusionary tactics against men. Some also argued certain agenda items, such as Women's political participation, are contingent upon women's interests to take part. But this conclusion overlooks the structural limitations that hinder participation. Other concerned netizens raised that these meetings and gatherings are not producing any results as women continue to suffer abuses and killings.

7. The framing and tone of official communications were identified as critical points of friction, capable of provoking backlash.

The report highlights that the way messages were communicated was as important as the content itself. An ENDC social media post inviting women to "discuss for the country that honoured us" was met with sharp criticism from women's rights advocates, who found the language insensitive to the real-world injustice women face. The subsequent

campaign that led to the post's removal illustrates how symbolic or paternalistic messaging can backfire, alienating women and reinforcing perceptions of tokenism. Genuine inclusion requires communication that is empathetic, context-aware, and shaped by the lived experiences of those it aims to engage.

8. The debate on inclusion extended beyond numbers to question the criteria and quality of female representation.

The online discourse was not limited to quotas. Concerns were raised about the substance of representation, with some users questioning the selection criteria for women participants. For instance, the inclusion of social media personalities sparked a debate about whether online influence was an appropriate qualification for deciding on national issues, with commentators arguing for the prioritization of expertise, legal knowledge, and relevant experience.

9. Monitoring revealed significant regional and linguistic gaps, indicating the online conversation was not nationally comprehensive.

The research methodology uncovered a critical limitation in the scope of the online discourse. There was a near-total absence of conversation on the topic in the Tigrigna language. The report attributes this to

the political environment in the Tigray region following the 2020-2022 war, suggesting that the monitored online conversations were not fully representative of all perspectives across Ethiopia.

10. The overall sentiment surrounding women's inclusion was dynamic and multifaceted, evolving throughout the dialogue process.

Public opinion was not static but shifted in response to events. It began with widespread negativity following the commissioner appointments, transitioned to more positive reactions fueled by the proactive work of CSOs and concrete ENDC commitments, yet was consistently complicated by both a persistent opposition to gendered inclusion and sharp critiques from activists over the depth and framing of the process.

Introduction

This report is intended to provide insights into online conversations with a special focus on the inclusion of women in the national dialogue process. National dialogue processes are political processes aimed at generating consensus among a broad range of national stakeholders on major nationally contested matters. These processes usually pass through three phases – preparation, process, and implementation.

National dialogues are governed by a list of principles such as inclusion, transparency and public participation, and a credible convener. These principles are set so that national dialogue processes achieve their intended goals of creating consensus on most of the issues they address.

Overwhelmed by historical and ongoing contestations and conflicts, Ethiopia launched a national dialogue process in 2022 and established a Commission to lead this process. The Commission was established and accountable to the House of People's Representatives (parliament). The parliament appointed 11 Commissioners to the ENDC from 42 candidates nominated by the public.

This report looks into online discourse regarding one principle of the national dialogue process – inclusion, zooming in on women's inclusion in the dialogue process. Inclusion is conceived as conscious involvement of concerned stakeholders during the preparation, process, and in the

post-dialogue period in the implementation phase. For relevance, the report approached inclusiveness in three themes: political, geographic, and social (mainly gender and religion).

Social media conversations regarding the national dialogue process started from the early stages, especially during the selection of the commissioners to lead the Ethiopian National Dialogue Commission. Inclusion, especially of women, was at the centre of these conversations, and they continued to the latest stages of the process.

During the convening sessions for agenda collection, inclusion was also the focus of netizens who expressed concerns regarding the lack of inclusion in the process and highlighted that the government dominated it. While other forms of inclusion had also gained attention online, political inclusion was the prominent subject. Gender and religious inclusion were also among the prominent subjects online.

Objective

The objectives of this desk research are to find out conversations online regarding the inclusiveness of the Ethiopian national dialogue process and to analyse the findings in terms of the sentiment of the conversations. In addition, it will infer how these digital narratives may be shaping broader public perceptions and potentially influencing women's participation—either by reinforcing barriers or opening pathways for more meaningful engagement.

Methodology

The data for this report was gathered through the search of keywords in Amharic, English, Afaan Oromo, and Tigrigna languages. But likely because the national dialogue process did not start in Tigray, the political space in the region is yet to recover from the 2020-2022 war, and the political space is engulfed with fears of continued violence, there is a generalized absence of conversation in Tigrigna regarding the national dialogue. Online content regarding the process in Tigrigna was from official ENDC posts or news. The links and screenshots of the relevant content discussed in the report are included in the report. Social media monitoring and national dialogue subject matter experts were involved in the development of this report. The experts monitored more than 200 social media posts, exclusive of comments.

The sentiment analysis was done by categorizing the conversations as positive, neutral, and negative based on the messaging in the contents pulled from the online platforms

A Concise Concept of National Dialogue

This section lays the groundwork for the report's primary focus by defining and briefly revisiting the concept of national dialogue. While earlier reports have addressed this, a renewed articulation is necessary to reflect this version's distinct approach. National dialogues serve as crucial platforms for addressing fundamental political crises, forging consensus, and establishing roadmaps for sustainable peace.¹ However, the legitimacy and effectiveness of these processes depend fundamentally on the meaningful inclusion of women, who constitute half of the population yet remain systematically underrepresented² in formal political processes.³ The gender transformative and intersectionality frameworks provide a comprehensive approach to ensuring women's meaningful participation and inclusion in national dialogue processes, drawing from global experiences, theoretical foundations, and practical implementation strategies. The framework recognizes that women's participation must be intersectional, substantive, and transformative to achieve lasting impact on both the dialogue process and broader societal structures.⁴

1 Philip Poppelreuter, 2025, Building Women's Coalitions as a Bridge to Inclusive Dialogue, Inclusive Peace

2 Thania Paffenholz, Nick Ross, Steven Dixon, Anna-Lena Schluchter and Jacqui True, "Making Women Count - Not Just Counting Women: Assessing Women's Inclusion and Influence on Peace Negotiations," Geneva: Inclusive Peace and Transition Initiative (The Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies) and UN Women, April 2016. Accessed from: link

3 <https://www.inclusivepeace.org/building-womens-coalitions/>; <https://www.cfr.org/womens-participation-in-peace-processes/>

4 <https://www.inclusivepeace.org/building-womens-coalitions/>; <https://press.et/herald/?p=116519>

National Dialogues are “nationally owned political processes aimed at generating consensus among a broad range of national stakeholders in times of deep political crisis, in post-war situations or during far-reaching political transitions.”⁵ Abdulqadir Adem (2020) defines national dialogue as a “tool for conflict resolution and managing political transformation” that “can broaden debate regarding a country’s trajectory beyond the usual elite decision makers, and can be “used to build consensus among contending political forces to resolve major political differences and avoid violent conflict.”⁶

Because national dialogues usually happen in contexts of conflict, popular uprising, war, or armed conflict, they should be designed to realize immediate and/or far-reaching outcomes; managing crises or reframing state-society relations as an outcome.⁷ A departure point for national dialogue processes from other forms of settlements, however, is that they are mechanisms intended to expand participation in political transitions beyond the political and military elites by allowing diverse interests to influence the transitional negotiations.⁸

National dialogue processes can have three to four phases: preparation, process, and implementation phases.⁹

5 Berghof Foundation (2017) National Dialogue Handbook. Available at: https://berghof-foundation.org/files/publications/NDH_Executive_Summary_englisch.pdf

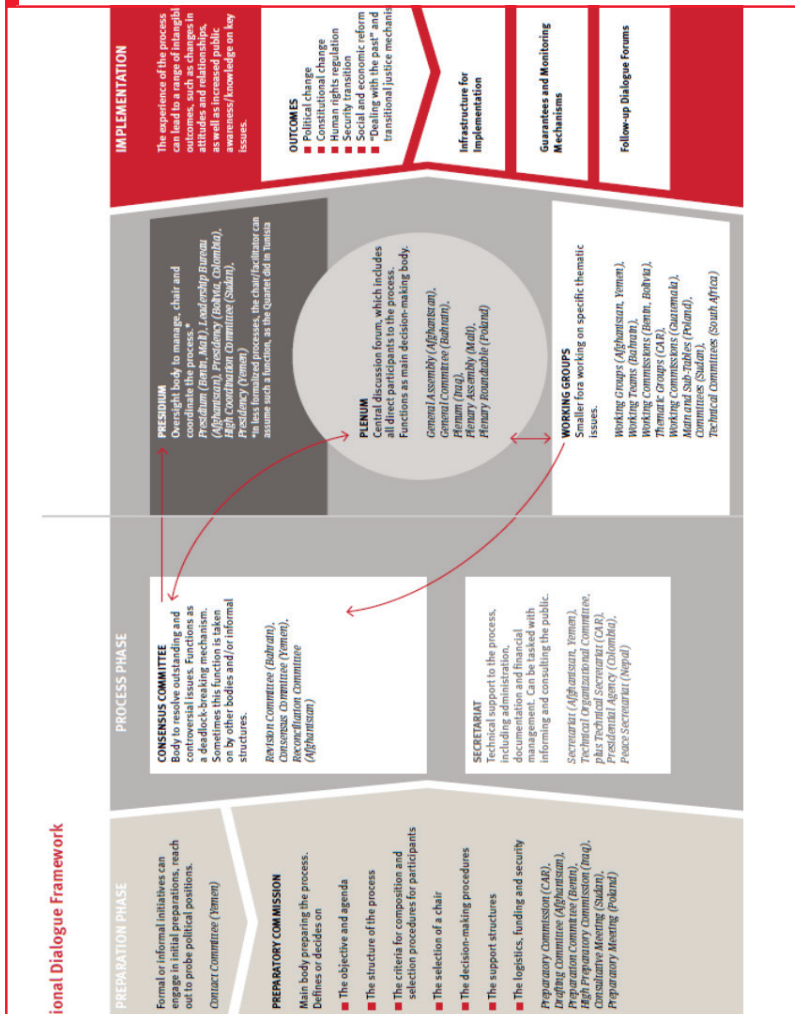
6 Abdulqadir Adem (2020) National Dialogue in Ethiopia Towards Sustainable Peace and Democratic Transition. Paper presented for a conference to launch a national dialogue in Ethiopia. Available at: https://www.fepethiopia.com/sites/default/files/2020-09/National_Dialogue_in_Ethiopia_Towards_sustainable_peace_and_Democratic.pdf

7 Ibid

8 Katia Papagianni (no date) National Dialogue Processes in Political Transitions; Civil Society Dialogue Network Discussion Paper No. 3. Available at: <https://hdcentre.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/National-Dialogue-Processes-in-Political-Transitions-January-2014.pdf>

9 Berghof Foundation (2017) National Dialogue Handbook. Available at: https://berghof-foundation.org/files/publications/NDH_Executive_Summary_englisch.pdf

Figure 1: Visualized process of the national dialogue process¹⁰



¹⁰ Berghof Foundation (2017) National Dialogue Handbook. Available at: https://berghof-foundation.org/files/publications/NDH_Executive_Summary_english.pdf

As the visualization shows, each step feeds into the other and complements the next step, ultimately contributing to the aspired changes to the process.

Finally, the success of a national dialogue process is determined by two factors: whether an agreement has been reached or not, and to what extent that agreement has been implemented.¹¹

11 Huma Haider (2019) National dialogues: lessons learned and success factors. Knowledge, evidence and learning for development. Available at: <https://gsdrc.org/publications/national-dialogues-lessons-learned-and-success-factors/>

Inclusiveness in National Dialogues

Inclusivity is one of the main elements of any national dialogue process. National dialogues are also conceived as “inclusive negotiating mechanisms utilised to influence or shape the decisions taken during periods of political transition.”¹²

Inclusivity in national dialogue processes could imply inclusiveness during the process or in the post-dialogue period in the implementation phase.¹³ However, as it does not mean more inclusivity equals better outcomes, inclusivity must go beyond the value attributed to the principle itself and also critically consider the challenges and dilemmas related to inclusivity.¹⁴

Inclusivity or lack thereof is the maker or breaker of national dialogue processes, and national dialogues can only be transformative if they are genuinely inclusive of society. To achieve this, it is necessary to help balance power asymmetries and ensure actual decision-making power.¹⁵

12 Katia Papagianni (no date) National Dialogue Processes in Political Transitions; Civil Society Dialogue Network Discussion Paper No. 3. Available at: <https://hdcentre.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/National-Dialogue-Processes-in-Political-Transitions-January-2014.pdf>

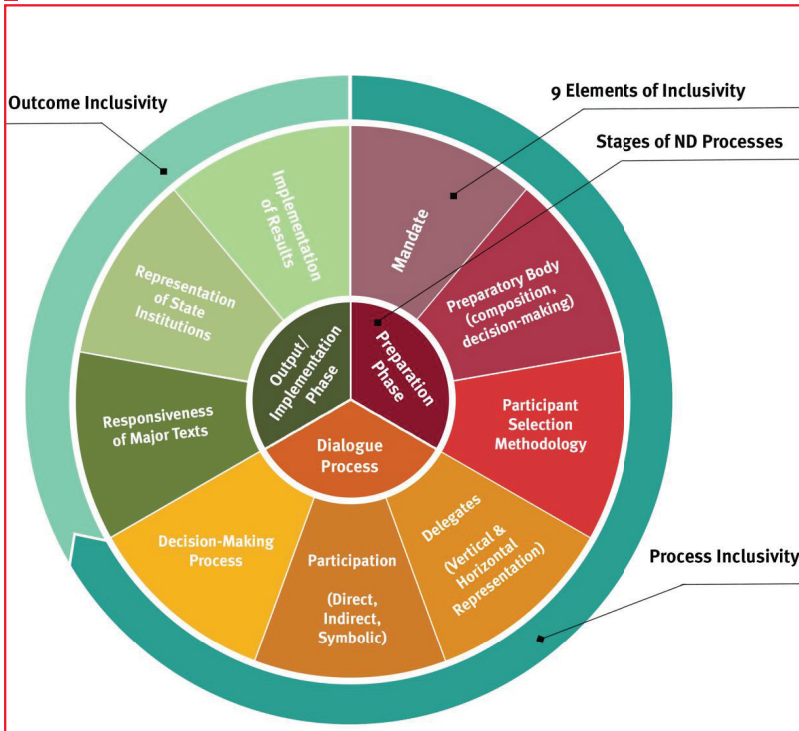
13 Katrin Planta, Vanessa Prinz and Luxshi Vimalarajah 2015. Inclusivity in National Dialogues – Guaranteeing Social Integration or Preserving Old Power Hierarchies? Inclusive Political Settlements Background Paper 1, November. Berlin: Berghof Foundation.

14 Ibid

15 Abdulqadir Adem (2020) National Dialogue in Ethiopia Towards Sustainable Peace and Democratic Transition. Paper presented for a conference to launch a national dialogue in Ethiopia. Available at: https://www.fepethio-pia.com/sites/default/files/2020-09/National_Dialogue_in_Ethiopia_Towards_sustainable_peace_and_Democratic.pdf Last accessed: June 20, 2025

The ENDC's modality of agenda selection process considers the power balance between representatives in addition to representativeness, participation of contending views, as well as transparency and legality.¹⁶

Figure 2: Stages and elements of inclusiveness¹⁷



16 ENDC (2024) የኢትዮጵያ ሀገራዊ ምክክር ኮሚሽን በኢጀንዳ ማሰባሰብ የምክክር ምዕራፍ ትኩረት የሚሰጣቸው አበይት ጉዳዮች፡፡ Available at: https://web.facebook.com/EthioNDC/posts/pfbid02ku8wjZGQRUt2caB883EzszhxKmt-9jSkYPAF2UGHUhxVnv7QekG27m8Ny9bcvLxVfl?_tn_=%2CO*F

17 Ibid

The above wheel of inclusiveness shows that national dialogue processes should ensure inclusiveness from the very early stages. This report will present conversations in the national dialogue process in three areas: political, social, and geographic.

Understanding Gender-Inclusive Dialogues

National dialogues represent pivotal moments in a country's political trajectory, often convened during periods of profound crisis to forge a new social contract and navigate transitions towards stability and democracy.¹⁸ These broadly inclusive, country-wide negotiation forums aim to produce a consensus roadmap, bringing together diverse stakeholders such as political parties, civil society, the private sector, unions, and religious leaders¹⁹ However, the claim that such dialogues authentically represent the nation is fundamentally challenged when a significant segment of the population, particularly women, is underrepresented or excluded from decision-making processes.

Despite mounting evidence that more inclusive processes lead to more sustainable outcomes²⁰, and notwithstanding widespread international legal obligations to equalize political participation across genders, women continue to be systematically excluded from various peace and transition processes, including national dialogues. Women's participation in peace processes globally remains strikingly low. For

18 <https://www.inclusivepeace.org/building-womens-coalitions/>

19 <https://www.inclusivepeace.org/building-womens-coalitions/>

20 <https://wps.unwomen.org/participation/>

instance, between 1992 and 2019, women constituted only 13 percent of negotiators, six percent of mediators, and six percent of signatories in major peace processes.²¹ More recent data for 2023 indicates that women comprised only 9.6 percent of negotiators, 13.7 percent of mediators, and 26.6 percent of signatories to peace and ceasefire agreements.²² Even when consultations occur, feedback from women and women's organizations in fragile and conflict-affected states (FCAS) often highlights that these engagements are extractive, tokenistic, and disempowering.²³

A meaningful inclusion of women is not merely an ethical imperative but a strategic necessity for the legitimacy, effectiveness, and long-term sustainability of national dialogues. It aims to develop a robust framework for engendering women's participation and inclusion in these critical processes. This framework will draw upon theoretical foundations, global best practices, and practical implementation strategies, with a specific focus on the unique challenges and opportunities presented by the Ethiopian National Dialogue process. By integrating women's diverse voices and experiences, national dialogues can transcend superficial representation to achieve truly transformative outcomes that address the root causes of conflict and build more equitable societies.²⁴

21 <https://www.cfr.org/womens-participation-in-peace-processes/>

22 <https://www.un.org/en/peace-and-security/page/women-peace-and-security>

23 <https://www.c-r.org/news-and-insight/what-are-gender-responsive-and-transformative-approaches-and-how-can-they>

24 <https://www.inclusivepeace.org/building-womens-coalitions/>; <https://press.et/herald/?p=116519>

To effectively integrate women into national dialogues, it is crucial to operate within a conceptual framework that moves beyond mere numerical representation to encompass substantive and transformative participation. This framework is built upon a gender-inclusive dialogue spectrum, an intersectional approach, and the principles of gender transformative methodologies²⁵

Gender-Inclusive Dialogue Spectrum

The gender-inclusive dialogue spectrum provides a continuum for assessing the depth of gender integration within a national dialogue process.²⁶ This spectrum helps to differentiate between various levels of engagement, from outright exclusion to genuine transformation:

Gender Discriminatory: At the lowest end of the spectrum, these processes actively exclude women or explicitly privilege men through discriminatory practices and structures. Such dialogues may reinforce existing patriarchal gender norms and exacerbate gender inequalities.

Gender Blind: A gender-blind national dialogue ignores pre-existing gender inequalities that form barriers to women's meaningful participation. It fails to recognize how social norms, for instance, might proscribe women's public speech on political issues or how socio-cultural

²⁵ *Ibid*

²⁶ <https://www.inclusivepeace.org/building-womens-coalitions/>

traditions might limit their mobility. The outcome of such a dialogue typically ignores existing patriarchal norms and biased gender power dynamics, tending to exacerbate gender inequalities.

Gender Sensitive: A gender-sensitive approach recognizes gender inequalities without specifically addressing them through targeted interventions. While it acknowledges the presence of gender disparities, it does not necessarily implement specific measures to overcome them. The outcome may acknowledge existing patriarchal norms and biased gender power dynamics, including some gender provisions, but these often lack the specificity needed for effective implementation, allowing gender inequalities to persist.

Gender Responsive: This level signifies a dialogue designed to respond to specific gendered needs. It is informed by an understanding of gender, recognizing that women participants may require more technical support, especially in audio formats and local languages, due to educational barriers. It also acknowledges gendered vulnerabilities, such as specific security risks women delegates may face when traveling to or from dialogue events. A gender-responsive outcome acknowledges existing patriarchal norms and biased gender power dynamics, with some gender provisions included with sufficient precision to increase the chances of effective implementation, thereby deliberately alleviating some forms of gender inequality.

Gender Transformative: This represents the ideal and most impactful approach. A gender-transformative national dialogue is informed by an analysis of underlying gendered power dynamics and aims to transform the root causes of gender inequalities and discrimination into

equality.²⁷ It seeks to overcome structural discriminations entrenched in forms of negative peace. This approach requires women to participate at or near parity, with attention to intersectionalities, and to be represented in leadership positions. Discussions in such a dialogue engage with gender broadly, not just the needs and experiences of women. The outcome intentionally targets existing patriarchal norms and biased gender power dynamics, containing explicit provisions and strong implementation mechanisms to address the underlying drivers of gender inequality. Gender transformative peacebuilding aims to analyze and shift the underlying causes driving inequality and conflict, such as imbalances of power, harmful norms, and unequal access to resources.²⁸

27 <https://press.et/herald/?p=116519>

28 <https://www.c-r.org/news-and-insight/what-are-gender-responsive-and-transformative-approaches-and-how-can-they>; https://rc-services-assets.s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/Towards_an_inclusive_and_transformative_peace_our_approach_to_gender_may_2023.pdf

Other frameworks include the intersectional framework, recognizing the inherent diversity of women, and the gender transformative framework that encourages critical reflection and examination of gender roles, norms, and power dynamics among both women and men.

Ensuring Women's Inclusion in National Dialogue Phases

The success of women's participation in national dialogues is significantly influenced by strategic interventions across all phases of the process: preparation, design, implementation, and monitoring. Each phase presents distinct opportunities and challenges for ensuring meaningful inclusion.

Preparatory Phase

The preparatory phase is arguably the most critical for laying the groundwork for meaningful women's participation. Early involvement of women has been consistently shown to increase their influence throughout the entire dialogue process, including the subsequent implementation stages.

During this phase, the basic structure and procedures of the dialogue are designed, often by working groups or committees, and the work of this group is deeply political and can decisively influence the dialogue's conduct and decision-making. Securing women's participation in these committees can be less resistant than at later stages, as technical roles are often perceived as less important. A successful precedent is the Yemeni National Dialogue Conference, where women successfully

secured a 30 percent quota for women in the Technical Preparatory Committee, setting an important benchmark for subsequent dialogue bodies.

Extensive consultations with diverse women's organizations and networks are essential to gather their perspectives and priorities. These consultations should specifically focus on women's inclusion and the gendered implications of the proposed dialogue agenda. This ensures that the dialogue is responsive to the real needs and concerns of women across the country, not just those of elite groups.

In Ethiopia, for instance, the Coalition for Women's Voice in the National Dialogue (CWVND) conducted consultations with more than 3,000 women from various regions to condense their priorities into a 10-point women's agenda for the National Dialogue Commission.²⁹

Facilitating the formation and strengthening of coalitions among potential women participants is crucial.³⁰ Such coalitions enable women to develop common agendas, coordinate engagement strategies, and amplify their collective voice. Experiences from South Sudan to Cameroon demonstrate that the ability to collectively organize and engage based on common positions can make the difference between effective women's engagement and fragmented efforts in national dialogue processes.³¹ The CWVND in Ethiopia exemplifies how coalition building can enhance women's leverage over ongoing peacemaking initiatives.

29 <https://www.inclusivepeace.org/author/miaoak/>

30 <https://www.unwomen.org/en/articles/facts-and-figures/facts-and-figures-women-peace-and-security>

31 <https://www.inclusivepeace.org/ethiopia-how-women-are-influencing-the-national-dialogue-process/>; <https://www.inclusivepeace.org/author/miaoak/>

Providing targeted training and support to women participants in areas such as technical knowledge, communication skills, and negotiation strategies is also a vital component of inclusion. This empowers women to contribute effectively and substantively to discussions, ensuring their voices are heard. Such training interventions strengthen women's reputation as stakeholders with relevant thematic knowledge, skills, and expertise.

Dialogue Design and Structure

The design of the dialogue, including participant selection and agenda setting, directly impacts the extent and quality of women's participation. The design and structure phase involves activities such as participant selection and representation of various groups of society.

Intersectional Quotas: Implementing quotas that ensure significant women's participation (e.g., at least 30%) while also considering intersectional identities like age, geographical region, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status is key.

Diverse Representation: To ensure the national dialogue process reflects Ethiopia's full societal fabric, it is essential that women participants encompass a broad range of backgrounds and experiences. This includes not only grassroots women, those from marginalized communities, and women with disabilities, but also individuals active in academia, civil society, government, political parties, media, business, the diaspora, and communities affected by displacement or conflict. Thoughtful inclusion of survivors of gender-based violence and representatives from thematic interest groups—such as human rights

defenders—can further enrich the process. Such diversity strengthens the legitimacy of the dialogue and fosters outcomes that are both contextually grounded and socially responsive.

Leadership Positions: Guaranteeing women's representation in leadership positions, such as dialogue chairs, working group leaders, and secretariat positions, is essential for their influence. In the Yemeni National Dialogue Conference, women chaired three of the nine working groups, demonstrating their capacity for leadership

The agenda setting and designing of content for the dialogue process need integration of gender inclusive agenda and issues of priorities for women. It also needs to accommodate views of different groups of women are affected by various issues, including ethnicity, religion etc.

Implementation Phase

The implementation phase focuses on creating an enabling environment and utilizing appropriate modalities to facilitate women's active and influential participation. To achieve inclusion during this phase, women should have enabling conditions such as physical and psychological safe spaces, logistical support, and flexibility in scheduling sessions. In addition, it is imperative to design multiple modalities of participation for women, such as creating various means for women to participate, forming women-only platforms and allowing cross and inter-generational dialogue.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Effective monitoring and evaluation are essential to track progress, identify gaps, and ensure that women's participation leads to tangible, transformative outcomes. This needs to entertain various frameworks of measurement and feedback mechanisms. While numerical representation is key, it is also important to ensure that this participation is meaningful. Regular consultations and external evaluation should also help ensure continuous assessment of women's participation in the national dialogue process.

These approaches must also recognize and address the structural barriers such as limited political will, institutionalized discriminatory practices against women and resource constraints, and social barriers including gender norms and stereotypes, resistance from traditional leaders and severe social backlash including defamation. Capacity building and networking opportunities for women are important elements of empowerment in this regard.

Meanwhile, beyond recognition, overcoming the multifaceted barriers to women's meaningful participation requires a comprehensive and strategic approach that integrates various interventions. These could be women's coalition building to amplify their voices and address their priorities, or fostering strong networks such as cross-sector alliances to strengthen women's collective power and facilitate knowledge sharing.

1. In Numbers: ENDC Performance at Different Stages

As per ENDC's performance report for the three years covering the period until it got a one-year extension, it has strived to include women at all stages.

Preparation Phase

During the preparation phase, the ENDC worked on two key activities: training of partners as well as identification of participants for the agenda selection. Accordingly, the ENDC trained a total of 8,515 partners pooled from different organizations out of which 954 were women, making 11.2% of the total participants.

In terms of identification of participants for agenda selection, the ENDC identified a total of 124,695 participants of which women accounted 37,080 making 29.7% of the total participants, from 11 regions and 2 city administrations, save Tigray.

Implementation/Agenda gathering phase

During the agenda gathering phase of the dialogue process in regions and zonal administrations, the Commission managed to gather 15,204 participants of which 3,679 were women, making 24.2% of the total participants.

The following table shows the sectoral classification of regional level participants in the agenda gathering sessions segregated by gender.

No.	Stakeholders	Planned number of participants	Actual Participants			Percentage of performance	Women's Participation
			Men	Women	Total		
1.	Political Parties	790	495	119	614	77.7%	19.4%
2.	Influential Individuals	3453	2086	370	2456	71.1%	15.1%
3.	Government Institutions	3503	2078	405	2483	70.9%	16.3%
4.	Associations and Organizations	4405	2956	827	3,783	85.9%	21.9%
5.	Woreda Representatives	1,111	607	496	1,103	99.3%	45.0%
Total		13,262	8,222	2217	10,439	78.7%	21.2%

Source: ENDC Three Years Report³²

The commission plans to raise the number of women participants to at least 45 percent.

³² ENDC. Three Years Performance Report. TIKVAH ETHIOPIA Telegram Channel. https://clark.dirzon.com/Doc/Details/telegram%3Ayateyopheyaa_hagaraawi_mekekere_komishene_ya_1.pdf

Social Media Conversations and Women's Inclusion

In the context of national dialogue process in Ethiopia one broad theme that comes to light repeatedly is the participation of women in political processes and decision making which remains far below the desired levels, highlighting significant gaps in gender equality.

While there are efforts to bring gender dimensions into policy, ambiguity in responsibility allocation and capacity gaps often hinder implementation. For instance, the selection process for commissioners resulted in a gender imbalance, with only three (3) women out of 11 commissioners initially selected.

Conversations online regarding women's participation in the national dialogue range from campaigns to include women in the process from the outset to informing the public, specifically women, of the national dialogue process and the state of their participation. As one of the core principles of the Ethiopian National Dialogue, as enshrined in the proclamation, inclusion has been at the centre of online discourse concerning the process. Drawing on the provisions in the proclamation, women's organizations and civil society organizations (CSOs) started calling for gender parity in the Commission that would lead the process.

Figure 3: A Report by Ethiopia Insider



 Translation:

Twenty (20) CSOs call for 50% of the candidates for the National Dialogue Commission to be women

When the House of People's Representatives (HoPR) announced a short-list of 42 candidates out of 632 initial nominations³³, only four were women, and just three made it through to make the 11 Commissioners appointed by the Commission.

In a statement in February 2022, eight CSOs argued that the disproportionate representation of women in the Commission violates Article 12 (3) of the Proclamation, which requires that The list of candidates shall be inclusive of gender and other forms of diversity.³⁴

33 BBC Amharic. ለአገራዊ የምክክር ኮሚሽን በዕጩነት የተለዩ የ42 ግለሰቦች ዝርዝር ይፋ ሆኑ. <https://www.bbc.com/amharic/news-60260831>

34 A PROCLAMATION TO ESTABLISH THE ETHIOPIAN NATIONAL DIALOGUE COMMISSION

Official government channels, amplifying the Federation's statement on enhanced women's participation, also called for enhanced participation of women in the national dialogue process, stressing that capacitated women would benefit from the dialogue process and its outcome.

Figure 4: A post by Oromia Women and Children Affairs Bureau regarding the importance of women's participation in the national dialogue process

 **Biiroo Dhimma Dubartootaa fi Daa'imman Oromiyaa** ኢሮሚያ ሴቶች እና ህፃ... · Follow ...

17 February 2024 · 🌐

Dubartoonni marii biyyaalessaa milkeessuu keessatti gahee olaanaa qabu- Federeeshinii Dubartootaa Oromiyaa

Dubartoonni marii biyyaalessaa milkeessuu keessatti gahee olaanaa waan qabaniif, hirmaannaan isaan marii biyyaalessaa fuulduratti taasifamurratti qabaatan cimuu qaba jedhame. Akkaataa hirmaannaan dubartoota Naannoo Oromiyaa Marii Biyyaalessaa keessatti cimuu danda'urratti, Federeeshiniin Dubartootaa Oromiyaa dhimmamtoota isaa waliin magaalaa Adaamatti mari'ateera.

Marii kanarratti Pireezidaantiin Federeeshinii Dubartootaa Oromiyaa Injinara Tigist Tafarraa, Hirmaannaa dubartootaan ala mariin biyyaalessaa hin milkaa'u waan ta'eef hirmaannansaaniin cimuu qabaa jedhan.

Hoji Raawwachiiftuun Gamtaa Sagalee Dubartootaa Itoophiyaa, Aadde Warqinesh Beegii, mariin biyyaalessaa kutaalee hawaasaa hunda kan hirmaachisu waan ta'eef, dubartoonni marii biyyaalessaa dhufu keessatti qaama kamiinuu waliin walqixa hirmaatuu qabaatu jedhan.

Mariin kun akka Naannoo Oromiyaatti kilaastara 7 jalatti qoqqoodamee akka mariiyatamu sagantaa baharraa hubachuun danda'ameera.

[See translation](#)



 Translation

"Women have a significant role in making the national dialogue successful" – Oromia Women's Federation.

As women have a major role in making the national dialogue successful, it was stated that their participation in the upcoming national dialogue must be strengthened. Regarding how the participation of women in Oromia Region can be enhanced in the national dialogue, the Oromia Women's Federation held a consultation with its stakeholders in Adama city.

In this consultation, the President of the Oromia Women's Federation, Engineer Tigist Tafarra, stated that without the participation of women, the national dialogue cannot succeed, and therefore their involvement must be strengthened. The Executive Director of the Ethiopian Women's Voice Coalition, Mrs. Warqinesh Beegii, said that since the national dialogue is meant to include all segments of society, women must participate equally with all groups in the upcoming dialogue.

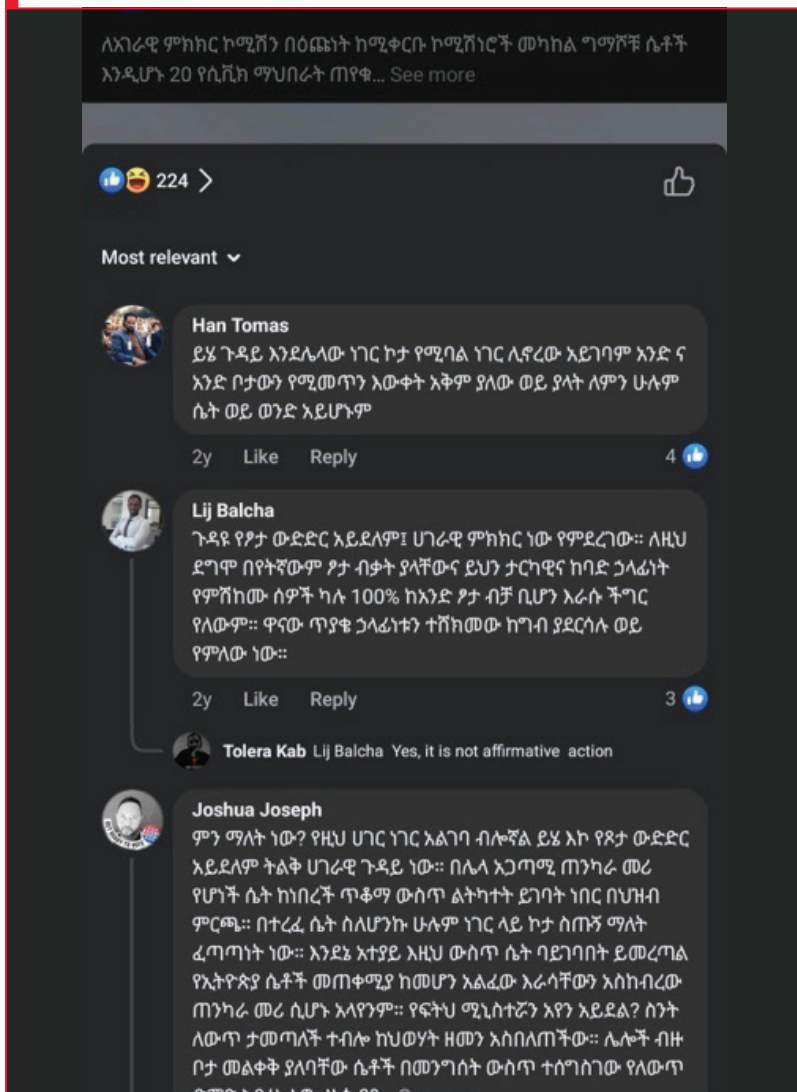
It was understood from the program that this dialogue will be conducted in Oromia Region under seven clusters.

Figure 5: Comments under the Facebook post by Oromia Women and Children Bureau. Comments are generally approval of the message.



But, in other cases, there is a limited awareness regarding the relevance of proper gender inclusion in the process; netizens downplayed the issue of gender inclusion and emphasized that it should only be merit-based. Commentators under this post also stressed the importance of women in resolving national issues and processes that exclude them are unfavourable.

Figure 6: A screenshot of a Facebook post by Ethiopia Insider regarding gender parity and comments by page followers



 Translation:

C1: This should not have a quota system like any other thing. The only consideration should be fitting to the position and having the capacity to deliver, so it doesn't matter whether all are men or women

C2: This is not a gender competition; it is a national dialogue. So, it is not a problem even if all are 100% from one gender as long as they have the capacity and can bear this burden of national responsibility. The main question is 'can they deliver on the responsibilities they carry?'

C3: What does this mean? I don't understand the affairs of this country. This is not a gender competition; it is a huge national matter. If there is a woman who has delivered well in other areas should have been a candidate by popular vote. Apart from this, demanding a position just because she is a woman is a misplaced demand. I even prefer that women are not included in this. We haven't seen Ethiopian women, except being used by others, commanding respect and emerging as strong leaders. Haven't we seen the Minister of Justice? She was expected to bring big changes, but she made it worse than the TPLF. Other women who should leave their positions are holding government positions and suppressing voices of change.

Social media comments of a similar nature were also observed following ENDC's communication regarding the work that the Commission did to ensure women's inclusion in the dialogue process. The following

comment under a tweet by the ENDC in April 2024 demonstrates that the issue of gender inclusion is understood as something that can be sequenced and should follow other priorities.

Figure 7: A post on X by ENDC and a comment by a user stating women's inclusion is not their worry now, but allowing them to stay alive



Agenda Collection

Joint efforts by civil society organizations continued to create awareness and mobilize and organize women to prepare and consolidate their agenda to present to the ENDC. This is mainly spearheaded by the Coalition for Women's Voice in the National Dialogue (CWVND). Established in March 2022, CWVND embraced 50 women-led CSOs across Ethiopia, intending to ensure women's meaningful participation in the National Dialogue.

The Coalition, hosted by TIMRAN, held consultative meetings with more than 3,000 women in eight regions and two city administrations to craft a women's agenda for the NDC later submitted to the Commission. The figure of the consulted women would later reach 6,000 by January 2025. The rise in violence and harmful traditional practices against women and children, lack of justice, disproportionate impact of political instability on women, vulnerability of women with disabilities, and educational accessibility are among the 10-point agenda that the Coalition submitted to the ENDC. Some of these items, as made public by the Coalition include³⁵ issues related to:

- Escalation of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence and Harmful Traditional Practices against Women and Children
- Problems Faced by Women Due to Lack of Peace and Political Instability

35 Facebook Post “የጥምረት ለሴቶች ድምፅ 10 ሴቶችን የተመለከቱ አጀንዳዎች ለሃገራዊ ምክክር ኮሚሽን አሰረከበ” (Translation from Amharic The Coalition for Women's Voice submitted 10 agendas concerning women to the National Dialogue Commission);³ Coalition for Women's Voice in the National Dialogue Page; 7 July 2025. Link is here https://web.facebook.com/story.php?story_fbid=1051459753825640&id=100068848767316&rdid=OcPrTyVB-SpDboek#

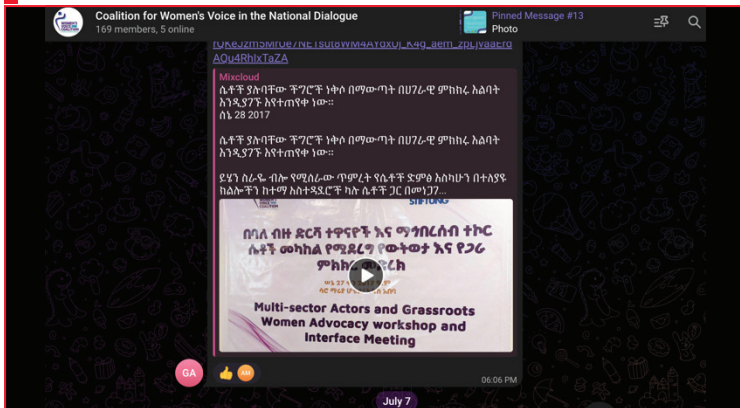
- Insufficient Attention Given to Women with Disabilities
- Limited Political Participation and Decision-Making Role of Women
- Limited Economic Empowerment and Land Ownership Rights for Women

Meanwhile, the Coalition called for the ENDC to ensure that 50 percent of the dialogue facilitators are women, complemented with capacity building training to women facilitators, out of which 28 out of 150 facilitators were deployed by the ENDC. By doing so, the Coalition aimed to identify women's problems and seek resolution through the national dialogue process.

Figure 8: A call for ensuring 50% of dialogue facilitators are women



Figure 9: A screenshot from the Coalition's Telegram account *reporting* on its activities



Translation

We are identifying women's problems and seeking their resolution through the national dialogue process

Other women's organizations also worked towards using digital spaces to promote women's participation in the dialogue process and amplify their work regarding this effort. Among these, women's organizations such as the Oromia Women's Federation and the Ethiopian Women's Federation have gathered and submitted a women's agenda to the ENDC.

Figure 10 (L): A Facebook post by Oromia Women's Federation announcing submission of women's agenda to the ENDC and thanking the participants.



Figure 11: A Facebook post by the Ethiopian Women's Federation announcing agenda submission to the ENDC



Reactions to these posts, as demonstrated in the comments section of the Facebook post by the Oromia Women's Federation regarding agenda submission, are largely positive and supportive of women's participation for a favourable outcome.

Figure 12: Comments under the agenda submission Facebook post by the Oromia Women's Federation



👉 Translation

Comment 1: We thank our women's organizations for the meaningful contributions made across all levels. Your contribution is valued. We wish you continued strength and longevity!

Comment 2 Women's organizations have made significant contributions—your continued strength and commitment are essential.

Comment 3: Thank you women organizations, your contribution is critical.

Comment 4: The role of Oromia women organization was critical and thank you!

Comment 5: It is true that the dialogue sessions were good, you too thank you!

Comment 6: The contribution of our women's organizations has been crucial, carrying a lion's share of responsibility. I express my sincere gratitude and deep respect for your unwavering commitment.

Similarly, the following post from the ENDC announcing the plan to enhance women's participation to 45% received positive reactions from netizens.

Figure 13: A Facebook post by the ENDC announcing a plan to reach 45% women's participation in the process

 **Ethiopian National Dialogue Commission/የኢትዮጵያ ሀገራዊ ምክክር ...** [Follow](#) ...

30 June at 09:59 · 🌐

በምክክር የሴቶች ተሳትፎ ከ45 በመቶ በላይ እንዲሆን እየተሰራ ነው፡፡ ኮሚሽኑ ሰኔ 23/2017 ዓ.ም ኮሚሽኑ በሀገራዊ የምክክር ጉባኤው ከ45 በመቶ በላይ ሴቶች እንዲወክሉ ለማድረግ እየሰራ መሆኑን አስታውቋል፡፡

ይህንንም ለማሳካት ከተለያዩ መንግሥታዊና መንግሥታዊ ያልሆኑ ተቋማት ጋር በትብብር እየሰራ ነው ተብሏል፡፡

በምክክር ሂደት ሴቶችን ማሳተፍ የተሟሉ ማህበረሰባዊ መፍትሔዎችን ለማፍለቅ እንደሚያስችል ተገልጿል፡፡

ሴቶች የማህበረሰቡ ግምገማ በመሆናቸው በማንኛውም ሀገራዊ ጉዳይ ላይ አስተዋጺቸው ከፍተኛ እንደሆነም ተመላክቷል፡፡

የኮሚሽኑ የሥርዐተ ጾታና ሕዝታችንን ዘርፍ አስተባባሪ ወይዘሮ አበበየሁ ደሳለኝ በመሠረታዊ ጉዳዮች ላይ መግባባትን መፍጠር የሚቻለው ሴቶችን በማካተት እንደሆነም አስረድተዋል፡፡

ይህ መረጃ የተገለፀው ኢትዮጵያ ሀገራዊ ምክክር ኮሚሽን ሠራተኞች ባለፈው ቅዳሜ ሰኔ 21/2017 ዓ.ም ሴቶች በምክክር ሂደት ስላላቸው ተሳትፎ በተወያዩበት መድረክ ነው፡፡

እየተካሄደ ባለው ሀገራዊ ምክክር ሴቶች በወረዳ የማህበረሰብ ክፍሎች፣ በፌዴራል ባለድርሻ ሕዝላት፣ በታዛቢነት፣ በሞዲራተርነት፣ በአሠልጣኝነትና በበጎ ፈቃደኝነት እየተሳተፉ እንደሚገኙ በመድረኩ ላይ ተገልጿል፡፡



Figure 14: Comments under ENDC's Facebook post regarding the plan to reach 45 percent women's participation in the dialogue process



The comments sections of ENDC's posts concerning the inclusion of women also received positive reactions from followers. While some comments went off the rails to speak of unrelated topics, such as sexuality, as indicated in the following post, others commented on what the effort of reaching 45% means in actual terms.

Figure 15: A post by ENDC announcing plans to reach 45% women's participation and the comments under it





However, some commenters, on the other hand, questioned the selection of women to participate in the dialogue process, saying that, in addition to being women, their merit should be an important consideration so that they can contribute to the process. For example, the following post questions how social media personalities are invited to represent women and speak about women's issues, and proposes ways of resolving them.

Figure 16: A post by a Facebook user questioning the approach to participant selection and the issue of inclusion in the national dialogue process, and comments under the post.

Dirribii Dabaree
 Ishee kana sirrii xiinxalte.
 Ammoo namuma ilaalcha Mootummaa qabu fi Mootummaa deeggaru waman malee, namoota xiqqoo yaada Mootummaa faalleesan tokko illee hin waamne!!
 Kun illee dogongora jabaadha.
 Ni Mariyanna erga jedhanii paartilee siyaasaa faallaa Mootummaa adeemanii fi uummata keessaa illee nama ilaalcha mootummaatti hin amanne affeeruu qabu turee xiqqoo Akkaa marii fakkaatuuf.
 Caasaa Mootummaa sadarkaa hunda irra jiruu walitti qabanii waltajjii teechisuun marii mootummaatti malee kan biyyalessaa hin fakkatu dhugaa rabbii.

30w Like Reply See translation

Barsiisaa Qaroo Hawaasa
 Dubara qofaa miti dhiironni achii hirmaataan waa'ee seeraa, waa'ee biyyaa, waan biyya ijaaruu, saba ijaaruu, warra hubannoo hin qabnee sadarkaa barnootaa xiqqaa irra jiran, warra sammun akkuma Ganda isaa qofatti yaaduu warri deemtee hirmaatte, namoota hubannoo waa'ee marii kana hin beeknee faatuu hirmaate kanaaf yaanni ati kaastee dhugaadha

30w Like Reply See translation

Negash Diriba
 Ayii...Bilo, sillee PP mataan qulfii wajjiin mataan si dhukkubee si qollofamuuf deemaa jirta. Kunniin ofiin hin beekan waan beekaan itti himu hin fudhatan. Nama dhagaarratti fincaa'e taate atis!

30w Like Reply See translation

Martha Roro · Follow
 Dubaroota Abbaa Dulaa qofti ni gahuu akka Fa... faa jechu

30w Like Reply See translation

Abdataa Bakar Abdoo · Follow
 Kanaaf irra dibaa fii sossoba kana didaa jirra, Jawariis kanuma dide malee dhagaa karatti guuraa hin jannee bar

30w Like Reply See translation

Mootii Nuubiyaa · Follow
 Mansuree abbaa shiittoofayitu Influential ta'ee marii biyyoolessaatti dhiyaate

30w Like Reply See translation

Tajudin Aliyi · Follow
 Dhaloota gaarii jechuun team leader isaanii Manshuree Jamaal beekti

Bilisee Sabaa
 December 24, 2024 · 🌐

MARI BIYYAALESSAA IRRATTI:
 Otuma jennuu marii Biyyalessaa deemaa jiru kana keessa dubartiin keessatti hirmaatte 5% yoo guddate 10% hin caaltu? Sunuu ammoo warra.....😞 Akkamitti miira dubartiitti dhagahamu, waan dubartoota yaadessuu fi sammuu dubartiin yaadamu dhiirri murteessaaf? Akkamiin? Rakkoon akka kanaa Yoom furmaata argata. Warri hirmaateeyyuu hangam waan heeraa fi seeraa hubata? Dhiibbaa uumtota jechuun nama sa'aa 24 TikTok irraa game taphatu murtii biyyaa fi egerree biyyaatti akka murteessu waamuunoo? 😞Biyyi tokko akkamiin dandeettii namaa, beekkumsaa fi muuxannoo biyya ijaaruu irratti qabu, TikTok irratti hordoftoota guddaa qaba jedhamee gabaa TikTok keessaa filatamaa? Hordoftoota qabaachuu moo beekkumsaa fi dandeettii ykn muuxannoo qabaachuu dha kan ilaalamu? TikTok'n Warra qaama qullaa viidiyoo of waraabuu fi waan aadaa fi safuuf hin jirre gochuun karaa salphaan beekamuu danda'u bar. Maalumaafuu irra keessa Otoo ta'uu baatee biyyaafis irra wayya. 🙏

👍👎 57 18 comments 1 share

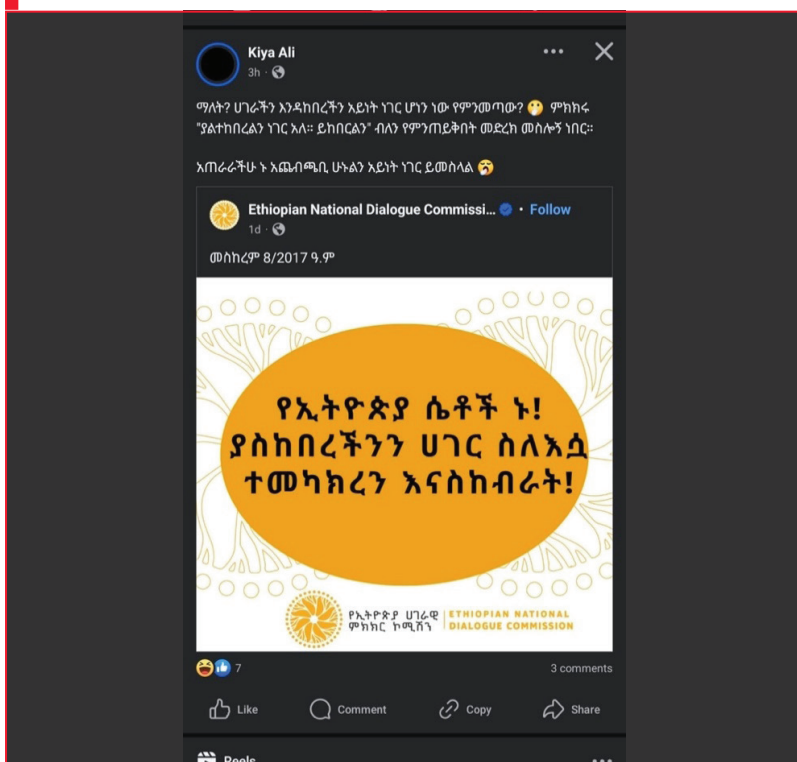
👍 Like 🗨 Comment

Translation:

Even as we say, in this ongoing National Dialogue, the women who participated—if it increased—does not exceed 10%? That too is only those..... 🤔 How is the feeling of women heard, the things that concern women and the thoughts women think—how are they decided by men? How? When will a problem like these find a solution? Even those who participated, how much do they understand about the constitution and the law? By “influential people”—{are we} meaning a person who plays games on TikTok on 24 hours—is called to decide the country's fate and the its future? 🤔 How can the merit of a person be judged, their knowledge and experience to contribute to nation building, be selected from the TikTok platform just because they have many followers on TikTok? Is it having followers or having knowledge and ability or experience that is considered? (It is to be noted that} on TikTok—those who record videos of naked bodies and do things that have g against our culture or decency—can easily become known. Anyway, for the betterment of the country, it is better if things are not done for the surface level commitment only. 🙋

While the inclusion of women was discussed by the ENDC and organizations and individual activists called for considerations of women's inclusion in the process, meaningful and gender-sensitive approach was also demanded.

Figure 17: A screenshot criticizing the framing of a message from the ENDC calling for women's participation in the dialogue process



 Translation

Post by user: *What do they mean? Are we supposed to come as though our country respected us? I thought the dialogue was a platform for us to demand for the respect of our issues which we consider are not respected. The way your invitation is framed seems to make us cheerleaders.*

Post by the ENDC: *Women of Ethiopia – Come! Let's discuss for the country that honoured us and make it proud!*

Article 35, a women's rights advocacy group, also campaigned for the removal of the post by the ENDC and demanded an explanation. It later congratulated its followers after its removal.

[illegible]

Sentiment Analysis

From the monitoring activity, we can understand that the issue of women's inclusion in the national dialogue process exhibits all three sentiments – positive, negative, and neutral. Initial sentiments are largely negative, reflecting widespread concern and criticism from women's groups and civil society organizations (CSOs) regarding the limited opportunities for women to influence the nomination process for the Ethiopian National Dialogue Commission (ENDC) members. This negative sentiment is amplified by the perceived lack of transparency in the selection of commissioners, resulting in a significant gender imbalance, and directly contradicting Article 12 (3) of the National Dialogue Proclamation, which mandates gender consideration. Calls for gender parity in the national dialogue process from CSOs highlight a strong dissatisfaction with the status quo and a demand for concrete action to address the historical underrepresentation of women in Ethiopian political and decision-making roles.

Conversely, a distinct strain of negative and somewhat neutral sentiment arises from certain netizens who downplay the importance of gender inclusion. These commentators often emphasize "merit-based" selection, arguing that gender should not be a primary consideration. This perspective, sometimes bordering on outright dismissal of gender quotas, reflects a limited awareness or perhaps a resistance to the fundamental principles of equitable representation aspect of the national dialogue.

On the other hand, positive sentiment surfaced in response to proactive efforts by women's organizations. Campaigns to inform and mobilize women, and the sustained efforts of coalitions like the Coalition of Women's Voice in the National Dialogue (CWVND) and women's federations to craft and submit women's agendas, largely saw supportive reactions. The positive sentiment is evident in comments supporting women's participation for a favourable outcome, especially following announcements of concrete plans like the ENDC's commitment to reach 45 percent women's participation.

However, even within these positive developments, we see the complexity of sentiments in these conversations. For instance, well intended posts by the ENDC inviting women to participate in the national dialogue process, faced backlash from rights and feminist movements for lacking sensitivity and failing to acknowledge women's real challenges. Hence, in addition to efforts for inclusion, the framing of communication is crucial.

Conclusion

The meaningful participation of women in national dialogues is not merely a matter of political correctness or numerical representation; it is a fundamental requirement for the legitimacy, effectiveness, and sustainability of peace processes and democratic governance. When women are genuinely included in national dialogue processes, the outcomes are more comprehensive, durable, and responsive to the needs of the broader population. Women bring unique perspectives, experiences, and approaches to conflict resolution and peacebuilding that are essential for addressing the root causes of conflict and building sustainable peace.

The case of Ethiopia's National Dialogue illustrates both the persistent challenges and the remarkable potential of women's collective action. The efforts of organizations like the Coalition for Women's Voice in the National Dialogue (CWVND) and the women's federations at different levels demonstrate that strategic coalition building, early engagement, and targeted capacity development can significantly enhance women's influence and ensure their priorities are integrated into national processes.

However, the continued presence of socio-cultural barriers, resource constraints, and ambiguous institutional mechanisms highlights the need for sustained commitment and coordinated action from all

stakeholders. The monitoring activity has demonstrated this via comments and direct posts. These barriers and tensions of overcoming them have also been manifested in social media engagements.

The ultimate goal of inclusion is not just to increase women's participation in national dialogues, but to transform the nature of these processes to be more inclusive, democratic, and effective in addressing the complex challenges facing societies as some online demanded. National dialogues can become more powerful instruments for social transformation and sustainable peace.

The monitoring activity has also demonstrated that social media has helped women to mobilize themselves and voice their needs and concerns regarding the national dialogue process. Social media has also been used to create awareness regarding the essence of women's participation.

However, there is no data from the monitoring activity that would enable making a definite conclusion regarding the impact of online conversations on women's participation in the dialogue process. While this is strictly speaking of actual physical participation in the dialogue process, the virtual space has provided the opportunity for women to voice their issues, although this is limited because of factors such as the digital divide in the digital space.

Recommendations

1. Strengthen Gender-Balanced Representation in the ENDC and Dialogue Structures

For the national dialogue process to be credible and inclusive, the Ethiopian National Dialogue Commission (ENDC) and related structures would benefit from a more balanced gender composition. While acknowledging the challenges of representation in a context marked by competing demands for political, ethnic, and regional pluralism, deliberate attention to gender parity can help align practice with the commitments already articulated in the National Dialogue Proclamation. While civil society organizations and women's groups have already voiced concerns, their future role could extend beyond critique toward systematic monitoring of representation trends. Such monitoring, could enhance accountability and ensure alignment between the dialogue process and the commitments outlined in the Proclamation

2. Institutionalize Mechanisms for Women's Voices in Agenda-Setting and Decision-Making

Women's concerns should not be treated as an add-on to national dialogue but integrated into its core deliberations. Building on the work of platforms such as the Coalition for Women's Voice in the National Dialogue (CWVND), the ENDC could consider structured channels through which women's organizations feed into agenda-setting and

decision-making. By valuing both grassroots consultations and the expertise of women professionals, the dialogue process can ensure that women's perspectives reflect Ethiopia's diverse social and economic realities, from urban networks to rural livelihoods.

3. Reframe Public Communication on Women's Inclusion to Avoid Tokenism

The way women's inclusion is communicated is as important as the fact of participation itself. In a polarized digital environment, messaging that appears symbolic or paternalistic risks reinforcing perceptions of tokenism. By adopting language that frames women's inclusion as central to Ethiopia's resilience and national future, rather than as a gesture of generosity, the ENDC and its partners can reduce backlash and foster greater public trust. Civil society and feminist networks, in collaboration with media and communication experts, can help refine messaging that resonates with women's lived experiences across Ethiopia's socio-economic spectrum.

4. Leverage Concrete Targets and Measurable Commitments to Build Trust

Experience from the early phases of the dialogue suggests that the public responds more positively when institutions move beyond general promises and articulate measurable commitments. For example, announcements on increasing women's participation were met with visible online approval. By setting realistic but ambitious targets and reporting transparently on progress, the ENDC can reinforce its credibility. Independent oversight groups and women's federations can

complement this effort by documenting and communicating achievements in a balanced manner, ensuring that successes are celebrated without ignoring the need for further work.

5. Bridge Online-Offline Engagement to Amplify Impact

Ethiopia's digital space remains limited by unequal access and sharp divides between urban and rural populations, yet online discourse still shapes perceptions and mobilization. To maximize impact, digital conversations should be meaningfully linked to offline forums where women from different socio-economic and linguistic backgrounds can participate. Collaboration between the ENDC, civil society, media, and technology platforms can help create these bridges, ensuring that the dialogue reflects not only the voices of the digitally active but also the lived realities of women in underrepresented regions.

6. Address Regional and Language Gaps in Engagement

The absence of significant conversations in certain languages illustrates how digital monitoring alone cannot capture Ethiopia's full diversity. Given the political and security context, additional efforts are needed to ensure that women in conflict-affected or marginalized regions are not excluded. This requires a combination of translation of content into multiple languages, tailored outreach by local organizations, and support for safe spaces where women can engage without fear of political reprisals. Donors and international partners can reinforce these efforts by providing resources for locally grounded initiatives rather than solely top-down programs.

7. Promote Quality and Substance of Representation beyond Numbers

Numbers matter, but they do not tell the full story. To address skepticism and ensure meaningful outcomes, the emphasis should be on the quality and substance of women's representation. Selection criteria should value expertise, legitimacy within communities, and diverse lived experiences, rather than privileging public visibility or token presence. Women's federations and civil society coalitions can play an important role in nominating candidates who combine technical knowledge with grassroots credibility, while universities and think tanks can provide training and capacity-building to strengthen women's contributions once they are in the dialogue.

Bibliography

- Africa Intelligence. (2025). Ethiopia: Ruling party influence dents credibility of national dialogue process. <https://www.africa-intelligence.com/eastern-africa-and-the-horn/2025/07/01/ruling-party-influence-dents-credibility-of-national-dialogue-process,110470276-art>
- Biruk Mekonnen.* (2025, June 9). *NATIONAL DIALOGUE: Breaking the cycle for a better future..* MFAEthiopia Blog. <https://mfaethiopia.blog/2025/06/09/national-dialogue-breaking-the-cycle-for-a-better-future/>
- Borkena. (2024, July 5). *The Ethiopian National Dialogue Commission (ENDC) and its probability for success!* <https://borkena.com/2024/07/05/the-ethiopian-national-dialogue-commission-endc-and-its-probability-for-success/>
- Cohen, J. (2023). *TOWARDS AN INCLUSIVE AND TRANSFORMATIVE PEACE: OUR APPROACH TO GENDER.* Conciliation Resources. https://rc-services-assets.s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/Towards_an_inclusive_and_transformative_peace_our_approach_to_gender_may_2023.pdf

Conciliation Resources. (2023). *What are gender responsive and transformative approaches, and how can they strengthen peacebuilding? Lessons from Nigeria*. <https://www.c-r.org/news-and-insight/what-are-gender-responsive-and-transformative-approaches-and-how-can-they>

Dekens, Dazé. (n.d.). Engendering CCDRR Policies and National Plans. In *Training Manual on Gender and Climate Change Resilience* (p. 93). Gaps and Challenges to Gender Mainstreaming in National Policies and Plans – UN Women Asia. https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2024-07/pres_07_facilitator_reference_2.pdf

ENA. (2024). *Agenda Gathering process inclusive, participatory: Coalition of Ethiopian Women Association*. ENA English. https://www.ena.et/web/eng/w/eng_4524708

ENDC from inception to action – Ethiopian Press Agency. (2025). <https://press.et/herald/?p=116519>

Friederich Ebert Stiftung (FES). *Amplifying women's voices in the Ethiopian national dialogue*. (2024). <https://ethiopia.fes.de/e/amplifying-womens-voices-in-the-ethiopian-national-dialogue.html>

Global Affairs Canada. (2025). *Project profile — Fostering the Meaningful Inclusion of Women in Ethiopia's National Dialogue*. <https://w05.international.gc.ca/projectbrowser-banqueprojets/project-projet/details/p011295002>

Including women at the peace table produces better outcomes. (n.d.). Council on Foreign Relations. <https://www.cfr.org/womens-participation-in-peace-processes/>

Natasha Kay Mortley. (2020). *GENDER MAINSTREAMING for Natural Disaster Risks and Climate Change: A Guide for Shelter and Deputy Shelter Managers.* <https://www.caribank.org/sites/default/files/publication-resources/Gender%20Booklet2%20final%20November%2020%2C%202020.pdf>

Oak, M., & Oak, M. (2025, March 28). *Building women's coalitions as a bridge to inclusive dialogue.* Inclusive Peace. <https://www.inclusivepeace.org/building-womens-coalitions/>

UN Women. (n.d.). *Facts and figures: Women, peace, and security.* <https://www.unwomen.org/en/articles/facts-and-figures/facts-and-figures-women-peace-and-security>

UNDP. (n.d.). *10 Lessons learned in gender mainstreaming in disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation in Viet Nam.* <https://www.undp.org/vietnam/publications/10-lessons-learned-gender-mainstreaming-disaster-risk-reduction-and-climate-change-adaptation-viet-nam>

United Nations. (2025). *Women, peace, and security | United Nations.* <https://www.un.org/en/peace-and-security/page/women-peace-and-security>

UNOY Gender Toolkit: A Practical Guide to Gender Transformative Approaches for Youth Peace Organisations – UNOY. (n.d.). Unoy - Global Network Strengthening Sustainable Youth-driven Peacebuilding. <https://unoy.org/downloads/gta-toolkit/>

UNOY. (2024). *International Women's Day 2024: Gender Transformative Approaches in Peacebuilding.* <https://unoy.org/international-womens-day-2024-gender-transformative-approaches-in-peacebuilding/>

Wanjau, W. (2022, May 6). *Ethiopia: How women are influencing the National Dialogue process.* Inclusive Peace. <https://www.inclusivepeace.org/ethiopia-how-women-are-influencing-the-national-dialogue-process/>

Women's Participation and a Better Understanding of the Political | Global study on the implementation of UN Security Council resolution 1325. (2015). <https://wps.unwomen.org/participation/>

Visit Our Website



For More Info

Email: info@cardeth.org

Website: www.cardeth.org

Social Media: @CardEthiopia

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia



CARD

የመብቶች እና ዲሞክራሲ ፅንፈኛ ማዕከል
CENTER FOR THE ADVANCEMENT
OF RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY

MAKE DEMOCRACY THE ONLY RULE OF THE GAME!