

Hanan Aman

Civility Leader

Summer 2024

08/17/24

Women's Right to Education in Ethiopia

Introduction:

Being a woman raised in Ethiopia, I encountered several obstacles during my educational journey, spanning from early childhood schooling to university. Despite having an equal opportunity to study like my brother, I was mentally impacted by the fact that the majority of girls were unable to attend school due to different reasons. The feeling was intensified when some teachers showed preference for boys over girls and granted them preferential treatment, while select teachers engaged in unethical conduct by soliciting favors from female students in return for passing marks. I had a surge of emotions when certain lecturers conveyed to the male students that they had the potential to become future leaders, while neglecting to extend the same message to the female students. These occurrences caused me to doubt my capabilities. During my class participation, I encountered bullying from certain teenage boys who doubted my competence. The conduct was shaped by the perspectives of specific educators and the community, impacting their perception of themselves and females.

Upon achieving exceptional scores on my tests, several individuals levied accusations of cheating against me. The act of bullying had a profound effect on me. This ongoing battle continued throughout my studies while studying in Ethiopia. I saw a consistent pattern where the female population in my class diminished with each academic promotion. Upon completing high school, the majority of students in my class were male, and at university, the number of female

students was much lower. A significant number of young women were unable to pursue advanced education as a result of cultural constraints. Frequently, families were compelled by poverty to make a decision between sending either their sons or daughters to school.

Traditionally, families would give greater importance to the education of males, presuming that girls would ultimately marry and rely on their husbands for support. Furthermore, females' educational possibilities are restricted by reasons such as geographical location, inadequate schooling, limited transportation, and early marriage.

These educational obstacles are not exclusive to me; other females in Africa also experience comparable struggles. Good Governance Africa reported that in 2015, more than 31 million children of primary school age in Africa were not attending school, with girls accounting for 53% of this population (Armstrong, 2022). Girls in Ethiopia have the same challenges. Ensuring access to education for women in Ethiopia is imperative since it is their fundamental right. Regrettably, some women in Ethiopia still do not have access to this fundamental right, which has significant repercussions for society. Women, being the foundation of society, wield a significant impact.

The primary problems they encounter arise from detrimental societal norms, such as domestic and gender-based violence, inadequate government financial assistance, and an absence of support both within the educational system and within their households. These challenges have both immediate consequences on women and deeper implications for society as a whole. To tackle these problems, it is essential to demonstrate empathy and kindness in order to guarantee that every girl has the chance to flourish in their schooling. Possible solutions to these challenges encompass enhancing societal awareness regarding the significance of girls' education, strengthening governmental financial backing for education, and amplifying support for girls

within educational institutions. Additionally, it is imperative to tackle community concerns by fostering consciousness, guaranteeing equal and equitable treatment, and introducing the notion of intersectionality to ensure fair treatment based on diverse needs. Furthermore, it is imperative to observe and acknowledge these difficulties and employ ethical examination with impartiality in order to generate significant transformation.

Context:

Education is an essential right that all individuals must engage in, as it is crucial for empowering society. According to article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, every individual is entitled to the right to education. Education should be provided without charge, particularly in the primary and foundational levels. Mandatory attendance in elementary school is required. Technical and professional education should be universally accessible, and higher education should be equally attainable for all based on individual merit (United Nations, 1948). This statement asserts that education is a fundamental entitlement for all individuals since it fosters individual development, diminishes disparities, and amplifies our capacity for rationality and critical thinking, setting us apart from non-human creatures. Hence, education is unquestionably a fundamental right of every individual.

Women and underprivileged girls worldwide frequently face significant barriers that prevent them from fully exercising their rights, assuming they are granted any rights at all. Women have a higher probability of being denied the enjoyment of these rights compared to males. The paper by GGA provides light on this matter, examining the gender disparity in Africa and illustrating the prevailing male dominance from 2000 to 2021 (Armstrong, 2022). The World Bank blogs indicate that in sub-Saharan Africa, there is a higher number of children who

are not attending school, with a significant proportion of them being girls. Inside the offered article illustrates the recent increase in the proportion of females who are not attending school in both lower and upper secondary education (Kattan & Khan, 2023).

Women's education in Ethiopia faces obstacles at every level, from primary to tertiary education, with women's representation significantly lower than that of men. In 2015, UNESCO reported that the enrollment rate for secondary school among adolescents aged 15-24 was only 31%. While the number of female and male students attending primary school is nearly equal, female participation declines sharply as they advance to secondary and tertiary education. By 2015, Ethiopia had achieved the highest female enrollment rate in primary education among African countries, reaching 60% (Thelwell, 2019). However, by 2021, less than 20% of females in Ethiopia had access to secondary education (Tiruzer Ethiopia in Africa, TEA, 2021). This downward trend continues in higher education, where only 27% of university students are female, and a quarter of them drop out before graduation, highlighting the ongoing lack of opportunities for women (Asfaw, 2012).

Analysis:

Cultural norms

Harmful cultural standards are the main factor preventing females from accessing education in Ethiopia. These traditional norms, particularly concerning the responsibilities of women, sometimes prescribe that women and girls should remain confined to their homes and engage in early marriages, which detrimentally affects their access to education.

Culture is the distinguishing factor that sets each individual apart from others. We should all demonstrate cultural appreciation without exhibiting ethnocentrism or cultural relativism. Many civilizations globally possess conventions and attitudes regarding the responsibilities of women, which may occasionally be detrimental and have an impact on women's rights, particularly in the area of education. The standards differ throughout different civilizations. Women in Ethiopia face significant social disparity as a result of prevailing attitudes on women's rights and their societal worth. Women are affected in several areas of their lives, encompassing economic, social, and educational domains.

In the traditional Ethiopian society, girls are predominantly expected to remain at home and do domestic responsibilities (TEA, 2021). This standard has a substantial influence on the lives of women, specifically by restricting their right to education. According to Tiruzer Ethiopia in Africa (TEA), 2021 the proportion of females in Ethiopia who have access to secondary education is less than 20%. In Ethiopia, Oromia is one of the regions with a population of 27 million individuals, with 88% living in rural areas. The level of educational achievement is rather low, with over half of women (51%) having had no formal education, while just 12% have completed secondary or higher education (Raj et al., 2019).

Early marriage

The absence of school attendance results in women remaining at home, frequently resulting in early marriage. TEA, 2021 reports that 41% of Ethiopians enter into marriage prior to reaching the age of 18. In Ethiopia, 40% of females aged 20-24 are married before they become 18, and 14% are married before they turn 15 (Raj et al., 2019). Early marriage in Ethiopia is predominantly influenced by cultural norms that advocate for women to marry at a young age. This practice often results in women being confined to their homes and experiencing

various health challenges. Evidence indicates that Ethiopia possesses one of the most elevated rates of early marriage globally, with a staggering 15 million underage girls being married off (UNICEF, 2022). Peterson (2018) found that 57% of adolescent females living in rural regions get married before reaching the age of 18. Based on the 2021 TEA study, 40% of adolescent females get married and become mothers before reaching the age of 18. According to UNICEF (2022), almost 90% of these girls lack formal education, have limited access to important services, and often justify behaviors that hinder their own empowerment to their peers. The conviction that women have an obligation to remain at home has had a substantial influence on their inclination to seek education.

I would want to acknowledge my dearest friend, Naima, who has unfortunately experienced the detrimental effects of early marriage. Her story started when a prominent individual from her community sought her father's consent to wed her. Although Naima first hesitated and desired to complete her education before getting married, her father consented due to the man's esteemed reputation in the city and the difficulty of refusing his proposal. Naima, a 12th-grade student, achieved a great score on the national exam and got admitted to a prestigious institution. She was ready to begin her studies at the university, but due to this unforeseen event, she chose not to enroll.

Within our cultural context, it is believed that if a prominent senior individual seeks the hand of someone's daughter in marriage and their proposal is declined, there is a prevailing notion that the daughter may encounter difficulties in finding a suitable spouse in the future. I contend that this is a fallacy that certain individuals use for their own benefit. Although I am not assigning blame to the culture itself, I believe it is our collective duty as a society to discern between advantageous and detrimental customs, and actively embrace the positive ones while

rejecting the harmful ones. Naima was fortunate to have a husband who proved to be generous and supportive, although he did not encourage her to pursue higher education. Instead, Naima chose to focus on raising her two sons, a decision many women in similar situations often face due to cultural expectations. Unfortunately, most women in comparable circumstances are not as lucky to have such support.

Furthermore, Westfall, 2018 offers an additional illustration of early marriage: Asyia Adam entered into marriage with an elder gentleman selected by her parents at the age of 16, during her eighth year of schooling. Asyia's new spouse, who had only achieved a Grade 8 education, did not endorse her decision to pursue more academic qualifications. She pursued her education and teaching degree, and then had to divorce her husband because they didn't agree about her future aspirations. It is imperative to address this issue by implementing targeted interventions that not only protect young girls from early marriage but also provide pathways for them to pursue their educational and career aspirations. This case illustrates the ongoing conflict between cultural practices and individual empowerment, underscoring the need for systemic change.

Lack of financial support from the government

Another factor contributing to the inability of females to access education in Ethiopia is the absence of financial assistance from the government. This issue is evident in the insufficient allocation of funds by the government towards secondary education. According to the data presented in Gretland et al., 2014, there are around 30,000 primary schools nationwide, whereas the number of secondary schools is less than 2000. Oromia has a total of 12,000 elementary schools and more than 700 secondary schools. Amhara has a total of 8000 elementary schools

and more than 200 secondary schools. Furthermore, families' financial constraints hinder their capacity to provide education for their daughters, typically giving priority to sending boys to school instead.

The Ministry of Education (MoE), 2022 emphasizes that government investment in education is essential for establishing an inclusive environment that eliminates all obstacles, particularly those related to gender, and ensures that all children have equal access to high-quality education. Nevertheless, in Ethiopia, a lack of financial resources and the inadequate budget allocations for education pose substantial barriers for girls aspiring to receive an education (Gretland et al., 2014).

Government expenditure plays a crucial role in the education system since it enables individuals to have access to education. Inadequate expenditure might have adverse effects on several aspects that contribute to kids' education. Between 2014 and 2019, the World Bank reported that Ethiopia's average education expenditure accounted for only 4.9% of the government's GDP, which is considered insufficient given the country's population of 120 million (Kattan & Khan, 2023; MoE, 2022). Insufficient financing has a detrimental impact on education in several aspects, such as poor provision of secondary schools, insufficient transportation services, a scarcity of educational resources like textbooks, inadequate financial support for instructors, and a lack of school buildings, among others (Westfall, 2018).

The primary reason for the high dropout rate among females is the long distance they have to go on foot in order to attend secondary school. Some individuals have relocated from their families due to the financial strain of renting a property, as a result of inadequate secondary

school facilities. The financial situation affects female students and also leads the family to prioritize males over girls (Westfall, 2018).

A significant number of girls in Ethiopia face limited access to education as a result of inadequate transportation options. Consequently, several girls have abandoned their education due to their inability to separate from their families in order to attend school. As a result, boys are frequently enrolled in schools that are located far from their homes, which accounts for the limited number of girls attending school (Westfall, 2018).

Moreover, UNICEF emphasizes that a significant number of families in Ethiopia face economic hardship, which poses challenges in meeting the financial requirements related to education, including school fees, uniforms, and supplies. As a consequence of this economic burden, females are frequently excluded from education in favor of boys, as boys are seen to have more prospects for future income (Westfall, 2018). Financial restraints are another factor that prevents girls from receiving an education. Insufficient school amenities, such as restroom facilities, contribute to gender bias and the risk of sexual exploitation. Girls are also negatively impacted by a scarcity of educational resources such as textbooks. Due to limited access to libraries, especially in rural or impoverished areas, girls may not have the opportunity to study outside of class or complete assignments effectively. This lack of access to a quiet, resourceful environment for learning places them at a further disadvantage, impacting their overall academic performance and school attendance (Westfall, 2018; Gretland et al., 2014; UNICEF, 2022).

Given the prevalent poverty and challenges faced by the majority of the population in Ethiopia, accessing education is particularly difficult for many individuals, particularly girls. As a result of poverty, several families are compelled to prioritize fundamental necessities like

sustenance and housing above the payment of school fees or other expenditures. As a result, due to limited finances, families prioritize sending boys to school over girls.

I have a personal story that exemplifies the problem of restricted availability of school transportation for females in Ethiopia. Although my friends Iftu and Kadijah were admitted to Bahir Dar University, they chose not to enroll due to its considerable distance from their place of residence. Their families were hesitant to send them such a considerable distance. University entrance in Ethiopia is contingent upon the performance in the national examination. Typically, girls tend to achieve lower scores than males. Consequently, educational institutions allocate students to specific disciplines and colleges based on these results. The system should undergo reassessment to guarantee that university assignments are not exclusively determined by governmental preferences. Effectively addressing this matter is of utmost importance.

UNICEF reports that transportation obstacles provide a substantial obstacle to girls' ability to access school in Ethiopia (Gretland et al., 2014). A significant number of female students discontinue their studies due to the impracticality of commuting considerable distances from their residences to educational establishments. In addition, families face challenges in affording transportation expenses due to their low financial means. This issue is worsened by cultural norms that give higher importance to the education of boys compared to the education of girls (Gretland et al., 2014).

Lack of female role models

One of the main obstacles preventing girls in Ethiopia from going to school is the absence of support for girls within the education system, as well as a lack of knowledge among

families, communities, and society about the advantages of education for girls and women. The absence of female role models, resulting in the incapacity to report instances of mistreatment or abuse.

Education for girls is frequently undervalued by communities and families, who typically hold the assumption that their main responsibilities should be limited to homemaking, motherhood, or marriage. Multiple variables contribute to this problem. Firstly, there may be a lack of support from families and communities on the entitlement of girls and women to access school. Even in cases when assistance is provided, there is frequently a deficiency in comprehension or recognition of the particular assistance, support, or motivation that girls and women require, resulting in elevated rates of discontinuation. The absence of assistance leads to a deficiency in girls' drive and self-assurance to assert their own interests (Westfall, 2018).

Lack of representation and support might demotivate girls to seek education and careers. Additional female role models in education inspire females to stay in school. Changing gender norms can interrupt this cycle and keep more females in school. UNICEF reports only 2.1% of Afar girls finish elementary school, and many drop out owing to early marriages and a dearth of female teachers and role models (Westfall, 2018; Gretland et al., 2014).

The Borgen Project reported that 36.7% of Ethiopian primary school teachers were women in 2012, with considerably less in rural regions (Peterson, 2018). Girls need female teachers, especially in early schooling. Girls first experience education in primary school, and a female teacher can favorably influence their perception. Female instructors may be role models and encourage females to attend school. A female instructor is also important because girls may feel more comfortable addressing their biological requirements and reporting sexual harassment to someone they can relate to. Seeing a female instructor in their setting might make girls feel

supported and relatable (Westfall, 2018). Female instructors and role models help females stay in school and continue their education (MoE, 2022; (Gretland et al., 2014).

Lack of sanitary products

Female students encounter extra obstacles, such as the lack of access to feminine hygiene supplies and the absence of female mentors, when they attend school. These obstacles might hinder their ability to report instances of mistreatment or abuse that take place during their journey to school or within the school premises.

Girls' education is sometimes undervalued by communities and families, who typically hold the assumption that their main tasks should be limited to homemaking, motherhood, or marriage (TEA,2021). The absence of assistance demotivates girls from arguing for their own interests and adds to elevated rates of discontinuation. Despite receiving assistance from their family, girls' education may be impeded by a lack of comprehension of their unique requirements. Female students encounter further obstacles, including restricted availability of feminine hygiene items and a shortage of female mentors. These variables heighten their susceptibility to mistreatment and maltreatment when traveling to or at school. Based to a survey conducted by Tegegne & Sisay, 2014 the literacy percentage among women in Oromia is much below the national average.

A significant barrier to girls' education in Ethiopia is the absence of menstrual hygiene products. Some families, especially those living in rural areas, could find themselves unable to afford essential feminine hygiene products owing to financial constraints. Moreover, women encounter difficulties in accessing the assistance they require due to cultural stigmas around menstruation, which hinder open discussions about menstrual well-being. Consequently, several

females prefer to utilize unhygienic alternatives or withhold from attending school altogether during their menstrual cycle. This issue not only impacts their education but also their overall welfare and future opportunities.

Studies demonstrate a significant link between insufficient management of menstrual hygiene and school absenteeism, underscoring the urgent need to address and remove this significant barrier to girls' education. A 2013 study in Northeast Ethiopia identified seven main factors contributing to absenteeism during menstruation. According to the study, 82.26% of students expressed feelings of embarrassment or concern about leaks or stains, 56.05% of students did not use pads to manage their menstrual flow, and 31.45% of students lacked access to a private space to attend to their periods. Additionally, 22.98% mentioned a lack of continuous water supply for hygiene purposes, 20.97% experienced pain or discomfort during menstruation, 8.47% reported the absence of a proper system for disposing of pads or cloths, and 7.66% stated that there were no separate bathrooms available for girls (Tegegne & Sisay, 2014). This study exclusively focuses on Northeast Ethiopia; nevertheless, several other locations have comparable challenges with even more elevated proportions. Tackling these obstacles is essential for enhancing the educational achievements of females and their general well-being.

Solutions:

The education system for women in Ethiopia is a crucial matter with substantial significance for society at large. Effective strategies to enhance women's education in Ethiopia involve promoting awareness of detrimental societal norms within families, communities, and society as a whole. Ensuring equality and fairness in government funding for education, while

enhancing assistance for females in both educational institutions and domestic settings. In order to effectively tackle community concerns, it is imperative that we actively promote consciousness, guarantee unbiased and just treatment, and include the notion of intersectionality to ensure equitable treatment that takes into account varied demands. Moreover, it is imperative to observe and acknowledge these difficulties and employ ethical examination with impartiality in order to generate significant transformation.

Reduce rates of early marriage

Ethiopia is a country characterized by its rich cultural heritage and diversified population, consisting of over 80 ethnic groups. This culture encompasses positive as well as negative standards. Nevertheless, there are individuals who believe that a culture must be adhered to, regardless of its detrimental effects. This concept originated in the community due to the longstanding tradition and practices of their ancestors and community members. Early marriage is a detrimental cultural practice that persists in Ethiopia and hinders girls and women from attending school.

Research conducted by UNICEF and other organizations indicates that Ethiopia has one of the highest prevalence rates of early marriage worldwide (UNICEF, 2022; Peterson, 2018; TEA, 2021; Raj et al., 2019). Given the current practice of this culture, it is crucial to comprehend its cultural and ethical foundations in order to raise awareness about these matters. One idea is to increase awareness among families and the community about the detrimental effects of early marriage on the physiological, emotional, and physical well-being of girls.

A research conducted by Woldegebriel et al. (2023) found that teenage females who marry at an early age are at a considerably higher risk of getting obstetric fistula following

childbirth. Woldegebriel et al. (2023) reported that around 9,000 women in Ethiopia are affected by obstetric fistula annually. By spreading knowledge about the dangers of early marriage to the community and families, we may both educate and mitigate this harmful cultural practice. Furthermore, it is advantageous to implement a community service initiative that offers educational opportunities and promotes awareness among community members on the adverse consequences of early marriage.

Societal norms have a significant influence and can detrimentally affect some demographic groups, leading to negative consequences in their life. The prevailing social standards in Ethiopia have a significant impact on women's education, impeding their ability to reach their maximum capabilities. The resolution of this matter necessitates the facilitation and promotion of women's access to education, accompanied by the provision of necessary assistance and encouragement. Many societal standards dictate that woman should primarily be confined to domestic roles as wives and mothers, and there are segments of society who hold the belief that women are not entitled to receive an education (TEA, 2021). This idea is significantly affecting women in Ethiopia and restricting their capacity to empower themselves. The lack of information among women is leading to their mistreatment, particularly in the form of physical violence, early marriage, psychological injury, and emotional distress (Westfall, 2018).

Despite the protections outlined in the Ethiopian Constitution, including the equal right to education for women and the minimum age for marriage set at 18, these regulations are often undermined by cultural, religious, and economic factors (Gretland et al., 2014). To combat this, there needs to be a stronger enforcement mechanism that actively ensures these constitutional rights are upheld, preventing practices like child marriages that significantly hinder girls' education.

Teach families about importance of girls' education

Another alternative is to advocate for the advantages of providing education to women or girls. By fostering an understanding of the significance of education for women and girls, the family initiates the encouragement of their daughter's attendance at school and cultivates a mindset that rejects the detrimental societal norms and cultural practices. For instance, in my family's case, my father is a very informed individual who provided me with encouragement throughout my educational path. Additionally, he ensures that I am not subjected to detrimental cultural practices prevalent in our country, such as early marriage, female genital circumcision, and the expectation that females must confine themselves to domestic responsibilities.

According to Gretland et al. (2014), research suggests that a targeted program aimed at raising knowledge about the detrimental effects of early marriage and the advantages of education in rural areas might be beneficial in addressing this damaging cultural practice. The strategy should entail active cooperation with the local community, encompassing religious and community leaders, schools, teachers, children, and families, in order to successfully tackle the issue.

Increase government investment in education

Government assistance is essential for the education system in Ethiopia, as over 90 percent of schools in the country are public schools that rely on government funding. According to Study from Link Ethiopia, there are 30,000 primary schools and less than 2000 secondary schools. Therefore, constructing schools in rural areas not only reduces the travel time (60 minutes) and effort for students walking to school, but also addresses the imbalance between primary and secondary education facilities (Gretland et al., 2014).

Investing in education yields several benefits that relieve economic problems. A well-educated population fosters national growth and creates abundant opportunities, so boosting the country's overall prosperity. One crucial factor for achieving success is the education of women, as women play a pivotal role as mothers. Highly educated women not only act as exemplary figures for their families and future generations, but also make substantial contributions to advancements in maternal health. Evidence indicates that women with higher levels of education are more inclined to make well-informed choices during pregnancy, resulting in safer delivery and improved health outcomes for their children (Weitzman, 2017). Moreover, women who have received education have more independence in making medical decisions, therefore assuring that their own health requirements as well as those of their children are adequately met (Idayu Badilla Idris et al., 2023).

Investing in education is a wise financial strategy. Regrettably, the government is allocating funds for schools and instructors that school got destroyed by war (Ethiopia: The Ethiopian Teachers' Association mobilises for safe schools and workplaces, 2023). According to Dr. Yohannes Benti, the ETA President and member of the Education International Executive Board, Ethiopian teachers wish to raise awareness about the importance of safe teaching and learning environments as essential for ensuring quality education for all and fostering peaceful, democratic, and sustainable societies (Ethiopia: The Ethiopian Teachers' Association mobilises for safe schools and workplaces, 2023).

Prior to the occurrence of instructors engaging in misbehavior and abuse against the learners they educate, especially targeting female students, it is imperative that we confront this issue. This problem also undermines the motivation of teachers and hinders their ability to carry out their duties. It is crucial to tackle this problem.

Additionally, the government should establish a scholarship program, as well as provide mentorship and training opportunities for women who have been unable to access education. Studies have shown that when women are provided with mentorship and vocational training, it not only improves their economic self-sufficiency but also positively impacts their families. For example, a program implemented by the Network of Ethiopian Women's Associations (NEWA), 2024 provided soft skills training for young women graduates. Participants like Rahel from Hawassa, who initially struggled to find employment, were able to develop essential skills such as communication and emotional regulation. Rahel eventually launched a successful business, which improved her family's financial situation and well-being. This example highlights how mentorship and training can empower women to become more economically independent and improve the lives of their families (NEWA, 2024).

This is considered fundamental information. For instance, the study reveals that a majority of mothers in Ethiopia deliver their first child at home due to several factors. One of the reasons for their lack of understanding regarding the services provided by the hospital. Implementing an effective training program and allocating adequate funds for education may effectively address the challenges that many families, communities, and societies are currently confronting.

More resources should be focused on rural areas, because women in those areas need a lot more support in accessing education than in urban areas. According to the survey, over 80% of the Ethiopian population resides in rural areas (USAID, 2017). By promoting gender equality and ensuring fair treatment for both women and men without any discrimination. The incorporation of the notion of intersectionality and the impartial treatment of the issue forms the basis of the solution.

Boosting the government's allocation of funds for education and allocating additional resources specifically towards the education of women will have a beneficial impact on the economy. The government should prioritize women's education by allocating adequate money in both rural and urban regions. The allocation of funds for education in Ethiopia had a significant nominal growth of 70 percent, rising from ETB 95.7 billion in the fiscal year 2017/18 to ETB 162.2 billion in the fiscal year 2021/22. However, when considering the impact of inflation, the actual worth of the assigned budget has seen a decrease of 20 percent (UNESCO, n.d.). Despite the budget seeing growth throughout time, it is important to consider other aspects such as inflation. Therefore, it is advisable to proactively plan and budget for schooling in advance. This may be efficiently accomplished by providing transportation services to facilitate access to school for those in need, raising awareness among women, particularly in remote regions, about their entitlement to education, and ensuring that schools offer comprehensive women's services, including provisions for feminine hygiene.

The government should allocate funding for the construction and maintenance of hygienic and secure toilet facilities at educational institutions. Ensuring the provision of sanitary facilities, particularly for females, is crucial for enhancing attendance rates. The government must provide a shuttle bus service to facilitate easier access to secondary schools for students residing in outlying places. Reducing the burden of long journeys will improve both school attendance and academic performance. The government must increase the number of secondary schools. To accommodate the increasing demand, the government should expand the number of secondary schools. Additionally, special attention must be given to neglected regions to reduce inequalities in education.

Increase number of female teachers

It is imperative to enhance support for females in educational institutions and households. Our top priority should be the establishment of a nurturing atmosphere that fosters female empowerment and recognition. By enhancing our support for females, we can greatly enhance their physiological and emotional development. When women achieve exceptional academic performance, they serve as a source of motivation for other women to aspire to achieve similar levels of success. The inclusion of women in all sectors, especially in education, is crucial for instructing and mentoring girls to reach their full potential (Gretland et al., 2014). Female educators act as influential role models, motivating young girls to see themselves in positions of authority and academic success.

In Ethiopia, women account for 40% of primary school teachers, 18% of secondary school teachers, 9% of teacher education instructors, 16% of vocational trainers, and 9% of higher education faculty members (Ethiopia Ministry of Education, 2016; Melka & Zalalam, 2022). Research indicates that an increased presence of female teachers is associated with a reduction in the dropout rate among female students (Westfall, 2018; Gretland et al., 2014). Additionally, having female teachers reduces the likelihood of sexual assault, bullying, and similar issues, as girls feel more comfortable reporting these incidents to female teachers rather than male teachers. Female instructors counter detrimental gender stereotypes that restrict girls' ambitions by showcasing the achievement of women in academic endeavors. Furthermore, the inclusion of these individuals in educational institutions fosters a nurturing atmosphere that empowers young women to actively engage in inquiry, contribute to classroom dialogues, and strive towards their scholastic aspirations. These exemplary figures may have a profound

influence on the self-assurance, self-worth, and general academic achievements of young females.

By having more women in teaching, we can better understand girls' educational requirements and reduce sexual abuse, violence, and maltreatment. Female instructors are more likely to support and understand females, which helps address their needs and concerns, according to research. This supportive environment can help reduce school-based sexual and gender-based violence. Westfall, 2018 reports that female instructors may considerably reduce gender-based violence by providing girls with role models and a safer, more empathetic atmosphere where they can report abuse and harassment. This is crucial because gender-based violence in schools hinders education and harms girls' mental health.

Civility plays a major role in providing a supportive learning environment for girls and women. As demonstrated in this course, the practice of civility promotes the development of collaboration and the resolution of problems. In order to provide more assistance to the advancement of women's education, we should Promote the establishment of student clubs: These groups have the potential to mitigate instances of sexual assault, foster motivation among females, and ignite their passion for academic excellence. Enhance the representation of female educators and mentors: Research indicates that the presence of female professors can reduce dropout rates by 50%, offering crucial assistance and serving as influential figures for female students. By adopting a respectful and polite attitude and implementing these measures, we can establish a fair and encouraging educational atmosphere that benefits everyone.

Provide education about menstruation, sanitary facilities and supplies

Schools and educational programs should educate female students, families, and communities on menstruation issues to promote awareness, as it is one of the major causes of girls dropping out of school. Training can reduce dropout rates and boost female attendance to provide them a bright future for themselves and the society.

Supporting female students in school with female teachers is another issue. Having female instructors in Ethiopia helps boost women's literacy rates by providing role models for female students. Increasing female instructors reduces sexual assault, bullying, and other mistreatment that causes girls to leave out. Since women founded society, this affects female students, communities, and society. A scholarship program and mentorship encourage female students to continue their study. A training program for female instructors to get higher education and enter the higher education system will also improve female student enrollment that having many female professors minimizes female dropout and gender abuse stereotypes (Westfall, 2018).

Another solution is to train people to make sanitary pads and to make them available in schools. In Ethiopia, a 14-year-old sixth grader worked with her teacher and three classmates to learn about cheap pads and reusable underwear for a week as part of the initiative led by UNICEF (Haile, 2023). This led to the distribution of over 100 pairs of underwear and reusable sanitary pads to young women in schools and empowered them to manage their menstrual hygiene, enabling them to continue their education without interruption.

SNV's 'Girls in Control menstrual cleanliness Management Project' educates over 32,000 Ethiopian girls on menstruation cleanliness and reduces stigma (Gretland et al., 2014). It is just two years project, therefore we need a longer-term firm to teach the community about

menstruation and provide feminine hygiene items. We can improve girls' health and education by investing in period education and products like the Mooncup reusable menstruation cup (Gretland et al., 2014).

Conclusion:

Education for women enhances economic growth, life expectancy, quality of life, and investment returns in emerging nations. Education empowers women by equipping them with a diverse range of information that can be effectively utilized across several professional domains, leading to enhanced employment opportunities. Women's education acts as a role model for both their children and society.

It is imperative that the Ethiopian government undertake measures to enhance women's education. Addressing this issue would have a significant and far-reaching influence on the whole nation and every facet of life, given the highly crucial role women play in society. Furthermore, allocating additional resources towards education, including services, healthcare, and transportation, as well as promoting and facilitating women's access to higher education, will significantly enhance the government's economy. As a component of the investment in education, it is crucial for women to have a visual representation of success in the classroom, such as female instructors, particularly in remote regions. The inclusion of a female instructor would provide solace to young girls who are frequently in the company of male teachers and will inspire them to excel and aspire for excellence. Increasing societal awareness on the need of educating females is a challenging endeavor. However, the endeavor is highly valuable as

prevailing social norms disproportionately undermine women's rights rather than benefiting them.

Women's education is a fundamental entitlement for women globally, and it is imperative that this matter be resolved and adequately acknowledged. Women in Ethiopia are entitled to receive an education since it is their inherent human right. Girls in Ethiopia have constraints in accessing school due to insufficient assistance, inadequate government funding, and negative cultural norms. However, these limits may be overcome by addressing these issues.

Furthermore, despite the fact that women in Ethiopia are guaranteed equal rights and protections under the constitution, including access to education, the truth is that these legal frameworks are nonetheless undermined by challenges related to culture, religion, and economic status. To provide a better future for the coming generation, remove barriers to girls' education, and support the social and economic advancement of the country, it is imperative that these constitutional guarantees be strengthened and enforced. Passing law shields the next generation from this harmful culture, ensuring their safety. Additionally, it has positive implications for the economy, societal well-being, community development, and overall national progress, particularly in terms of fostering an educated society, especially among females.

References

- Armstrong, M. (2022, July 11). *Education: Girls are catching up with boys in sub-Saharan Africa*. World Economic Forum. <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2022/07/education-africa-girls-boys-gender-school/>
- Asfaw, A. (2012, November 1). *Gender inequalities in tertiary education in Ethiopia*. Brookings. <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/gender-inequalities-in-tertiary-education-in-ethiopia/#:~:text=Globally%20there%20is%20a%20trend>
- Ataklti Gebretsadik Woldegebriel, Gebremedhin Gebreegziabih Gebrehiwot, Abraham Aregay Desta, Kiros Fenta Ajemu, Asfawosen Aregay Berhe, Tewelde Wubayehu Woldearegay, Kiros Demoz Ghebremedhin, & Nega Mamo Bezabih. (2023). Factors associated with obstetric fistula among reproductive age women in Ethiopia: a community based case control study. *Reproductive Health*, 20(1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12978-023-01622-y>
- Ethiopia Demographic and Health Survey*. (2016). <https://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/FR328/FR328.pdf>
- Ethiopia: The Ethiopian Teachers' Association mobilises for safe schools and workplaces*. (2023, October 27). Education International. <https://www.ei-ie.org/en/item/28191:ethiopia-the-ethiopian-teachers-association-mobilises-for-safe-schools-and-workplaces>
- Gabrielová, K. (2022, April 28). *Improving access to education for marginalised girls in Ethiopia*. People in Need. <https://www.peopleinneed.net/improving-access-to-education-8890gp>

- Gretland, E., Robinson, B., & Gondar, T. (2014). *An Investigation into the Barriers to Female Education in Link Ethiopia Schools*. <https://linkethiopia.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Barriers-to-Girls-Education.pdf>
- Haile, D. (2023, May 17). *Providing sanitary pads in schools helps to increase class attendance of girls | UNICEF Ethiopia*. www.unicef.org.
<https://www.unicef.org/ethiopia/stories/providing-sanitary-pads-schools-helps-increase-class-attendance-girls>
- Idayu Badilla Idris, Amy Azira Hamis, Ayuzeity Bistari Md Bukhori, Chan, D., Hakimah Yusop, Muhammad Al-Amin Shaharuddin, Nazmeen Adline Fawwazah A Fauzi, & Thinakaran Kandayah. (2023). Women's autonomy in healthcare decision making: a systematic review. *BMC Women's Health*, 23(1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12905-023-02792-4>
- Kattan, R. B., & Khan, M. M. (2023, March 9). *Closing the gap: Tackling the remaining disparities in girls' education and women's labor market participation*. World Bank Blogs. <https://blogs.worldbank.org/en/education/closing-gap-tackling-remaining-disparities-girls-education-and-womens-labor-market>
- Melka, T., & Zalalam, T. (2022). *Promoting Female Primary School Leadership in Ethiopia: Countering Culture creating innovative infrastructures and policy solutions to support sustainable development in Global South communities View project Capacity Building for Agricultural Innovation Systems View project*.
<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED619827.pdf>
- NEWA. (2024, May 29). *How Soft Skills Training Helps Young Ethiopian Women Find employment - NEWA*. NEWA. <https://newaethiopia.org/how-soft-skills-training-helps-young-ethiopian-women-find-employment/>

Peterson, H. (2018, December 29). *Top 10 Facts About Girls' Education in Ethiopia*. The Borgen Project. <https://borgenproject.org/top-10-facts-about-girls-education-in-ethiopia/>

Raj, A., Salazar, M., Jackson, E. C., Wyss, N., McClendon, K. A., Khanna, A., Belayneh, Y., & McDougal, L. (2019). Students and brides: a qualitative analysis of the relationship between girls' education and early marriage in Ethiopia and India. *BMC Public Health*, *19*(1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-018-6340-6>

Tegegne, T. K., & Sisay, M. M. (2014). Menstrual hygiene management and school absenteeism among female adolescent students in Northeast Ethiopia. *BMC Public Health*, *14*(1). <https://doi.org/10.1186/1471-2458-14-1118>

The Ministry of Education (MoE) i. (2022). *NATIONAL STUDY ON THE MAGNITUDE OF OUT-OF-SCHOOL CHILDREN IN ETHIOPIA 2020 REPORT SYNTHESIS 2 | OUT-OF-SCHOOL CHILDREN IN ETHIOPIA -2020 REPORT SYNTHESIS*. https://luminosfund.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/National-Study-on-the-Magnitude-of-Out-of-School-Children-in-Ethiopia_2020-Report-Synthesis.pdf#:~:text=URL%3A%20https%3A%2F%2Fluminosfund.org%2Fwp

Tiruzer Ethiopia for Africa (TEA). (2021). *Gender Inequality in Ethiopia - TEA*. [Tea4africa.org. https://tea4africa.org/Women%20Empowerment%20-%20TEA.html](https://tea4africa.org/Women%20Empowerment%20-%20TEA.html)

UNESCO. (n.d.). *Government expenditure on education, total (% of GDP) - Ethiopia | Data*. [Data.worldbank.org.](https://data.worldbank.org)

<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.XPD.TOTL.GD.ZS?locations=ET>

UNICEF. (2018a). *Children in Ethiopia*. [Unicef.org. https://www.unicef.org/ethiopia/children-ethiopia](https://www.unicef.org/ethiopia/children-ethiopia)

UNICEF. (2018b, November). *UNICEF Fact Sheet – Girl's Education*.

<https://www.unicef.org/ethiopia/media/381/file/Girls%20Education%20Advocacy%20Brief%20in%20Ethiopia%20.pdf>

UNICEF. (2022). *Education, Not Marriage: Building Better Futures for Girls in Ethiopia*.

UNICEF USA. <https://www.unicefusa.org/stories/education-not-marriage-building-better-futures-girls-ethiopia>

UNICEF Ethiopia. (2018, January). *UNICEF factsheet-girl's education | UNICEF Ethiopia*.

Www.unicef.org. <https://www.unicef.org/ethiopia/reports/unicef-factsheet-girls-education>

United Nations. (1948, December 10). *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. United Nations.

<https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>

USAID. (2017, June). *Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment | Ethiopia | Archive - U.S.*

Agency for International Development. 2012-2017.Usaid.gov. <https://2012-2017.usaid.gov/ethiopia/gender-equality-and-womens-empowerment>

Weitzman, A. (2017). The effects of women's education on maternal health: Evidence from

Peru. *Social Science & Medicine*, 180, 1–9.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2017.03.004>

Westfall, A. (2018). *The power of female teachers and role models in Ethiopia's pastoralist*

communities. Unicef.org. <https://www.unicef.org/ethiopia/stories/power-female-teachers-and-role-models-ethiopia-pastoralist-communities>

