

Barriers to women and girls' participation in electoral processes in Ethiopia and policy responses

Robin Richards

Independent Research Consultant

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Question

What are the main barriers to women and girls' meaningful participation in electoral processes in Ethiopia?

- *Are there any specific elevated risk factors to women's participation in elections, including Gender Based Violence?*
- *What evidence-based measures can be taken to protect women and girls' human rights during electoral processes to facilitate women's participation in electoral processes?*

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1. Summary

This report focusses on the main barriers to women and girls' meaningful participation in electoral processes and evidence of what works to overcome these. The report also considers the role of various other elevated risk factors in Ethiopian society including violence against women in elections, socio-cultural factors, economic factors, and the role of norms. Where examples from Ethiopia are not available, this report draws on research and policy responses from other African or developing countries.

Due to the policy-specific nature of this question, this review draws mostly on grey literature, and some academic literature. There is a robust body of evidence on the gender gap in Ethiopia. However, there is limited evidence on the policy measures used to raise the representation of women in Ethiopia. Therefore, this review will draw on material from other African and developing countries to address this evidence gap.

In general, women continue to occupy a marginalised position in Ethiopian society, including inequalities in access to education, employment opportunities and lower salaries in comparison to men (BTI, 2020). The following factors affect the ability of women to participate meaningfully in politics and elections in Ethiopia:

- Political violence and human rights abuses affect women's participation in elections in Ethiopia (The Carter Centre, 2009; Amnesty International, 2015);
- Women in Ethiopia experience Gender Based Violence (GBV), including physical, emotional and sexual violence, putting them at risk when participating in electoral processes (USAID, 2020);
- During election periods, women experience more psychological abuse and violence than physical violence in comparison to men, and are more likely to experience sexual harassment within political party structures (Ballington, Bardall and Borovsky, 2017); and
- Other important factors that inhibit women's participation in electoral processes include: socio-cultural issues and patriarchy; religious factors; and family commitments/time constraints (Kassa, 2015).

Women play a major role in the economy by providing 40-60% of labour to the agriculture sector, which is the country's largest economic sector. However, men earn 2.7 times higher salaries than women (Jones, Tafere and Woldehanna, 2020). There is a significant positive relationship between female participation in the labour force and empowerment. Earning a salary gives women a measure of independence from men and builds their self-confidence (Mlambo and Kapingura, 2019). However, in some Ethiopian households, men control women's resources, including their wages earned independently and this can constrain the degree to which they participate in activities outside the home (Kassa, 2015). Moreover, the nature of work undertaken by many women in Ethiopia is not empowering and hence employed women have the same propensity to attend political meetings as their unemployed counterparts (Aalen, Kotsadam and Vilanger, 2019).

The following measures to increase women's participation in political and election processes are discussed in the literature:

- Incentivising political parties to include more women on party lists for elections (Luchsinger, 2007 and Mlambo and Kapingura, 2019);
- Legislation enforcing gender quotas in governance structures appear to show evidence of success by contributing towards the development of gender policies supporting women's development as well as women participating more widely in society (Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab, 2018, Tripp, 2016);
- Women's political participation has been addressed through targeted awareness campaigns, providing them with information on how to become involved (Mlambo and Kapingura, 2019);
- GBV related to elections can be addressed through targeted interventions such as enacting laws to protect women during elections; appointing women as election monitors; media monitoring from a gender perspective; training women on mediation, conflict management and leadership; undertaking baseline and follow-up studies on women's experiences in elections (The European Centre for Electoral Support, 2019); and
- Recent governance reforms, including women's increased participation in Cabinet and the appointment of women as heads of key state institutions such as the Ethiopian National Election Board and the appointment of a woman as Chief Justice, provide new opportunities for women to participate in electoral processes in the future (Hertling, 2020).

2. Ethiopia's transition to democracy and women's participation in recent elections

When Ethiopia moved to a democratic system of governance in 1991, the country became the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and the governing party, the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) has been entrenched in power since then. Before its shift to democracy, Ethiopia was under military control, with governance by force a defining feature. More recently, the last two national elections (in 2005 and 2015) have not been considered transparent, free or fair. For example, in 2005 The Carter Centre reported serious cases of post-election violence including the killing of supporters during election protests and ineffective electoral processes such as counting final votes and reviewing election complaints. Inflammatory speech, human rights abuses and political tensions led election observers to conclude that political rights and freedoms were not secured to ensure fully free and fair democratic elections (The Carter Centre, p. 7, 2009).

Amnesty International reported that the 2015 elections were marred by widespread violations of human rights, including violence. Authorities imprisoned many legally registered opposition members, journalists, bloggers and protesters and civil society's ability to participate in election observation was restricted under legislation that permitted only organisations aligned to the ruling party to undertake such activities (Amnesty International, 2015). Arriola and Lyons (2016) report that following the election outcome, authoritarian rule was set to continue for some time into the future. The ruling EPRDF claimed to have won together with its key allies every seat in Parliament, leaving not one seat occupied by an opposition party (Arriola and Lyons, p.76, 2016).

Recent interventions taken by the current political leadership, suggests encouraging signs that Ethiopia's upcoming elections (that were postponed in August 2020 due to COVID-19) may

provide women with new opportunities to participate in the electoral processes and improve their representation in government (Hertling, 2020).

From 1995 to 2015¹ the share of women in parliament grew from 2% to 38.8% (Hailu, 2017). The Federal Republic of Ethiopia constitution provides a guarantee for gender equality and prohibits any discrimination on the grounds of gender (Constitution of the Federal Republic of Ethiopia, 1995, article 25). Gender mainstreaming can be found in several national policies which highlight the root causes of underrepresentation of women in political life, such as the National Woman's Policy 1993, National Cultural Policy, 1997 and Education and Training Policy, 1994. There is also a National Gender Action Plan, 2006 (Hailu, 2017). Moreover, when Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed took power in 2018 he advocated a more inclusive approach to governance. He reduced the size of his cabinet from 34 to 20 members and appointed women to half the cabinet positions. He also nominated a woman as his first Chief Justice and identified a woman to become the first woman president. An exiled woman opposition leader was appointed to become the Chair of the National Election board of Ethiopia (Hertling, 2020). Women also constitute 30% of the judiciary (UN Women, 2014).

3. Main barriers to women and girl's participation in electoral processes in developing countries and in Ethiopia

Key barriers to women's political participation in developing countries

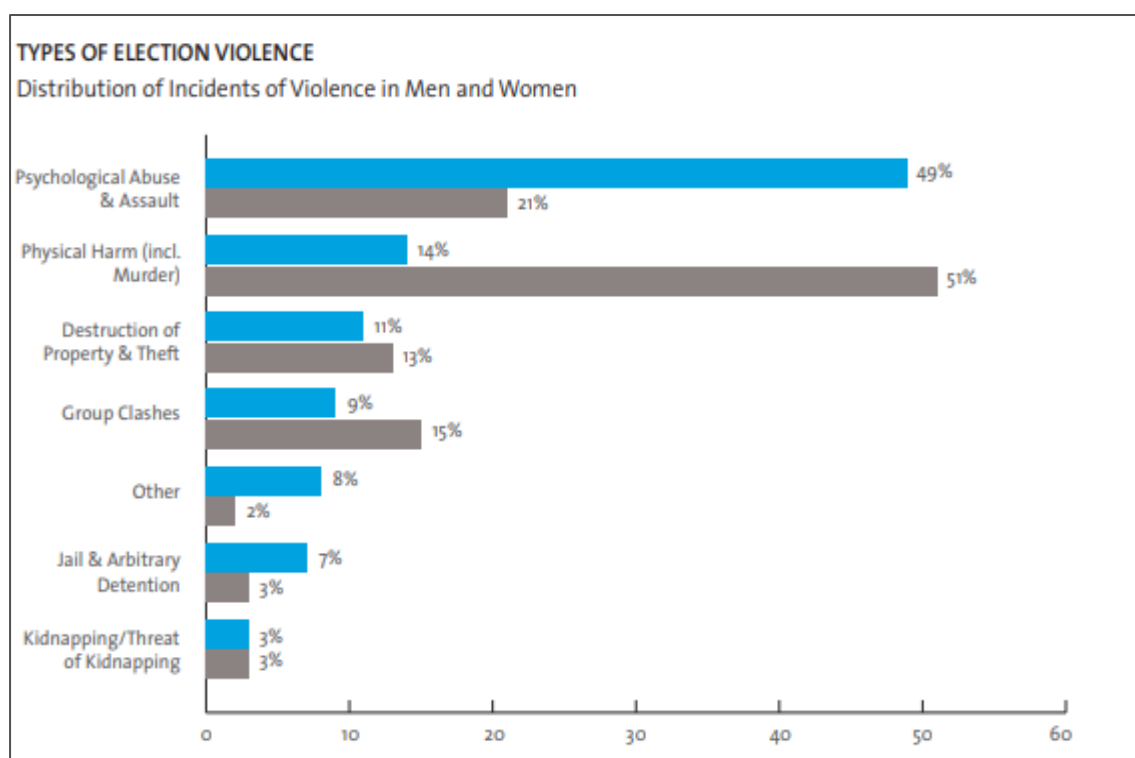
Despite the progress that Ethiopia has achieved with regard to increasing the participation of women, they remain underrepresented in Parliament and parity continues to be a goal (Hailu, 2017; Dejene, 2020). The marginalised place women in Ethiopian society and the high rate of violence perpetrated against them in society generally, together with a history of violence and human rights abuses in recent elections in Ethiopia may discourage women from participation in electoral processes as it does in other countries. For example, as in Nigeria (see for example: Para-Mallam, 2015). Mlambo and Kapingura (2019) note that in many African states politics is associated with violence and intimidation, and although both genders are affected by this, women experience a more acute sense of vulnerability and are the first to have their rights to education, political participation and livelihoods curtailed as a consequence (Mlambo and Kapingura , 2019).

Drawing on evidence from a number of developing countries (not including Ethiopia), Ballington et.al (2017) note that the types of election violence experienced by women and the frequency of incidents are very different from violence perpetrated against men during elections – with women experiencing one-third of the number of direct physical attacks than men encounter but, being three times more likely to be victims of psychological violence (Ballington et.al., 2017, p. 29, See Figure 1). Psychological violence includes a spectrum of experiences including: fear for

¹ This is in line with the general trend in Africa where female representation from 1990 to 2015 increased from 7.8% to 22.2% (Tripp, 2016). There are 12 African countries which perform better than the rest of the world in terms of having female speakers of the house and 20% of cabinet posts occupied by women.

their personal security; security of their loved ones, and; fear of social ostracism and attacks on their moral character. Ballington, et.al. (2017) notes that women are also more likely to experience sexual harassment within their political parties, including being forced to perform sexual favours for office bearers (Ballington, et al., 2017, p.30).

Figure 1: Proportional distribution of different types of election violence as experienced by women (blue panel) and men (grey panel) between 2006 and 2010. Countries included are Guyana; Bangladesh; Timor-Leste; Nepal; Burundi and Guinea



Source: Ballington, et.al. 2017, p. 30, reproduced with permission from UNP

Mlambo and Kapingura (2019) developed an empirical model to identify the most powerful variables influencing women’s political participation in 14 Southern African Development Community (SADC) states² (which does not include Ethiopia). The author used data obtained from the Economist Intelligence Unit’s index of democracy and the World Bank. The study used yearly panel data for the years 2010, 2015 and 2016.

² There are 16 SADC States comprising Angola, Botswana, Comoros, Democratic Republic of Congo, Eswatini, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe

See: Figure 2: Factors influencing women's participation in electoral processes (dynamic model),
Source: Mlambo and Kapingura, 2019, p. 8,
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/23311886.2019.1681048?scroll=top&needAccess=true>

The following key findings emerge from this study:

- **Human Development Index (HDI):** There is a statistically significant negative relationship ($p=0.0009$) between the **Human Development Index** and women's participation in electoral processes. The higher the ranking on the HDI, the lower the likelihood of political participation. Mlambo and Kapingura (2019) note that this finding is consistent with other research that indicates little empirical evidence of a relationship between women's participation in parliament and economic development (e.g. Tripp, 2016). There may be other obstacles to women's participation in politics, even-though human development and economic status may have improved. These include cultural factors such as patriarchy in the family where women's activities are prescribed by gender role expectations such as taking care of children and household chores (Dejene, 2020). The key decision makers in households are often men who are usually the main breadwinners, controlling the activities that women participate in, including political involvement.
- **Political Culture:** There is not a significant positive relationship ($p=0.5241$) between **political culture** and women's political participation. However, in hierarchical top-down societies there is a tendency for women's political participation to be more curtailed as opposed to more egalitarian societies.
- **Political Participation:** There is a positive significant relationship between **political participation** and women's participation ($p=0.003$). This means that when levels are political participation are high in society generally, there is also likely to be a high level of women's participation in politics.
- **Female Labour Force Participation (FLP):** There is a significant positive relationship between **female participation in the labour force** and women's political participation ($p=0.0082$). Kassa (2015) highlights that women's participation in the labour force give them material independence, self-confidence and professional skills and may reduce women's dependence on men.
- **Functioning Government:** there is a significant positive relationship between a **functioning government** and women's political participation ($p=0.0025$) because this implies that policy decisions promoting women's equality relating to political participation are likely to be implemented.

Key barriers to women's political participation identified in Ethiopia

Socio-cultural issues

A patriarchal system continues to shape Ethiopian society where segregated gender roles are barriers to women's political participation. Furthermore, there is still the expectation that women are led but not expected to lead. Women are considered subordinate to men both in the family and societal contexts (Kassa, 2015).

Dessie and Verma (2018) note that many women consider politics to be unattractive where power is obtained through various illegal and unethical actions and their motivation to take part in politics and compete for leadership positions is diminished. Women fear that corrupt political practices of current leadership, will result in their own eventual co-option into such practices (Dessie and Verma, 2018).

Religious factors

Ethiopia is a secular state and there are two influential religions in the country, Orthodox Christianity and Islam. The role of religion is powerful in Ethiopian society and the articles 816 and 492 of the Criminal Code protects religious freedoms and has provisions for fines or arrests of people who denigrate religious practices (Humanist Report, 2016). In many mainstream religions, power and authority are divinely bestowed on men and women play subordinate roles. Kassa (2015) notes that religion is used as an instrument to reinforce traditional gender roles that subordinate women and exclude them from social, political and religious life. Women who internalise the subordinate position in society that religion proscribes for them, reinforce their own disempowerment and exclusion from politics. Moreover, women perceive politics as a 'dirty game' and the domain of men and withdraw from these activities (Kassa, 2015). However, Tripp (2016) notes that in some African countries like Senegal the influence of religion on women's political participation deteriorates when there are strong women's movements.

Education and employment

Women face discrimination in respect of education and employment (BTI, 2020³). With respect to education, female literacy is 29% compared to 49% for men for the period 2007-2013) (BTI, 2020). In addition, education and employment educational disparities, particularly at the tertiary level between men and women also curtails women's abilities to enjoy full citizenship and engage in political activities as men do (Kassa, 2015; Dejene, 2020). Women also have less access to skills training (Dejene, 2020).

About half the population of Ethiopia are female and they play an important role in agricultural production and other household activities (Dejene, 2020). Kassa (2015) notes that women are still expected to play the role of caregiver in the family whereas men are seen as breadwinners. According to the National Labour Force survey in 2012 women represented only 27.3% of total government employees, and the vast majority were engaged in low-level clerical work. Women accounted for only 23.9% of technical and professional employment (Dejene, 2020).

Early socialisation of children in the family ensures the continuation of values and division of labour in the household. This is exacerbated by perceptions in wider society that women are weak and incapable of making major decisions and should rather focus on more trivial household matters. Time spent in this role limits women's time available to engage in political activities. The division of labour at the household level, means that women spend more time attending to household work including childcare. Women have less time to socialise outside the family and the household unit which reduces their access to political activities in the wider society (Kassa,

³ Bertelsmann Stiftung Transformation Index (BTI), 2020

2015). Moreover, it is difficult to reach women in rural areas because of poor infrastructure (Dejene, 2020).

Economic factors

It has already been noted that Ethiopian women are poorer and less educated than men. Many women are financially dependent on their husbands or relatives. In addition, women in Ethiopia struggle to attain basic rights, such as property rights including access to land and credit (Dejene, 2020). Their lack of resources places them in a weak position to be able to participate in political processes and because their domains of activity are located within their father's or husband's households, they have no foundation on which to build knowledge and their social capital lies within households rather than outside of them. Building external networks is therefore difficult.

Kassa (2015) reports that although women are increasingly assuming household headship, they have limited resources to support their families. Women are poorer than men because they earn lower wages; they are generally less educated and do not benefit from their labour contribution, particularly in agricultural sphere. (Kassa, p.2, 2015). Jones et.al. (2020) highlights that women play a major role in this sector, comprising 40-60% of all agricultural labour and the agricultural sector, has been targeted as a key sector to stimulate economic growth and poverty reduction. Agriculture contributes 46% towards the country's GDP and comprises 85% of the employment opportunities. Some 90% of the poor depend on agriculture for their livelihoods (Jones, et.al., 2010). More generally, the labour market prioritises men over women. Men earn 2.7 times higher salaries and occupy more jobs outside agricultural production than women occupy. Women's participation in public office also remains limited.

The main economic factor which influences women's ability to engage politically, is income derived from employment. This gives women independence and the ability to make independent decisions from their households. Although the Ethiopian government has been aware of the impacts of the economy on women, and has developed policies such as the Economic Reform Policy that target vulnerable groups in Ethiopian society, specifically women, little has changed at the level of household decision making. The household head remains the male figure who controls every asset including property of the family (Kassa, 2015). Women continue to require permission from male household heads in relation to expenditure of resources. Even if a woman receives wages from employment, her income is likely to be controlled by men. A quantitative study conducted by Aalen, Kotsadam and Villanger (2019) found that there was no difference among employed Ethiopian women in the manufacturing sector and unemployed women with respect to attending political meetings. This study concludes the nature of work undertaken by women in Ethiopia (which entails menial work, long hours and poor labour rights) may not be empowering. Furthermore, employed women stated that have less time and energy to devote to political participation (Aalen, Kotsadam and Villanger, 2019).

Political factors

Dessie and Verma (2018) identify various political factors that are barriers to women's participation in Ethiopia. Firstly, men dominate senior political party decision-making structures. Their dominance within party structures denies women the opportunity to experience leadership

positions within parties. In addition, male-dominated leadership structures in parties leads to the subordination of women's issues, needs and perspectives over men (Dessie and Verma, 2018).

Secondly, undemocratic internal party structures resulting from poorly resourced and organised parties affects citizen's participation in them and specifically women's involvement (Dessie and Verma, 2018). An absence of internal democracy within parties, provides a cover for hidden discriminatory activities. Women lack political knowledge and networks for actively taking part in party activities and decision's including policy-making. In summary, political parties serve as barriers to women's participation in politics at the micro and macro-levels. Parties have the ability to promote women's involvement in internal executive leadership positions or deny them this opportunity. This has ripple-effects at the macro-level. Their failure to make progress within party structures because of internal barriers impedes female political participation and decision-making opportunities at a societal level (Dessie and Verma, 2018).

A third factor identified by Dessie and Verma (2018) is ethnic political identity. Ethnic identity has been politicized in the country and this in turn creates conflict between ethnic groups, for instances between Amhara and Tigray, Oromo and Tigray, Somali and Oromo, Amhara and Gumuz. Such ethnic clashes constrain women's participation in political decision-making and have a large impact on human and material resources. The politicization of ethnicity has resulted in the development of political trust based on ethnic identity. There is a higher level of trust among political officials with the same ethnic affiliation. Dessie and Verma (2018) argue that this makes politics unattractive and pushes women away from participation. When political leaders act more in the interests of their ethnic groups rather than Ethiopian society as a whole, the general population, including women become cynical about political leadership and withdraw from taking part in elections and leadership issues (Dessie and Verma, 2018).

Homosociality

Dessie and Verma (2018) note that in Ethiopian society gender stereotypes orientates women towards each other and similarly men. Women therefore spend more time with each other socially. This creates obstacles for women who wish to enter the male dominated political decision-making position in society. Consequently, women lack the political skill to effectively participate in leadership structures in the country.

Social justice, equality and discrimination of women in Ethiopia

Women occupy a marginalised position in Ethiopian society. This is not only expressed in their curtailed opportunities to participate in electoral processes, but in wider societal obstacles they face which contributes in turn to their political, economic and social disenfranchisement.

USAID reports that currently one in three women experience physical, emotional or sexual violence and 65% of women have suffered through female genital mutilation (USAID, 2020). Jones et.al. (2010) highlights the problem of violence against women in Ethiopia. Rape, abduction (often to avoid dowry payments); early marriage (disempowering women's negotiating abilities in the household due to limited educational opportunities); family violence and trafficking of women continue to occur. In a multi-country World Health Organisation study, Jones et.al. (2010) note that Ethiopia had the highest percentage of physical assaults out of 22 countries and 49% of women had experienced assaults by an intimate male partner. The risk of physical

violence that women are exposed to in Ethiopia is attributed to their low status and limited power, For example, the number of women participating in the national legislative assembly was below 30% (UN Women, 2014). Access to social and economic resources and weak legislation protecting their safety are further factors (Jones et.al., 2010).

4. Policy responses to overcome barriers to women's participation in elections

Researchers suggest various ways in which women's participation in elections and political processes more generally can be increased. These can be classified into several strands: structural and institutional reforms; legislative changes including funding and campaign finance reform; awareness-raising and; and measures to make it safer for women to participate in elections such as mitigating violence

Structural and institutional changes

Mlambo and Kapingura (2019) suggest that governments need to engage with political parties to ensure that they include more women on their candidate lists. Political parties need to become the institutional vehicles through which women's participation in politics can be facilitated. This can begin with encouraging their participation within party structures over election periods. Governments also need to promote the economic emancipation of women so that when they become more financially independent, they will be able to make decisions to enter into politics without the need for consultation and permission from their male partners.

There extent of gender mainstreaming across ministries and institutions requires further development and greater resource allocation. At present, there are coordination weaknesses between the planning units and the gender directorates in the ministries that are responsible for gender mainstreaming (UN Women, 2014). Furthermore, there are three reasons which curtail gender mainstreaming in development policies. These are an emphasis on macroeconomic outcomes, macro-level conceptualisations of gender issues and the limited role of civil society in influencing policy (Dejene, 2020).

Awareness raising

Mlambo and Kapingura (2019) note that there is also a need to engage women through awareness campaigns. This would include providing women information on how they can become more engaged politically, not just through participating in election campaigns. For inclusive political participation there needs to be equal participation between men and women, including in politics more generally (Mlambo and Kapingura, 2019).

Legislative and constitutional changes including political party funding, campaign finance reform and gender quotas

Kassa (2015) notes that Article 35 of the Ethiopian Constitution itemises the rights of women and the government promoted the mainstreaming of gender in all of its development policies (Kassa, p. 2, 2015). To further consolidate and entrench the rights of women, a national Ethiopian Policy on women was declared in 1993. The policy aimed to speed up equality between men and

women and this levelling of the playing field was meant to facilitate women's equal participation in the political, social and economic life spheres of the country. The policy was also meant to ensure that women have the right to own property and that other human rights enjoyed by men are equally applied to women, such as their ability to participate in public life and assuming leadership positions in society. This policy also aimed to empower rural women by giving them access to social services and other policies that freed them from repressive work and family conditions in rural life. The policies also targeted specifically other repressive customary practices, based on patriarchy and specifically permitted women to hold public office and participate in decision making in society (Kassa, 2015). Besides this policy, a new Federal Family Code passed in 2000, was meant to further protect the rights of women in households by raising the minimum age of marriage from 15 to 18 years and permitting women to share accumulated assets in a household where a couple has been living together for three years. In addition, domestic violence has been criminalised as well as harmful traditional practices such as genital mutilation and abduction (Kassa, 2015). In addition, Ethiopia signed the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action and endorsed the Millennium Development Goals of 2000, which entail commitments to gender targets for political representation⁴ and access to education for women and girls respectively (UN Women, 2014).

Mlambo and Kapingura (2019) suggest that governments should provide more funding to independent female politicians. Increased funding should be provided to political parties to support increasing the number of female candidates on their party list structures (Mlambo and Kapingura, 2019). In Ethiopia, a new election law was passed in May 2020. At the Bill stage of the new law, one of the amendments proposed was to give priority to female candidates if they got an equal number of votes with male opponents in an election. However, this amendment was not ratified into law (Kiruga, 2019). Luchsinger-Sidhau and Meena (2007) confirms that some countries are already assisting political parties through funding incentives for those parties who nominate women onto their candidate lists and in Ethiopia in the 2005 elections, international organisations provided a pooled fund that provided goods and services to parties and individual candidates. Parties putting forward women candidates were given increased support in this way to encourage them.

Research from developing countries more generally show that gender quotas that increase women's representation at all levels of government is another policy measure that can be utilised to increase their political participation (Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-Pal), 2018). A review of eleven project evaluations in Afghanistan, Lesotho and across 24 states in India indicated that gender reservation quotas increased women's political participation and resulted in the production of goods in society aligned with women's needs. For example, in Afghanistan it was found that having a woman in a leadership position through a gender quota system had the positive effect of increasing women's participation in village governance, community life and economic activities. Benefits of gender quotas in political representation have been reported in other African countries. For example, Bauer and Burnet (2013) report that in Rwanda, gender quotas have had a number of positive symbolic effects even at the grassroots level. Firstly, it has changed the way Rwandans perceive women as political leaders. Women serve at all levels of government and women are respected in the same way as their male counterparts in government leadership roles. Secondly, quotas have increased women's sense of agency in

⁴ The target is that women should occupy 30% of decision-making posts.

society. Women are able to speak out in public meetings and their views are no longer dismissed as they used to be in the past.

Tripp (2016) argues that quotas have had the most impact on boosting the legislative representation of women in Africa. More than 65% of African countries have adopted some form of quota to increase the share of women in parliaments. In countries where quotas for female representation were applied in legislatures, their average levels of representation were higher. In those countries where quotas were applied, 25% of seats in legislatures were occupied by women whereas in countries without quotas, the average female representation was lower at 14% Tripp (2016, p. 383).

In Uganda, women's movements played a critical role in pushing for representation. Other key actors that advocate for higher representation for women are female party leaders, United Nations agencies and international non-governmental organisations (Tripp, 2016). Moreover, Tripp (2016) notes that although economic growth is generally associated with empowerment for women, poor African countries like Mauritania have improved the political participation of women through use of quotas. Currently Ethiopia has a system of non-legislated quotas for minorities that are not related to gender (IDEA, 2020). There are women's associations in all regions of Ethiopia and the government established a Women's Development Army to coordinate women living in the same neighbourhoods (UN Women, 2014).

Measures to make it safer for women to participate in elections

As noted earlier, in preceding elections Ethiopia has experienced many incidents of violence and human rights abuses. Under these circumstances, women may be reluctant to participate, fearing for their safety. However, violence against women during elections, can be mitigated in various ways. Based on experiences in countries such as Ethiopia, Jordan and Afghanistan, the European Centre for Electoral Support (2019) offers practical recommendations for encouraging women to participate in electoral processes and reducing violence against women at each stage of an election cycle, including focussing on the following aspects:

Pre-election measures: Adapting or incorporating laws that protect women against violence in elections; gender mainstreaming within the policies and programmes of the National Election Board of Ethiopia (NEBE). This includes election Codes of Conduct.

For example, in Nigeria, their Code of Conduct made explicit mention of the need for all political parties to ensure the promotion and active participation of women, youth and the physically challenged in electoral processes. This code specified that the rights of women would be respected, including for example their rights to freely engage and communicate with political parties and candidates. The code further specified that women and youth should have equal participation alongside men in all political activities and that they should have free access to all public political meetings, marches and demonstrations and that all reasonable steps must be taken to ensure women are able to freely engage in political activities (UN Women, 2014b).

Electoral campaign: Training and education including capacity building for women mediators in countries such as Ethiopia can raise participation. This includes training women on leadership and conflict management skills; supporting the inclusion of women in political processes and promotion of women as candidates; development of and distribution of a guide for female candidates; media monitoring of elections from a gender perspective; supporting and promoting

women election observers and observe elections from a gender perspective; support an election situation room for Civil Society Organisations, with specific attention to women-related election incidents.

An example of an educational initiative aimed at assisting voters in Mali in the 2013 elections, was the development of 'peace platforms' in conjunction with local authorities. The purpose of the platforms was to provide a safe space where voters could discuss crucial issues relating to the elections including the importance of women's vote, the role of the media in reporting on the elections and the actual voting process itself. This was part of an initiative that provided psychosocial and economic assistance to displaced women and girls from Northern Mali (UN Women, 2014b).

In Cote d'Ivoire a platform of civil society organisations observing the elections was formed with the aim of increasing the number of women observers for its 2015 elections. The programme utilised previous lessons from the country's 2010 election, incorporating elements that addressed women's reluctance to talk about the violence they faced during these elections, as a result of their fear of being rejected by male family members or the community (UN Women, 2014b).

Post-election phase: Undertake gender baseline studies on the experiences of women during elections; develop policy recommendations also focussing on inclusion of women and marginalised groups to guide future elections; undertaking qualitative studies on women's political participation and representation in Ethiopia (UN Women, 2014b).

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