



2023

THE BEGINNING OF THE LONG JOURNEY

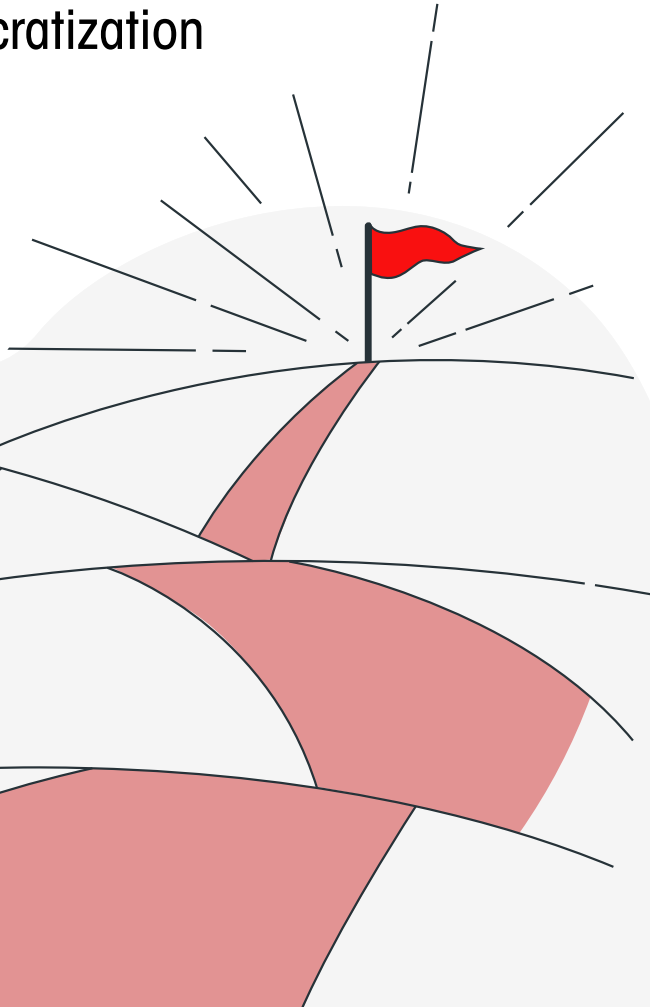
In Pursuit of Promoting
Ethiopia's Democratization



CARD

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CENTER FOR THE ADVANCEMENT
OF RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY

MAKE DEMOCRACY THE ONLY RULE OF THE GAME!





MAKE DEMOCRACY THE ONLY RULE OF THE GAME!

About CARD

The Center for the Advancement of Rights and Democracy (CARD) is a board-led, for-not-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.

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WHO WE ARE

The Center for the Advancement of Rights and Democracy (CARD) is a board-led, non-profit organization registered in Ethiopia under the Civil Societies Law 1113/2019 with registry number 4307 of the Authority for Civil Society Organizations.

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MAKING SENSE OF OUR TAGLINE

The people of Ethiopia have several socio-political questions that require urgent and strategic responses. Consequently, there are also many formal and informal organizations created to find answers to these questions through the assumption of political power. However, violence has often been considered a means to either assume or influence power. This culture of political violence has long claimed lives, destroyed infrastructure, deprived people of access to basic necessities and kept Ethiopians in a vicious cycle of poverty.

At CARD, we believe that democratization paves the way to peaceful and progressive means of responding to the questions Ethiopians have. We also believe that democracy needs to be the only rule of the game for all actors to start the journey towards harmonious cohesion.



**MAKING DEMOCRACY
THE ONLY RULE OF
THE GAME!**



OUR PROGRAMS

It is in CARD's belief that working to enhance safety and security as well as the professional and ethical integrity of the media and civil society lays the foundation for democratization.

Accordingly, it has identified five programs that guide the overall mission it has taken as a civil society actor.





1. Civic Engagement

This program benefits human rights defenders and youth leaders by capacitating them technically and financially so that they will be able to institutionalize their individual initiatives and formalize their informal movements.

- ➔ Empowering formal, informal, and customary groups to institutionalize and formalize their movements.
- ➔ Building human and resource capacities of emerging civil society organizations to improve their impacts.
- ➔ Creating a series of dialogue platforms for inter-group and intra-group bodies over controversial socio-political issues to develop consensus.
- ➔ Investigating causes of conflicts and advocating for participatory resolution mechanisms.





2. Youth and Women Empowerment

This program is designed to help youth and women build a constituency for human rights and democratic mass movement through research as well as awareness-raising and capacity-building training series.

- ➔ Creating awareness about human rights values and democratic principles through a series of training targeted at high school and university students.
- ➔ Raising the capacity of youth and women to make knowledge-driven societal changes through the facilitation of research opportunities.
- ➔ Promoting inclusion and diversity through human rights seminars and festivals, the creation of cross-sectional dialogue platforms, and other public events.
- ➔ Promotion of gender rights and protection of marginalized and vulnerable groups.





3. Media Literacy

Media literacy targets media practitioners to create a vibrant and safe media space by raising professionalism, and ethical standards, capacity building to counter disinformation, and cooperating to defend the safety and protection of media professionals.

- ➔ Advocating for the media space and freedom of expression to keep the media space improving.
- ➔ Protecting and defending the safety and security of journalists for the healthy growth of professional journalism.
- ➔ Monitoring narratives, and combatting disinformation, hate speech, and incitement raise the culture of ethical discourse in both formal and informal platforms.
- ➔ Advocating for the independence of public (state-run) media outlets to provide accurate and diverse information to the public.





4. Digital Rights

It is a program benefitting online citizens through advocacy, training, and awareness raising on internet accessibility and the protection of people who are connected to the internet.

- ➔ Advocating for the free and all-inclusive accessibility of the internet to reduce the impact of the digital divide among society members.
- ➔ Defending the rights of online expression and access to information.
- ➔ Promote the protection of personal data, individuals' privacy, security, and safety of online citizens.
- ➔ Supporting activities of online platforms improve their moderation efforts by raising the understanding of local contexts to protect the physical and psychological safety of their users.





5. Democratization Index

This is a pilot program aiming to measure progressive democratic governance in regional state governments of Ethiopia's federation through an annual evaluation of legal and practical developments.

- ➔ Periodic rating and ranking of states and federal administrative units to evaluate their yearly progress of democratization as well as develop a culture of healthy competition among one another and their respective past.
- ➔ Creating a research-based resource to identify the strengths and weaknesses of each of the administrations so that stakeholders can be able to prioritise their focus areas in pursuit of democratization.
- ➔ Designing and implementing policy advocacy based on trends in the democracy index reports to further positively shape future democratization activities.





VISION NEXUS METHODOLOGY

As stipulated in our tagline, Making Democracy the Only Rule of the Game, CARD aspires to see Ethiopia where democratic culture flourished on human rights values. To this end, empowering the youth with robust knowledge and understanding of human rights to enable them embrace the values and establish public social relationships based on them is one of our instruments.

At CARD, our basic methodology is ensuring the agency of communities as noted in our mission statement. We build capacities of communities and social movement leaders to enable them be their own agencies

CARD's five program areas are designed accordingly to fit this methodological philosophy. All of the programs strive for a better media and civic space and respect for rule of law. Projects implemented at CARD are always aligned to these program areas and evaluated towards achieving programmatic and organizational objectives and vision.

Advocacy, partnership and collaboration, knowledge creation and awareness raising and building a social constituency for democratization are used in all of our project activities so that they contribute to the overarching vision.





The Stories that Keep Us Moving

CIVIC AGENCY OF COMMUNITIES

Active civic engagement is a unique feature of democracies. Civil society organizations (CSOs) are leading champions of civic engagement; however, most of the CSOs in Ethiopia are concentrated in the geographic centre of the country. Through building the capacities of informal groups and individual initiatives, CARD believes that it is possible to build strong and evenly distributed civic engagement platforms and cultures across Ethiopia.

It is with this motive that CARD has developed a civic engagement curriculum, which includes classroom training on seven topics that range from human rights to project cycle management and effective communication, practical engagement tour, and financial and technical support to help emerging organizations are born and established.

In this process, so far, CARD has been able to bring up four newly established organizations in Amhara, Gambella, Somali, and Oromia regions.





"When I received training from CARD, I was a third-year student in Jigjiga University. I was in graduating class when the grand process started the civic engagement activity started. It took a total of six months. I was studying management. I was also Young African Leaders Initiative alumni and I also actively participated in clubs at my university such as gender and anti-corruption clubs.



Mihret Walelign, founder of Her Ethiopia.

Before the training, I received from CARD, I had no clue about organizational management as well as project cycle management. The training also included human rights, proposal writing and others. It was an intensive and all-encompassing training.

CARD's staff as well as the trainers were friendly and cooperative during the whole process of the training and that was inspirational for me to fully attend the training. CARD's team also supported me when I wrote my first proposal to establish Her Ethiopia.

We received immense support from CARD in the process of forming the organization as well as the implementation of our first project. CARD's staff were also always accessible to us and they answered our questions beyond the scope of the relationship we formed by agreement.

During the one year since we were formed, CARD followed up with our activities, supported us in project implementation, and shared opportunities with us including financial management.





Because of this support, we added more activities to our initial proposal. We have provided all the training we planned to in the region and we established good relations with government organizations, we formed networks with non-governmental organizations, and we have been recognized by the UN and invited in celebration of Women's Day. We have partnered with schools in Jigjiga and this is a big achievement. We also have established relations outside of Jigjiga.

What we learned from CARD is the humility of getting down and being close to our beneficiaries, trainees and other partners. Because of this, we managed to get free services for training and documentary production companies. So, partnership building is something we owe to CARD.

Over the coming five years, we aspire to be a sustainable organization with a regional impact and to be a primary organization that comes to people's minds whenever they think of women's rights in Ethiopia. We also plan to expand to Afar and work beyond FGM and GB. We want to work in the area of reproductive health".

A gender symposium in Jigjiga facilitated by Her Ethiopia, an emerging organization initiated by CARD.





ADVOCACY FOR PEACE

CARD's motto "Make Democracy the Only Rule of the Game" is a manifestation of its determination that all disputes must be resolved in a peaceful and participatory means. Under the civic engagement program, CARD designs dialogue programs that help people practice the resolution of conflicts through dialogue as well as creating platforms to build mutual understanding. Additionally, CARD has been embedding conflict sensitivity in all of its projects as conflicts are widespread and prioritizing peace is necessitated.

Furthermore, CARD persistently advocates for the peaceful resolution of all conflicts across Ethiopia. To this end, it has partnered with many local civil society organizations to call upon actors involved in conflicts to choose peaceful means of resolving differences and immediately stop violent conflicts. In the Tigray war, CARD was one of the few local civil society organizations that stood in advocacy for peace regardless of immense challenges and pushbacks.





RAISING A GENERATION OF DEFENDERS

Investing in the youth is of paramount importance to guarantee a promising future. The CARD team believes that democratization in Ethiopia has had a rocky journey because movements for the promotion of human rights values and democratic principles have not meaningfully empowered the larger youth sections of the community and disregarded vulnerable and marginalized communities. It is, therefore, our conviction to bring more youth and women to the arena of public affairs.

The Youth and Women Empowerment Program aims to ensure youth and women's participation in civic activities through the facilitation of empowerment opportunities. By doing so, CARD believes it will be able to contribute to its bigger aim of raising a generation to build a constituency for human rights promotion and democratization.

One of the flagship projects under this project is Youth and Women Empowerment is the New Generation of Human Rights Defenders (NGHRDs), a training series for high school students to become defenders.



"I received training on human rights from the Center for the Advancement of Rights and Democracy (CARD) when I was a student at Amigonian School, Addis Ababa. I was among the first batch of trainees that received the training in 2021.

The training was empowering and inspiring for us and immediately after completing the training, we launched a club at our school to promote human rights values and defend the rights of women.

First, inspired by the human rights training provided by CARD, we decided to establish a school club known as Youth Human Rights Defenders Club, which has 14 members and creates awareness among students about human rights. Then we selected 45 students from 9th to 12th grade and started training them using the module given to us by CARD.

My special role in the club was to train students. In addition to training the 45 selected students, I also gave frequent lectures and acted as a representative at the main branch of Amigonian School. I was able to invite professional trainers to provide training to students in time management and other subjects.



Soleyana Doju on the Human Rights Festival, the Amigonian Youth Human Rights Defenders Club she co-founded celebrated in March 2022 after having reached more than 50 members.



After taking the training, we noticed an increase in students' self-confidence, improvement in speaking skills and good group reading. Finally, in our school (Amigonian High School), we organized a successful event aimed at certifying the trainees by inviting the executive director of CARD and JSDP (High School Student Welfare Association) as well as our parents.

Our school has given us a certificate to the members of the club for organizing this club and doing a successful job.

Moreover, because we wanted the club to be sustainable, we brought many students on board so that they assume leadership roles to continue the club after we move out for college. I work to be a human rights defender who stands for the rights of everyone."

In 2021, CARD named 364 high school students from Addis Ababa NGHRDs after successive training offered to them in ten rounds. These trainees were selected from high schools in Addis Ababa based on their interest in human rights activism and offered four sections of basic human rights training on the concept of human rights, freedom of expression, gender equality, freedom of assembly, and demonstrations.

CARD scaled up this training and expanded its reach to the regional towns of Hawassa, Adama, Debreberhan, Bishoftu, Dire Dawa, and Harar in addition to Addis Ababa in 2022. A total of 370 students were reached under this training series this year, out of which 59.5% were female students. CARD is working to keep the NGHRDs in its network.





In a message to a booklet CARD published for the 2022 human rights festival, Daniel Bekele (PhD), Commissioner for the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission, highlighted that the realization of the vision of seeing human rights becoming a culture in Ethiopia depended on the youth.

A partial view of the 2022 Human Rights Festival, a festival where the trainees graduate and get introduced to human rights organization in a side exhibition.





EMPOWERING THE YOUTH WITH LOCAL WISDOM

CARD Weredwet Research Fellowship is another project under the Youth and Women Empowerment Program. It is named after Yeqaqe Werdwet, a woman who lived around 160 years ago in the 19th century and fought for equal marital rights among the Guraghe community.

The fellowship provides technical and financial support to Ethiopian women and youth who aspire to pursue a researcher career in human rights topics. Furthermore, while building their careers, the youth get the opportunity to promote their ideas to bring about a just society by researching issues related to human rights issues, customary institutions, and the situations of marginalized and vulnerable sections of the societies in Ethiopia.

CARD has so far taken in seven Werdwet Research Fellows over the last three years. Through the Weredwet Research Fellowship, CARD intends to empower youth, especially youth women, as researchers while at the same time publishing evidence on local issues that concern vulnerable and marginalized sections of societies.

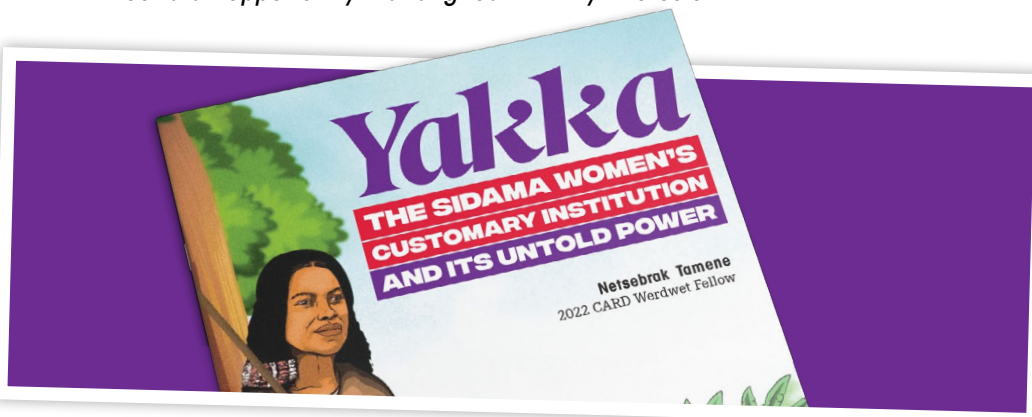


Words from Werdwet Fellows

"I was preparing for a presentation in 2022 on how rural women in Ethiopia demonstrate agency and identity despite their lack of awareness about urban-based women's rights movements. It was then that I came across the Yakka institution, which is an indigenous instrument used by Sidama women to defend their rights and protect themselves from domestic violence. I was surprised to find that many young people in the community were unaware of this institution, and I was inspired to research and disseminate information about it. Through the Werdwet Fellowship, I found an opportunity that aligned with my interests."



Netsebrak Tamene, 2022 Weredwet Fellow, author of "Yakka: the Sidama Women's Association and Its Untold Powers"

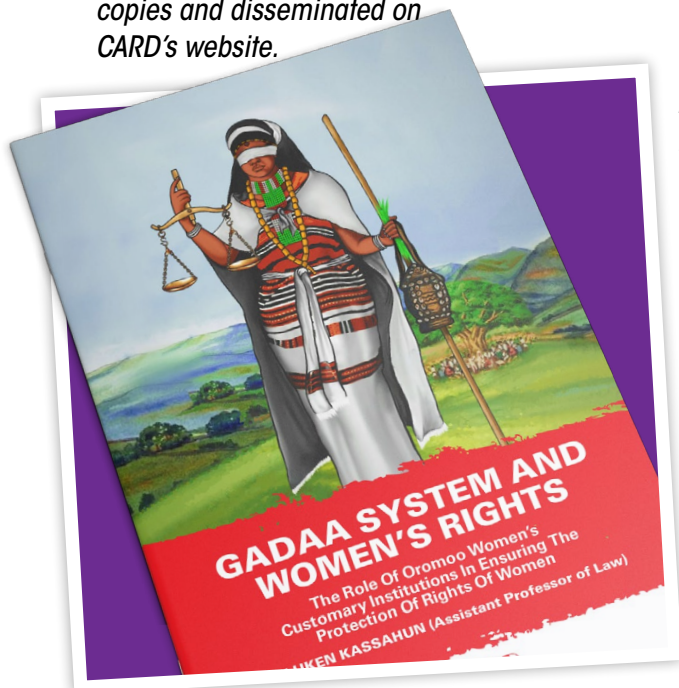




"I was honored to be chosen as one of the first Werdwet Fellows. I researched the role of Oromo women's customary institutions in ensuring women's rights protection. Despite obstacles such as COVID-19 restrictions and security concerns, I was able to complete my research, and my findings were published in hard copies and disseminated on CARD's website."



Muluken Kassahun, 2020 Werdwet Fellow, author of "Gadda System and Women's Rights"



I advise future fellows on proper time management and hope that the Werdwet Fellowship will become well-known in Africa and around the world."



SAFE AND VIBRANT MEDIA SPACE

CARD is a major proponent of freedom of expression as well as the safety and security of journalists in Ethiopia. To this effect, CARD has been involved in the capacity building of journalists, as well as media professional associations to boost their capacity to produce professional contents and to defend their rights.

Knowledge and Skills Raising



From the get-go, CARD has been engaged in multifaceted activities to counter disinformation, hate speech, and incitement widespread in Ethiopia due to the nature of its politics, digitization, and conflicts. CARD has developed tools, manuals, and guidelines prepared in local languages to empower journalists and online content



creators with technical capacities to spot and counter disinformation and hate speech, mitigate incitement, to promote the idea of conflict sensitivity.

In this course, CARD has been able to contribute to knowledge creation, raising, and socialization. The knowledge and evidence-creation activities are backed by continuous monitoring and research. So far, CARD has produced and circulated among stakeholders more than 60 reports on a biweekly basis on the relationship between online content and offline conflicts. To increase evidence-based understanding, CARD has also commissioned the Ethiopian media census in 2022, assessment of conflict-sensitivity in Ethiopian media editorial policies, and drafted a model policy to improve conflict-sensitivity.

CARD has also mastered capacity building series of training for journalists and online content producers. It has been delivering training on legal frameworks on freedom of expression, countering disinformation, and promoting conflict sensitivity and human rights sensitivity.

Among the latest series of training CARD has been able to provide in sixteen towns of Ethiopia in 2022, it reached 364 journalists and online content creators in collaboration with Radio Netherlands Worldwide (RNW) and the US Embassy. Creating a new generation of trainers when we start a new training is also our strategy too.



The Training in the Trainers' Words

"I participated in the training of trainers (ToT) organized by CARD and RNW Media in August 2022. Before this, I had experience as a trainer, having provided training to journalists, content creators, and human rights defenders in Ethiopia. However, most of my knowledge was self-thought. This Training of Trainers (ToT) was a valuable experience for me, as it provided me with trainer skills and guidance.

Although I was already familiar with many fact-checking tools presented in the ToT, I found the training to be a great opportunity to learn more about teaching methods. Despite being online, the ToT was interactive and had a personal and participatory approach. As a result, I changed my training approach from a lecture method to a bottom-up approach that allows participants to take an active role.

I appreciated the opportunity to participate in the ToT and consider myself lucky to be part of the project. Facilitating training sessions around Ethiopia has given me a broader perspective and understanding of the context in different parts of the country. I hope to continue my journey by learning more about the topic and trainer skills."



Rehobot Ayalew,
consultant and fact-checker



"Due to the growth of digital media in Ethiopia, the influence of misinformation has emerged as one of the main issues and has contributed to numerous issues such as hate, violence, and instability in the nation.

The Center for Advancement of Rights and Democracy (CARD), in partnership with RNW/RNTC and the American Embassy in Addis Ababa, organized a four-day training for journalists and online content creators in the middle of May 2022, and I had the opportunity to participate in this project as a trainer after training of trainers.

I had the chance to learn about the various aspects of information disorder and I had the opportunity to learn about numerous counter-disinformation strategies during the course, as well as ways of recognizing and using various verification tools. [At the end], I toured and trained more than 200 journalists in 11 different cities after the TOT, which was also a learning opportunity for myself."



Tesfaye Woldeyohannes,
Consultant and trainer





Safety and Protection of the Media

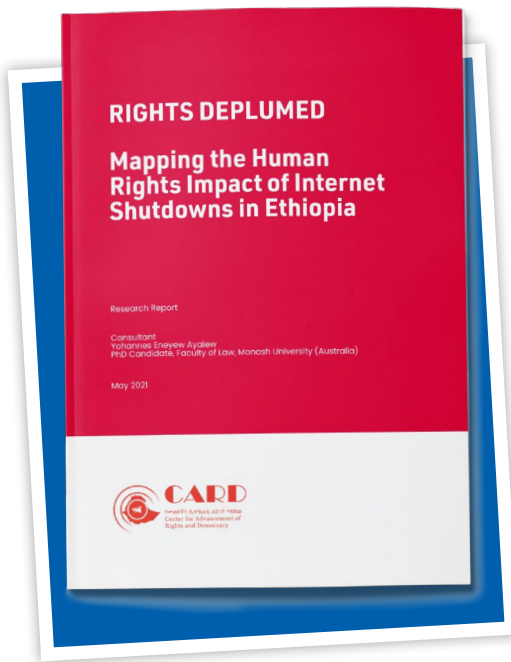


A safe media space results in vibrant media just like a vibrant media results in democratization; this is why CARD takes the safety and protection of the media space and its practitioners very seriously. CARD always stands with journalists who are experiencing harassment and always advocates for more enabling media law and space.

CARD has been working to support journalists' associations to become strong and also to come together in a coalition when it comes to the safety of their communities. Our support for strong associations is a contribution to ensuring a safe space which is claimed by the journalists themselves.



EMBRACING THE DIGITAL AGE



The future is digital. CARD is an enthusiast that Ethiopia needs to embrace the potential the digital age brings to it and needs to develop its capacity to counter the challenges associated. The potential of digital technology to transition to democracy is also immense.

Therefore, CARD is dedicated to promoting human rights protected

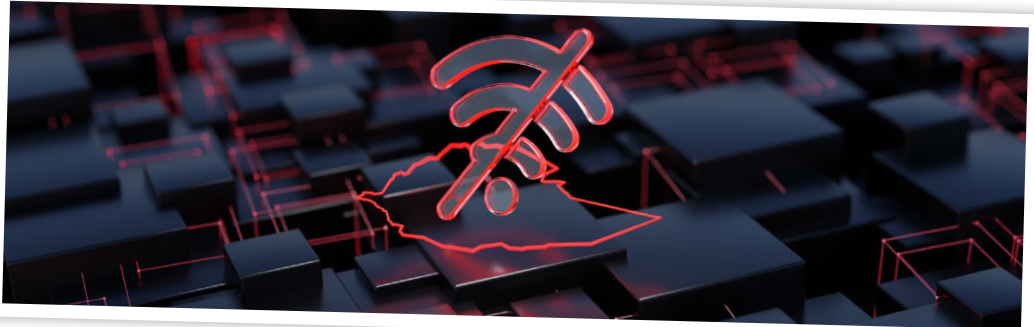
offline to be protected online as well. Additionally, CARD advocates for the protection of the safety and security of online citizens from the invasion of privacy and dangerous speeches.



CARD's work to advance digital rights has two dimensions: advocating for equitable and sustainable accessibility of the Internet on one hand and advocating for a framework of protection of the safety and security of citizens online on the other. In its advocacy for accessibility of the internet, CARD has become a member of the global #KeepItOn coalition and it continuously advocates against internet shutdowns across the world.

CARD extended the advocacy and it has contextualized it to advocate not only against internet shutdowns but also for equitable accessibility of the internet across Ethiopia as its penetration is only reached a quarter of the Ethiopian population.

Additionally, CARD uses a social media campaign hashtag #KeepItSafe to equally advocate for the safety of online citizens to be protected by the state, social networks, and others. In its #KeepItSafe advocacy CARD has been advocating for Ethiopia to adopt a comprehensive data protection law among others.





WATCHING DEMOCRATIZATION PROGRESS

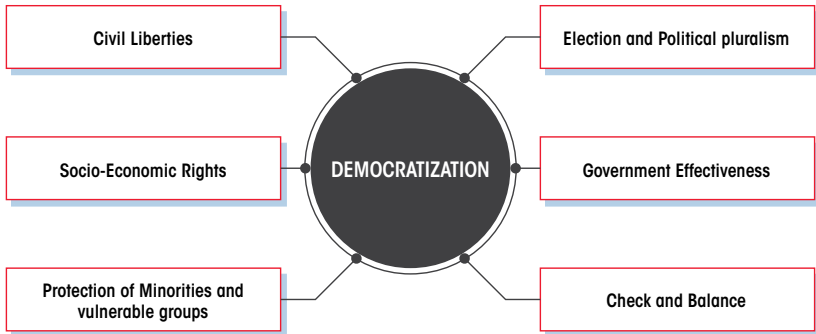
Democracy is not a destination; it is a process where a government that has received periodically limited popular consent rules and minorities are protected. It is a system that is continuously nurtured to evolve with the development of systems and societies.

In Ethiopia, democratic promises have not progressed as much as they are expected to. That is why it is important to see its progress and/or regress in all administrative units.

To make this possible, CARD has designed a democratization index, a measurement in which members of the federation are evaluated according to their performance in democratic governance. This program is under pilot phase but the methodology has already been developed.

CARD's methodology to annually evaluate, rate and rank progresses in democratic governance has six attributes each of which have five indicators. With these 30 indicators, hundreds of experts evaluate the performances of each regional state and give them the chance to see their strengths and weaknesses to work on based on a standard as well as in comparison to other peer states.





More Pictures





CARD

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