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Gender parity in education in Ethiopia

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Question

- *What are the trends in the gender gap in primary and secondary school, particularly for the emerging regions (Afar, Benishangul-Gumuz, Gambela, and Somali)? Period: 2000 to 2019.*

Contents

1. Summary

This report was completed in two parts, results from statistical research and extraction from four reports provided by the requester (section 8).

Trends in the gender gap

Ethiopia Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) data report number of children out of primary school over time, and nationally, show improvement in the gender gap between 2001 and 2016. Ministry of Education Annual Abstracts enrolment data and Education Sector Development Policy Review data from more recent years suggests the gap is widening again slightly. It was not possible within the scope of this report to analyse how policies might have affected the trend change. However, economic constraints are widely cited as a barrier to girls education and the political instability in recent years is likely to have had a negative effect on economic and other barriers.

Regional disparities are pronounced in Ethiopia. Aggregate figures can mask the reality for rural areas. Looking at trends in the emerging regions using the same data set shows erratic trends in number of children out of school and in gender parity.

The trend for nationally aggregated data for secondary school from DHS data shows improvement in children out of school and gender parity between 2001 and 2011 but a worsening of both in 2016. The trend in data disparity is similar in Gambela, wider but of a similar pattern in Benishangul-Gumuz, and quite different in magnitiude and direction in Afar and Somali.

Data on learning recorded over time and disaggregated by region was difficult to find. UNESCO data on primary completion rates nationally shows a narrowing of the gender gap between 2000 and 2009. The gap then widens and then narrows again in 2012. Data for 2013 were not available. Data for 2014 and 2015 (most recent) show a slight widening of the gap again. Limited data over time for gender parity in youth literacy rates shows a positive trend with parity at 0.98 in 2017.

Factors influencing girls' access to primary and secondary education include: early marriage, living in rural areas, financial barriers, cultural barriers, gender insensitive school-environments, and political will.

Literature reviewed

Four reports were provided to review for this helpdesk with data extraction in section 8. A report on advancing women's equality in Africa focussed on improving economic opportunities and noted that parity in work and society must come together. Ethiopia was deemed to be performing particularly badly on parity in 'legal protection and political voice'. However, Ethiopia has an above average score on political representation. Research looking at the role of politics in relation to girls' education gives important insight. Yorke, Rose, and Pankhurst (2019) explore this with discussion on why positive progress in official policy is not necessarily leading to changes on the ground. They recommend a focus on the meso-level, the space between policy and implementation.

Notable improvements in gender parity in the Government cabinet show progress in addressing stereotypes. Women in politics should provide good role models for girls and send messages to families of the importance of women in society. However, it must be recognised that such

positive progress centrally will take time to filter into society, particularly in remote rural areas. Deeply ingrained cultural norms take longer to change than policy.

One promising approach to bridging the gap that emerges out of this helpdesk would be to have powerful women travel and reach out to communities. Promoting gender equality broadly will assist in progress in girls' education but may not be prioritised as direct impacts are hard to measure.

Positive progress within education policy for girls' inclusion is not being realised in practice. Resistance at more local levels is highlighted. Efforts to include women in education planning are commendable but historical cultural norms mean that self-esteem may need to be built for women to take on these roles. Again, this is something that will take time but broader efforts for women's empowerment seem important in this regard. Political power for implementing action is also lacking. There is a need for greater clarity regarding responsibility for policy implementation and adequate funds. There is potentially an overload of policies and guidelines without enough resources to implement them.

2. Proportion of primary-age children out of school

Using the Education Development Policy Center (EDPC) database, data over time were available from the Ethiopia Demographic and Health Survey (DHS).

Looking at data on percentage of children out of school (Table 1) nationally the situation appears to be improving over time both with greater numbers in school and a smaller difference between numbers of boys and girls. In 2016, the most recent available data, there is a 0.4 percentage point difference (PPD) between boys and girls in school with a greater number of girls out of school than boys. This compares to a 7.7 PPD in 2000, 1.8 PPD in 2005, and 1.3 PPD in 2011. It should be noted that 0.4 percentage point is still some way from parity. In numbers of children the difference is 296,279 more girls out of school than boys nationally.

Table 1: Percentage of children out of primary school (age 7-14) over time, national and regional, disaggregated by gender (F=female, M=male)

Year	National	Afar	Benishangul-Gumuz	Gambela	Somali
2016	24.7 (F) 25.1 (M)	37.1 (F) 35 (M)	25 (F) 13.4 (M)	8.5 (F) 10.8 (M)	41.4 (F) 34.9 (M)
2011	31.3 (F) 33.6 (M)	49.4 (F) 45 (M)	27.4 (F) 25.6 (M)	20.6 (F) 15.2 (M)	48 (F) 34 (M)
2005	49.8 (F) 48 (M)	86 (F) 78 (M)	45.5 (F) 41.2 (M)	43 (F) 44.8 (M)	88.4 (F) 81.5 (M)

| 2000 | 68.1 (F) | 79.5 (F) | 63.3 (F) | 44.5 (F) | 86.8 (F) |
| | 60.4 (M) | 76.7 (M) | 48.8 (M) | 24.3 (M) | 85.3 (M) |

Source: Author's own. Data taken from EPDC extraction of DHS dataset[1]
https://www.epdc.org/country/ethiopia

The gender difference in data for the Afar region varies relatively widely over time (see figure 1). There is a small gap in 2000 (3.2 PPD), and large gap in 2005 (8 PPD) getting smaller again in 2011 (4.4 PPD) and 2016 (2.1 PPD). Percentages of out of school children in the Afar region for both boys and girls are higher than the national average for each year of available data. The trend differs compared to the national trend.

The gap between boys and girls varies widely over time in the Benishangul-Gumuz region. A greater percentage of females are out of schools compared to males with a 14.4 PPD in 2000, dropping to 4.3 PPD in 2005, dropping again to 1.8 PDD in 2011, and then making a big rise to 11.6 PPD in 2016. A lower or similar percentage of children are out of school in this region across the years. The percent of boys out of school in the Benishangul-Gumuz region is markedly low in 2016, 13.4 compared to 25.1 nationally. The percent of out of school girls in 2016 is 25, similar to the national average of 24.7. The data show a large decrease in out of school boys between 2016 and 2011 with a PPD of 12.2.

The data for the Gambela region show pronounced fluctuations over time with a 20.2 PPD difference in 2000 to near parity in 2005 and to 5.2 PPD in 2011. The PPDs are where more girls are out of school than boys. In 2016 there is recorded that more boys are out of school than girls by 2.3 PPD. Compared to national average the number of out of school children for both boys and girls are markedly lower across the years.

The trend in gender parity in the Somali region appears to have worsened over time. In 2000 more girls than boys were out of school with a relatively small PPD of 1.5. This increased to 7.1 PPD in 2005, 14 PPD in 2011 and then 7.5 PPD in 2016. There are a larger proportion of children out of school in the Somali average than the national average across years and gender.

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[1] https://www.epdc.org/country/ethiopia

Figure 1: Trends in the gap between out of primary school boys and girls, national and regional
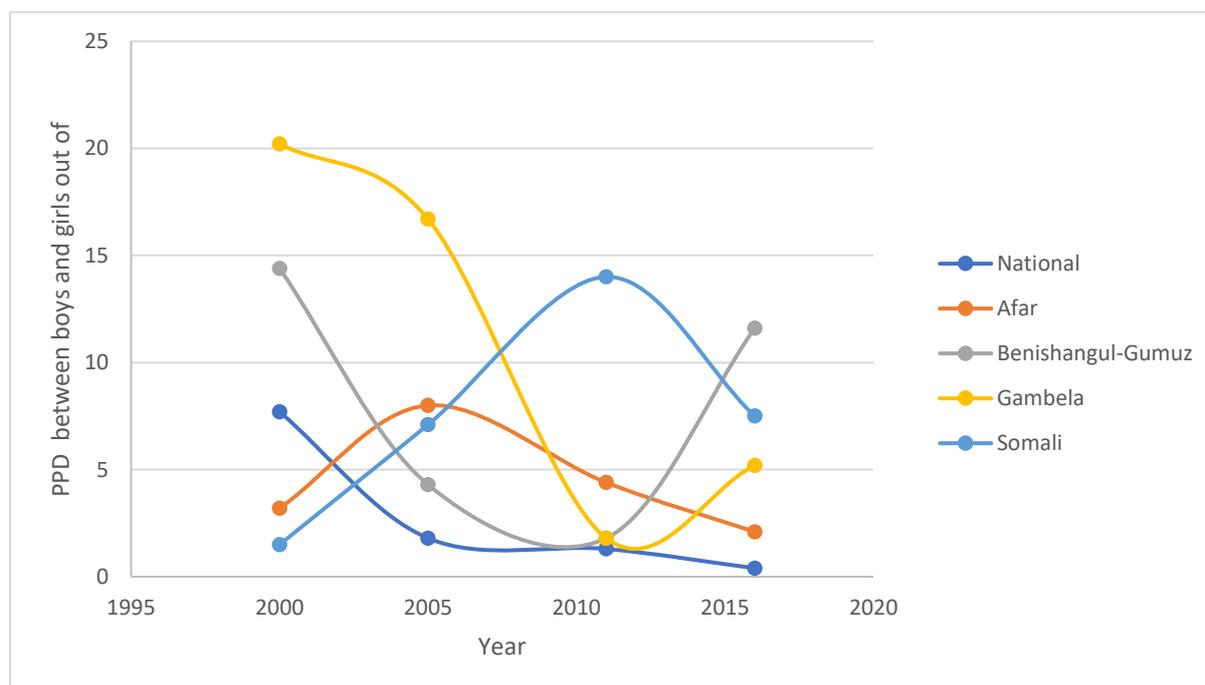
Source: Author's own. Data taken from EPDC extraction of DHS dataset[2] calculations from table 1.

Note that a downward trend on the chart indicates an improvement in parity (lower PPD), a narrowing of the gap between boys and girls. An upward trend on the chart indicates a worsening in parity (higher PPD), a widening of the gap between boys and girls.

3. Proportion of secondary-age children out of school

Nationally the proportion of children out of secondary school has improved between 2000 and 2011 then worsened again by 2016.

Table 2: Percentage of children out of secondary school (age 15-18) over time, national and regional, disaggregated by gender (F=female, M=male)

Year	National	Afar	Benishangul-Gumuz	Gambela	Somali
2016	54.7 (F) 45.5 (M)	76 (F) 48.7 (M)	54.2 (F) 38.2 (M)	31.8 (F) 26.7 (M)	66.7 (F) 37.9 (M)

[2] https://www.epdc.org/country/ethiopia

Year					
2011	44.1 (F)	71 (F)	44.9 (F)	58.3 (F)	64.5 (F)
	41.8 (M)	39.4 (M)	34.3 (M)	56 (M)	38.2 (M)
2005	57.7 (F)	84.9 (F)	67.2 (F)	49.6 (F)	91.5 (F)
	43.4 (M)	76.5 (M)	32.5 (M)	32.9 (M)	80.4 (M)
2000	71.7 (F)	87.4 (F)	74.4 (F)	46.7 (F)	80.3 (F)
	56 (M)	74.8 (M)	48.3 (M)	18.9 (M)	77.9 (M)

Source: Author's own. Data taken from EPDC extraction of DHS dataset[3]
https://www.epdc.org/country/ethiopia

The gap between out of secondary school girls and boys nationally improved between 2000 and 2011 and then worsened again slightly in 2016 (See figure 2). The Somali region have a worsening trend for gender parity for secondary children, similar to the trend on the region for out of school primary children. In Gambela the gap between genders falls dramatically between 2000 and 2011 then increases again slightly in 2016. There is no clear trend for Benishangul-Gumuz and Afar.

**Figure 2: Trends in the gap between out of secondary school boys and girls, national and regional**

[3] https://www.epdc.org/country/ethiopia
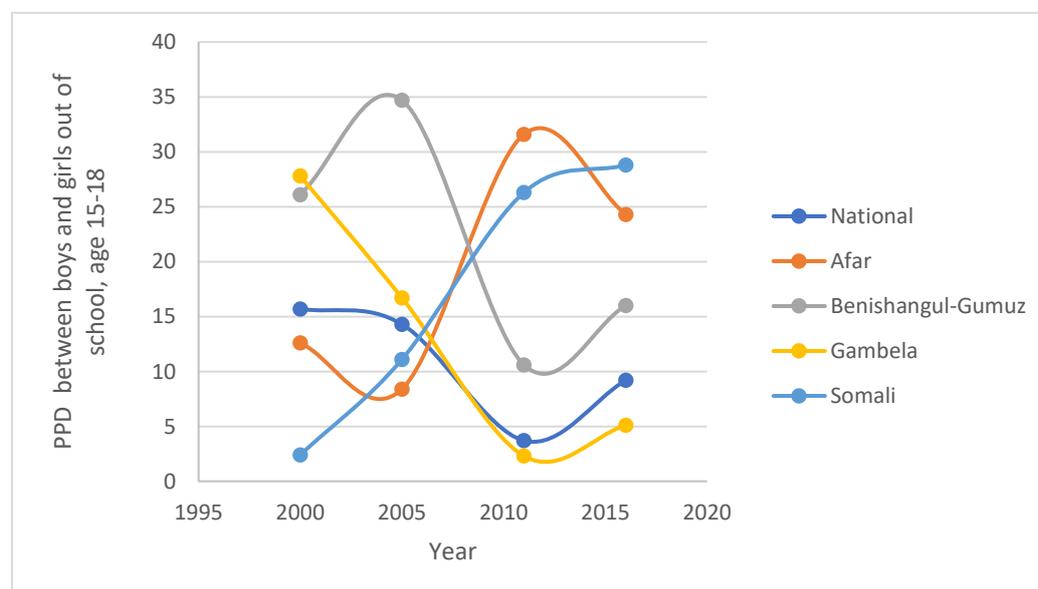
Source: Author's own. Data taken from EPDC extraction of DHS dataset[4] calculations from table 2.

4. Completion rates

Primary completion rates were only available at a national level using the UNESCO database. Figure 3 shows a general trend of a narrowing of the gender gap over time (data were unavailable for 2013). In 2012 completion rates were slightly higher for girls than for boys. In 2014 and 2015 completion rates are slightly higher again for boys.

**Figure 3. Primary education completion rates, females and males**

Source: Adapted from UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), http://data.uis.unesco.org/#
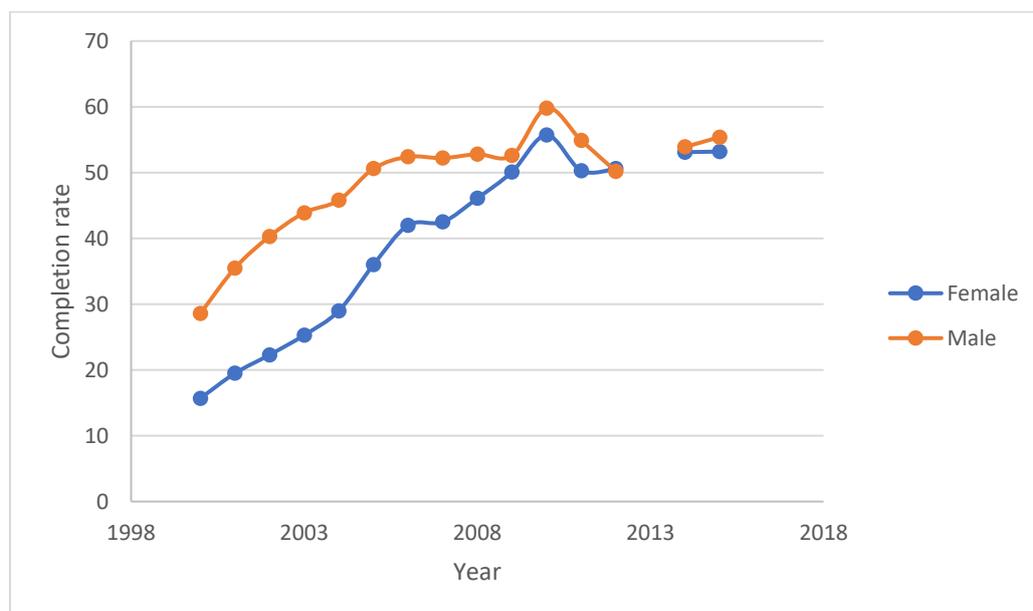
5. Youth literacy rate

National gender parity in literacy rates for 15-24 year olds has improved from 0.62 in 2004 to 0.98 in 2017 (with 1 indicating complete parity). Data were available for four years between 2000 and 2019, see figure 4.

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[4] https://www.epdc.org/country/ethiopia

Figure 4: Gender parity for youth literacy rates in Ethiopia, population 15-24 years
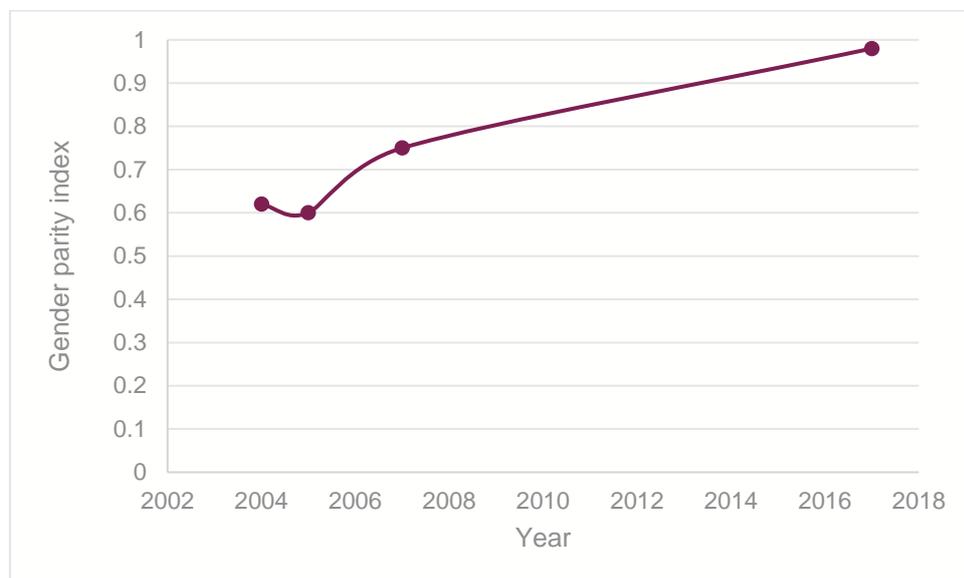
Source: Adapted from: UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS)[5]

6. Data quality

Data quality would be a useful area to explore further on this topic. A rapid search identified comments from an early Ethiopia DHS report that fieldwork is closely monitored through field visits and field check tables (Central Statistical Authority and ORC Macro, 2001). The most recent DHS report describes in more detail the field team and reports the use of 28 data quality controllers (14 for interviews and 14 for biomarkers) (Central Statistical Agency (CSA) [Ethiopia] and ICF, 2016).

UNESCO have an assessment framework to evaluate administrative routine data systems (UNESCO, 2014).

7. Factors influencing gender parity

The following factors were identified during the rapid research for this report: early marriage, living in rural areas, financial barriers, cultural barriers, gender insensitive school-environments, and political will. The scope of this query was revised so this area was not fully explored. Early marriage, rural areas and cultural barriers are expanded upon below as information which emerged during this review.

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[5] http://data.uis.unesco.org/#

Early marriage

Of women who left school between ages 15 and 17, only 9 percent reported marriage as the reason (Erulka, 2013).

A Berhane Hewan pilot used community conversations, support for remaining in school and cash transfers. Study participants were three times more likely to stay in school and 10 times less likely to be married. However, intervention participants were more likely to be married than the control group at age 15-19 suggesting the programme shifts marriage age (Psaki, 2015).

Rural areas

A Young Lives Policy Brief from 2006 highlights regional disparities in gender parity in Ethiopia and suggests distance to school as the main factor (Pereznieto & Jones, 2006). Parents are concerned that girls could come to harm on their journey to school. National level data only were available from the Education Policy Development Centre on out of school children disaggregated by urban rural (table 3). There are certainly wide disparities between proportion of children out of school between urban and rural areas. However, whether living in urban or rural area does not seem to affect disparity according to these data.

Table 3: Percent of children out of school, primary age 7-14, gender disaggregated

Year	2000	2006	2011	2016
Rural	75.7 (F) 66.2 (M)	54.1 (F) 51.6 (M)	34.6 (F) 37.3 (M)	26.8 (F) 26.9 (M)
Urban	23.1 (F) 19 (M)	14.4 (F) 12.2 (M)	14.2 (F) 10.7 (M)	11.3 (F) 10.5 (M)

Source: https://www.epdc.org/country/ethiopia

Cultural barriers related to the treatment of women and girls

A Young Lives Policy brief describes traditional attitudes that parents believe there is nothing to be gained from sending girls to school (Pereznieto & Jones, 2006). Families prefer to use girls' services at home and there is concern that school will spoil them culturally.

Gender insensitive school environments

See Yorke, Rose, and Pankhurst (2019) and Ministry of Education, Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (2019).

8. Annotated bibliography

The following references were provided by DFID to be included in the report. A rapid data extraction was undertaken to report information deemed of relevance to the helpdesk topic.

The Power of Parity. Advancing Women's Equality in Africa.

McKinsey Global Institute (2019)

The overall focus of the report is on economic inclusion of women in Africa. The report notes that parity in both work and society must both occur together.

Ethiopia

McKinsey Institute Global analysis reports gender parity statistics rated at different levels to compare to other countries. Rated extremely high inequality for Ethiopia was 'legal protection and political voice', gender parity score (GPS) 0.47. Rated high inequality are 'gender equality at work' (GPS 0.54), 'essential services and enablers of economic opportunity' (GPS 0.72), 'overall gender inequality in society' (GPS 0.68), and 'overall GPS' (GPS 0.63). Rated as medium inequality was 'physical security and autonomy' (GPS 0.85). Overall the Ethiopia scores were classed as average compared to other African countries.

Ethiopia has an above average score on equality of political representation. There is a female head of state alongside a male head of government. Positive outcomes in Ethiopia of skills training improving women's earnings and productivity used psychology-focused personal initiative training. Small business owners are encouraged to be self-starting and future oriented, and to anticipate problems and plan ways to overcome them. Also noted, Ethiopia's Enterprise Partners, increasing digital financial services and aiming for 75 percent of new bank accounts to be opened by women.

Ethiopia is one of the 13 African countries to have ratified the International Labour Organization Convention 183 which guarantees maternity leave and breaks at work for breastfeeding; protects pregnant women against discrimination and dismissal; and guarantees women can return to their job after pregnancy.

Education

Women in Africa take on a disproportionate amount of unpaid care work and this correlates with lower education levels. More men than women are in informal employment and 44.5 in informal employment have no education. Limited education makes it hard to leave informal employment. Approximately 39 percent of women working formally have a secondary education and 30 percent a tertiary education.

Notes child marriage a factor affecting girls education. And limited resources due to economic constraints and political priorities. Analysis found where there is gender parity in education there is likely to be greater: parity in unpaid work, and achievement in professional and technical occupations. 'Narrower gender gaps in educational attainment are strongly correlated with the status of girls and women in the family' (p27).

The government in Namibia have ensured women are teaching in schools so that girls have relatable figures and role models. Along with other measures, Namibia have achieved parity in education. Schools are free and education is compulsory. Attainment and equality are tracked carefully.

Cash transfers to encourage girls into schools have been successful in Morocco. Particularly for keeping girls in school or encouraging them to return after dropout. The education plan for Chad 2018-20 is ensuring gender parity with legal, financial, and cultural measures. Aims include strengthening teachers' knowledge on particular characteristics of girls' schooling, and giving girls grants for equipment and transport. Zambia ensures maternity leave for teenage mothers so they do not dropout of the education system.

Education Statistics Annual Abstract 2011 E.C. (2018/19)

Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia Ministry of Education (2019)

This report contains data from the Education Management Information System (EMIS). It is not clear why data are labelled 2011 with (2018/19) in brackets? The tables show gender disaggregated data for access, but it is not clear what the data are showing. Targets are said to be in percentages but doesn't say in relation to what and some figures are over 100? Data are shown for 2007 and then for 2011 both target and actual. There is a column showing whether the target was reached. Data for all grades show a higher figure for males than females. Dropout rates appear to have worsened with relative parity for both boys and girls. Completion rates were equal in 2007 and increased above target for both boys and girls by 2011 but boys' rate was four percentage points higher.

Gender Parity Index (GPI) data are recorded although parity of what is unclear? For pre-primary there is no difference in GPI between 2007 and 2011, 0.95. For Grades 1-8 gender parity has worsened from 0.93 to 0.9. GPI has also worsened for Grades 9-12, from 0.91 to 0.87. Females as a share of school leaders has increased slightly from 8 percent in 2007 to 11 percent in 2011.

There are tables with gender disaggregated data from each year for the years between 2007 E.C. (2013/14) to 2011 E.C. (2018/19) for enrolment and number of teachers. Primary enrolment increases from 2007 to 2008 and again in 2009 then decreases again for both boys and girls. The gender gap appears relatively unchanged over these years.

Table 4: Primary enrolment trends by region, F=female, M=male

Year	Afar	Benishangul-Gumuz	Gambella	Somali
2007	85,431 (F) 117,253 (M)	98,434 (F) 121,928 (M)	51,515 (F) 62,496 (M)	343,761 (F) 465,116 (M)
2008	86,130 (F) 109,274 (M)	102,696 (F) 126,454 (M)	53,601 (F) 63,798 (M)	376,793 (F) 512,650 (M)

2009	89,058 (F)	111,956 (F)	53,080 (F)	370,509 (F)
	110,689 (M)	138,220 (M)	62,681 (M)	522,542 (M)
2010	83,227 (F)	116,465 (F)	52,895 (F)	423,883 (F)
	102,905 (M)	139,900 (M)	61,028 (M)	572,957 (M)
2011	81,340 (F)	114,937 (F)	56,059 (F)	391,971 (F)
	102,829 (M)	137,682 (M)	62,973 (M)	541,588 (M)

Source: Author's own. Data taken from Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia Ministry of Education (2019).

In Afar primary enrolment of males declines over the five-year period, 2007-2011 (table 4). Enrolment of females increases then decreases again. In the Benishangul-Gumuz region both male and female enrolment increase over the five years with little change in the gender gap. In Gambella there is a small upward trend in female enrolment while male enrolment remains relatively unchanged. The gender gap is therefore reduced in this region. In Somali there is a sizeable increase in both male and female enrolments in 2010 which decreases again in 2011. The gender gap remains relatively unchanged over the five-year period.

There are more data in this report which could be further explored outside of the scope of this report. Data from this relatively narrow time-frame may not be useful or recent enough to spend a lot of time on for this query.

The Politics of Girls' Education: The Case of Ethiopia 1991-2019

Yorke, Rose, and Pankhurst (2019)

Noting the difficulties in achieving gender equality in education despite international and national level commitment, this report looks at the role of politics in relation to this issue. It draws on a large-scale study of education quality reforms in primary education in Ethiopia. It explores the interaction between the political settlement and education policy domain.

This report uses Ministry of Education Annual Abstracts data to show the considerable progress in enrolment rates for both boys and girls since 1995. The gender gap improves around 2005 and the again in 2007 but starts to widen again around 2014. The gap is wider in 2018 than the gap between 2006 and 2012. Data on learning levels show greater inequality than enrolment rates. Rural girls are particularly marginalised. Traditional gender norms are reported to be the greatest barrier to girls' lower enrolment and achievement. The burden of heavy domestic work is one factor that inhibits attendance and performance. Traditional patriarchal practices are difficult to change and progress in this area is slower in rural areas.

School- and community-level factors have been a focus for gender parity in education, but authors recommend a focus at the meso-level, the space 'between policy and it's realisations' (p5). They explore the actors and relationships determining whether policy is translated into practice.

The political domain

The new prime minister from 2018 has made commitments to education and gender equality. Many women have been placed into high level positions in the cabinet showing commitment to real change. This progress in addressing stereotypes and providing role models for girls may take some time to filter into the change on the ground in communities and families.

The education domain

Stakeholder interviews find the representation of women in the education system is poor despite policies and strategies to improve this. There is particularly a lack of women in positions of decision-making and programme design. Resistance of gender quotas was found among male stakeholders at the *woreda*[6] level. There is some reluctance among women to enter into leadership positions. The authors suggest that cultural norms may have eroded their confidence to take on such roles. The Gender Directorate at the Ministry of Education were reported to have little power for implementing action. The Minister for Education between 1991 and 2006, female Dr. Gennet Zewde describes the difficulties of being a woman in government and needing to fight resistance to be taken seriously. She made a lot of progress during her time as Minister.

Attitudinal barriers of stakeholders are found to be a major barrier to progress in girls' education. Trainings to convince stakeholders are not necessarily able to change deeply entrenched biases. More progressive stakeholders acknowledge that although there is progress with girls' enrolment, access and quality remain an issue. They recognise the barriers of domestic work burdens, early marriage, and discriminatory attitudes in the school environment. There needs to be a focus on completion and not just enrolment.

Authors make a distinction between parity and equality, emphasising that although the gap in enrolment numbers are improving, this is not the whole picture. Some stakeholders think that parity has been achieved because enrolment statistics have improved. The high performance of individual girls as well as favourable aggregate statistics is seen by some stakeholders as evidence that inequality is not a problem.

A price worth paying. A strategy for mobilising and utilising resources for the education sector in Ethiopia.

Ministry of Education, Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (2019)

The latest data available on education spending shows that Ethiopia is spending 4.7 percent of gross domestic product on education. Ethiopia have problems with tax collection rates which constrains funds. Ethiopia uses a larger share of education spending on higher education than comparable countries.

The report notes that among the huge numbers of internally displaced children, girls' have much lower school attendance than boys. The median age girls get married is 17.1 years, despite marriage being illegal before the age of 18. Teenagers in rural areas are three times as likely to have begun child bearing than urban peers.

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[6] 3rd level administrative division

Barriers to girls' education noted in the report are girls' domestic responsibilities, lack of parental awareness of the benefits of education, lack of gender sensitive facilities, and school violence.

'Ethiopia has long-standing policy and planning commitments to gender equity in education through a raft of national plans, including its Growth and Transformation Plans, education sector plans and Education and Training Policy 1994 with a focus on promoting equitable access to education and training.' (p76) Strategies to mainstream gender equality in national curricula include recruiting and training female teachers, gender-responsive resource allocation, enhancing female participation in leadership and planning, and granting financial support to girls.

Policy instruments developed in the latter part of this decade include: the Gender Strategy for the Education and Training Sector, Girls' Education and Gender Equality Strategy, Gender Responsive Pedagogy Module, and Gender Mainstreaming Guidelines.

The first Education Sector Development Policy (ESDP), in 1994, noted the need for meaningful local action to break down barriers for girls. It calls for community leaders and women's groups to create awareness of the importance of girls' education and bring about change at the family level. ESDP II emphasised a safe supportive environment for learning with gender-sensitive curricula and separate latrines. Policies are often not implemented as responsibility is not clear. The latest ESDP, number five, has strategies focusing on gender throughout rather than just in specific sections. ESDP IV suggested: 'establishing and strengthening gender offices, gender forums, girls' clubs and female student associations in regional education bureaus; gender mainstreaming guidelines were revised; a life skills training manual for secondary education prepared; a system to mitigate gender-based violence, supported by a code of conduct' (p78).

A Gender Responsive Pedagogy (GRP) manual focuses on creating a gender responsive environment in Ethiopia which is hoped to become a central component to in-service teacher training.

Gender gaps have widened under GSDP V. 2017/18 gender parity calculations based on data from ESDP V, ESDP V MTR (Mid-term review) and EMIS show significant regional variations with Somali and Afar being particularly poor. Ethiopia General Education Quality Improvement Programme for Equity (GEQIP-E) aims to improve parity by 'empowering girls in upper primary grades through girls' clubs; implementing a (recently developed) life skills training manual for upper primary; and gender-sensitive school improvement planning' (p81).

Research into the uptake of gender policies showed that the GRP had not been incorporated. Establishment of gender clubs had not been given attention. One donor interviewed believed that there was an overload of policies and guidelines and not enough resources to implement them.

9. References

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About this report