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Proceeding of a Workshop on Women in Leadership and Decision Making

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March 2005

Together for a Better Future

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PROCEEDINGS OF A WORKSHOP ON WOMEN IN LEADRESHIP AND DECISION MAKING

Organized by The National Gender Forum
Christian Relief and Development Association
(CRDA)

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March 8, 2005
CRDA Training Center

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PROCEEDINGS OF A WORKSHOP ON WOMEN IN LEADRESHIP AND DECISION MAKING

Date: March 8,2005
Venue: CRDA Training Center.
Participants: See Annex.

1.Opening Session

On March 8,2005 that marks the International Women's Day for the 95th time internationally and for 30th nationally, the National Gender Forum of NGOs under the auspices of the Christian Relief and Development Association /CRDA/ organized a day long workshop under the theme – **Women in Leadership and Decision Making.** The workshop that attracted participants from NGO/CSOs was held at the CRDA training center in Addis Ababa. The theme of the workshop was chosen purposely by the organizers as timely issue since the year 2005 is time for regional and national elections in Ethiopia.

In addition to the welcoming and opening speeches by the officials of CRDA, scholars that initiated lively deliberations among the participants presented two studies pertaining to women's involvement in leadership and decision-making.

2 Welcoming Address

Chairperson of the Gender Forum Steering Committee with CRDA Wrt. Wubitu Abere in her welcoming note to the participants said the National Gender Forum of NGOs, which was officially launched on 8 July 2003, is entrusted with responsibilities of undertaking and realizing gender research, advocacy, networking, capacity building and fundraising activities meant to enhance gender equality at different levels.

Referring to previous year's event Wrt. Wubitu recalled that the forum in collaboration with the prime minister's office and the DAG Group for the Advancement of Women had organized a workshop under the theme – **Gender Exemplary Practices-** By then, according to Wrt. Wubitu, the participants have dwelt on best achievements in the area of education as well as promising practices from pastoral and

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agricultural households and given warm recognitions. The same session has also called for the reinforcement of such rewarding and gender sensitive attitudes and practices.
Concerning this year's theme Wrt. Wubitu said the daylong workshop is organized to create awareness on the issue women in leadership and decision making which her organization considers a timely agenda. Wrt. Wubit finally called on Deputy Executive Director for Policy at the CRDA Ato Dereje Balcha to officially open the workshop.

3 Opening Address

In his opening remarks, deputy Executive Director for Policy at the CRDA, Ato Dereje Balcha indicated that CRDA's objective as an umbrella organization includes helping disadvantaged and marginalized groups to which women belong. Towards this end, Ato Dereje said CRDA has initiated the establishment of different forums one among which was the National Gender Forum of NGOs.

According to Dereje beyond its set objectives the forum has a long-term objective of transforming itself in to a national network with broader opportunity for joining similar networks at regional and global levels.

Ato Dereje emphasized that the theme of the workshop – Women in Leadership and Decision-making was chosen by the NGO/CSO sector in consultation of member organizations considering the upcoming May 2005 national and regional elections. The workshop is therefore meant to create awareness among member organizations, partners and the community at large. He went on to say that it was also intended to consider the case from a civic perspective and encourage women's involvement in the election process.

Ato Dereje also noted that the participation of women in leadership and decision-making would be the key to their involvement in policy formulation process and thereby voice their issues for stronger influence. He thus urged the NGO/CSO sector to work for the involvement of more women in leadership and decision-making, their participation in poverty alleviation programmes and the betterment of the livelihood of women at the grass root level.

Ato Dereje finally seized the occasion to express his conviction that CRDA would do all in its power to ensure the success of the efforts of the National Gender Forum of NGOs.

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4. Women in leadership and Decision Making: The Ethiopian Perspective

Following the brief opening session, a study entitled Women in Leadership and Decision Making: The Ethiopian Perspective was presented by Wrt. Mintewab Zelelew a Gender officer at the African Initiative for Democratic Order.

While introducing her approaches Mintewab noted that for the sake of presentation, she has divided her paper in to 3 sections namely: the history of Women's Political participation in different regimes, justifications for women's participation, and barriers for women's involvement in decision making.

In her assessment of women's participation in the Pre-FDRE Government, Mintewab noted that leadership and decision making posts in the past imperial regimes were totally considered to be taken by men. This situation, according to Mintewab, has prohibited women from contributing to the politics of their country besides making women vulnerable groups of the society.

Despite the above situation Mintewab indicated some rare occasions in the pre-Emperor Hailesillassie I regime where women had assumed some kind of leadership and decision making opportunities cases in point were the times of Meskel Kibra(wife of King Lalibela), Mintewab(wife of Bakafa) and most of all Taitu(wife of MenelikII).

While examining Hailesellassie's regime where the first parliament was introduced, Mintewab said no woman has been nominated as a member of parliament until 1957. The revision of the constitution that year introduced the first ever and only female parliamentarian. Following this Mintewab added, 2 women in 1965 and 5 in 1969 have joined the emperor's parliament.

Coming to the Dergue period, Mintewab said the 1987 constitution and the subsequently proclaimed electoral law had ensured the equality of citizens and their right to elect and be elected. She also mentioned that the regime has realized the establishment of the Revolutionary Ethiopian Women's Association (REWA). She however, stressed that all have remained far from increasing the participation of women in leadership and decision-making.

Concerning situations in the FDRE Government, the presenter mentioned the adoption of important legal frame works that ensure the full participation of women in leadership and decision-making.

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These include the provisions in the country's constitution, national laws on the rights of women as well as international instruments adopted by the government. Despite the various provisions Mentewb said women still don't have meaningful participation in decision-making bodies both at federal and regional levels.

To substantiate her argument Metewab has refereed to figures (on the participation of women) during the past two national and regional elections under the FDRE. (Please refer the study by Wrt. Mintewab Zelelew attached with this proceeding). She has also compared the situation with other countries that have registered remarkable results in promoting the involvement of more women in decision-making.

Concerning justifications behind the need for women's participation on leadership and decision-making, Mentewab has primarily indicated 'Right Based' justifications as crucial. She argued the principle stating women and men should be equal participants in power and decision-making, which has been recognized in major declarations, should be the reason for women's participation. Mintewab raised economic justifications as a second reason. In this regard the fact that men and women are making decisions on equal footing will make a difference in the priorities that are set for development. In addition she argued that as women constitute half of the human kind they are half of the world's resource of talent, ability and potential. According to Mintewab there is also efficiency-based argument for women's participation in leadership and decision-making.

In the section on Barriers for women's participation in politics, she mentioned cultural, economic and political barriers. Mintewab argued that in most parts of Ethiopia girls are kept largely with in the confines of the household and family where they are taught to accept decisions that men make on their behalf. She added the contrary to the requirements to be part in decision-making; the majority of women are illiterate. Hence lack of access to education could be taken as a challenge women face in seeking leadership positions.

Before concluding her presentation Mitewab has made a list of recommendations that she believes would promote the participation of women in Leadership and decision-making.

- The government the civil society need to work a lot to empower women economically
- Efforts should be exerted towards realizing women's right to education

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- The socio cultural set up needs to be changed in order to realize women's equal rights with men
- Political parties should give due attention to women's issues.

5. Discussions.

After wrt. Mintewab concluded her presentation the moderator Ato Lealem Berhanu (IIRR Country Director) opened the flour for discussion.
The first speaker Ejigayehu started her comment by appreciating the presenter for having the interest to come up with such a big and timely issue. She also expressed her happiness over the coming in to the scene of young female gender researchers like Mintewab. She also expressed her appreciation to the CRDA gender forum for organizing such an event and for its gender related activities so far.

Regarding the contents of the presentation she expressed her doubt as how much the quota system will promote the involvement of women in leadership and decision-making. According to the participant though the quota system has some contribution, the beneficiaries of the system may not address the issue of women empowerment. In this regard she stressed on the efficiency of the women to address and raise the issue of women using their posts. The participant also recalled the presence of quota system in the previous regime but questioned how much it helped to raise the status of women. Therefore, she argued that it will only helps to raise the number of women in decision making positions not their active involvement.

In her opinion it will be better to work towards convincing men and women as well as political parties to indorse programs reflecting the interests of women. The other issue raised by the same speaker was the importance of capacity building in a way that enables women to exercise power beginning from school days. She referred to a regulation by the ministry of education that requires one of two classroom monitors to be a girl.

Though she appreciated the trend as a significant move towards making women exercise power at early stages, she opposed the fact that those female students are made vice monitors. Regarding the

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presenter's analysis of historical aspects, the participant asked why empress Zewditu was not mentioned among those women who had exercised some degree of power historically and how Zewditu failed to exercise the power bestowed on her at that time.

Responding to questions and comments forwarded by the participants the presenters Mintiwab said the quota system would be one of the ways to promote the involvement of women in leadership and decision-making. She believed so because it is the access to education that prohibited women from assuming such positions. She however agreed with the participants that with out meaningful participation the quota system will remain far from achieving its goal even a 50 % involvement of women. Concerning capacity building Mintwab accepted the idea that calls for sustainable capacity building programs to women.

She also noted that she has indicated in her paper how capacity building schemes benefit women parliamentarians as well as those in leadership and decision-making. Responding to the comment on the absence of causes for the under representation of women she said though not in detail she had touched the factors to it. She also accepted factors like "women failed to stand for their right and men will not allow it" as additional factors.

6. Women's participation in political leadership and decision-making.

The second presentation on Women's participation in political leadership and decision making was made by Berouk Mesfin , a lecturer in Political Science and International Relations at The AAU and Assistant Dean of the College of Social Sciences.

Basically Ato Berouk divided his paper in to two major parts namely: An over view of women's participation in political leadership and decision making at global level as well as Assessment of omen's participation in political leadership and decision in Ethiopia (see Annex)

While looking into the involvement of women in in leadership and decision-making at global level, the presenter said though women represent half of the global population, they still constitute a minority in higher levels of political leadership and decision-making bodies.

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Coming to situations in Sub-Saharan Africa, Ato Berouk noted that it is no different from the rest of the world. He said in the vast majority of countries in Sub Saharan Africa, women account for less than 10% of parliamentary seats. The presenter however indicated promising trends of Uganda where he said has become close to reach parity between men and women in the legislature (women have 48% in the Lower House & 30% in the Upper House). Ato Berouk also made a detailed presentation on the situation of women presidents and prime ministers in Sub Saharan Africa. According to Berouk currently, Mozambique's Luisa Diogo is the only prime minister in Sub Saharan Africa. He also touched up on the inadequate representation of women at the ministerial level.

While presenting the major part of his paper i.e. an assessment of women's participation in political leadership and decision making, Berouk started by clearly showing the involvement Ethiopian women as political party leaders, as election candidates, as parliamentarians and as ministers. His presentation, which was supported by facts and figures, showed the low level of women's representation that calls for much attention in the future.

Ato Berouk's study has tried to forward a wide range of factors that account for the scarce representation of women in political leadership and decision-making. Among his factors were weaknesses on the part of Ethiopian political parties, Ethiopian women's perception of politics, economic insecurity and financial vulnerability of women, lesser access to education and the cultural perception that considers women's place as home and more specifically kitchen, in the words of Berouk "The Cultural Glass ceiling".

The presenter finally made a set of recommendations that would help to increase women's opportunities to reach higher levels of political leadership and decision-making. Some of the points are: provision of the necessary education, improved use of the media to change wrong perceptions, inclusion of a sizable number of women in political parties as active members, leaders and candidates, a national legislation setting aside a number of reserved seats for women in the two houses, a program of affirmative action as well as a an aggressive and policy relevant research on the situation of women.

7. Discussions.

After summarizing the major issues of Ato Berouk's presentation, the discussant Ato Lealem made the flour open for possible questions comments by the participants.

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A male participant from the Ogaden Welfare and Development Association started by appreciating the presenters and organizers for coming up with such a timely issue of national importance. He however expressed his reservation on the studies focusing only on statistical and historical aspects. He said the paper does not talk about why those things happened to women. He added there has been women's movement starting from 1910 recognized by the world but it did not do any good to women so far. Women and children are still suffering .why did this happen? It should ask this question. He thus forwarded his opinion regarding the above question. According to the participant the reasons are because men will not allow it and women will not stand for their right. So he concluded instead of talking about history he asked the participants to talk about what has to be done at home and in everyone's institution.

Another male participant told the forum not to focus on the number of female parliamentarians rather on the actual implementation of programs on women. He referred the case of US and Canada that have lesser number of women parliamentarians than Rwanda and South Africa as an example and asked the question as where do we see the respect of the rights of women? According to the participant greater involvement of women does not necessarily guarantee the respect of their rights.

On her reflections at the workshop W/ro Azeb noted that even those women who had the opportunity to assume positions have not fully exercised their power. I doubt even the educated women and men alike know their constitutional rights. But for the sake of the discussion, which is on women, she said, I am sure most women do not have sufficient awareness of their rights. So how do we expect educated women like us to teach other less privileged women about their constitutional rights? According to Azeb, the submissiveness of women comes from the long-lived cultural barrier. In addition I doubt men are ready to share their power with females. We should look in to this matter carefully, as whether the men are ready or not. She added the struggle should not only come from women it should also come from the men side too. We need to sensitize all through education. According to Azeb, Advocacy plays a significant role in this respect.

In her comment on the issues raised Gender Forum Steering Committee chairperson wubitu Abere said the fundamental thing should be addressing the fundamental human rights concern of

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women. Woubitu raised as an example a billboard by the UNICEF that says Educating female benefits all as having a different connotation behind the statement. According to Wubitu it is not because women serve others that they are entitled to their rights. The fundamental thing should be addressing the human right issue. When big institutions like UNICEF say or speak in terms of efficiency and neglecting the right component, what do we expect from the other staff?
The other point Wubitu raised was regarding the translation in to practice of international and national high standards that are set so far. Concerning who should do it, she said, " we as NGO or CSO group (I feel) do have a role to play in the translation of those high standards ". She also invited the participants to reflect on the matter.

Another female participant started by reminding the forum to focus on the content of the paper and not to expect the paper to be a full-fledged one. She also warned the participants not to be optimist about men sharing their power to women. She said women should rather strive to gain power rather than expect from another party. One way of realizing it would be through capacity building.

Another female participant stressed the importance of considering the willingness of men to share their power and women standing for their rights side by side. She said Ethiopian women have not developed the culture of standing for their rights hence they need the participation of women as well.

A participant from the SOS Sahel noted that from her experience working in the remotest corners of the country, she has observed the absence of awareness on gender issues at grass roots level. According to her, such realities call for an aggressive campaign of awareness by all concerned. She also stressed on the importance of bringing about attitudinal changes among the educated citizens as well as who she said tend to marginalize gender concerns in their areas of involvement.

In connection with the above issue the discussant Ato Lealem Birhanu recalled his experience 5 years ago while he was conducting training for 30 government officials with over 16 years of experiences. At the training he asked the trainees whether gender was their organizational issue and they responded it was not. He then asked them why they have most of the women in the support staff especially referring to why they don't have a male secretary. As Lealem asked this question, they all responded by saying that because a man's voice won't be as attractive as a woman does. According to Lealem this

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clearly shows the low level of gender awareness even among the educated.

A female representative from the Ethiopian Orthodox Church Development Commission started her comments by saying that if the proper interventions could be made, Churches would contribute a lot in promoting the role of churches in leadership. According to the participant, promoting the leadership of men has for long been the dogma of the church she belonged. As a result, she argued, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church currently has over half a million clergies (all of them men). She added the church officials always tell her not to raise the issue of women becoming clergies. According to her this trend greatly damages the role of religious institutions in bringing attitudinal changes among the community. She thus stressed on the need for aggressive intervention towards reversing the trend.

In connection with the above issue of women and religious institutions, a participant from the Mekane Yesus Evangelical Church (Eabessae Ashenafi) mentioned recent promising she had observed in her church in bringing women to leadership positions. Accordingly she said her church (Mekane yesus) already has six women priests and expressed her conviction that during the upcoming General Assembly of the Church a woman or two would run for presidency. Speaking about leadership and decision-making, Eabessae agreed with other participants and the presenters that education plays a significant role in the realization of the goals. She however indicated her reservation that the current low quality education prevalent in most schools would help in shaping future women leaders as desired. She therefore told participants to do all in their capacity to bring the problem to the attention of those concerned bodies.

Concerning the point on religion, a participant from the Ogaden welfare and Development Association agreed with the speaker from the Orthodox Church saying that each religion anywhere will not encourage gender equality and it will remain a problem in the coming years as well.

A representative from Panos Ethiopia (Abraham) stressed on the importance of introducing capacity building activities with the ongoing affirmative action programs. According to Abraham unless the two activities are employed side by side, realizing active female involvement in leadership and decision-making would remain far from becoming successful.

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A woman (Nejat) from the Ethiopian Muslims Relief and Development Organization urged the participants and the organizers not to be event oriented when dealing with women's issue. She said it has become quiet normal to hear about women in leadership when elections approach or a related event is about to be observed. She instead told the participants to raise the issue in a sustainable manner. Nejat also recommended the formation of a network of NGOs to deal with the the issue in a sustainable and integrated manner. Establishing an advocacy group that incorporates that incorporates men and religious leaders should also be part of the effort, said Nejat.

Another participant (Nigist) from forum on Street Children Ethiopia recalled that following the adoption of a policy on women, every regional state and federal government offices have established Women's Affairs Departments. But she said despite their existence structurally, the departments the most neglected parts of all structures. According to Nigist mainstreaming women's issue could not be a reality without strengthening those departments.

A male participant from Mama Humanitarian Organization mentioned his concern that as women start to assume higher positions, they tend to boss around especially on their men colleagues. He added those women in particular do it purposely against male employees, which will in turn spoil the whole working environment.

The discussant. Ato Lealem responded to the speaker by saying that though he doubted the existence of such moves by all females; if that is true for the females the same applies to men while assuming power.

A female participant who started by questioning the purpose of the workshop itself said that the discussion is missing its target of what to do in order to raise involvement of more women in the upcoming election. She added the workshop was meant to propose on possible actions to be taken by the CSO and NGO group to that end. She thus asked the organizers what they have in mind while planning the workshop. She also asked them if they think the issue came late for the May 2005 elections and what should be done in the remaining relatively shorter periods.
Similarly another participant told the forum not to raise the issue of women in leadership only when election approaches. She said the participants should discuss broadly on the role of CRDA for the election that comes after five years.

In her response to the above questions and comments Coordinator of the Workshop Wro. Almaz noted that the Gender Forum under the

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auspices of CRDA has been looking in to the issue of Women in Leadership and decision making from different perspectives. When one looks at CRDA's efforts from the point of view of this workshop, it might be considered late. But CRDA is conducting this workshop to examine and have reflections on the role of women in leadership and decision making from civil society perspective. The issue regarding the inclusion of women's issue in the programs of contesting political parties have been discussed much. This time she noted their attention is to consider and treat the matter as a human rights issue. According to Almaz the organizers' intention is to see the matter beyond politics. She also reiterated the fact that the theme of the workshop - Women in Leadership and Decision making a timely issue. She also indicated that they have adequately treated the matter in the brochure distributed to the participants.

Regarding the question as what activities are being taken by the different forums under the CRDA, Almaz said as the forums belong to one department she would be happy to inform the participants on what other forums are doing on the election. Accordingly Almaz mentioned the advocacy works being conducted by the Good Governance Forum where it has distributed about 25, 000 brouchers on democratic and civil rights among the electorate. The Civil Society Forum is also engaged in different works related to the election. She said the forum has assigned a coordinator for that purpose where lobby works for the participation of CSOs in the election is being conducted. She finally urged the participants to bear in mind that as a CSO, they are not entitled to involve in the programs of contesting political parties rather to see the involvement of women in the election from rights perspective.

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8. Conclusions.

In his closing remarks at the daylong workshop, discussant of the forum Ato Lealem Berhanu appreciated the selection of the theme as a timely issue and the lively deliberation conducted by the participants. He mentioned that based on the presentations by the experts and the discussions that followed have showed the presence of a fertile framework regarding policy matters. But he urged the participants to know and work towards the implementation of the policies that are meant to promote the involvement of more women in leadership and decision-making. He told the participants to look in to their respective institutions and identify how many of the CSOs are being lead by women.

He also appreciated the move taken by the Mekane Yesus Church in having women priests for the first time. He also expressed his concern regarding the listing of cultural barriers as rather excuses for the low level of women's involvement in leadership and decision-making. The moderator also stressed on the importance of raising the awareness of women on election. He said there are still a number of women that did not know the fact that to elect and be elected is their constitutional right. He also told the forum to give much emphasis to the reproductive and productive burdens of women during their interventions. Most of all he called up on NGO/ CSOs to aggressively work on providing education to women, if the nation is to realize its desire of women's involvement in leadership and decision-making.

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Women in Leadership and Decision making

The Ethiopian perspective

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Prepared by: Mintwab Zelelew

March 8, 2005

Introduction

It is evident that women's equal participation in leadership and decision-making plays a pivotal role in the general process of the advancement of women. Without the active participation of women and the incorporation of women's perspective at all levels of decision-making, the goals of equality, development and peace can't be achieved.

In this paper, an attempt is made to address the history of women's participation in decision-making, justifications for the need to participate in decision-making, and lastly the barriers for women's participation in decision-making.

Due to time constraint, the writer couldn't properly address all the issues thoroughly.

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I. The history of women's participation in leadership and decision-making

In formal terms women have the same rights as men for many decades, but this has not led to radical changes in predominant ideologies and social structures which are necessary in order to give substance and cogency to the right of women to participate. Globally, with a few exceptions, the public political domain for many centuries has been defined and controlled by elite men. As a result, women's interests and concerns are not represented at policy-making levels and women can't influence decisions in social, economic and political areas that affect the society as a whole. Rather due to lack of proper representation in parliament, which is the apex of political life, women couldn't struggle to acquire legitimate rights.

The Ethiopian situation is not an exception. Women in Ethiopian history generally have no significant role. In this section we will briefly try to see the history of Ethiopia with regard to the political participation women had.

1.1 Before the FDRE Government

In the past imperial regimes since 'power' was considered to be one given from God to kings and since the kings necessarily should be men, leadership and decision making primarily was given to men. The main role of women were restricted with in the family i.e. undertaking household duties, delivery and raring of children etc. This, in addition to making them vulnerable groups of the society prohibits them from contributing something to the politics of their country.

This, however, doesn't mean that women didn't totally participate in politics. Those who are the wives of the rulers, and those who have blood relationship with royal families participated in politics either directly or indirectly. Meskele Kibra (Wife of king Lalibela), Seble Wongel (wife of king Libnedingil), Batti dil wonbera (wife of Giragn Mohammed), Mintwab (wife of Bakafa) and most of all Taitu (wife of Menelik) are known for their participation in decision-making and leadership as compared to women of their era.

Coming to Haile Selassie's regime, it was at that time the country had a parliament for the first time. The parliament had two chambers, Lower and Upper. Since the members of the two chambers were to be elected from the Clergy, Noblemen, and high military personals, women didn't have the chance to be nominated as member of the parliament.

It is only after the revision of the 1931 constitution that in 1957 the 1st and the only female was elected as a parliamentarian. In the following elections held in 1965 and 1969 2 and 5 women's were elected as members of the then parliament respectively.

During the Dergue regime, the 1987 constitution and the subsequently proclaimed electoral law had guaranteed the equality of Ethiopians irrespective of

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seats. Though this could be taken as a remarkable change, still much should be done to elevate the number to what it should be, given the female population size in the country. Besides, the fact that all the female parliamentarians are from the ruling party shows that still other political parties are not giving the necessary attention to women's role in leadership hence in politics.

The phenomenon observed in relation to the participation of women in parliament appears to recur at the ministerial, regional and local decision making levels. In the cabinet of 18, there is only one women minister, 5 women in the rank of state minister and vice minister. At a sub ministerial level, we have only 5 women vice ministers.

If we compare the number of Ethiopian women's representatives in the parliament with some other countries' women's representatives in Sweden there are about 40.4% single house and in Uganda women constitute 39% of the national decision maker. This shows that the participation of women in decision-making is still very low as compared to other countries.

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II. Justification on the need for women's participation in leadership and decision-making

There are various reasons that justify the need for women's participation in leadership and decision-making. The following are some of the reasons.

2.1 Right based justifications

Issues of women's empowerment and their full and equal participations in public life are human right issues. Human rights norms and standards guarantee women the human rights to non- discrimination in all aspects of political, economic and social life, and to full and equal participation in decision-making and access to power at all levels .At the same time, realization of the full

Therefore, women should be given the opportunity to exercise this equal right by participating fully in the decision making process with their male counter parts. Since full and effective participation in public life is the right and responsibility of every citizen, women also do have the right to participate in decision-making. Hence, women constituting half of the population of almost all nations should be represented proportionally.

Women do have the right to be part of the democratic process of election. To elect or be elected is one of the basic Human rights. Hence, women should get the opportunity to exercise this human right and be part of the election process, not only as a voter for others who are going to be decision makers but also as one to be elected so that they can get the power of leadership.

To conclude, since achieving the goal of equal participation of women and men in decision-making will provide a balance that accurately reflect the composition of society and is needed in order to strengthen democracy and promote its functioning; since it is impossible to build a modern democratic nation on the basis of exclusion and inequality; and since the exclusion of women from representation would seriously undermine the legitimacy of the democratic system as the representatives will be distanced from electorate women, women should get proportional representation in decision.

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2.2 Economic justification

There is the importance of promoting women's to leadership positions, as it is a precondition for women's empowerment. To put it differently, equality in political participation and decision-making is one of the major priorities for the advancement of women. This is because the absence of women from the most important forums where critical political and economic agendas such as the

national budget are debated seriously challenges the claims of women to legal, economic and social rights.

The Beijing platform recognizes women's equal participation in decision-making and political life as vital for the advancement of women. According to this plat form women remain in a position of in equality compared with man partly because their situation, needs and concerns are not even considered in current decision making. Hence the advancement of women demands that women participate actively in setting the agenda and determining issues on which decisions are to be made. This means that the mere fact that men and women are making decisions on equal footing will make a difference in the priorities that are set for development. And therefore if women are there as decision makers or leaders, they will prioritize the economic empowerment and advancement of women and hence the attainment of sustainable human development.

2.3 Others

As pointed out earlier women constitutes half of human kind. Consequently they are half of the world's resource of talent, ability and potential. Hence their participation in decision-making is logical as they are the major contributors to the national economies through their paid and unpaid labour. The exclusion of women from decision-making and leadership has the danger of inefficient utilizing of human resources. Therefore, since women constitutes a key national resource whose ideas, creative solutions and concerns can help change the quality of life and society at large, their participation in public decision making role is essential.

In addition to this, there is also efficiency-based argument for women's participation in leadership and decision -making. This argument starts from recognition that women and men have different needs, interests and priorities arising from their specific roles and situations. There is an assumption that women can contribute more effectively than men to the formulation of women friendly policies because they are some how better able to represent women's

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interests. And since women's needs, interests and concerns are not just those of women themselves, but reflect their primary roles as mothers, wives and caregivers, incorporating women's perspective in decision making would result in better decisions that more adequately reflect the needs and interests of children and families, including the male members. Generally, when women are elected in political office, there are bound to be positive consequences such as;

- They will make the government to give attention to the right of women as a distinct social category
- Help in the inclusion of women in decision making
- Create women's access to physical and financial resources as well as allowing them their rightful share of opportunities in educational, health, and business sectors of the nation.
- Help release women from the yoke of ignorance as they continue to be among the majority of illiterate and semi-illiterate, enslaved by retrogressive traditions and abject poverty.
- Help improve women's self esteem which will make them actively participate in politics without fear. etc.

III. Barriers for women's participation in politics

So far we have tried to see the history of women's participation in decision-making and the justification for the need to have women's participation in decision-making. In these sections we have noted that despite the existence of various rights based, economic and other justifications for the necessity of women's participation in leadership, still the number of women in leadership is so insignificant. In this section we will try to see the barriers (problems) that prohibit women from participating in decision-making activities.

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3.1 Cultural barriers

Many agree that women's participation in decision making, their ability to influence, oppose and change the policies that affect them is circumscribed due to various barriers that could be taken as the result of culture. In this regard the Beijing platform for action. Paragraph 183 states that socialization and negative stereotyping of women and men including stereotyping through the media, reinforces the tendency for political decision making to remain the domain of men.

True, in Ethiopia too, in most cultures girls are kept largely within the confines of the household and family where they are protected, and taught to accept decision that others, parents, brothers make on their own behalf. This means women lack experience of decision making and leadership in the public arena because girls, in contrast to boys, are socialized to play passive roles and given little to make decisions or develop leadership still outside the family context.

Societal perceptions regarding the traditional division of labor where women are bound to perform certain functions such as household duties, and some other "feminine" jobs, provide difficulties for women in entering in the political sphere. Moreover, politics is still seen as a "no-women's land" and that the "political space" still belongs to the men. Women are socialized to believe that their proper place is home. As a result most women have less ambition and interest in political affairs such as decision-making and leadership at the public level.

Even those who do have the ambition to participate turn off from politics as usually people who have taken the challenge of political life have found themselves vulnerable and subjected to various forms of harms.

In addition to the above-mentioned barriers the fact that women often find themselves isolated and marginalized in unfriendly male dominated institutional

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cultures discourages them from participation in politics. Usually women must continually prove themselves to be capable, but men are assumed to be competent even when they are demonstrably not. Besides, women must provide strong arguments to support their views while men are simply accepted on the basis of their professional qualifications.

Above all, since due to poverty women become increasingly concerned with earning a daily living than following any specific political agenda, they usually don't show interest. More than this, women who are subject to violence, can't, even ever dream of participating in leadership.

3.2 Economic and political Barriers

As leadership is showing the way, the leader must be knowledgeable thorough and know her facts. To be so, women need to have the necessary capacity built by education. Contrary to the requirements to be part in decision-making, the majority of women are illiterate. Hence lack of access to education could be taken as a challenge women face in seeking leadership positions. Even when women succeed in gaining education and enter the decision making mainstream, they are often marginalized by an institutional, setting that reflects men's needs and situation, and ignores women's different needs and experience. Modern work patterns and practices are designed for men who have a supportive wife to take care of their essential domestic needs and family responsibilities at home hence the saying that every career man needs a good wife. In addition to education, lack of access to communication deters women from participating in leadership and decision-making. Therefore we can say that the economic capabilities of women are determining factors for other political, social or economic decision-making.

The structure and agenda of political parties could also be taken as barriers for women's participation in politics, hence leadership. The political parties do not

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have a program that addresses the need and situations of women and they don't easily promote women in their echelons.

In this regard the Beijing Plat form for action demands the government and political parties to take measures to ensure women's equal access to and full participations in power structures and decision-making. Accordingly governments are required to protect and promote the equal rights of women and men to engage in political activities, take measures, where appropriate, in electoral systems that encourage political parties to integrate women in elective and non- elective public positions in the same proportion and at the same levels as men etc.

Political parties are also required by the same document to consider examining party structures and procedures to remove all barrier that directly or indirectly discriminate against the participation of women, consider developing initiatives that allow women to participate fully in all internal policy making structures, and consider incorporating gender issues in their political agenda, taking measure to ensure that women can participate in the leadership of political parties on an equal basis with men.

Conclusion

History tells us that, women in Ethiopia have not usually engaged in leadership and decision-making. Those few who were said to have role in decision making belong to or are related to prominent political families.

The need for women's participation in leadership and decision-making could be justified one through rights based argument and two, efficiency-based argument. According to the rights based argument it is the principle of democracy that adult citizens from all walks of life should have equal access to participate in leadership and decision-making. Besides, full participation in decision-making is the Human Right of women. Hence, giving women the opportunity to participate

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in decision-making is respecting their human right and exercising democracy and good governance in one country.

The second argument states that representatives of specific interest and perspectives should participate directly in leadership and the decision-making process to ensure that both the agenda or issues to be considered and the decisions subsequently made incorporate their views. Since women and men play different roles in society and therefore have different needs, interests and priorities, it follows that women also can't be adequately represented in decision making by men. Therefore, according to this argument, to efficiently address the interests of women, they need to be represented in proportion to their number in leadership and decision-making.

Though there are various justifications as stated above for the need to women's participation in leadership and decision-making, deeply entrenched barriers exclude women from meaningful participation in leadership and decision-making. These barriers mainly are cultural i.e. socio-cultural perceptions and inhibitions, lack of economic empowerment and illiteracy.

Therefore, much should be done in enhancing the quality of women's participation in decision making by helping elected women and men mainstream gender in the legislative and policy agenda of governments in order to overcome these barriers and ensure active participation of women in leadership and decision making.

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Recommendations

- The government as well as the civil society need to work a lot to empower women economically as their low economic position is a reason for their low participation in politics.
- Efforts should be exerted towards realizing women's right to education
- The socio cultural setup needs to be changed in order to realize women's equal rights with men.
- Political parties should give due attention to women's issues.

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Women's Participation in Political Leadership and Decision-Making in Ethiopia

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for the Workshop on
Women in Leadership and Decision-Making
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Introduction

In any part of the world, women are either excluded or marginalized from higher level political arrangements. Indeed, the proportion of men elected and appointed as political leaders and decision-makers compared to women in the same positions is highly skewed, with men overwhelmingly dominating the political field across the board. The situation in Ethiopia is not different, with women undoubtedly under-represented within different political organizations and institutions. This paper, based mainly on available and relevant books, articles, research papers and other documentary materials, is designed to provide reliable and pertinent information on the participation of women in Ethiopian politics and government – an issue which has become lately a subject of intense interest among social scientists. The paper begins by examining the participation of women in political leadership and decision-making in the world generally and in Africa particularly. It then surveys critically the actual participation of women in the top levels of Ethiopia's political parties and government institutions, followed by a discussion of obstacles to such participation. Finally, it puts forward a conclusion followed by a set of recommendations that will help in the elaboration of measures to overcome existing obstacles and to increase women's participation. Finally, a list of useful sources is provided in the references' section.

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1. An Overview of Women's Participation in Political Leadership and Decision-Making

1.1. The International Situation

Women constitute half of the world's population and by implication potentially half of the world's electorate. Furthermore, most countries claim to use democratic methods including multiparty systems, elections and parliamentarism to select political leaders and to make policy decisions. Indeed, in almost all countries, women have, on paper at least, nominal political equality. They have the right to vote, to be eligible for election, and to exercise public functions on equal terms with men. Nonetheless, women constitute a

minority in higher levels of political leadership and decision-making bodies that inevitably affect their everyday lives. In simple words, they are relegated to the backseat of politics and government affairs.

One internationally agreed indicator of women's political participation is the proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments. The record world average of women's representation in national parliaments was reached in 1988 when women representatives accounted for 14.8 % of all parliamentarians. Sixteen years later, in 2004, women made up only 10% of members of national parliaments (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2003 and 2004). This world average indicates a situation in which women are regarded just as a *special interest group* rather than as half of humankind.

Another equally important indicator is the number of women heads of state or government. Only a handful of women have occupied the positions of presidents or prime ministers. From 1990 up to 1999, there were 11 women presidents. In the same decade, there were 16 women prime ministers. The world record of women leaders was 13 in July 2002 when Latvia, Finland, New Zealand, Ireland, Sri Lanka, Philippines, Indonesia, Panama, Bangladesh, Tome and Principe, Senegal Sao and South Korea had either women presidents or women prime ministers. In 2004, the world women leader count reached 9. Among these leaders, 5 women were heads of state including Maria Gloria Arroyo of Philippines, Chandrika Kamaratunga of Sri Lanka, Mary McAleese of Ireland, Tarja Halonen of Finland and Vaira Vike-Freiberga of Latvia. In that same year, 4 women were prime ministers including Yulria Tynioshenko of Ukraine, Luisa Diogo of Mozambique, Khaleda Zia of Bangladesh and Helen Elizabeth Clark of New Zealand (International Women's Democracy Center, 2003).

Finally, the number of women ministers worldwide is around 6 %, with 5 countries (including Sweden and Finland) achieving 30 % women at the ministerial level. Yet, in 48 countries, there are no women ministers. Most of the ministries headed by women are the least influential social welfare areas involving mainly health and social services, and understandably women's affairs (International Women's Democracy Center, 2003).

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These areas are conventionally considered to reflect major concerns of many women throughout the world. Very few women hold the cabinet positions of foreign affairs (Nkosazane Dlamini-Zuma of South Africa, Laila Freivalds of Sweden, Condoleezza Rice of the United States among others), defense (save for Leni Bjorklund of Sweden, Kristin Devold of Norway, Michelle Alliot-Marie of France), finance or trade – prominent and pivotal areas for the policy agendas of most if not all governments.

1.2. Conditions in Sub-Saharan Africa

The scarcity of women in leadership and decision-making positions is thus an international phenomenon, with men wielding greater political power and thus deliberately monopolizing strategic leadership and decision-making. The circumstance in Sub-Saharan Africa is no different. In terms of women's representation in national parliaments, the average in Sub-Saharan Africa has increased from 11.3 % in 2000 to 15.3 % in 2004 (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2004), with a significant variation among countries. Indeed, as of September 2003, Rwanda became the country closest to reach parity between men and women in the legislature with women obtaining 48.8 % in the Lower House and 30 % in the Upper House. Rwanda is ranked number one in the world, followed by Sweden where 45.3 % seats of the parliament are currently occupied by women.

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Likewise, Mozambique (34 %) and South Africa (32 %) have reached the minimum goal of 30 % recommended by the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action. In three countries, namely and in ranking order Seychelles (29.4 %), Namibia (25 %) and Uganda (23 %), women hold more than 23 % of parliamentary seats. In contrast, in the vast majority of countries of Sub-Saharan Africa, women accounted for less than 10 % of parliamentary seats, with Madagascar (3.8 %) and Mauritania (3.7 %) having less than 4 % women representation. More worryingly, the parliaments of Niger and Guinea-Bissau have no women at all.

Women's slightly enlarged presence in the parliaments of Sub-Saharan Africa was achieved because special measures were put in place by governments and political parties. Such measures include the setting of affirmative-action type mechanisms known as quotas. On the one hand, there are political party quotas. One notable example is the African National Congress of South Africa which has voluntarily adopted a 30 % quota for women as election candidates (Myakayaka-Manzini, 2003). On the other hand, there are legislative or constitutional quotas. For instance, "the new constitution of [Rwanda], ratified in May 2003, calls for a minimum of 30 % women in all decision-making posts, and sets aside 30 % of seats in the Chamber of Deputies" (Women Waging Peace, 2003:2). Similarly, Uganda has put in place a 30 % reservation mandated by legislation for women in local government.

Since 1975 when Elizabeth Domitien of the Central African Republic became Sub-Saharan Africa's first woman prime minister, few woman have attained high level leadership and decision-making. Ruth Perry headed an interim government in Liberia (1996-1997), and Specioza Kazibwe became in 1994 Uganda's vice-president (until she was abruptly removed from office in 2003). It should also be recalled that Mame Madiar Boye was appointed as Senegal's prime minister (2001-2002), that Maria de Sousa acted as Sao Tome and Principe's prime minister after 2002 (until she was removed by a military coup in 2003), that Sylvie Kinigi served as prime minister of Burundi from 1993 up to 1994 as did the late Agathe Uwilingiyimana of Rwanda (until she was assassinated in office). Presently, Luisa Diogo of Mozambique is the lone prime minister in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Lastly, women do not have an adequate representation at the ministerial level. As a matter of fact, in 1999, South Africa had only 3 women out of 27 ministers, while Zimbabwe had only 2 women out of a 24-member cabinet (Tripp, 1999:3).

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2. An Assessment of Women's Participation in Political Leadership and Decision-Making in Ethiopia

2.1. Women as Party Leaders in Ethiopia

One important facet of women's political participation is their standing in political parties. This is of crucial importance as political parties constitute the platform for selecting and promoting candidates for elections. In Ethiopia, existing political parties can be classified into two categories: the ethnically-based parties organized (including the Tigrai People's Liberation Front, the Amhara National Democratic Movement and the Oromo People's Democratic Organization, the Southern Ethiopia Peoples Democratic Front and other affiliated parties) under the umbrella of the ruling coalition known as Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), and the multiple opposition parties consisting either of ethnically-defined or ideological (national wide) parties (Pausewang / Tronvoll, 2000:9; Joireman, 1997).

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Table 1: Women Members of Political Parties' Executive Committees and Central Committees

Political Parties	Category	Men Members of the Executive Committee	Women Members of the Executive Committee	Men Members of the Central Committee	Women Members of the Central Committee
Amhara National Democratic Movement	Ruling coalition	8	-	50	6
Oromo People's Democratic Organization	Ruling coalition	14	1	82	3
Southern Ethiopia Peoples Democratic Front	Ruling coalition	8	-	49	-
Oromo National Congress	Opposition	10	1	33	3
Southern Ethiopia Peoples Democratic Union	Opposition	13	-	39	-
All Ethiopian Unity Organization	Opposition	11	1	N.A.	N.A.

Source: Adapted from Emebet et al, 2004

In both categories, however, women tend to operate on the margins of key leadership levels and internal party structures. In the case of the EPRDF, women were active as combatants in the military struggle and in supporting roles. They also participated in the

program for political mobilization which formed an integral part of the political struggle (Druce / Hammond, 1992). Yet, after the EPRDF attained political power in 1991, women were left on the sidelines of the coalition's leadership (Vaughan / Tronvoll, 2002:112 and 139). In the same vein, "most opposition parties derive their leadership (also often at the same time, the founding members) from the same social pool. Most of the leaders of opposition are middle aged, men, the urban educated professional middle class" (Demissie, 2004:12). The percentage of women in the governing bodies of virtually all political parties range between 0 % to a pitiful maximum of 12 % (See Table 1). In short, the awareness of the need to motivate and include more women in the membership and leadership of political parties is apparently non-existent (Consult this paper's section on the weaknesses of political parties).

2.2. Women as Election Candidates in Ethiopia

The situation of women candidates reflects the situation in the political parties. A very small number of women candidates contested for parliamentary and regional council seats in the 1995 and 2000 elections. In the 1995 elections, there were only 21 women running for the House of Peoples' Representatives (the Lower House) and 92 women running for regional council seats. Out of these, 15 women (71 % of the women candidates) got elected for the House of Peoples' Representatives while 77 women (84 % of the women candidates) got elected in the regional councils (Aspen, 1995; Donor Election Unit, 1995; Tronvoll / Aadland, 1995; Lyons, 1996).

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According to the data obtained from the National Electoral Board, in the 2000 elections, 92 women run for the House of Peoples' Representatives out of a total of 1,077 candidates, while 277 women run for regional councils out of a total of 2,156 candidates (National Electoral Board, 2000b). Out of these women candidates, 42 got elected for the House of Peoples' Representatives, whereas 218 got elected in the regional councils (National Electoral Board, 2000c).

Table 2: Women Candidates Fielded by Political Parties for the 2000 Elections

Political Parties	Category	Men Candidates for the House of Peoples' Representatives	Women Candidates for the House of Peoples' Representatives	Men Candidates for Regional Councils	Women Candidates for Regional Councils
Amhara National Democratic Movement	Ruling coalition	120	14	244	45
Oromo People's Democratic Organization	Ruling coalition	166	13	485	76
Tigrai People's Liberation Front	Ruling coalition	34	4	112	40
Oromo National Congress	Opposition	32	3	41	2
All Amhara People's Organization	Opposition	16	1	28	4
Ethiopian Democratic Party	Opposition	13	2	31	6

Source: Adapted from National Electoral Board, 2000b

2.3. Women as Parliamentarians in Ethiopia

"Only 42 (7.69 %) women are represented out of a total of 547 members of the House of Peoples' Representatives [the Lower House]" (Meron, 2005:71), well below the average in Sub-Saharan Africa. As a result, Ethiopia is number 96 in the world ranking for the representation of women in its Parliament (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2004:3).

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Table 3: Gender Composition of the House of Peoples' Representatives in the 2000-2005 Term

Region	Number of Parliamentarians	Number of Men	Number of Men in %	Number of Women	Number of Women in %
Tigrai	38	34	89.47	4	10.53
Afar	8	7	87.5	1	12.5
Amhara	138	124	89.86	14	10.14
Oromia	178	165	92.7	13	7.3
Somali	23	23	100	0	0
Benishangul Gumuz	9	9	100	0	0
Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples	123	117	95.1	6	4.9
Gambella	3	3	100	0	0
Hareri	2	2	100	0	0
Dire Dawa	2	2	100	0	0
Addis Ababa	23	19	82.6	4	17.4
Total	547	505	92.32	42	7.69

Source: Data from the House of Peoples' Representatives

In the House of Federation (the Upper House), women's participation is equally low, and in fact has noticeably decreased. In 1995, women accounted for 8.9 % of the House of Federation with 10 members. In 2000, women's presence declined to 7 members which represents a mere 6.3 % of the total members.

Table 4: Women Members of the House of Federation in both the 1995-2000 and 2000-2005 Terms

Region	Number of Members 1995	Number of Women	Number of Members 2000	Number of Women
Tigrai	6	0	6	2
Afar	2	0	2	0
Amhara	17	3	17	1
Oromia	19	2	16	2
Somali	4	0	4	1
Benishangul Gumuz	5	0	5	0
Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples	54	4	55	0
Gambella	4	0	4	0
Hareri	1	0	1	0
Total	112	10 (-1)	110	7 (-1)

Source: Adapted from Meron, 2005

At the regional council level, there are only 218 woman members out of a total number of 1,755 members (with 86 seats left vacant) of regional councils (Polhemus, 2003:11). Yet, a comparison of the gender breakdown of the regional councils elected in 1995 with those elected in 2000 shows an increase from 5 % to 12 % in women members (ibid:12).

Table 5: Composition of the Regional Councils in the 2000-2005 Term

Region	Number of Men Members	Number of Women	Total Number of Members	Opposition or Independent
Tigrai	110	42	152	0
Afar	83	2	87	3
Amhara	250	44	294	0
Oromia	467	70	537	2
Somali	166	2	168	15
Benishangul Gumuz	67	13	80	5
Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples	308	38	346	23
Gambella	42	0	55	0
Hareri	29	7	36	0
Total	1522	218	1755	48

Source: Adapted from Polhemus, 2003

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The participation of women in parliamentary committees established on specific areas is by the same token limited as shown by Table 6.

Table 6: Composition of Parliamentary Committees in the 1995-2000 Term

Committees	Number of Members	Number of Women Members
Economic	13	0
Budgeting	13	0
Social	18	0
Defense and security	14	0
Foreign affairs	14	1
Administration	15	0
Law	13	0
Media and culture	15	0
Women's affairs	15	9
Total	130	10

Source: Data from the House of Peoples' Representatives

2.4. Women as Ministers in Ethiopia

In Ethiopia, a tiny number of women occupy ministerial and sub-ministerial positions. In fact, at present, in an 18-member cabinet, there is only 1 woman heading a line-ministry – Genet Zewde, the Minister of Education. In addition, at the sub-ministerial level, there are only 1 other woman with the equivalent rank of minister, 3 state ministers and 1 deputy-minister[2] (Meron, 2005:70-71; Emebet et al, 2004:43).

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Table 7: Individuals at the Ministerial and Sub-Ministerial Levels in the 2000-2005 Term

Rank	Number of Men	Number of Women
Minister	16	1
With the rank of a minister	5	0
Acting minister	1	0
State minister	12	3
With the rank of a state minister	0	1
Deputy-minister	11	1
With the rank of a deputy-minister	1	0
Total	46	6

Source: Adapted from Emebet et al, 2004 and Meron, 2005

[2] This short list includes Gifti Abassiya (the Head of Women's Affairs in the Office of the Prime Minister with the rank of State Minister), Dr. Mulu Ketsela (the State Minister of Finance and Economic Development) and Netsanet Asfaw (the State Minister of Information).

The gender gap in the regional executive branches is even more dramatic as there was not a single woman in five regions (listed in Table 8) after the 1995 elections. The pervasiveness of men's dominance is substantiated by the fact that, since 1995, all regional presidents have been and still are men.

Table 8: Members of Regional Executive Committees in the 1995-2000 Term

Regions	Total Number of Members	Number of Women
Afar	15	0
Amhara	21	0
Gambella	19	0
Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples	21	0
Oromia	21	0

Source: Adapted from Women's Affairs Office / World Bank, 1998

2.5. Some Propositions on Obstacles to Women's Participation in Political Leadership and Decision-Making in Ethiopia

To explain why women are scarcely represented in Ethiopia's political leadership and decision-making, an array of factors can be suggested. These factors range from political and socio-economic factors to cultural and psychological explanations.

2.5.1. Weaknesses of Ethiopian Political Parties

Most if not all of Ethiopia's political parties do not have active women's sections (Jalele, 2005:21), and do not employ appropriate strategies to promote women representation (ibid:22; Vaughan / Tronvoll, 2002:112). Furthermore, almost all political parties are weak in the sense that they seem totally unaware and unwilling to deal with specific gender issues (as attested by their presentations and general performance during the forums on Gender and Elections recently organized by Panos Ethiopia). They simply do not try to incorporate a significant number of women into regularized forms of party membership. It follows that the political parties have few women members and activists.

It is thus possible to hypothesize that such political parties are not hospitable to women's participation. Because, parties with a higher proportion of women members and activists

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Affairs, 2004:xiii). All in all, a woman with inadequate or no income has no time and energy to think about and work for something that does not address her immediate survival and does not sustain her family for the following days. Had that woman had a secure job and better income, no doubt she would have shown some interest in politics and would even have engaged in an election campaign to occupy some political office (Meron, 2005:77).

2.5.4. Ethiopian Women's Lesser Access to Education

Ethiopian women's access to educational opportunities is severely limited compared to men from primary to university levels, with profound inequalities in enrollment. "Out of the national Gross Enrollment Rate of 64 % for primary school in 2003/2004, female enrollment constituted only 53.8 % while it was 74.6 % for boys" (ibid:75). The number of female students decreases as the level of education rises. Indeed, "the national Gross Enrollment Rate for secondary school is 19.3 % and it is 14.3 % and 24 % for girls and boys respectively" (ibid).

2.5.5. The Cultural *Glass Ceiling*

In Ethiopia, women must deal with a strong cultural perception which suggests that women are inferior to men (ibid:74). This perception amplifies the attitude that women's proper place has always been and still is the home, and more specifically the kitchen. Women are expected from childhood, and are accordingly brought up, to be good (meaning subservient) housewives and mothers. It also inhibits women's ability to competently perform political leadership roles and participate in decision-making processes in the face of overt cultural hostility.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Despite their nominal political equality, Ethiopian women's participation at the pinnacle of leadership and decision-making in political parties and government institutions

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remains peripheral. This lack of participation of one half of the population clearly limits the diversity of political parties and the effective operation of government, and leads to the perpetuation of policies and practices that do not serve the needs of women and men equally. To increase women's opportunities to reach higher levels of political leadership and decision-making, the following positive measures (not in order of importance) should be initiated:

1. Ethiopian women should be provided with the necessary education in order to create a much larger pool of women capable of developing professional skills, of competing with men, and of vying confidently for top-level political leadership and decision-making.
2. The media should be used to change the society's perception that women are inferior to men, and also to alleviate the negative attitude of women towards politics.
3. A civic education program targeting all Ethiopian women should be organized. This program could make them realize that they can influence electoral processes, political parties, and governmental organizations and by implication the formulation of issues and policies. Furthermore, women running for elected positions, women parliamentarians and women in top government positions should receive some training that could increase their skills and capacity. This implies providing adequate resources and support to local NGOs that are engaged in this line of work generally on a non-partisan basis.
4. Political parties should include a sizable number of women as active members, leaders and election candidates.
5. A national legislation should be provided, setting aside a number of reserved seats in the House of Peoples' Representatives and the House of Federation as well as in the nine regional councils.
6. A program of affirmative action should be worked out, requiring the Ethiopian government to appoint women to 20, 30 or even 40 % of higher level leadership and decision-making positions.
7. More aggressive and policy-relevant research should be conducted (and disseminated) in order to come up with the reliable comparable data and analysis needed to provide a concrete and complete diagnosis of Ethiopian women's situation, to identify all actual and potential obstacles, and to conceive new and innovative ways of overcoming them.

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22	Belaynesh Tadesse	HIV-AID	15-42-42		

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Date March 8, 2005 **Name of the Meeting** _____

Attendance

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Date March 8, 2005 **Name of the Meeting** Gender Forum

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Date _____ **Name of the Meeting** _____

Attendance

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