

JANUARY 2026



**BASELINE STUDY ON
WOMEN AND YOUTH
POLITICAL PARTICIPATION
IN SELECTED REGIONS OF
ETHIOPIA**



CARD

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CENTER FOR ADVANCEMENT OF
RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY



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Canada Fund for Local Initiatives
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About CARD

The Center for the Advancement of Rights and Democracy (CARD) is a board-led, for-profit organization registered in Ethiopia under the Civil Societies Law 1113/2019 with registry number 4307. CARD acquired its legal personality on 24 July 2019. CARD aspires to see Ethiopia where democratic culture flourished on human rights values and has been working with a mission to empower citizens and groups of citizens to ensure their ability to promote and defend human rights and build democratic governance in Ethiopia.

The Baseline Study on Women and Youth Political Participation in Selected Regions of Ethiopia was conducted with a grant received from the Government of Canada under its program called Canada Fund for Local Initiatives (CFLI).

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life worth living consultancy,
education and training services plc

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ACHPR	African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights
ANM	Amhara Nationalist Movement
BPfA	Beijing Platform for Action
CARD	Center for the Advancement of Rights and Democracy
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women
CoC	Code of Conduct
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CSO	Civil Society Organization
De Facto	Practical (Applied)
DEVAW	Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women
De jure	Legal
EHRC	Ethiopian Human Rights Commission
EPRDF	Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front

FDRE	Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GBV	Gender Based Violence
HoPR	House of Peoples’ Representatives
IFES	International Foundation for Electoral Systems
KII	Key Informant Interview
MOWSA	Ministry of Women and Social Affairs
NEBE	National Election Board of Ethiopia
PP	Prosperity Party
PWD	Persons with Disability
SNNPR	Southern Nations and Nationalities and People’s Region
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
VAW	Violence against Women
VAWiE	Violence Against Women in Elections

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

CARD extends its sincere appreciation to the Government of Canada for its generous support in making this study possible under its program Canada Fund for Local Initiatives (CFLI). CFLI's commitment to locally driven, inclusive, and rights-based initiatives has been instrumental in enabling this baseline study and in strengthening efforts to advance women's and youth participation in Ethiopia's democratic processes. CARD also acknowledges the researchers, stakeholders, and community members who contributed their time, knowledge, and experiences to this study.

FOREWORD

• The Center for the Advancement of Rights and Democracy
• (CARD) is committed to the promotion and protection of
• human rights and the advancement of democratic gover-
• nance in Ethiopia. CARD envisions a society where democratic
• culture is firmly rooted in equality, inclusion, and meaningful
• citizen participation, and where all segments of society partic-
• ularly women and youth are able to exercise and influence in
• the decisions that shape their lives.

In recent years, Ethiopia has undertaken major political and legal reforms, though substantial gaps persist between official pledges and lived realities, especially for the vast majority of women and young people. The Center for the Advancement of Rights and Democracy (CARD) commissioned this baseline study to assess women’s and youth political participation in the Amhara, Oromia, and Sidama regions, as well as within the Dire Dawa City Administration. Serving as a data-driven foundation for the project *Enhancing Women and Youth Participation in Ethiopian Politics through Civic Engagement and Education*, the study informs CARD’s programmatic design, strengthens evidence-based advocacy, and facilitates monitoring of inclusive governance. Moreover, it provides a critical resource for policymakers, civil society organizations, development partners, and community leaders seeking to advance equitable and representative political participation.

As Ethiopia advances its democratization efforts, bringing women and youth from to the center of political decision-making is not merely a question of representation, but one of justice and long-term sustainability. CARD affirms that the true strength of a democracy lies in its ability to include and safeguard its most marginalized and vulnerable populations. It is our hope that this baseline study will inform meaningful dialogue, inspire corrective action, and support collective efforts to transform political participation from symbolic presence into substantive power rephrase.

Moges Demissie (PhD)

Executive Director

Center for the Advancement of Rights & Democracy (CARD)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

• This baseline study provides a comprehensive examination of women’s and youth political participation across the Amhara, Oromia, and Sidama regions, as well as within the Dire Dawa City Administration. It not only documents the extent and nature of participation, but also situates these experiences within the broader institutional frameworks and socio-political environments that shape engagement at both regional and local levels. The study explores multiple dimensions of participation, including involvement in electoral processes, membership and leadership within political parties, civic engagement initiatives, and representation in governance structures. In doing so, it carefully considers the legal frameworks, administrative arrangements, and contextual factors that influence opportunities and barriers to participation.

Data collection was conducted across diverse political and social settings to ensure that variations in experiences and governance structures were adequately captured, thereby reflecting the complexity and heterogeneity of political participation in Ethiopia. By establishing a descriptive benchmark, the study offers a critical reference point that provides contextual insights into the realities of women’s and youth political participation. This study also provides a foundational reference for future analysis and initiatives, with the overarching aim of advancing Ethiopia’s democratic trajectory toward genuine inclusivity, facilitating learning and to enable systematic monitoring of changes over time. It underscores the importance of continuous reforms to the political and civic spaces and contributes to a deeper understanding of how women and youth engage in political processes, thereby creating the

conditions necessary for women and youth to assume leadership roles and actively shape the nation's governance

Key Findings:

The “Participation-Power Divide”

The study revealed that there is a demonstrable divide showing high rate of participation-but low power position in practice. While women and youth are highly visible in “labor-intensive political participation” roles—comprising an estimated 60–70% of the voting population and campaign workforce—their presence in substantive decision-making and executive roles remains disproportionately low. Youth are often used instrumentally as “mobilization channel” during elections but excluded during the subsequent resource allocation and decision-making phases. They are often trapped in symbolic roles, such as “Women’s Leagues” or Youth Wings, lacking real budgetary or executive power. Participation is thus largely “descriptive” rather than “substantive”.

Persistence of Structural and Cultural Barriers

The advancement of women and youth continues to be constrained by a complex system of interlocking obstacles that persist across different regions. Socio-cultural norms, rooted in traditional patriarchal structures such as the Songo system in Sidama and household practices in rural Amhara, reinforce the widespread belief that leadership is inherently a male domain. Economic dependency further compounds these challenges, as limited access to independent financial resources—identified as the primary barrier at 25.19%—creates a dependency syndrome that undermines sustained participation and increases the vulnerability of women and youth to political manipulation. In addition, pervasive insecurity remains a critical deterrent, with regions like Amhara and Oromia marked by physical insecurity and fear of political reprisal, discouraging potential candidates from pursuing

leadership roles. Moreover, institutional fragility—manifested in the budgetary limitations faced by the Regional Bureaus of Women, Children, and Youth (BoWCY)—poses a significant risk to the effective implementation of policies.

Policy–Practice Disconnect

Ethiopia possesses a robust *de jure* framework, including Article 35 (Rights of Women) and Article 38 (Right to Vote and be Elected) of the 1995 Constitution. Landmark reforms like Electoral Proclamation No. 1162/2019 and its 2024 amendment (No. 1394/2024) provide legal incentives for inclusive recruitment. The National Policy on Ethiopian Women (1993) and the National Youth Policy (2004) also aim to institutionalize political and economic rights. However, these are often undermined by an “adult-centric” political culture and a persistent “policy-practice gap” remains, as informal cultural barriers often override legal protections. Despite Ethiopia’s strong *de jure* commitment to inclusion, women and youth continue to face significant barriers to meaningful political participation. The persistence of economic dependence, entrenched cultural narratives, and constrained civic spaces renders the ‘political door’ heavy for these groups.

Significant Regional Nuance

Significant regional nuances characterized by strong youth mobilization in Amhara and Oromia, rarely translates into resource access or cabinet roles, reflecting a *Frontline Paradox*. While Sidama’s new regional status generates momentum, traditional governance structures constrain inclusive participation. In Dire Dawa conducive urban environment is offset by the 40-40-20 ethnic quota system, which prioritizes identity over gender and age, resulting in *double marginalization*.

Study Context and Methodological Approach

1.1 Overview of Study Context

- Ethiopia's contemporary political landscape is characterized by a complex and volatile transitional period, the dynamics of which accelerated in the aftermath of the significant political shifts that emerged in 2018. A cornerstone of this period was the dissolution of the long-standing Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) and its reorganization into the Prosperity Party. This shift was accompanied by ambitious legal and institutional reforms intended to dismantle the authoritarian structures of the past. Key milestones included the revision of restrictive legislations, most notably the enactment of the Civil Society Organizations (CSO) Proclamation No. 1113/2019¹.

Despite these initial strides toward a unified political structure, the transition has faced severe institutional strain. Observers and human rights defenders have increasingly raised alarms regarding

1 Proclamation No. 1113/2019, Ethiopian Civil Society Organizations Proclamation sought to expand the civic space by allowing organizations to engage in human rights advocacy and election monitoring.

a “repressive backslide.” While administrative regions such as Oromia, Amhara, Sidama, and the Dire Dawa City Administration remain centers for renewed national political activity, the environment is increasingly affected by the political dynamics unfolding in the country.

Currently, proposed amendments to the CSO Proclamation threaten² to grant the state expansive powers to intervene in the internal governance of independent organizations, potentially restricting groups engaged in democratic advocacy and election-related work. This shifting landscape creates both opportunities and significant barriers for inclusive political engagement. This deteriorating space poses a direct threat to the gains made post-2018, creating a paradoxical environment where the formal mechanisms of democratic participation exist, yet the practical ability of citizens to participate remains heavily constrained. Consequently, while the legal framework for democracy exists, the practical reality is increasingly defined by restricted freedoms and a deteriorating environment for civil society. The civic space that briefly opened is now contracting, creating a dual reality of democratic promise and systemic obstruction.

1.2 Problem Statement

The current landscape for women and youth political participation in Ethiopia is going through a period of profound transition and systemic challenge. While the legal framework provides a foundation for inclusion, recent human rights assessments³ indicate a widening gap between policy and practice. The country is

2 See <https://www.omct.org/en/resources/statements/ethiopia-new-draft-law-threatens-to-dismantle-civil-society>

3 See United States Department of State, Ethiopia 2024 Human Rights Report. https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/62451_ETHIOPIA-2024-HUMAN-RIGHTS-REPORT.pdf

confronting significant challenges in relation to democratization, reflected in the limitations on the implementation of essential rights to free speech and peaceful assembly. This environment has specifically marginalized women and youth, whose political agency is often the first to be curtailed during periods of instability and state-of-emergency measures.

Despite representational gains in some sectors, women continue to face significant barriers to authentic power. For instance, The Global Gender Gap Index 2022⁴ notes that achieving equal representation in national parliaments remains a multi-decadal challenge globally. In Ethiopia, this is compounded by a lack of mandatory legislative quotas. Similarly, youth engagement is increasingly viewed as a bulwark against democratic backsliding. However, in Ethiopia, the “closing of civic space”—evidenced by proposed restrictive changes to the Civil Society Organization (CSO)⁵ law and the reported shutdown of over 1,500 organizations—severely limit the platforms available for youth to organize and advocate for their rights.

Furthermore, restrictions on journalists, civil society, and opposition members can exacerbate democratic challenges by deterring women and youth from political engagement. Tackling these constraints through stronger protections and expanded civic platforms is critical to fostering inclusive participation. Without baseline insight into the interplay of conflict, legal restrictions, and gendered barriers, political participation initiatives risk irrelevance and limited impact. The central problem addressed by this study is the systemic underrepresentation of women and youth in Ethiopia’s

4 See World Economic Forum, Global Gender Gap Report 2022. <https://www.weforum.org/publications/global-gender-gap-report-2022/>

5 See Amnesty International, Ethiopia: Authorities must drop proposed changes to the CSO law (2025). <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr25/0185/2025/en/>

political and governance structures, despite these demographics forming the overwhelming majority of the population.

Similarly, although the 1995 Constitution (Article 35) explicitly mandates affirmative action, a profound gap remains between the legal framework and its actual implementation in political practice. For example, while women occupied approximately 41% of the seats in Ethiopia's House of Peoples' Representatives in 2021, this numerical representation masks their restricted substantive influence, particularly within local executive bodies and regional governance structures. Ethiopia's position at 74th on the Global Gender Gap Index further highlights enduring shortcomings in both socio-economic and political empowerment, illustrating how women and youth continue to be excluded from the central mechanisms of party leadership and the allocation of resources.

This exclusion is compounded by targeted Violence against Women in Elections (VAWiE) and the rapid contraction of civic space. Evidence shows that most incidents involving women in politics take the form of psychological intimidation, defamation, or physical harm, often driving them to withdraw to avoid stigma. At the same time, youth and women encounter mounting barriers to collective organization, including harassment of civil society leaders and digital repression. For youth—who rely heavily on digital platforms—the threat of surveillance, arbitrary detention, and “red-tagging” could transform political advocacy into a high-risk endeavor, significantly discouraging their participation.

Economic and institutional barriers further render women and youth uncompetitive against established male incumbents. A pervasive “resource gap” exists because political financing is heavily skewed; women often lack access to the independent capital or party funding necessary for large-scale campaigning. This is compounded by “economic violence,” where female candidates are denied access to family resources as punishment for their aspirations. Institutionally, youth are frequently relegated to the roles of

“political foot soldiers” for mobilization but are systematically sidelined when it comes to formal candidacy or leadership roles within party hierarchies. This lack of institutional support is mirrored by a lack of data, as the invisibility of youth-specific metrics leads to a policy environment that overlooks their unique needs.

Finally, deeply entrenched patriarchal structures and cultural norms continue to frame leadership as a male-dominated domain. Nearly 40% of the barriers to women’s participation are rooted in cultural perceptions, including family disapproval and the stigmatization of those who step out of traditional domestic roles. These societal pressures, combined with the escalation of political violence and the fear of repression, create a formidable wall against inclusive governance. By addressing these interlocking barriers—from historical gaps to security concerns—this study aims to provide the evidence necessary to dismantle the structures that keep the majority of Ethiopia’s population from the decision-making table.

Together these dynamics reveal a structural problem, while representation figures suggest progress, systemic barriers rooted in violence, repression, and exclusion continue to suppress meaningful participation of women and youth in Ethiopia’s political and governance processes.

1.3. Rationale for the Baseline Study

Ethiopia’s rapidly changing political context has seen growing challenges on political freedoms, and limitations on the civic space—conditions that particularly undermine the participation of women and youth. This project seeks to establish a critical baseline to document these challenges, providing evidence for advocacy against women and youth political participation. The study aims to establish a foundation for future initiatives by systematically identifying structural barriers to participation and establishing measurable benchmarks to assess barriers and opportunities to political

participation. Moving beyond broad generalizations, it provides nuanced regional analysis across Oromia, Amhara, Sidama, and Dire Dawa, ensuring that interventions reflect the distinct social and institutional realities of each context. Such comparative insights make it possible to design strategies that are both relevant and culturally responsive. Ultimately, the inclusion of women and youth is positioned not merely as a matter of representation, but as the cornerstone of sustainable peace and the foundation of a resilient democratic culture in Ethiopia.

1.4 Objectives of the Study



General Objective

The overall objective of the study is to establish a comprehensive baseline data that evaluates the current status of women's and youth's political participation and leadership engagement across the Oromia, Amhara, Sidama, and Dire Dawa regions. The study aims to identify systemic barriers and key stakeholders, establish measurable performance indicators, and provide evidence-based recommendations to inform CARD's program design and advocacy strategies for inclusive governance.

Specific Objectives



The following are the specific objectives of the study:

- » Assess the current level and nature of youth and women's political participation and leadership engagement.
- » Identify social, structural, and institutional barriers affecting political participation.
- » Map key stakeholders, policies, and initiatives supporting women's and youth's political inclusion.
- » Establish baseline indicators against which project outcomes will be measured.
- » Provide evidence-based recommendations to strengthen program design, advocacy, and future interventions.

1.5 Scope of the Study

The study was conducted across multiple dimensions. Geographically, the research focused on four selected areas identified by CARD: Dessie in the Amhara Regional State, Jimma in the Oromia Regional State, Hawassa in the Sidama Regional State, and Dire Dawa City Administration. In terms of target groups, the study engaged women aged 18 and above and youth aged 18–35 of both sexes, along with political party members and leaders, representatives of civil society organizations, community members, and government officials and decision-makers. Sectorally, the study examined issues related to political participation, governance, civic engagement, and democratic processes.

Purposive sampling (considering representativeness, convenience, and security) was used to identify geographical locations/region; line ministries, CSOs, and other research participants.

1.6 Research Design and Methodology

1.6.1. Research Approach

The study adopted a participatory, mixed-methods research design, enabling the collection of diverse perspectives and data sources to generate a comprehensive understanding of the nature and current status of women’s and youth political participation. By integrating qualitative depth with quantitative breadth, the research ensures that the data was both statistically relevant and richly nuanced.

The study employed a mixed-methods approach. Qualitative data were gathered through Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) with diverse state and non-state actors, complemented by Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) conducted in major urban centers including Dire Dawa, Dessie, Hawassa, and Jimma. These methods provided context-specific insights and highlighted lived experiences shaping political participation. Quantitative data were collected via

a structured survey administered through the KoboToolbox platform, enabling real-time entry and minimizing transcription errors. In addition, a review of relevant documents was undertaken to capture perspectives on women's and youth political participation in Ethiopia.

1.6.2. Research Methods and Instruments of Data Collection

To ensure validity and reliability, four complementary methods were employed for data collection: document reviews, key informant interviews, focus group discussions, and surveys. Using multiple sources allowed for triangulation of responses and strengthened the evidence base. The methods, target groups, and purposes are outlined below:



Document Reviews: A wide range of documents were examined with a focus on women's and youth political participation in Ethiopia. These included local, national, regional, and international human rights, democracy, and election-related legal and policy instruments. Key national frameworks such as

the Constitution, the Criminal Code, the Electoral Proclamation, and related directives were reviewed. In addition, prior studies on political participation and civic engagement of women and youth in Ethiopia were analyzed. The selection process followed a predefined checklist to ensure consistency.



Key Informant Interviews (KII): A total of 38 Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) were conducted using snowball sampling to capture diverse perspectives from targeted locations. Participants included political leaders such as youth wing executives and regional party leaders from the Prosperity Party and

ANM, who mobilize young voters and fulfill leadership quotas. Government officials from Women's Affairs, Education, and Labor offices contributed insights on policy implementation at Kebele

and Woreda levels. Civic association leaders, including representatives from Women and Youth Federations and Disability Associations, highlighted advocacy for marginalized groups such as persons with disabilities (PWD). Additionally, current and former election officials from the National Election Board of Ethiopia (NEBE) provided perspectives on electoral participation.



Focus Group Discussion: Seven FGDs were organized to capture diverse views, needs, and interests regarding women’s and youth political participation. Discussions were guided by a predefined FGD framework. Participants included representatives from government offices (Youth and Women Affairs), political parties (Prosperity Party, ANM), academic institutions (Dire Dawa University) and community associations (Disability groups, House Maids, Youth associations).



Survey: A structured survey questionnaire was administered to a diverse range of respondents, with 48.28% drawn from community members, complemented by perspectives from policymakers, CSOs, and 18.62% from university lecturers, traditional leaders (e.g., Idir), students, and subject experts. Systematic random sampling was applied across the four selected regions, with a deliberate focus on women and youth in line with the study’s objectives. The survey was strongly youth-centered, as individuals aged 18–35 accounted for 84.14% of participants, reflecting the project’s emphasis on youth political participation. Data collection was conducted digitally using Kobo software on tablets, with questionnaires initially prepared in English and subsequently translated into local languages to ensure accessibility.

1.6.3. Data Interpretation and Analysis

The data collected was analyzed through both quantitative and qualitative methods. Quantitative data was analyzed using percentages to highlight the structural and cultural barriers affecting women’s and youth participation, while simultaneously providing insights into their status and levels of engagement. Qualitative findings were interpreted using thematic analysis, an approach that facilitated the identification of recurring patterns and challenges such as the “dependency syndrome” highlighted by youth and the “descriptive versus substantive” gap experienced by women. This process enabled the transformation of raw narratives into a structured and cohesive analytical framework.

1.7. Ethical Consideration

The study was conducted with strict adherence to ethical principles throughout data collection, analysis, and reporting. To ensure safety and integrity, all research team members received training on research ethics, survivor-centered approaches, and respectful interviewing techniques. Key ethical measures included:

- » **Voluntary Participation and Informed Consent:** Participants were fully informed about the study’s purpose, their right to decline, and the intended use of data. Only individuals aged 18 and above were selected, with careful attention to minimizing power imbalances during consent and interviews.
- » **Anonymity and Confidentiality:** Identities and responses, particularly on sensitive political issues, were kept strictly confidential and anonymized in all outputs.
- » **Do No Harm:** The research prioritized the safety and dignity of participants—especially women and youth—by using sensitive, non-judgmental questioning techniques.

- » **Power Dynamics and Practical Considerations:** Adequate time was provided for recruitment and consent, ensuring participants, including young people, could freely and fully understand the information before agreeing to take part.

1.8 Limitations of the Study

The major limitation of the study is the prevailing security issues and instability in parts of Amhara and Oromia, which required flexible scheduling and a strong reliance on local Research Assistants (RAs) familiar with the terrain. To reduce political sensitivity, questions were carefully framed in neutral terms, emphasizing institutional barriers rather than partisan affiliations. Despite these constraints, the use of parallel research teams helped keep data collection on track, producing a meaningful snapshot of Ethiopia at a democratic crossroads.

A key challenge was the limited geographical scope of the study, which covered only four regions and four woredas. This restricted sampling, combined with the unavailability or reluctance of some key informants and focus group participants, affected the representativeness of the findings. Nevertheless, the data gathered provides valuable insights into women’s and youth’s political participation and offers a foundation for designing countermeasures to strengthen inclusive governance.

1.9 Informants and Discussants

Sources of the Informant by region	State Actors	Non-State actors	M	F	Total	Remark
Dire Dawa	6	5	8	3	11	
Amhara-Dessie	6	2	5	3	8	
Oromia-Jimma	4	4	8	8	8	
Sidama	5	5	4	6	10	

Sources of the Informant by region	State Actors	Non-State actors	M	F	Total	Remark
NEBE (HQ)				1		
			25	13	38	

Table 1: Brief Profile KII Informants and Discussants

Sources of the Informant by region	No of FGD	Number of Participants	Participation (%)
Dire Dawa	2	15	28.57
Amhara-Dessie	1	8	28.57
Oromia-Jimma	2	17	28.57
Sidama	2	16	14.29
Total	7	56	100%

Table 2: Brief Profile of FGD Informants and Discussants

Region	Sex	Educational Background					Sum	Total	Age (>36)
		No Formal	Primary	Secondary/ TVT	Higher	Post Graduate			
Dire Dawa	F	3		7	9	6	25		1 missed
	M			5	19	2	26	51	4
Sidama (Hawassa)	F		3	8	12		23		
	M	1	1	5	6	7	20	43	
Amhara (Dessie)	F				6	6	12		
	M			1	5	10	16	28	
Oromia (Jimma)	F			1	5	1	7		
	M				13	2	15	22	1
Grand Total		4	4	27	75	34	144	6	

Table 3: Profile of Survey Respondents / Informants

Legal and Institutional Framework Governing Women and Youth Political Participation (WYPP)

- The legal foundation for the political participation of women and youth in Ethiopia is rooted in the 1995 Federal Constitution and supplemented by specific national policies designed to address historical imbalances. The Ethiopian legal framework establishes a robust *de jure* commitment to inclusion, derived from both domestic and international law.

2.1. National Legal Frameworks

2.1.1. Constitutional Provisions

The 1995 FDRE Constitution⁶ sets up the main rules for political rights, especially for women and youth. Article 25 establishes the principle that all individuals are equal before the law, prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sex or any other status while article

6 Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (1995) emphasizes equality and the government's responsibility to ensure that everyone has a fair opportunity.

38 guarantees political rights for all citizens. It states that every Ethiopian has the right to vote and to run for office at any level, regardless of sex or other status. This provision ensures universal suffrage and equal access to public service, extending these rights to women and youth as part of the broader national framework.

While this provides a broad foundation, the text becomes more specific when addressing women's rights. Article 35 focuses on women, affirming that they enjoy the same constitutional rights and protections as men. At the same time, it acknowledges the historical inequalities women have faced and therefore mandates affirmative measures to promote equal participation in politics, society, and the economy. It also requires the state to eliminate laws and customs that harm women physically or mentally, recognizing the need to dismantle harmful practices and redress past injustices.

Finally, article 89 directs the government to ensure that women participate equally with men in economic and social development. Together, these provisions form a coherent constitutional commitment to equality. While their practical implementation may be challenging, the Constitution clearly articulates the vision of an inclusive society on paper.

2.1.2. Electoral Laws

Election Proclamation No. 1162 (2019) ⁷ marked a significant milestone by establishing the National Election Board of Ethiopia as an independent body. The law incorporated provisions to ensure gender-sensitive recruitment of election officials, aiming to increase women's participation. It also required political parties to include women in leadership positions as a condition for accessing certain

7 See Proclamation No.1162/2019, "The Ethiopian Electoral, Political Parties Registration and Elections Code of Conduct Proclamation", at <https://nebe.org.et/sites/default/files/Ethiopian-Electoral-Proclamation-No-1162.pdf>

state funding. However, the Proclamation falls short of placing mandatory gender quotas, instead offering extra public funding to parties with at least 20% female candidates and requiring gender balance among election officials and observers. While these incentives may encourage inclusion, their voluntary nature means some parties could simply disregard them.

The 2024 amendment, Proclamation No. 1394⁸, built upon this foundation with notable updates. It strengthened internal party democracy, thereby creating greater opportunities for women and youth to advance beyond ordinary membership roles. While the original law emphasized diversity, the amendment reinforced this requirement by mandating inclusivity in leadership structures and candidate lists, making the framework more systematic.

Regarding party registration, the amendment simplified procedures for new parties but maintained strict distinctions between national and regional organizations. This could pose challenges for youth-led or gender-focused grassroots movements, limiting their reach despite easing entry requirements. Candidate nomination processes introduced specific measures to support women, such as reduced signature requirements, designed to address historically low participation rates. Another important aspect is dispute resolution, which provides mechanisms to address complaints related to registration or election outcomes. This is particularly significant for women and youth, who often encounter barriers at the local level, as it offers a formal legal pathway to challenge unfair practices. Overall, while the framework demonstrates a clear intent to broaden participation and promote inclusivity and progress is evident, certain structural limitations remain, leaving some pathways to equal participation only partially open.

8 See Proclamation 1394/2025: A Proclamation to amend the Ethiopian Electoral, Political Parties Registration and Election's Code of Conduct, <https://nebe.org.et/sites/default/files/Proclamation%201394%20A%20proclamation%20to%20amend%20the%20Ethiopian%20Electoral%2C%20Political%20Parties%20Registrati.pdf>

2.1.3 Civil Society Laws

Civil society organizations are crucial for driving political change, particularly those focused on women’s rights and youth participation. The 2019 Civil Society Proclamation 1113⁹ removed the 10% cap on foreign funding for human rights and advocacy, enabling women’s and youth groups to access international support and gain momentum. However, proposed amendments in 2025/26 may broaden the definition of political advocacy, potentially restricting foreign funding again and undermining progress.

The National Policy on Women (1993) aimed to embed gender sensitivity in government structures, promoting fair development and decision-making, though its practical impact remains limited. The National Youth Policy (2004)¹⁰ defined youth as ages 15–29 and emphasized their role in democracy and governance. It encouraged organized participation through associations and leagues, highlighting youth as key drivers of social and political change.

2.2. International and Regional Commitments

Ethiopia’s legal system strongly supports gender and youth inclusion, reinforced by international commitments. The FDRE Constitution establishes that all international agreements ratified by Ethiopia, including CEDAW¹¹ form part of national laws. This framework mandates the elimination of discrimination and promotes women’s political participation. The Maputo Protocol and Beijing Declaration further reinforce these commitments, advocating for affirmative action and equal representation. Furthermore,

9 Proclamation 1113/2019: Organizations of Civil Societies Proclamation.

10 See FDRE National Youth Policy (2004). https://ywcaeth.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/Ethiopia_2004_National_Youth_Policy.pdf

11 See Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), at <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/cedaw.pdf>

UN resolutions and the African Youth Charter emphasize youth involvement in political processes, recognizing violence against women as a barrier to equality and participation.

2.2.1. Maputo Protocol

Ethiopia ratified the Maputo Protocol¹² in 2018. It reinforces the need for active measures to promote equal participation of women in politics. Ethiopia is also a signatory and has ratified the Protocol of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa. Article 9 of this protocol specifically requires states to take "positive action" to ensure women are equally represented in elections and in government policy-making.

2.2.2. Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)

Serving as a "Bill of Rights" for women, Ethiopia has ratified CEDAW¹³ in 1981. The convention requires states to take suitable steps to eliminate discrimination against women in political and public life. This commitment is reflected in the 1995 Constitution's "Affirmative Action" clause (Article 35), which corresponds with CEDAW's call for "temporary special measures" to promote gender equality in politics. Article 7 demands that the state eliminate discrimination against women in political and public life, guaranteeing the right to vote in all elections and eligibility for elected positions. Similarly, considered as a form of discrimination under Article 1 of CEDAW, violence against women in Elections (VAWiE) hampers the exercise of fundamental freedoms in politics. As a signatory, Ethiopia must follow CEDAW's principles of "parity as a core principle," ensuring women can vote, run for office, and engage in policy-making. Recent updates (General Recommendation 40)

12 Maputo: Protocol to the African Charter on the Rights of Women in Africa, African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights: A Legal Analysis

13 See the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979).

highlight a shift toward achieving 50% representation in all decision-making bodies.

While focused on children, the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) Committee mentions Ethiopia’s “Youth Development Strategy Plan.” This plan aims to help youth become active in civic and political life. The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child has recognized Ethiopia’s progress in ratifying child-related protocols, which helps strengthen the protection and development framework for young citizens. This framework shows a strong legal commitment to inclusion. However, practical participation is currently influenced by the changing civil society environment and the 2024 electoral amendments. Ethiopia’s domestic laws are supported by its commitment to international agreements that set global standards for gender and youth inclusion.

2.2.3. Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action 1995 (BDPFA):

Ethiopia endorsed the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action 1995 (BDPFA)¹⁴ in 1995. It identifies “Women in Power and Decision-making” as a key area of concern. The framework requires governments to take steps to guarantee women’s equal access to and full participation in leadership. This serves as a roadmap for gender equality, focusing on women’s roles in decision-making.

2.2.4. Global UN Commitments for Women and Youth Participation

The Sustainable Development Goal 5¹⁵ aims to ensure that women fully participate and have equal opportunities for leadership in all levels of political and public life. Similarly, the United Nations

14 See Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995). <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2015/01/beijing-declaration>

15 What is Goal 5-Gender Equality, https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Goal-5_Fast-Facts.pdf

General Assembly Resolution 48/104¹⁶ acknowledges that violence against women hinders equality and peace, values that are essential for political participation. On the other hand, the United Nations Security Council Resolution 2250 (Youth, Peace and Security)¹⁷ marks a significant change in perspective, It emphasizes the importance of involving young people in formal political decisions. Ethiopia ratified the African Youth Charter in 2014¹⁸, affirming the right of every young person to participate in all aspects of society and requiring states to establish platforms that promote youth involvement in decision-making.

2.3. Institutional Framework and Policy Mechanisms

Ethiopia's institutions and long-term development plans are also understood to support women and young people in a big way. The following are some of the institutional foundations for political participation of women and youth;

The National Election Board of Ethiopia (NEBE) is recognized as one of the key institutions that laid the groundwork for women's involvement in politics. In recent years, NEBE has stepped up to make sure women and youth really get their voices heard at the polls—not just as voters, but as candidates, too. The National Election Board of Ethiopia (NEBE) goes beyond simply organizing elections. It provides financial incentives to political parties that include women on their candidate lists. In addition, NEBE has introduced a Gender Mainstreaming Manual to integrate anti-violence initiatives into the electoral process. More recently, the Board has advocated for Temporary Special Measures to ensure that more women are nominated by political parties. Ethiopia's Ten-Year

16 See The Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women, proclaimed by UNGA Resolution 48/104, at https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/documents/atrocities-crimes/Doc.21_declaration%20elimination%20vaw.pdf

17 UN Security Council Resolution 2250 (2015) sees the youth as vital partners in democracy and peace building, not just a population needing protection.

18 See the African Youth Charter, https://au.int/sites/default/files/treaties/7789-treaty-0033_-_african_youth_charter_e.pdf

Development Plan is another policy framework that puts gender right at the heart of its vision for the future. The plan’s goals of making half of all lawmakers to be women, and supporting 10,000 women to become capable leaders can be seen as ambitious yet it sets a target that pushes people to think differently about who holds power.

On the other hand, the Ministry of Women and Social Affairs (MoWSA) leads the charge on gender and youth issues and makes sure government policies actually help real people. They’re updating the National Women Policy and drafting a new policy to fight gender-based violence, making the legal landscape a little safer for women and girls. On the youth side, organizations like the Ethiopian Youth Federation are supposed to help young people get involved in politics and civic life, but there’s always that big question—how free are they from government control? Either way, these groups give youth a place at the table, or at least a shot at having one.

Similarly, women parliamentary caucuses help female MPs band together to push for laws that actually take women’s needs into account. Legal reforms, like the Federal Revised Family Code and the Criminal Code, have given women more protection at home, which is key if they’re going to step confidently into public life. There’s also the Ethiopian Women’s Development and Change Package, which is all about getting women into leadership roles at every level, from local councils to regional offices.

Moreover, gender responsive budgeting guidelines force government departments to plan their spending in a way that finally considers women’s needs. Big international players—UN Women, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, and others—hold Ethiopia to global standards and keep pushing for equal participation. New models from groups like IFES¹⁹ focus on building up youth through education and civil society work, making sure the next generation knows how to get involved. At every level—from local government units all the way to national ministries—these efforts add up, slowly but surely shifting the landscape for women and youth in Ethiopia.

19 See Understanding Young People’s Political and Civic Engagement as a Counter to Democratic Backsliding, IFES Learning Agenda Evidence Report (December 2024). <https://www.ifes.org/publications/understanding-young-peoples-political-and-civic-engagement-counter-democratic>

Women's Political Participation: Status, Barriers and Enablers

3.1 Status of Women's Political Participation

- The survey data reveals that most respondents see women's political participation as "Moderate" to "Low". This quantitative data highlights a widespread perception of limited engagement in meaningful decision-making roles. Although the 1995 FDRE Constitution introduced reforms that broadened opportunities for women, particularly at the kebele (local) level, the advancement achieved has been inconsistent. Women constituting an estimated 60–70% of the voting population, are highly visible during elections but often confined to symbolic roles rather than substantive decision-making.

The following table summarizes the data gathered from the survey.

Participation Level	Percentage (%)	Frequency (n=144)
Moderate	41.48%	60
Low	27.41%	40
Very Low	17.78%	26
Very High	12.59%	18

Table 4: Survey Report Summary)

These findings are reinforced by insights from key informants, who emphasized that “Women and youth are not participating in politics in proportion to their presence within the community. Overall, their involvement in both national and local governance remains limited. While participation is relatively stronger at grassroots levels, such as kebele and block structures, it declines significantly as positions become more senior”²⁰.

On the other hand, although structures such as Women Federations and “one-to-five” networks exist at the grassroots level, their primary purpose is to serve as channels for government communication rather than platforms for genuine political advocacy. Increasing women’s presence in legislative bodies and peace/security initiatives (eg., Gachana Sirna) has not diminished the leadership male-domination of leadership. The evidence is further supported by perspectives shared by focus group discussants, indicating that “women and youth continue to have low levels of participation and representation in political positions. Their leadership roles are concentrated primarily at lower administrative levels, such as sub-city and kebele structures, while their presence and influence diminish significantly at higher levels, including city governance”²¹.

20 KII 05, Sidama.

21 FGD 33, Dire Dawa.

Similarly, although recent trends indicate some progress—with 37.8% of respondents noting increased engagement over the past two years—32.6% reported no change. Overall, participation is progressing but continues to be constrained by structural and cultural barriers, leaving women and youth underrepresented in meaningful leadership roles despite their numerical strength as voters.

3.2. Barriers to Women Participation

The data highlights a multi-layered set of barriers that prevent women from engaging effectively in politics. Socio-cultural barriers remain significant, with 24.44% of respondents identifying traditional views on gender and age as major hurdles. Women’s multiple responsibilities as wives and mothers are rarely accommodated by political schedules, forcing many to withdraw. Traditional structures, including the influence of religious leaders and elders, often limit women’s public roles, while community confidence in women’s political decision-making remains low. Deeply ingrained beliefs that “men are destined to lead” perpetuate the perception of women as incapable or unfit for politics. The double burden of household and childcare responsibilities, which women shoulder at rates of 70–80%, further prevents them from competing equally with men. Constant societal discouragement has also created a confidence gap among women. Focus group discussions corroborate this data, revealing that “the political landscape is not favorable because women have a lot of responsibilities. As mothers, they take 70-80% responsibilities of their children creating heavy burdens”²².

Economic barriers compound these challenges. Lack of financial resources and economic dependence was cited as the top barrier by 25.19% of survey respondents. Focus group discussions further revealed the presence of corruption, with women being asked

22 FGD_01, Sidama.

for money or sexual favors when seeking employment or political advancement. Women's financial dependency and the high costs of political campaigning make it difficult to sustain candidates. Even when women-led structures exist at the kebele level, they often operate without budgets, rendering them functional only in form.

Institutional barriers also play a critical role. Bureaucracy, nepotism, and administrative malpractice discourage new entrants, while frequent turnover of officials undermines continuity in empowerment programs. Political parties act as gatekeepers, with 32.59% of respondents viewing them as blocking access to real power, even when recruiting women and youth for symbolic "bridge" roles.

Ethnic quota systems, such as the 40-40-20 arrangement in Dire Dawa, create glass ceilings for women and youth outside dominant groups. Legal and party recruitment rules were cited by 9.63% of respondents as barriers, with key informants noting a gap between policy and practice. An information gap persists, with 14.81% of the population lacking access to political education, mentorship, or awareness of rights; marginalized groups such as housemaids often remain unaware of their right to elect and be elected.

Women and youth with disabilities face near-total exclusion from politics due to lack of physical access and social support, with participants suggesting quotas as the only solution. This analysis is validated through the views of key informants, who noted that "The challenge does not lie in national or regional policies, but in the lack of commitment from individuals in leadership positions, who often neglect their responsibility to empower youth and women. Moreover, effective monitoring mechanisms are largely absent; reporting exists in name only, without any dedicated body ensuring accountability in practice"²³. Overall, while legal and policy frameworks are supportive, their implementation remains weak.

23 KII_03, Sidama.

Finally, safety and online violence present additional deterrents. Digital insecurity is widespread, with 46.66% of respondents feeling unsafe or very unsafe expressing political views online. “Women in particular face digital threats that are not only political but deeply personal, undermining their confidence and safety in public life”²⁴. Harassment is common, with 31.85% frequently witnessing online bullying targeting politically active individuals. Fear of physical attacks, harassment, and political instability discourages families from allowing youth and women to enter politics, with 15.56% of survey respondents citing fear of violence as a primary deterrent. In general, these socio-cultural, economic, institutional, and safety-related barriers illustrate the depth of challenges facing women and youth in political participation.

3.3. Enablers and Opportunities for Women Participation

Despite the barriers to participation, several enablers and opportunities are currently facilitating greater involvement of women and youth in politics. Legal protections and affirmative action measures, such as adding five points to women’s scores for promotions, are cited as vital institutional enablers. Likewise, a supportive policy environment, particularly the 2019 Civil Society Law and constitutional provisions under Articles 35 and 38, are seen as essential, though requiring stronger enforcement. Continued and strengthened affirmative action and quota systems are widely viewed as the most effective tools for ensuring representation.

Institutional frameworks such as the establishment of Youth Councils, including those in Dire Dawa, and the presence of women’s structures from the federal to grassroots levels provide critical platforms for engagement. Policy support has also improved, with recent labor law reforms extending maternity leave to four months

24 FGD_P8, Amhara

and introducing specialized saving regulations for women and youth, thereby fostering economic independence.

On the other hand, civil society engagement plays a key role by providing safe spaces and capacity-building opportunities that political parties often fail to offer. Capacity-building initiatives focused on leadership competencies and civic education is critical for moving women and youth from symbolic “bridge” roles into substantive decision-making positions. The presence of role models and mentorship programs, including those led by CSOs and local Women Affairs offices, inspires confidence. Participants are driven by a genuine passion for serving their community, which motivates them to overcome systemic hurdles when nominated by officials. Higher education emerged as the strongest predictor of success, with most success stories involving women who completed their education and achieved economic independence.

Modernization and technology have contributed positively through the transition to digital voter information platforms and increased media promotion about elections, enhancing transparency and engagement. Finally, active recruitment by political parties is acknowledged by 66.67% of survey respondents, indicating that some parties are making deliberate efforts to support women and youth in political participation.

Summary Table: Main Barriers (Survey Data)

Barrier Category	Percentage (Top Choice)	Key Insight
Economic Dependence	25.19%	Lack of funding is the #1 hurdle.
Socio-Cultural Norms	24.44%	Traditional views on gender roles.
Violence/Harassment	15.56%	Safety concerns prevent entry.
Lack of Information	14.81%	High need for civic education.
Domestic Duties	9.63%	Family roles limit available time.
Institutional Rules	9.63%	Party recruitment rules are restrictive.

Table 5: Summary Table - Main Barriers (Survey Data)

Youth's Political Participation: Status, Barriers and Enablers

4.1 Status of Youth Political Participation

Youth, defined as those individuals under the age of 35, represent a demographic majority estimated over 70% of the Ethiopian population. Survey data shows that more than 83% of respondents fall within this age bracket, but most rate youth participation in local government leadership and politics as only “moderate” (41.5% and 44.4% respectively). While youth are highly active in “labor-intensive” political activities, they are often excluded from high-level leadership and their influence or presence in genuine decision-making roles remains disproportionately low.

A significant share, over 45% perceives participation as “low” or “very low,” with only 8.15% rating it “very high.” While youth are highly mobilized during elections and political campaigns, often making up 60–70% of the voting and campaign workforce, they are excluded from high-level decision-making positions. Their involvement is largely symbolic, with focus group participants noting that youth and women are often invited to conferences or events to fulfill quotas rather than to contribute substantively.

The nature of youth engagement is characterized by high activity in grassroots and mobilization roles but limited influence in executive positions. Common activities include attending political party meetings (36.3%), community organizing (35.56%), and digital activism on social media (22.2%). Voter turnout among youth was reported at 26.67%, yet their representation in decisive roles such as cabinet members or heads of offices is considered “rarely visible” by 42.22% of respondents. Key informants emphasized that “despite Youth often described as the engine of development and agents of change, the opportunities and space provided for them in political decision making are limited”.(KII_07). Similarly, it was stated that the number of youth in higher governance positions should serve as a baseline indicator of real impact, highlighting the gap between mobilization-based participation and meaningful inclusion. Youth are frequently described as “bridges” or “foot soldiers” who help secure party strategies but rarely benefit from the political outcomes they enable.

At the organizational level, youth are highly structured through kebele-level federations and party youth wings, which serve as primary vehicles for community mobilization. However, their participation is often limited to symbolic roles rather than substantive leadership. Qualitative data consistently points to a distinction between political presence and meaningful participation, with youth physically present in forums but lacking access to decisive executive roles or economic opportunities. Informal engagement is increasingly common, with youth turning to social media activism, community volunteering, and protests, while formal participation in parliamentary or ministerial roles remains limited.

Despite their numerical strength and high mobilization, youth representation in actual decision-making continues to be rated as low to moderate by most survey respondents. While 44.44% of youth are registered members of political parties, their influence within party structures is constrained, with leadership positions

dominated by older elites. Overall, youth remain central to mobilization and grassroots activities but are marginalized from substantive leadership and policy-making roles, underscoring a persistent gap between demographic presence and political representation. Gender disparities further compound the issue, as male youth are more engaged in political spaces than young women, largely due to lower community confidence in women’s decision-making capacities.

Summarized Levels and Nature of Participation

Participation Activity	Frequency/%	Nature of Engagement
Voting/Campaigning	60–70% of workforce	High mobilization but limited to election periods.
Political Meetings	36.30%	Frequent attendance but often with limited influence on outcomes.
Community Organizing	35.56%	Active at grassroots levels like Kebeles.
Digital Activism	22.20%	Used as a “safe” space to bypass traditional gatekeepers.

Table 6: Summarized Levels and Nature of Participation

4.2 Barriers to Youth Participation

The qualitative data from FGDs and KIIs highlights several “gate-keeping” mechanisms that prevent youth from ascending to real leadership roles. Youth face a “triple threat” of barriers:

A) Socio-Economic, Cultural and Security Factors

Youth participation in politics in Ethiopia faces a wide range of socio-economic, cultural, and security-related barriers, including;

Economic dependency is one of the most pressing challenges, with 25.19% of survey respondents citing lack of financial resources and high unemployment as primary obstacles. Without independent income, youth cannot sustain political campaigns or resist

political pressure, often falling into a “dependency syndrome” where reliance on families or government-controlled jobs undermines political independence. High unemployment and economic instability further discourage engagement through democratic channels. In addition, youth report limited access to loans and credit systems, which prevents them from funding independent campaigns. This lack of economic empowerment sometimes leads to frustration and undemocratic expressions of grievance. “There was this woman with an Economics degree of 3.7 points, who is going to leave to an Arab country, because she could not find a job.”²⁵ For youth with disabilities, the barrier is even compounded as they face near-total exclusion due to physical accessibility barriers and the absence of specific support mechanisms or quotas to ensure their representation.

Socio-cultural norms also play a significant role in limiting youth participation. Traditional views prioritize the wisdom of adults over the potential of youth, with 24.44% of survey respondents identifying this as a major hurdle. Youth are often perceived as “inexperienced” or “immature,” leading to their marginalization in formal political parties dominated by an adult-centric culture. Deep-seated attitudes persist, with community members and leaders doubting the capacity of young people to lead effectively. “Capacity-building efforts focus more on awareness than practical leadership skills”²⁶. Age-based hierarchies reinforce the notion that older men are the “natural” leaders, with 39.26% of respondents citing age and gender norms as top barriers. The absence of mentorship and political education compounds these challenges, with 25.19% of respondents highlighting the lack of skills and guidance as a major hindrance to youth empowerment.

25 FGD_P6, Amhara

26 KII_02, Oromia

Security concerns further deter youth from political engagement. Fear of violence, harassment, and political instability is particularly acute in regions such as; Amhara, where 15.56% of survey respondents identified these risks as significant barriers. Families often discourage youth from entering politics to protect them from instability or being targeted by opposing groups. Overall, only 42.22% of respondents feel the current environment is safe to run for office. Digital harassment adds another layer of insecurity, with 33.33% of youth reporting feeling unsafe expressing political views online and 31.85% frequently witnessing online bullying or violence. These threats contribute to widespread fear and discourage meaningful participation.

B) Institutional and Legal Hurdles

Institutional and legal hurdles limit youth access to power. Approximately 32.6% of survey respondents identified political parties as “gatekeepers” that block youth from real leadership roles, often relegating them to “foot soldier” or “bridge” positions that serve older elites. Ethnic-based political arrangements, such as the 40-40-20 rule in Dire Dawa, create glass ceilings for youth outside dominant groups. While national youth policies exist, there are no clear legal quotas or affirmative action measures specifically for youth in electoral law. Administrative barriers, including tightened regulations on civil society organizations, restrict spaces where youth typically gain civic education and leadership experience. Structural preconditions, such as mandatory service in league wings or volunteer structures, are often viewed as non-inclusive and designed to serve party interests rather than youth needs.

C) Political Apathy and Symbolic Inclusion

Political apathy and symbolic inclusion undermine youth participation. Many young people feel disillusioned with the political system, perceiving it as exclusionary or dangerous, which leads to voter fatigue or withdrawal from formal processes. Youth are frequently invited to conferences or events to fulfill quotas or act

as showcases, but they lack access to actual decision-making roles or tangible benefits such as loans and job opportunities. This tokenistic inclusion reinforces the perception that youth participation serves party interests rather than empowering young people themselves. Together, these socio-economic, cultural, security, and institutional barriers illustrate the depth of challenges facing Ethiopian youth in achieving meaningful political representation. "Policies are often strong on paper yet weak in implementation, with women and youth included symbolically rather than substantively"²⁷.

4.3 Enablers of Youth Participation

Despite the challenges facing youth participation in Ethiopia, several enablers have been identified as crucial for fostering greater involvement. are widely supported, with 71.85% of respondents aware of such measures and many advocating for mandatory quotas in leadership positions to break structural barriers. Education also plays a central role, as higher education and targeted civic education programs are seen as the most effective tools for building confidence and leadership skills. Indeed, 50.37% of active youth surveyed hold a university degree, underscoring education as a primary driver of political consciousness and a pathway for youth to transition from mobilizers to formal leaders.

Institutional and civil society support further strengthens youth participation. Structures that provide actual budgets and decision-making authority, rather than symbolic "protocol seats," are considered essential for genuine inclusion. Civil society organizations (CSOs) play a "lion's share" role by offering capacity building, awareness-raising, and safe spaces for youth to express political views. With 50.37% of respondents identifying CSOs as the most influential actors in promoting participation, their role in training

27 KII_22, Sidama.

and advocacy is seen as indispensable. Mentorship programs and role models also serve as strong motivators, with young leaders in regional administrations, particularly in Sidama and Amhara, inspiring others to engage. National mentorship initiatives that pair aspiring youth leaders with established political figures were highlighted as a top recommendation.

Legal frameworks and policies, including the National Youth Policy, are regarded as good beginnings that incorporate youth issues, though their implementation remains weak. The establishment of Youth Councils in places like Dire Dawa and party youth wings, such as the Prosperity Party Youth Wing, are viewed as potential pathways for integrating youth into the political arena. However, participants emphasize that these structures must be strengthened to ensure meaningful participation. Social media and digital platforms also provide accessible spaces for youth to engage in political discourse and advocacy, bypassing traditional gatekeepers. Digital activism is particularly prominent among urban youth, with 22.22% of respondents using social media as a primary tool for political advocacy.

Finally, peer influence and role models play a significant role in motivating youth participation. Seeing young leaders succeed in local governance, such as at the kebele or woreda level, encourages others to join. The appointment of young individuals to positions like city mayor or head of department, notably in Sidama, serves as a powerful motivator for broader youth involvement. Together, these enablers—ranging from affirmative action and education to institutional support, civil society engagement, digital platforms, and mentorship—illustrate the pathways through which youth can move from symbolic roles to substantive participation in Ethiopia's political landscape.

Comparative Analysis of Women and Youth Political Participation across Four Regions

- This comparative analysis evaluates the political landscape for women and youth across Amhara, Oromia, Sidama, and Dire Dawa. It integrates quantitative survey data (n=145) with qualitative insights from 38 Key Informant Interviews and 7 Focus Group Discussions to highlight regional nuances in participation, barriers, and institutional effectiveness.

5.1. Overview of Regional Participation Levels

Across Ethiopia's four regions studied, participation during election cycles is generally high, but the quality of engagement remains uneven. In the Amhara Region, women and youth are strongly represented in mobilization structures such as the Women's League and Youth Federations. However, their presence in executive positions like the Cabinet or Woreda Administrators is minimal, leading to participation described as "high in number but low in influence." In Oromia, where 15.17% of survey respondents are based, youth and women are highly active in peace-keeping structures such as *Sirna Gachena*. Yet, their involvement is often limited to serving

as “bridges” for established leaders rather than gaining executive authority.

Dire Dawa, which contributed the largest share of survey respondents (35.86%), offers a more conducive environment due to urban exposure and active women and youth leagues, with informants estimating their representation at 35–40% in local positions.

Nonetheless, ethnic-based political arrangements continue to impose ceilings on inclusivity. In Sidama, youth engagement is facilitated through regional structures (29.66% of respondents), but dependency on government jobs and limited access to credit restrict their ability to challenge the political status quo or engage in independent advocacy.

5.2. Representation and Leadership Status

The data reveals a sharp contrast between grassroots presence and executive decision-making across regions. In Oromia, participation is shaped by the cultural influence of the *Gadaa* system, where youth groups such as the Qeerroo/Karree have historically been powerful agents of change. However, their formal inclusion in administrative bureaucracy remains moderate, with youth often confined to security-related roles like *Rond* (community policing).

Women’s participation is more visible in civil society than in party leadership. In Sidama, enthusiasm among youth is high following its recognition as a regional state, but women struggle to break into governance due to male-dominated traditional structures such as the *Songo* elder councils. Dire Dawa, as a chartered city, presents a unique case where the 40-40-20 ethnic power-sharing arrangement sidelines women and youth by prioritizing ethnic representation over demographic inclusivity. Despite this, informants report that women and youth account for 35–40% of positions, supported by urban exposure.

In Amhara and Oromia, youth are highly visible during protests and electoral mobilization but excluded from resource allocation once elections conclude. Across all regions, women's participation is frequently symbolic, restricted to roles like "women's affairs representatives" in kebele councils, which lack real decision-making authority. Survey data further highlights a gender gap within youth participation, with men (53.1%) outnumbering women (46.21%). Institutional structures such as youth and women's leagues exist but are often influenced by ruling party agendas, limiting their independence. While quotas exist—33% for youth and 50% for women in some party structures—implementation is inconsistent, and leadership involvement outside Dire Dawa remains below 20%.

5.3. Institutional Gaps: Policy vs. Practice

A recurring theme across regions is the gap between supportive legal frameworks and their implementation. Affirmative action policies, such as adding 3–5 points for women in recruitment or promotion, are active in Oromia and Dire Dawa, but monitoring and enforcement are weak. Women's roles in kebele councils are often symbolic, fulfilling quotas without granting substantive authority. Key informants noted that affirmative action measures, such as recruitment advantages, are not obligatory and suffer from poor oversight.

Political parties were criticized for "seasonal engagement," relying on women and youth during election cycles but sidelining them afterward. Institutions lack accountability and the capacity to enforce quotas, with skill gaps among personnel responsible for implementation. Furthermore, NGO and government support is limited, with most projects directed toward government structures rather than independent civic associations, leaving youth without targeted initiatives to build leadership capacity.

5.4. Regional Barrier Analysis

Barriers to meaningful participation vary across regions but share common themes. Socio-cultural barriers remain dominant, with male domination and elder bias cited by 24.44% of respondents. These attitudes are particularly rigid in rural Amhara and Oromia, where elders are favored for leadership, limiting youth and women’s independence. Economic dependency is pronounced in Sidama and Oromia, where youth and women lack funds for transportation and food during campaigns, making participation contingent on party support, which is rare. Dependency syndrome and lack of access to loans further prevent independent candidacies.

Security concerns are acute in Amhara and Oromia, where fear of harassment, political reprisal, and physical attacks deter participation, especially among women. Only 42.22% of respondents feel the environment is safe to run for office. Infrastructure and access also differ regionally: Dire Dawa respondents benefit from digital voter platforms, while rural Sidama and Oromia respondents struggle with basic civic awareness, with 15.56% of the total sample citing lack of information as a barrier.

Finally, trust and corruption undermine participation, as youth report disillusionment with government and NGOs, with some leaving local administration roles after witnessing corruption among senior officials. These barriers highlight the interplay of cultural norms, economic dependency, security risks, and institutional weaknesses that collectively restrict meaningful youth and women participation across Ethiopia’s regions.

The following table summarizes the primary barriers identified in the KII and FGD reports:

Barrier Category	Specific Regional Nuances
Socio-Cultural	High traditional “household head” norms in Amhara and Sidama. Traditional views and “Elder” bias limit women’s involvement.

Barrier Category	Specific Regional Nuances
Security & Fear	High concerns over political reprisal, physical harassment, and instability in Amhara and Oromia. Youth often avoid politics due to fear of violence.
Economic	Lack of collateral for loans and high costs of campaigning. Poverty and financial scarcity are cited as major limiters.
Institutional	Lack of monitoring in policy implementation and “nepotism” in government offices.

Table 7: Primary Barriers Identified in the KII and FGD

5.5 Youth and Women Specific Key Comparative Findings

Across all four regions, the survey shows that while 60-70% of the campaign workforce is constituted by women and youth, their representation in “high-level decision-making” remains “very low”. Across-regional trend identified in the FGDs also reveals that youth are viewed as “political instruments.”

Youth in Sidama and Dire Dawa specifically pointed out that they lack access to “loans and credit”, which older political actors use to fund their campaigns, effectively pricing them out of independent politics. In Amhara and Oromia, youth are the “frontline” during protests and elections. However, once the election ends, they are excluded from the “Resource Allocation” phase. In Dire Dawa, youth participation is more “transactional,” where engagement is often tied to temporary employment or short-term benefits rather than long-term policy influence. Whereas, for Women in Amhara and Oromia the highest levels of concern is the issue of safety including “physical harassment” and “security risks” associated with political affiliation.

5.6 Regional Participation Enablers and Opportunities

In Amhara and Oromia, civil society organizations (CSOs) and the media serve as the primary enablers of youth participation. Although formal party structures often remain closed to them, youth in these regions increasingly rely on digital platforms to organize and mobilize. In Sidama, the region's new administrative status has created a structural vacuum that allows for the establishment of new bureaus, such as the Women and Youth Bureau, which are being staffed by younger professionals.

Meanwhile, Dire Dawa benefits from an “urban advantage,” where better access to information, stronger internet connectivity, and the presence of international organizations provide women and youth with opportunities for capacity-building and political training. Respondents in Dire Dawa and Sidama specifically highlighted the role of CSOs in providing civic education and safe spaces for dialogue. In Amhara, participants emphasized the importance of mentorship and repeat training to help youth transition from being political “bridges” to becoming leaders.

Generally, across all regions, active recruitment and support for women was identified by 66.67% of respondents as the most effective strategy to increase participation, with NGOs consistently recognized as key enablers through training and advocacy. Training needs vary across regions. In Dire Dawa, there is strong demand for digital voter information platforms to enhance transparency and engagement. In Sidama and Amhara, the focus is more on economic empowerment, which is seen as a prerequisite for political independence and effective participation. In Oromia, women's federations are active but lack sufficient budgets, reducing their role to volunteer service rather than professional political engagement. These gaps highlight the importance of institutional support and resource allocation to ensure that women and youth structures can function beyond symbolic roles.

Summary Comparison Table

Feature	Amhara	Oromia	Sidama	Dire Dawa
Primary Strength	Strong electoral mobilization	High youth engagement Active peace & security roles (Sirna Gachena)	Strong local structures/ Kebele engagement	High urban awareness & forums /league participation
Leading Barrier	Very High: Concerns over conflict and instability. Security risks & "Elder" bias	Moderate: Strong youth activism but gendered roles. Dependency syndrome/ Security; Fear of political reprisal/Instability	Moderate: Focused on regional consolidation. Dependency on gov. for loans/jobs	More urbanized/cosmopolitan views. Tokenistic inclusion/ Symbolic roles
Top Recommendation	High: Traditional "household head" norms. Dependency on family resources. Mentorship & capacity building	High: Fear of political reprisal or "instability." Lack of collateral for youth loans. Protection & economic support/ empowerment	Very High: Traditional "Elder" governance. High poverty rates in rural districts. Meaningful quotas & independent financial access/ Quotas	Low: Relatively stable compared to others.: High cost of campaigning in urban setting. Transition from symbolic to decision-making roles

Table 8: Comparison of the 4 Regions

Conclusion and Recommendations

6.1. Conclusion

- The findings reveal a pervasive “Participation-Power” paradox across all four regions—Amhara, Oromia, Sidama, and Dire Dawa—where women and youth, despite constituting 60–70% of the voting population and campaign workforce, remain disproportionately absent from executive decision-making roles. Over 45% of respondents rated youth participation in leadership contexts as “Low” or “Very Low,” underscoring the gap between numerical presence and substantive influence.

This paradox is compounded by the *de jure* vs. *de facto* divide, where Ethiopia’s legal framework, including Article 35 (Rights of Women) and Article 38 (Right to Vote and be Elected) of the 1995 Constitution, alongside reforms such as Electoral Proclamation No. 1162/2019 and its 2024 Amendment (Proclamation No. 1394/2024), provides strong mandates for equality, affirmative action, and gender-sensitive recruitment. Yet, informal cultural barriers—particularly the entrenched “Adult-Centric” political culture—often override these protections, creating a persistent policy-practice gap.

The analysis also highlights structural and cultural glass ceilings that continue to restrict meaningful participation. Traditional patriarchal systems, such as the *Songo* councils in Sidama or household norms in rural Amhara, act as invisible barriers, reinforced by deeply ingrained beliefs that “men are destined to lead,” which erode community confidence in women’s leadership capacities. Women and youth inclusion is frequently symbolic, limited to fulfilling quotas or occupying roles such as “Women’s Affairs” representatives in kebele councils, positions that lack budgetary or executive authority. Economic dependency, cited by 25.19% of respondents, further undermines independence, leaving women and youth vulnerable to manipulation due to limited financial resources for sustained campaigning. Security concerns are especially acute in Amhara and Oromia, where fear of violence and physical insecurity deters female candidates and youth activists. Institutional fragility compounds these challenges, as most women and youth structures remain financially dependent on ruling parties or government bureaus, preventing them from setting independent agendas.

Regional nuances further illustrate the complexity of participation. In Amhara and Oromia, youth face a “Frontline Paradox”: they are highly active during protests and elections as mobilization bridges but are excluded from the subsequent resource allocation phase. Women’s and youth federations mobilize large numbers but fail to translate this into cabinet representation, while youth are often relegated to security roles such as *Sirna Gachena* or *Rond*. Sidama, as a newly recognized regional state, demonstrates the highest potential for change, with structural opportunities emerging, yet patriarchal governance through the *Songo* system continues to marginalize women. Dire Dawa, despite its urban advantage and relatively conducive environment, remains constrained by the 40-40-20 ethnic power-sharing arrangement, which prioritizes ethnic identity over demographic inclusion, creating a “double marginalization” for women and youth. Regional stability and fear

remain critical deterrents in Amhara and Oromia, where the cost of entry into politics includes significant personal safety risks.

Finally, the regional specificity of barriers underscores the uneven landscape of participation. Economic constraints are universal, but deterrents vary: in Amhara, security concerns and conflict-related violence dominate; in Oromia, traditional leadership structures act as gatekeepers against modern political inclusion; in Sidama, opportunities linked to regional statehood are undermined by weak mentorship and institutionalization; and in Dire Dawa, ethnic quotas overshadow gender and age inclusivity. Across all regions, information and capacity gaps persist, with many participants lacking political literacy and technical training in public administration, legislative drafting, and negotiation. This deficiency limits the effectiveness of those already in leadership positions, reinforcing the divide between symbolic presence and substantive power. Collectively, these findings highlight the entrenched structural, cultural, economic, and institutional barriers that perpetuate the participation-power paradox, despite Ethiopia's strong legal framework for inclusion.

6.2 Recommendations

For Government & Institutional Actors

Reform Campaign Financing: Advocate for NEBE to establish "Diversity Grants" to cover logistical costs for candidates from disadvantaged backgrounds, addressing the critical barrier of economic dependence. In Amhara and Oromia, regional security bureaus should collaborate with NEBE to create "Violence Monitoring Desks" and "Safe Zone" protocols for female candidates to hold rallies without fear of harassment.

Institutionalize Safety Protocols: In conflict-prone regions like Amhara and Oromia, establish "Violence Monitoring Desks" to

report intimidation without fear of reprisal and create “Safe Zone” protocols for female candidates to hold public rallies.

Empower and Strengthen Woreda-Level Offices: Empower Woreda-level Women and Social Affairs offices with autonomous budgets and a mandate to review local legislation through a “Youth and Gender Lens”. Move beyond symbolic “Leagues” by providing Woreda-level Women and Social Affairs offices with autonomous budgets and a mandate to review local legislation.

Formalize Bureaucratic Quotas: In newly formed regions like Sidama, mandate that at least 30% of “Head of Office” positions be filled by youth or women, moving beyond purely advisory roles.

Revise Power-Sharing Formulas: In Dire Dawa, advocate for a “Demographic Quota” (Gender/Age) to sit alongside the existing ethnic power-sharing arrangement to prevent “double marginalization” of minority women and youth to ensure inclusive representation.

Strengthen Monitoring of Affirmative Action: Bridge the “policy-practice gap” by establishing independent monitoring bodies to ensure that the 33% youth and 50% women targets are implemented in “executive” roles, not just symbolic ones.

6.2.2 For Media and Policy Makers

Media and policymakers should move beyond emphasizing seat counts and instead highlight the importance of securing positions for women and youth in high-power committees. Priority should be given to influential bodies such as Budget and Security, where decisions on resource allocation and governance are made, ensuring that representation translates into substantive influence rather than symbolic presence.

6.2.3. For Civil Society Actors

Establish Regional “Leadership Incubators”: Create structured mentorship and shadowing programs in Sidama and Dire Dawa, pairing emerging leaders with existing regional cabinet members to build technical capacity in policy drafting and public speaking.

Digital Literacy and Advocacy: In Oromia and Amhara, leverage high smartphone penetration to move youth from reactionary social media posts to organized political advocacy through “Digital Rights” training.

Target “Substantive” Representation: Shift advocacy focus from general seat numbers to securing positions where real power resides for women and youth on high-power Budget and Security Committees. These are the centers of power where women and youth are currently least represented.

Intersectionality in Advocacy: Mandate the inclusion of women and youth with disabilities in all political empowerment training and FGDs to address their specific barriers.

Institutionalize Mentorship Hubs (All Regions): Create a “Political Apprenticeship” program that pairs young female aspirants with outgoing or retired female politicians. This addresses the “lack of experience” barrier cited in several KIIs.

Mainstream “Gender + Disability” Inclusion (All Regions): Ensure that all political empowerment programs explicitly include women and youth with disabilities, addressing specific barriers like accessible polling stations and inclusive communication materials.

6.2.4. For Community & Traditional Leaders

The “Engaged Elders” Initiative: In Sidama and Oromia, conduct dialogue circles with traditional leaders (Songo/Gadaa) to frame women and youth participation as a “community asset” that strengthens social fabric rather than a challenge to tradition.

Religious Leader Engagement: Partner with religious institutions to challenge the “Men are Destined to Lead” narrative and build community confidence in women’s leadership capacities.

Sensitization on “Double Burden”: Work with religious and community leaders to address the “domestic duty” barrier (cited by 9.63% of women) by promoting shared household responsibilities.

6.2.5. For Economic Empowerment (Cross-Cutting)

Transition from Dependency to Autonomy: Support the creation of independent economic cooperatives for youth and women to reduce the “dependency syndrome” and provide the financial stability needed for long-term political engagement. Establish community-based “Candidate Support Funds” to reduce the dependency on party-controlled resources.

Political Entrepreneurship Funds: Create integrated loan and grant schemes for youth and women who are active in political structures. This reduces the “dependency syndrome” and provides the financial autonomy needed for independent political advocacy.

Domestic Responsibility Support: In rural constituencies, explore the provision of community-based childcare services during local council meetings to ensure that the “double responsibility” of household labor does not prevent women’s attendance.

Public-Private Mentorship: Link youth in the “Junior Cabinet” roles with private sector mentorship to build economic independence alongside political experience.

Mentorship Twinning: Pair experienced female parliamentarians with emerging women leaders for a 12-month cycle to build the “leadership competencies” cited as critical for moving into decision-making roles.

Youth Professionalization: Leverage regional bureaucracies to create “Junior Cabinet” positions or internships, allowing youth to gain administrative experience beyond mere “mobilization”.

Internal Democracy Reform: Parties must be pressured to move away from “appointment-based” leadership in their youth wings toward internal democratic elections. This prevents the “instrumentalization” of youth where they are only called upon for conferences but have no vote in party platforms.

Financial Inclusion via “Political Revolving Funds”: To combat the “dependency syndrome” mentioned in KII data, the government and donors should create a dedicated fund that provides low-interest loans or grants specifically for women and youth who are running for local office to cover campaign and administrative costs. Create a micro-grant system specifically for female and youth candidates to cover the basic costs of campaigning (leaflets, transportation, and airtime), reducing their dependency on wealthy party donors.

Establish “Political Safety Hubs”: Given the high security concerns in these regions, CARD and local partners should create safe, neutral dialogue spaces where women and youth can discuss political issues without fear of regional security forces.

Establish “Conflict-Sensitive” Participation Protocols: Given the security climate, CSOs should work with local administrations to create safe, neutral town-hall spaces where women and youth can engage without fear of political profiling or violence.

Data-Driven Accountability: Use the indicators suggested in the KIIs (e.g., “Ratio of Women in Cabinet vs. Women in Leagues”) to publish an annual “Regional Inclusivity Index” to encourage healthy competition between regions in empowering their citizens.

Proposed Strategic Intervention Action Plan: Enhancing Women and Youth Political Participation

Goal

- To close the gap between policy and practice, moving women and young people from symbolic roles into real positions of power where they can actually make decisions.

7.1. Strategic Pillar 1: Institutional & Legal Reform

Objective: Strengthen the enforcement of existing legal frameworks and reform restrictive institutional quotas.

- Campaign Finance Reform:** Advocate for the National Election Board of Ethiopia (NEBE) to implement the “Diversity Grants.” These would pay for campaign costs for candidates from disadvantaged backgrounds, cutting the problem of economic dependence.
- Safety & Security Protocols:** Set up “Violence Monitoring Desks” in conflict zones like Amhara and Oromia. People could safely report threats without worrying about backlash. Also, create “Safe Zone” rules for rallies.
- Demographic Quota Advocacy (Dire Dawa):** Recommend adding a “Demographic Quota” for gender and age to the current “40-40-20” ethnic power-sharing system. This way,

women and young people from all backgrounds actually get seats at the table for representation.

- D. Woreda-Level Empowerment:** Empower Woreda-level Women and Social Affairs offices with autonomous budgets and a mandate to review local legislation through a “Youth and Gender Lens.”

7.2 Strategic Pillar 2: Capacity Building & Mentorship

Objective: Equip emerging leaders with the technical skills and networks required for high-level governance.

- A. Regional “Leadership Incubators”:** Start mentorship hubs in Sidama and Dire Dawa. These will connect up-and-coming leaders with experienced women in regional cabinets, helping close the experience gap.
- B. Targeting “Substantive” Committees:** Shift training focus from general seat representation to securing positions on high-power Budget and Security Committees where real resource allocation occurs.
- C. Digital Rights & Advocacy Training:** In Oromia and Amhara, offer hands-on training in “Constructive Online Advocacy.” This helps young people move from just posting on social media to building real, rights-focused digital platforms and digital movements
- D. Disability Inclusion Mandate:** Make sure all political training and voting materials (like braille) directly address barriers faced by women and youth with disabilities.

7.3 Strategic Pillar 3: Community & Cultural Engagement

Objective: Shift deeply ingrained patriarchal norms and “adult-centric” political cultures.

- A. “Engaged Elders” Initiative:** Run “Dialogue Circles” with traditional leaders—like the Songo in Sidama and Gadaa in Oromia—to show that including women and youth isn’t a threat. It’s an asset for the whole community.
- B. Public Awareness Campaigns:** Tackle the lack of trust in women’s leadership. Hold local forums that spotlight successful women and young leaders in government.

7.4 Strategic Pillar 4: Economic Empowerment (Cross-Cutting)

Objective: Reduce the “dependency syndrome” that makes women and youth vulnerable to political manipulation.

- A. Independent Campaign Funds:** Support and facilitate the creation of community-based “Candidate Support Funds” or micro-loans, so candidates have a financial safety net and can stay engaged in politics for the long haul.
- B. Public-Private Mentorship:** Pair youth serving in “Junior Cabinet” or advisory roles with mentors from the private sector. This builds both economic independence and political experience.

7.5 Implementation Framework

Region	Primary Intervention Focus
Amhara & Oromia	Security protocols, violence monitoring, and digital advocacy training.
Sidama	Dialogue with Songo elders and mandated bureaucratic quotas (30% youth/women in Head of Office roles).
Dire Dawa	Reform of ethnic power-sharing quotas to include demographic (gender/age) representation.

Table 9: Regional Focus Framework

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ANNEX

ANNEX 1: List of KII Participants

Region	Sex	Age	Respondent ID	Organization / Affiliation	Role / Position	Stakeholder Category
Dire Dawa	Male	50	DD04	Sport Commission	Case Team Lead (Women & Youth)	State Actor
Dire Dawa	Female	24	Dire_03	Prosperity Party – Youth Wing	Vice President	Ruling Party
Dire Dawa	Female	35	DD05	Dire Dawa Women with Disability Association	Secretary	Non-State Actor
Dire Dawa	Male	45	KIldire4	Education Bureau	Curriculum Expert	State Actor
Dire Dawa	Male	36	KIldire5	–	President	State Actor
Dire Dawa	Male	45	KII_Dire_01	Dire Dawa Development Association	General Manager	Non-State Actor
Dire Dawa	Male	35	–	Prosperity Party	Youth Lead	Ruling Party
Dire Dawa	Male	52	KII_Dire_02	–	Executive Director	Non-State Actor

Region	Sex	Age	Respondent ID	Organization / Affiliation	Role / Position	Stakeholder Category
Dire Dawa	Male	35	DD02	EPP (Ehapa) / ex-ABEN (ANP)	Former ABEN Lead	Political Party
Dire Dawa	Male	34	DD03	Kebele 04 Youth Wing	Executive Member	Ruling Party
Dire Dawa	Female	64	KII 1	NEBE	Former Board Member	State Actor
Sidama	Male	32	SD_SID11	Youth Federation	Federation Leader	Ruling Party
Sidama	Female	35	KII22	Women Federation	President	Ruling Party
Sidama	Male	32	KII3	–	Youth Awareness Officer	State Actor
Sidama	Male	32	KII_SID8	–	Expert	Non-State Actor
Sidama	Female	20	KII444	–	Officer	Non-State Actor
Sidama	Female	26	KII_SID5	–	Officer	Non-State Actor
Sidama	Female	31	KII555	Community Member	–	State Actor
Sidama	Female	27	KII8	–	Gender Expert	State Actor
Sidama	Male	30	KII09	–	Expert	Non-State Actor
Sidama	Female	23	KII10	–	Member	Non-State Actor
Sidama	Male	40	KII04	–	Coordinator	Non-State Actor
Sidama	Male	32	KII05	–	Coordinator	Non-State Actor
Oromia	Male	38	KII03	–	Coordinator	Non-State Actor

Region	Sex	Age	Respondent ID	Organization / Affiliation	Role / Position	Stakeholder Category
Oromia	Male	34	KII02	ACH	Coordinator	Non-State Actor
Oromia	Male	44	5264892763709178	Social & Labor Affairs Office	Office Head	State Actor
Oromia	Male	46	571922E+15	—	Department Head	State Actor
Oromia	Male	36	6491461265170823	Culture & Heritage Office	Heritage Management Head	State Actor
Oromia	Male	36	KII01	—	Coordinator	State Actor
Oromia	Male	32	KII2	Women, Children & Social Affairs	Expert / GBV Focal	State Actor
Oromia	Female	35	823074129108	—	Social Worker	Non-State Actor
Oromia	Male	35	KII3	NEBE	Staff Member	State Actor
Amhara	Male	35	KII4	Amhara National Movement (ANM)	Executive Committee Member (Ex)	Political Party
Amhara	Male	35	KII5	Prosperity Party	Staff Member	Political Party
Amhara	Female	35	KII6	Women Association	Head Office Manager	Non-State Actor
Amhara	Male	30	KII7	Youth Association	Human Development & M&E Team Lead	State Actor
Amhara	Male	35	KII8	ANM	Executive Committee Member (Ex)	Political Party

ANNEX 2: List of FGD Participants

No	Code	Gender	Age	Represented Organization	Roles / Remark	Region
1	P1	Female	30	Women Association	Member	Amhara
2	P2	Male	32	Women and Social Affairs	Official	Amhara
3	P3	Female	28	Dessie Biruk Siket Association	Arab Countries Association	Amhara
4	P4	Female	27	Amhara Women Association	Representative	Amhara
5	P5	Female	31	Dessie Bikat House Maids Assoc.	Member	Amhara
6	P6	Male	29	Dessie City Youth Association	Member	Amhara
7	P7	Female	33	Dessie City Woreda Court	Legal representative	Amhara
8	P8	Female	33	Dessie Women Association	Member	Amhara
9	OJ-01	FeMale	48	Women federation(kebele)	Expert	Oromia
10	OJ-02	FeMale	49	Women federation(jimma town)	Expert	Oromia

No	Code	Gender	Age	Represented Organization	Roles / Remark	Region
11	OJ0-03	FeMale	30	Jimma university	Coordinator	Oromia
12	OJ0-04	FeMale	21	Kebele	Expert	Oromia
13	OJ0-05	FeMale	26	Kebele	Expert	Oromia
14	OJ0-06	FeMale	40	kebele	Expert	Oromia
15	OJ0-07	FeMale	39	Kebele	Expert	Oromia
16	OJ0-08	FeMale	43	Women and children affairs	Expert	Oromia
17	OJ0-09	FeMale	55	Women and children affairs	Expert	Oromia
18	OJ0-10	Male	27	Youth Affairs	Expert	Oromia
19	OJ0-11	Male	26	Enara	Expert	Oromia
20	OJ0-12	Male	36	Youth league	Expert	Oromia
21	OJ0-13	Male	26	Youth federation	Expert	Oromia
22	OJ0-14	Male	27	Youth federation	Expert	Oromia
23	OJ0-15	FeMale	31	Youth and sport office	Expert	Oromia
24	OJ0-16	FeMale	36	Women and children affairs office	Process owner	Oromia
25	OJ0-17	FeMale	38	Labor and social Social affairs	Expert	Oromia

No	Code	Gender	Age	Represented Organization	Roles / Remark	Region
26	Fgd sid 01	Male	28	Government Official	Official	Sidama
27	Fgd sid 02	Female	23	Youth League	Youth league member	Sidama
28	sid FGd 03	Female	23	Community Member	Member	Sidama
29	Sid FGd 05	Male	31	CSO	Representative	Sidama
30	Sid FGd 06	Male	29	Youth Office	Officer	Sidama
31	Sid FGd 07	Female	31	Disabled	Disabled representative	Sidama
32	Sid FGd08	Male	34	Political Party	Party member	Sidama
33	Sid 9	Female	28	Youth and Women Office	Officer	Sidama
34	FGD Sid 2/1	Male	34	Youth Office	Officer	Sidama
35	Id 02/02	Male	23	Association Youth	Association member	Sidama
36	FGD Sid 02/4	Male	27	Community Member	Member	Sidama
37	FGD Sid 02/05	Female	26	Political Party	PP Party member	Sidama
38	FGD sid 06	Female	32	Women and Youth Office	Officer	Sidama
39	FGD Sid 02/07	Female	30	Youth Federation	Federation member	Sidama
40	FGD Sid 02/08	Male	34	Community Member	Member	Sidama
41	FGD Sid 02/8	Female	21	Community Member	Participant	Sidama

No	Code	Gender	Age	Represented Organization	Roles / Remark	Region
42	dire1	Female	24	Community	Community member	Dire Dawa
43	dire2	Female	35	Community	Community member	Dire Dawa
44	dire3	Male	35	PDW Community	Community member	Dire Dawa
45	dire6	Male	43	The Community	Community member	Dire Dawa
46	DD-FGD 2	Male	35	Prosperity Party	Political party representative	Dire Dawa
47	DD-FGD 2	Male	34	Dire Dawa University	Political Science Dept	Dire Dawa
48	DD-FGD 2	Female	33	DD Women Disability Association	President	Dire Dawa
49	DD-FGD 2	Female	33	Prosperity Women Wing	Member	Dire Dawa
50	DD-FGD 2	Female	24	Youth League	Member	Dire Dawa
51	DD-FGD 2	Female	25	Community Member	Participant	Dire Dawa
52	DD-FGD 2	Male	30	Prosperity Youth Lead	Youth leader	Dire Dawa
53	DD-FGD 2	Male	35	Community	Participant	Dire Dawa

ANNEX 3: Survey Participant Profile

Overall Survey Coverage

Indicator	Value
Total Respondents	145
Youth (18–35 years)	122 (84.14%)
Adults (36+ years)	22 (15.17%)

Regional Distribution of Participants

Region	Number of Participants	Percentage
Dire Dawa	52	35.86%
Sidama	43	29.66%
Amhara	28	19.31%
Oromia	22	15.17%
Total	145	100%

Gender Distribution

Gender	Participants	Percentage
Male	77	53.10%
Female	67	46.21%
Not Reported	1	0.69%
Total	145	100%

Age Distribution

Age Category	Participants	Percentage
18–24 (Youth)	35	24.14%
25–29 (Youth)	48	33.10%
30–35 (Youth)	39	26.90%
36 and Above	22	15.17%
Total	145	100%

Stakeholder Categories

Stakeholder Group	Participants	Percentage
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Overall Survey Coverage			
Community Members (Women & Youth)	70	48.28%	
Other Stakeholders	27	18.62%	
Policy Makers / Government Officials	20	13.79%	
Civil Society Organization (CSO)	18	12.41%	
Political Party Leaders / Members	9	6.21%	
Total	145	100%	
Regional Gender Composition			
Region	Women	Men	Total
Dire Dawa	25	26	52
Sidama	23	20	43
Amhara	12	16	28
Oromia	7	15	22
Total	67	77	145
Breakdown of "Other" Stakeholders			
Category	Description	Count	
Education / Academic	Students, lecturers, teachers, graduates, academic institution reps	11	
Private Sector	Private organizations and business owners	7	
Community / Traditional Leaders	Idir and traditional institutions	2	
Government / Experts	Government employees, organization reps, experts	3	
Additional	Housewives, art organization leader	4	
Total		27	

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