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Gender Inequalities in the Ethiopian Education System: Past Trends and Current Status

Mulugeta Tsegai*

Abstract: This article reviews empirical research and theoretical perspectives on gender inequalities in educational performance and attainment from primary to higher education. Ethiopia has made enormous strides forward in improving access of boys and girls to education at all levels, and in promoting gender equality within the education system. Yet female students continue to lag behind in educational achievement and access, particularly at the secondary and tertiary levels, where girls' enrolment, completion and achievement rates are lower. Despite an enabling policy environment, a number of social and institutional barriers continue to prevent girls and young women from attending schools and universities and from performing as well as their male classmates. The prioritization of science and technology within the educational and development policies of the country may exclude female students unless additional actions are taken to promote their participation in these fields. Addressing gender equality in the education system, with a focus on improving girls' educational performance and outcomes, is crucial to meeting Ethiopia's development goals and to protecting women's rights.

Key Words: Gender Inequality, Gender Parity, enrolment

Introduction

International consensus on education priorities accords an important place to achieving gender justice in the educational sphere. Both the Dakar 'Education for All' goals (UNESCO, 2000) and the Millennium Development goals (2000) emphasize two goals in this regard. These two goals are distinguished as gender parity goals and gender equality goals. Hence, improving girls' access to education, with the goal of attaining

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gender equality, is a critical component of promoting development and meeting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in Ethiopia, across Sub-Saharan Africa and around the world (World Bank 2005). Educating women is fundamental to economic development and poverty reduction. Educating women promotes women's rights and is intrinsically linked to improving other development indicators, such as reducing maternal and child mortality rates. It also reduces birth rate and improves basic health of the entire families. Educating girls is also instrumental in the fight against HIV/AIDS. Although the importance of educating girls is widely recognized girls throughout the region continue to lag behind boys in terms of enrolment rates, completion rates, and performance in school (UNESCO, 2008).

Like many African countries, the majority of women in Ethiopia hold low status in the society. They have been denied equal access to education, training and employment opportunities. Their involvement in policy formulation and decision-making has been minimal (FDRE, 2006).

To overcome these challenges, Ethiopia has made a firm commitment to gender empowerment in the political and social realms. This commitment is clearly stated in the 1995 Constitution and the National Policy of Women which was adopted in 1993. Education for all, achieving gender parity at all levels of the education system, and practicing a policy of affirmative action to promote women's educational and social advancement are designated as policy priorities to realize the development goals of the country.

Ethiopia has seen substantial progress in gender empowerment, most notably with the achievement of 22.1 percent female representation in Parliament in 2005 as compared to 7.7 percent in 2000 and similar high levels of female representation at all levels of governance (FDRE, 2006). According to Ethiopia's Sustainable Development and Poverty Reduction Paper (FDRE, 2002), these achievements are supported by strong institutional measures, including policy and budgetary commitments. The paper expresses commitment to women's rights and to global agreements

such as CEDAW, MDGs and BPFA. These achievements are particularly significant given Ethiopia's past history in the *Derg* regime. Infrastructure for social service delivery was virtually destroyed in pre-1991 civil war.

In line with the strong commitment within government and the broader society to promote the status of women, Ethiopia has made impressive gains across a range of sectors in improving the social well-being of women and girls within the country. But still girls continue to trail behind boys in educational attainment, a fact which gets increasingly exaggerated at the secondary and tertiary levels. A number of socially constructed barriers and entrenched social practices continue to prevent girls from accessing education and performing equally in their examinations. Identifying and remedying the sources of girls' continued inequality within this sector is imperative to lifting the status of girls and women in Ethiopia. This promotes equitable socio-economic development within the country.

Objectives

The main objectives of this paper are to:

- describe the state of women's participation in all levels of the education system in the country in general and in primary school is particular emphasis to primary school in Ethiopia;
- examine government policies addressing gender issues;
- examine patterns of female equality in access to education, learning process , educational outcomes, and external results over the last five years; and
- forward suggestions towards ensuring gender equality.

Literature Review

In the section that follows the need for girls' education, government policies shall be briefly reviewed. This will to be followed by analysis of gender

mainstreaming in education in terms of gender parity and gender equality using the conceptual framework that fits the issue of this article.

Policies on Mainstreaming Gender Issues in Education

Numerous international and national declarations have stressed the needs and rights of women to be considered in various development sectors on equal terms with men. One of the most influential declarations adopted in 1981 and ratified by Ethiopia in the same year is the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). It deals with the rights of women and commits member states to incorporate the principle of equality of men and women in the legal, political, economic and social matters. It also abolishes all discriminatory laws (FDRE, 2002). In tune with the international commitment, the Ethiopian Government has embarked on a continuous process of reengineering its soft and hardware.

For instance, after the fall of the military regime in Ethiopia, government policies began to consider the need to address gender inequality in socio-economic and political arena. Thus, addressing gender issues has received a considerable attention by understanding its crucial role in poverty reduction, ensuring good governance and democracy. As a result, the Government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) formulated several laws and policies to promote gender equality. Particularly, Article 35 of the Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) clearly stipulates the rights of women. It states that:

> The historical legacy of inequality and discrimination suffered by women in Ethiopia taken into account women, in order to remedy this legacy, are entitled to affirmative measures. The purpose of such measures shall be to provide special attention to women so as to enable them compete and participate on the basis of equality with men in political, social, and economic life as well as in public and private institutions (FDRE,1995, p. 93).

The government has also been promoting the mainstreaming of gender in all its development policies and strategies to address gender inequality. In line with this, the National Policy for Women (TGE, 1994) specified strategies to ensure equitable socio-economic development. The policy states that the government shall facilitate conditions conducive for the participation of women in decision making process, social welfare and division of land and property, education and basic social services. National institutional machineries were established at federal, regional and Woreda (district) levels to implement the policy. Women's Affairs Office was reestablished as a full-fledged Ministry in October 2005 with the duties and responsibilities of ensuring participation and empowerment of women in political, economic, social and cultural matters (FDRE, 2006).

Furthermore, efforts have been made to address the problem of gender inequality and gender based discrimination in the Education and Training Policy. Within the framework of various policies and declarations, the Education and Training Policy further articulates the need to address the longstanding inequity and discrimination suffered by Ethiopian women as follows: "Special attention will be given to women and to those students who did not get educational opportunities in the preparation, distribution, and use of educational support input" *(*TGE, 1994; Article 3.7.7.).

Building on the Education and Training Strategy, the Ethiopia Education Sector Development Programme ESDP I (1997/98-2002/03) provides an important example of a sector-wide approach that has attempted to integrate gender issues across all aspects of the education system. Under the ESDP the promotion of education for girls is taken as a major strategy to achieve universal primary education by 2015.

Gender continues to receive a focus in ESDP III (2005/06-2010/11) which provides a useful analysis of lessons learnt since ESDP (I) and ESDP (II). It suggests that:

> Admission, completion and transition rates of girls will be increased and reach a level which is equal to that of boys. Steps to promote gender equity include interventions that improve access to education facilities and programs for girls, which will minimize barriers to their education. Locally relevant measures will be initiated to prevent social and cultural barriers to the education of girls (MoE, 2006, p. 60).

Thus, it is now apparent that the policy frameworks addressing the issue of gender equality as well as fostering female retention and success in the education system seem to be in place. The major interest of this paper is not only to describe women's access based on enrolment at the point of entry, but it also examines the extent to which government policies are implemented with respect to increasing women's success during their studies at various levels of the education system. Therefore, to understand gender equality in education it is crucial to have the following conceptual framework on gender parity and equality.

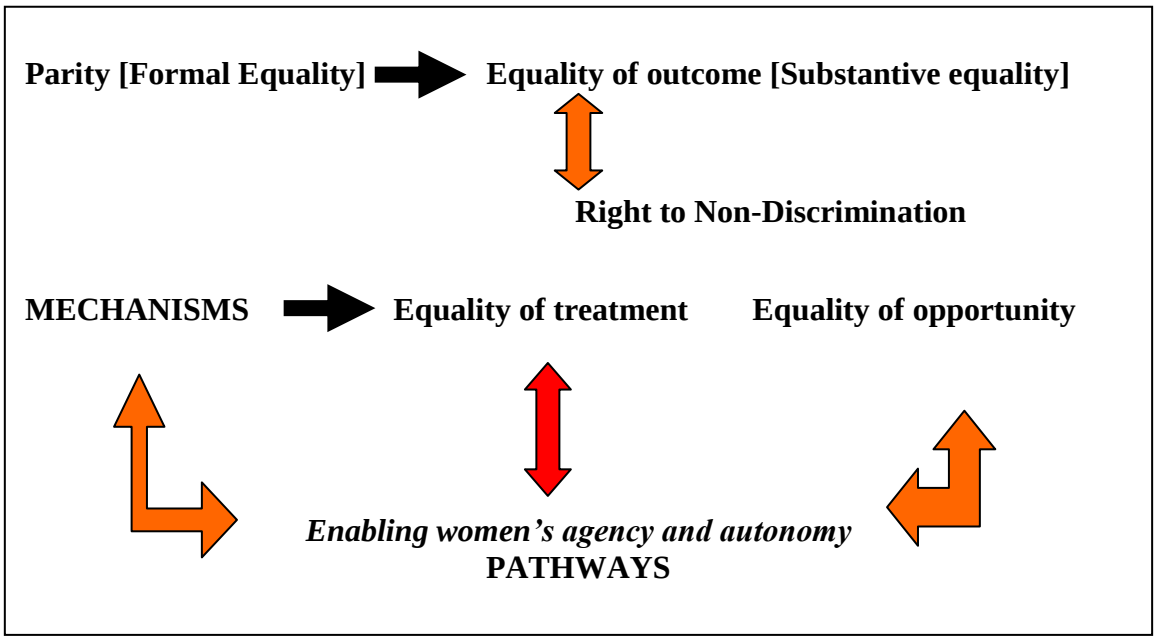
Defining Gender Equality

Gender equality is an often-used but infrequently defined term. Translating the concept of gender equality in education into a practical framework will assist education programmers in designing, managing, and evaluating education projects. To be practical, this framework must draw clear distinctions and demonstrate interrelationships among the concepts of gender parity, and gender equality. As noted in *Gender and education for all: The leap to equality*, "gender parity and gender equality in education mean different things" (UNESCO, 2003). Gender parity reflects *"formal equality"* in terms of access to, and participation in education. Parity is attained when the same proportion of boys and girls—relative to their respective age groups—enter the education system, achieve educational goals, and advance through the different cycles. Reaching parity in enrollment is necessary, but

not sufficient, for achieving equality and should be considered a "'first stage' measure of progress towards gender equality in education" (Subrahmanian, 2005).

Gender equality means males and females have equal opportunities to realize their full human rights and contribute to and benefit from economic, social, cultural, and political development (UNESCO, 2003).

Gender inequalities arise from the unequal power relations between women and men, and hence assessments of gender equality need to capture the relational dimensions of gender inequality. The dimensions of gender equality in education are multiple and inter-related. These dynamics are illustrated in Figure 1 and described more fully below.



Source: Subrahmanian (2005)

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework for Gender Parity and Equality

Formal equality measures numerical 'gaps' between female and male outcomes. However, for equality to be achieved, we need a definition that recognises that women and men start from different positions of advantage, and are constrained in different ways. Thus, achievement of *substantive equality requires the recognition of* "the ways in which women are different from men, in terms of their biological capacities and in terms of the socially constructed disadvantages women face relative to men," (Kabeer, 1999,p.37). This in turn depends on two further processes the indicators of which can tell us *how* equality of outcome has been achieved. These processes refer to the *quality of experience* of education, in terms of entering education, participating in it and benefiting from it. For gender equality to be meaningful, mechanisms for ensuring equality of treatment as well as equality of opportunity for men and women are important (Subrahmanian, 2005). These in turn rest on a commitment to non-discrimination, to ensure the erasure of social norms that construct women and men as unequal in value in terms of their contributions and entitlements, and to ensure that all social actors are committed to eliminating stereotypes and attitudes that reinforce and perpetuate inequalities in the distribution of resources between women and men.

According to Subrahmanian (2005), assessing gender equality requires assessing whether fundamental freedoms and choices are as equally available to women as they are to men. This involves focusing on pathways to equality, extending the concern with treatment and opportunity to also focusing on *agency* and *autonomy* exercised by women in enjoying their freedoms (Fig.1).

A move towards *substantive gender equality* thus requires recognising that discrimination arises from differential valuation of what it is men and women contribute, giving rise therefore to differential (unequal) investments in women and men, differential(unequal) rewards paid to women and men, and differential(unequal) resources allocated to men and women. These *gender ideologies* become the basis of social norms, practices and rules; these processes in turn inform masculine and feminine identities. Thus, a first step towards assessing progress towards substantive gender equality beyond

formal equality entails understanding the social construction of gender identity (Subramanian, 2005)*.* The construction of gender identities operates in different ways in different contexts, giving rise to inequalities between women and men in gaining access to, participating in and benefiting from various resources. Hence, based on the above conceptual framework and other related literature the following dimensions of gender equality in education are distilled.

Dimensions of Gender Equality in Education

Drawing, therefore, on the importance of viewing gender equality in terms of a 'relational process' observed through educational systems, and the norms and values institutionalised within them, this paper argues for breaking down 'gender equality' into its constituent parts and identifying indicators relevant to each component. For this purpose, it draws on Subrahmanian (2005) and USAID (2008) four-fold characteristics of gender equality in education. These are: equality of access, equality in the learning process, equality of educational outcomes, and equality of external results. Below are brief descriptions of each dimension, accompanied by examples of equity measures implemented to contribute to achieving equality.

Equality of Access

Indicators of gender parity tell us about the 'peopling' of institutions of education by gender, and indicate whether men and women, boys and girls are represented in equal numbers. Thus, the right to education is measured in terms of access, survival, attendance, retention, and to some extent transition between levels of education. *Access* means that girls and boys are offered equitable opportunities to gain admission to formal, non-formal or alternative approaches to basic education. Actual attendance, rather than enrollment, is a better indicator of whether access has been achieved.

Equality in the Learning Process

Gender equality in the learning process, refers to the right of men and women to non-discrimination in educational opportunities. This further suggests that educational institutions should function in ways that do not impose or perpetuate gender stereotypes that exert psychological influence and/or promote institutional barriers to the range of possibilities that boys and girls, men and women, can enjoy in relation to the education on offer. Research has shown that girls seem to be more sensitive to school quality than boys and that the quality of teachers has a greater impact on the demand for girls' education than for boys' (Kane, 2004). For example, a Kenyan study concluded that factors considered under opportunities to learn – chores, homework, tutoring, punishment, sex ratio, and class size – have slightly different effects on girls than boys (Mensch and Lloyd 1998). In a recent study, it was found that teacher behavior affected girls more than boys (Kendall, 2006). This therefore relates to equality of treatment, which in turn is reflected in equality of outcome such as performance in examinations and subject choice. Thus both process and outcome indicators can add up to provide a useful picture of gender equality within education.

Equality of Educational Outcomes

Equality of educational outcomes means that girls and boys enjoy equal opportunities to achieve and outcomes are based on their individual talents and efforts. To ensure fair chances for achievement, the length of school careers, academic qualifications, and diplomas should not differ based on a person's sex. Mechanisms for evaluating individual achievement should also be free of any gender bias. What tests, examinations, and assessments measure tells students what matters and to the extent that these mechanisms reflect a gender bias, they transmit messages to students that can discourage their interest in school or in particular subjects. Results from classroom tests, national examinations, and international assessments can influence boys' and girls' confidence levels and their perceptions of their abilities and what is expected of them.

They can also impact what is taught in the classroom and how content is delivered. Where tests or examinations are used to determine promotion into future grades, or other types of educational opportunities, the extent to which there may be bias in these mechanisms is an important consideration when trying to ensure equality of access and equality of outcomes.

Equality of External Results

Equality of external results occurs when the status of men and women, their access to goods and resources, and their ability to contribute to, participate in, and benefit from economic, social, cultural, and political activities are equal. This implies that career opportunities, the time needed to secure employment after leaving full-time education, and the earnings of men and women with similar qualifications and experience are equal.

Gender parity and greater gender equality in schooling can, and often do, co-exist with gender inequalities outside of education. Powerful examples of these are provided in countries where gender parity in secondary education has been achieved. In the United Kingdom, girls have been systematically doing better than boys (Arnot and Phipps, 2003). In France, whilst girls have caught up with boys and now outperform them in secondary schools, gender inequalities continue to prevent girls' equal entry to specialized training institutions (Baudino, 2003). In some Latin American countries, the level of women's participation in secondary school is surpassing that of men. In a number of Gulf States, notably Bahrain and Kuwait, more women than men are enrolled in university education. Yet in all of these countries, there continue to remain inequalities [to varying degrees] in employment, wages and political representation.

Much of the discussion of gender inequality in the labor market has been written in response to the writings of the human capital school of economics, which holds that gender inequality stems from inadequate investments on women (Jacobs, 1996). Gender differences in earnings persist despite the parity in education attained by women.

The four dimensions of gender equality are related, but that relationship is complex and not necessarily linear. Parity in enrollment and greater gender equality in schooling can, and often do, coexist with inequalities outside of education. In fact, several studies have demonstrated that educational success for girls does not automatically translate into higher economic status or greater political participation as adults (USAID, 2008). At the same time, improving opportunities for women in the labor market can give them the economic means to send their children to school. Achieving equality after learners finish their studies and enter the labor market requires interventions that go beyond the education sector.

Data and Method

Data Source

This section reviews literature that throws light on gender equality issues from the primary to the tertiary education level in Ethiopia. The review also draws on literature from other countries on the same issue. It maps the terrain of current and past few years gender inequalities for a wide range of educational indicators and discuss the theoretical perspectives that have been used in explaining these inequalities.
Data was gathered from the following sources:

- government policy documents and circulars;
- library search for books, chapters in books, Journal articles and conference/workshop papers on gender equality in education related issues; and
- Research findings of education-related Non-Governmental Associations and Research Centers.

Data Analysis

The data from the reviews were analyzed and interpreted using descriptive-narrative analysis and descriptive statistics.

Results and Discussions

This section presents the descriptive results of the document analysis. The results emerged in light of the three dimensions of gender equality: equality of access, equality of learning process, equality of educational outcomes and equality of external results. Following that there will be discussions of each of the three dimensions in the education system, from primary to higher education.

Equality of Access

Primary Education

Primary Education in Ethiopia is defined as sub-sector that covers 8 years of education (grades 1-8) divided into two cycles-1st cycle comprising grades 1-4 and 2nd cycle from grades 5-8. In the following sections, provision of primary education will be presented using basic education indicators of gender equality.

Admission

Admission to the first grade is expressed in terms of both gross and net intakes measured using apparent intake and net intake rates. Apparent Intake Rate **(**AIR) is the percentage of new entrants (irrespective of age) in grade 1 out of the total number of children of the official primary admission age (age 7 for Ethiopia) in a given year.

Gender disparities in primary education stem from disparities in enrolment in the first grade (UNESCO, 2007). The national average weighted Gender Parity Index (GPI) of gross intake rates (the ratio of the girls' GIR to boys' GIR) rose from 90 in 2005/06 to 91.7 in 2008/09.This indicates some bright spots that more girls are entering school, but still it is slightly lower than the GPI for Sub-Saharan Africa which was 92 by 2005(UNESCO, 2007).

Table 1: Admission and Survival rates by gender, 2004/05-2008/09

Year	Admission rate Grade 1			Survival Rate by Gender		
				Grade 5		
	Male	Female	**GPI**	Male	Female	Total
2004/05	154.7	142.8	92.3	57.2	61.9	59.3
2005/06	132.5	119.2	90.0	55.2	58.0	56.4
2006/07	130.4	117.4	90.0	57.2	61.9	59.3
2007/08	165.8	150.8	91.0	45.8	53.3	49.2
2008/09	169.4	155.4	91.7			

Source: Education Statistics Annual Abstract (2008/09), MoE, 2010

The above Table (1) shows that the AIR which was 1428 for female in 2004/05 increased to 155.4 in 2008/09. This shows that there were many over-aged children admitted to grade 1. However, the gender gap between boys and girls in AIR increased from 11.9 percent in 2004/05 to 14 percent in 2008/09. At this point, the cause of the disparity is not clear but it is believed to be linked to population estimates—perhaps underestimating the number of female, population in selected regions.

Survival rates will always be one year behind current data since it requires measurement of enrollment and repetition from the next year. While the gender parity remains close, girls are now “surviving” in lower primary better than boys. But the data shows that more than 46 percent of females have not continued into the second cycle of primary over the last five years.

Gross Enrolment Rate and Net Enrolment Rate

Gross enrolment rate (GER) is the percentage of students enrolled in certain level, irrespective of the age of the corresponding school age population. Net enrolment rate (NER) indicates the percentage of students of the appropriate school age enrolled in a given year out of the total school age population in

the same year. In Ethiopia, the primary official age is 7-14. Table 1 below shows GER and NER over the last five years.

Table 2: Gross Enrolment Ratio in primary (Grades 1-8) (2004/05-2008/09)

Year	GER			NER		
	Boys	**Girls**	**Total**	**Boys**	**Girls**	**Total**
2004/05	88.0	71.5	79.8	73.2	63.6	68.5
2005/06	98.6	83.9	91.3	81.7	73.2	77.5
2006/07	98.0	85.1	91.7	82.6	75.5	79.1
2007/08	100.5	90.5	95.6	86.0	80.7	83.4
2008/09	97.6	90.7	**94.2**	84.5	81.3	**83.0**

Source: Education Statistics Annual Abstract (2008/09), MoE, 2010

Enrolment in Ethiopia has increased dramatically for both boys and girls since the early 1990s. As indicated in Table 1, the national GER for 2007/08 stands at 95.6%, showing an impressive increase of 15.8 percent above the value for 2004/05 (79.8%). But for 2008/09, GER stands at 94.2 percent points, showing a slight decrease from the previous year. This leveling effect may mean that many of the children were captured by the system in the previous year. There is a gender gap in terms of enrollment of boys and girls, with girls still lagging behind by about 6.9 percent.

The NER has also shown a remarkable increase over the last five years. That is, the NER which was 68.5% (73.2% for boys and 63.6% for girls) in 2004/05 grew to 83.0% (84.5% for boys and 81.3% for girls) in 2008/09, resulting in an increase of 14.5 percentage points. However, one can clearly see that the rate of increase in NER has also been or decreased since 2005/06. Similarly, the gender gap was also narrowed; it decreased from 9.6 % to 3.2% during the same period.

Gender and Regional Disparities

The expansion of primary education has gone hand-in-hand with progress towards greater gender parity, but there are marked differences across and within regions as witnessed by the gender parity index (GPI). Eight regions including Afar and Somale had GPIs of less than 0.90 in 2008/09. These regions have not yet achieved the goal of gender parity in primary schooling set for 2005.

Table 3: Gender and Regional Comparison in GER, NER, and GPI in Primary Education (2008/09)

Region	GER		NER		GPI
	M	F	M	F	
Tigrai	107.2	107.1	95.6	98.1	**99.9**
Afar	33.3	28.5	25.3	23.2	**85.6**
Amhara	113.5	111.5	101.4	10-3.1	**98.2**
Oromia	94.4	83.3	80.9	74.8	**88.2**
Somali	37.5	31.7	33.3	29.4	**84.5**
Benishangul Gumuz	126.9	97.0	97.0	80.1	**76.4**
SNNPR	107.7	94.1	94.3	84.5	**87.4**
Gambella	121.8	102.0	80.2	69.7	**83.7**
Harari	118.6	97.1	100.2	83.6	**81.9**
AddisAbaba City	107.6	110.5	78.2	74.4	**102.7**
Dire Dawa City	97.2	86.9	76.5	70.2	**89.4**
National	97.6	90.7	**84.6**	**81.3**	**93**

Source: Education Statistics Annual Abstract (2008/09), MoE, 2010
***NER over 100 may be due to over reporting of enrolled school age students, population movement or other factors*

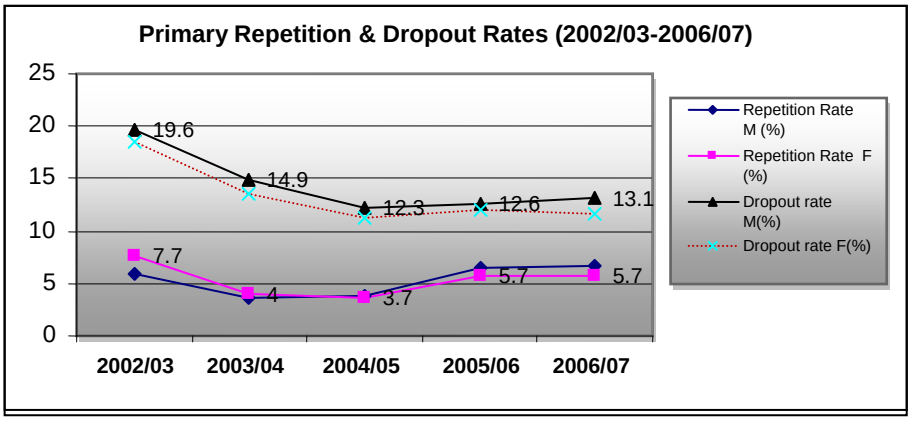
Table 3 shows that except in Addis Ababa City Administration where GER is almost equal for boys and girls, gross enrolment is in favor of boys in all regions. With regard to rural and urban enrolment, the proportion of girls is

lower than that of boys both in urban and rural areas. However, it is much lower in rural (45.7%) than in urban areas (49.6%). Like GER, NER is also in favor of boys in many regions. Particularly, the gender gap is relatively wide in Benishangul-Gumuz (16.2%), Harari (17.7%), SNNPR (13.1%), and Gambella (10.1%). It is only in Tigray and Amhara that one can see the NER favouring girls.

GPI can be summarized using UNESCO (2008) definition which considers GPI below 0.80 far; between 0.80 and 0.94 intermediate; GPI between 0.95 and 0.96 close and GPI between 0.97 and 1.03 as goal achieved. Accordingly, Addis Ababa, Tigrai and Amhara with above 1, 0.99 and 0.98 GPI respectively could be said they have achieved the gender equity goal Afar, Oromia, Somale, SNNP, Gambella, Dire-Dawa and Harari, with GPIs between 0.80 and 0.94 are in an intermediate position to achieve the goal. However, Benishangul-Gumuz (0.76) is far from achieving the goal of gender equity. Except in Addis Ababa where there is perfect gender equity, the GPI is in favour of boys in all regions.

Repetition and Dropout Rates

Repetition Rate measures the proportion of students who have remained in the same grade level for more than one year-usually retaking the grade having either left the grade permanently or comeback for second or third term. Dropout rates, on the other hand, measure the proportion of students who leave formal schooling and in most cases it is calculated as a remainder after subtracting from enrolment those who repeat and those are promoted to the next grade. The following figure summarizes repetition and dropout rates over the last five years.



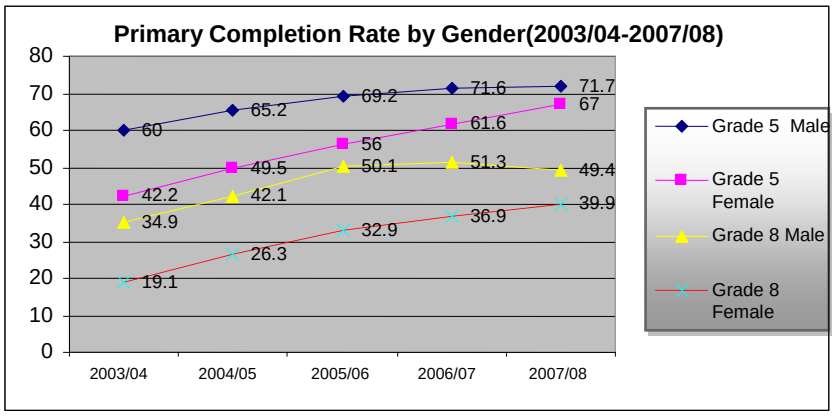
Source: Compiled from Ministry of Education, Education Statistics Annual Abstract (2007/08), MoE, 2009

Figure 2: Promotion, Repetition and Dropout rates by Gender (primary education 1-8).

Repetition, in the last three years under consideration is in favor of girls while in the first two years it is in favor of boys. On the other hand, dropout rate from 2002/03 to 2006/07 consistently decreased from 18.5% to 11.6% respectively. Generally, both repetition rates and dropout rates were in favor of girls in all grades in 2006/07. The data indicates that once girls enter primary education, they stay more than boys in the system.

Primary Completion Rate (PCR)

Primary Completion Rate is highly dependent on the accuracy of the single age population for both points of measurement (for Grade 5 age 11, and for Grade 8, age 14) and the accurate measurement of repeaters in each grade.



Source: Education Statistics Annual Abstract (2007/08), MoE, 2009

Figure 3: Primary Completion Rate by Gender

Figure (3) shows consistent increase in completion rates of both sexes for both Grade 5 (51.3% to 69.4%) and Grade 8 (27.1% to 44.7%) between 2003/04 to 2007/08. The gender gap in completion rate for grade 5 is 4.7% and for grade 8 9.5%.This indicates that as grade level increases completion rate decreases for both sexes. On the other hand, compared to the world average of completion rate for primary education for both sexes in 2005, which was 85 percent (World Bank, 2007), we are still lagging behind. This indicates that there is more wastage of resources is prevailing in Ethiopia.

Secondary Education

Gross Enrollment Rate (GER)

Secondary GER compares those students, regardless of their age, with the population of the appropriate age range. For Ethiopia, the ages for first cycle secondary (General Secondary) is 15-16 and for second cycle, 17-18 years of age.

Table (4) shows the secondary school age population, enrollment by cycle and gender, and the Gross Enrollment Rate for each. As can be seen from the Tables (2), (4), and (5) gender disparities are more prevalent and wider in secondary and higher education than at the primary level, but over five years, enrollment has grown.

Table 4: Secondary GER by Cycle and Gender (2004/05-2008/09)

Year	Secondary(9-10)			Secondary(11-12)		
	Male	Female	**GPI**	Male	Female	GPI
2004/05	34.6	19.8	0.57	4.3	1.7	0.40
2005/06	41.6	24.5	0.59	5.7	2.0	0.35
2006/07	45.7	28.6	0.63	7.3	3.7	0.51
2007/08	44.4	29.6	0.67	7.8	3.8	0.49
2008/09	43.7	32.4	0.74	8.5	3.5	0.42

Source: Education Statistics Annual Abstract (2008/09), MoE, 2010

Though the overall enrollments of boys and girls in the years under consideration are increasing in absolute terms, the GPI for secondary education shows decreasing and increasing trends for unexplained reasons. The GPI for the first cycle secondary education (grades 9-10) was 0.74 by 2008/09 and 0.42 for the second cycle (grades 11-12). This pattern in both cycles of the secondary will obviously affect the gender gap in the tertiary education. Compared to the World and Sub-Saharan Africa, which had a GPI of 0.94 and 0.83 by 2005(UNESCO, 2007), we have a long way to reach not only the global target but also the African level.

Higher Education

Higher Education in Ethiopia includes institutions with three, four, and six year undergraduate programs, as well as those with offerings through the two year Masters and three to four years PhD programs. Currently, there are 22 Government institutions (of which Addis Ababa University is the largest), and 51 accredited non- Government institutions which award different

degrees. These institutions offer instruction via Regular, Evening, Kiremt (summer), and Distance modalities (MoE, 2008).

Total enrollment in higher education institutions in 2008/09 was 319,217 in all programs including: Regular, Evening, Kiremt and Distance for both Government and non-Government institutions. Out of these, non-Government institutions enroll approximately 55,264 students, which accounts for 17.3% of the total. As a result the GER reached 5.6 percent in the same year (MoE, 2010), but still this is lower than the Sub-Saharan Africa.

Table 5: Undergraduate and Postgraduate Enrollment in Higher Education as Proportion of Females (2004/05-2008/09)

Year	Undergraduate degree		Postgraduate degree	
	*BS	Female	*BS	Female
2004/05	132868	23	3446	9.6
2005/06	173901	24.8	6382	9.9
2006/07	203399	26	7057	10
2007/08	263001	24.1	7355	9.6
2008/09	309,092	29.0	10125	11.3

Source: Education Statistics Annual Abstract (2008/09), MoE, 2010
**BS: Both Sexes*

At the secondary and tertiary level, gender disparities tend to be more prominent and globally in favour of girls. However, in Ethiopia gender disparity is very high and is in favor of boys. In 2008/09 more than a quarter and one-tenth of female students were enrolled in the undergraduate and postgraduate levels respectively. Though there are improvements in the past few years, the proportion of female students in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) is insignificant compared to their male counterparts.

In discussing these issues, one must first analyze and evaluate the state of gender disparities in higher education in Ethiopia. Among many factors, lack

of academic support has been identified as one of the issues which continue to limit female success in higher education Tesfaye (2007). The fact that implementation of gender-sensitive policies only begins at the university admission stage and does not continue throughout the students' academic career, sets female students up for failure (Tesfaye 2007; Teshome 2007). This means that gender-sensitive policies are implemented not at all levels of education and the support after enrolment is inadequate.

Attrition

Academic performance is a factor that influences the level of female survival rate in higher education institutions in general, and during their freshman year in particular. Though current data is not available on assessment of student performance enrolled in undergraduate program, the data of 2000/01 shows that 62.1% female freshman students enrolled in the undergraduate degree programs did not make to second year level in 2002 (MoE,2004). Moreover, a study conducted at Hawassa University (Tesfaye 2005), indicated that in 2004/05 academic year, of the total 1,323 female students enrolled at undergraduate level, 465 (35.1%) were dismissed for academic reasons. However, the figure does not take into account those who terminated their studies due to economic, health and family-related problems. Similarly, documents from the registrar office of Mekelle University indicate that, in the years 2005, 2006 and 2007, out of the female enrollments in these years, 278 (11.3%) 327(12.3%) and 440 (16.8%), were dismissed respectively for academic reasons in the first semester. This indicates that access to education without retention of the students in the system is not a good indicator of gender equity.

Equality in the Learning Process

As discussed earlier, achieving gender equality requires a determined effort to move beyond mere parity by adopting behavioral and changes that can bring about an enabling environment in which everyone, female and male,

thrives (UNESCO, 2008). But a study conducted by the Ministry of Education on gender issues in HEIs in Ethiopia indicated that,

> ….female students have frustration and helplessness regarding the inability of HEIs to provide them with sufficient protection for their safety and security. …. Several incidents of physical and sexual harassments take place in classes, libraries, cafeterias, around their dormitories, and in study spaces (MoE, 2004, p.14).

Violence in schools seriously affects pupils' physical and mental health and the development of social and cognitive skills, often resulting in poor academic achievement. Sexual harassment of girls often results in low self-esteem, poor participation in learning activities, high dropout rate and even suicide (UNESCO, 2008). The protection of women's right is enshrined in the 1995 Ethiopian Constitution. The question is what measures and mechanisms are needed to make it reality? What actions should be taken to prevent sexual offences within the Ethiopian education system and create safe and non-discriminatory school environment?

Gendered Choice of Subjects in HEI

Studies indicate socialization processes in schools have an influential role in orienting girls to particular fields. In most regions, except in Sub-Saharan Africa, and South and West Asia, girls now represent the majority of students enrolled in tertiary education. Despite this progress, women students tend to be concentrated in traditionally 'feminine' fields (UNESCO, 2008). The sex typing of fields of study is a worldwide phenomenon (Jacob, 1996), with variations among countries. For instance in Ethiopia girls represent less than a quarter of tertiary students in science related fields (engineering, life science and computing) but they are over a quarter in education, business and economics, law, and health sciences (MoE,2009) as compared with 51.6% of engineering students in Kuwait and 3.3 % in Switzerland and Japan (UNESCO,1995). Table (6) indicates field of studies for comparison

from six universities in Ethiopia. The universities have adequate number of students in the mentioned disciplines.

Table 6: Students Enrolled in Regular Undergraduate Program in Selected Fields and Universities*(2004/05-2006/07)

Year	Business and Economics		Technology/ Engineering		Education		Law		Medicine/Health Science	
	BS	F (%)	BS	F (%)	BS	F (%)	BS	F (%)	BS	F (%)
2004/05	9547	23.8	8164	19.6	16115	20.5	2724	27.4	6108	23.7
2005/06	13743	22.6	9276	18.4	17683	20	3684	28.9	6431	25.2
2006/07	13353	26.6	9404	16.8	19680	22.3	4567	26.8	9140	20.1

Source: Compiled from the Ministry of education 2007/08 Annual Abstract, MoE, 2009

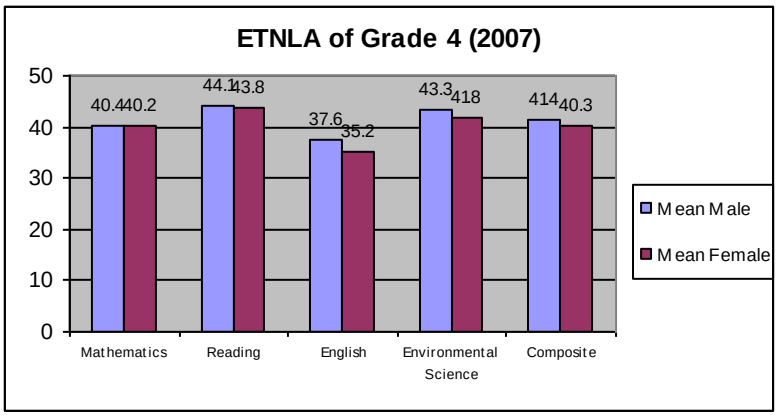
**Adiss Ababa, Bahidar, Hawassa, Jimma, Mekelle and Haromaya Universitie.*

As depicted in Table (6), data from the six universities indicates that the highest proportions of students are enrolled in Business and Economics and the lowest in Technology/Engineering fields. This corresponds to the global experience in the subject choices of female students in HEIs .The prioritization of science and technology (70:30) that was introduced in 2008 within the educational and development policies of the country may further exclude female students unless additional actions are taken to promote their participation in these fields. This indicates the need for a systemic intervention in developing female students in science and other similar fields.

Equality of Educational Outcomes

With regard to the second dimension of the Dakar Framework for Action – gender equality in terms of equal access to good quality education for girls- it is useful to note research on how well boys and girls perform in learner achievement tests. Student assessment results demonstrate large gender differences in overall performance and in performance by subject. Results from various national and international large -scale assessments indicate that boys have higher test scores in mathematics and girls have higher test scores in reading (Baker & Jones 1993, Beller & Gafni 1996, Nowell & Hedges 1998, Gallagher & Kaufman 2005, Marks 2007 cited in Buchman et al, 2008). As opposed to these results however, according to the reports of the Ethiopian Third National Learning Assessment (ETNLA) conducted in 2007 at the terminal grades of primary education (grades 4 and 8),the results are in favor of boys in all subjects under consideration (MoE, 2008).

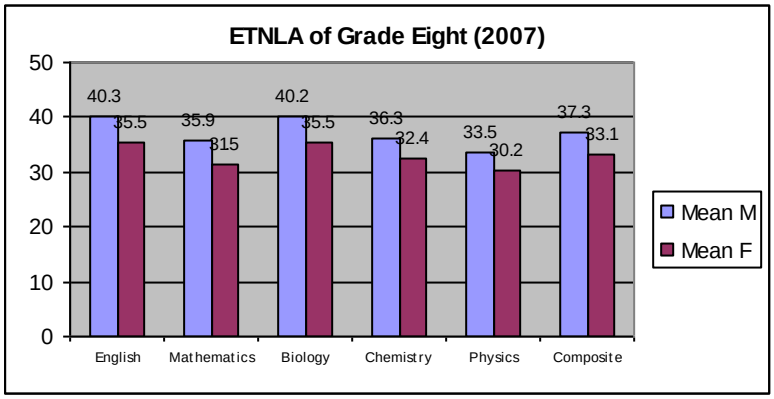
Similarly, a study conducted by Mulugeta et al (2008) in preparatory schools in Tigrai indicated a significant difference in achievement among students of different sexes. Though the overall performance of the student body was not good, boys performed better than girls. Therefore, this seems to be context and area specific.



Source: *Compiled from MoE, 2008*

Figure 4: ETNLA for Grade Four, 2007(in Percent).

As indicated in Figure (4), the overall result of ETNLA for grade four is not encouraging and is below the policy set by the Ministry of Education. Considering the gender disparities, boys achieved means scores that are higher by 1.12% in the composite scores and 0.23 to 2.38% in the four subjects than girl.



Source: *Compiled from MoE, 2008*

Figure 5: ETNLA Results for Grade Eight, 2007(in Percent).

Grade eight results are worse than that of grade four and the gender disparities are widened here. Boys achieved mean scores that are higher by 4.3% in the composite scores and 3.3% t0 4.8% in the five subjects (Figure 5) than girls.

Ethiopian School Leaving Certificate Examination

The pass rate in the Ethiopian General secondary School Certificate Examination (EGSECE) is determined by the Grade Point Average (GPA). The pass rate is defined as the percentage of students who have scored a GPA of 2.0 or above out of the total number of students who sat for EGSECE. On the other hand the pass rate for Ethiopian Higher Education Entrance Certificate Examination (EHEECE**)** is determined annually by the

Ministry of Education differently for both boys and girls. Therefore in this paper an approximate average of pass rate for the EHEECE is taken for both sexes as indicated in Table 7.

Table 7: Ethiopian School Leaving Certificate Examination Results

Year	EGSECE(≥2)		EHEECE (≥201) except for 2002/03 which was (≥101)	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
2004/05	62.2	39.9	80.9	67.9
2005/06	54.7	36.9	88.8	74.8
2006/07	56.1	39.5	92.4	83.3
2007/08	44.6	28.6	79.7	50.8
2008/09	50.1	32.2	83.3	64.9

Source: Compiled from the Education Statistics Annual Abstract (2008/09), MoE, 2010

As indicated in the EHEECE results higher proportion of female students are getting pass marks to joinHEIs and the gender gap is smaller than the gap observed in EGSECE except for 2007/08 and the following year, though the trend has an increasing and decreasing pattern. The EGSECE average result for female students is however slightly higher than one third. This indicates that female students had a disadvantage to enter the preparatory program and HEIs in the successive years.

Graduation

Graduates from Higher Education institutions typically complete one of three degree streams, Undergraduate, Postgraduate Masters, or Postgraduate Ph.D. As noted in Table 8 below, in 2008/09 there were 59,027 graduates from all three degree streams and from both Government and non-

Government institutions. Of these, 10,215 (i.e., 17.3%) were female. This represents the lowest level of female participation at any level of education—but it does represent systematic improvement over five years.

Table (8) shows the trend in graduates by degree type over the last five years. The average rate of growth of female graduates, (i.e., over 41% for Postgraduate and over 72% for Undergraduates) reveals improved efficiency, and the likelihood of improved labor market.

Table 8: Graduates from all Programs of Higher Education Institutions by the Year (2004/05-2008/09)

Year	Undergraduate			Postgraduate degree		
	Male	Female	%	Male	Female	%
2004/05	9646	1889	16.4	1025	101	8.9
2005/06	21240	4095	16.2	1252	136	9.8
2006/07	24474	5371	18	2412	259	9.7
2007/08	38048	9931	20.6	2380	284	10.7
2008/09	39231	16539	42.2	2856	401	14.0
AAGR	42%	72%		29.2%	41.2%	

Source: Compiled from the Education Statistics Annual Abstract (2008/09) MoE, 2010

Equality of External Results

Although women constitute 49.5% (FDRE, 2008), of the population in Ethiopia and contribute their share in agricultural production and other household activities, they have not benefited from their labor equally with their male counterparts. The participation of women in qualified jobs and related fields is at its lowest level. For instance, the National Labor Force Survey CSA, 1999 (cited in FDRE, 2006) indicates that women account for only 23.9% in technical and professional fields. The majority of women perform tiresome, low paid and even unpaid jobs.

The inequality between female and male in education can also be seen from the data on females teaching in HEIs in Ethiopia as indicated in Table (9) below.

Table 9: Percentage of Full Time Ethiopian Female Teaching Staff by Institution, Academic Level 2006/07, First Semester

S. No	University	Academic Level		
		% female teaching staff from the total staff		
		% BA/BSc.	% MA/MSc.	% PhD
1	Addis Ababa	10.5	10.5	4.1
2	Haromaya	11.4	2.9	0
3	Hawassa	13.2	8.0	5
4	Jimma	9.2	4.5	0
5	Ambo	8.0	8.9	0
6	Bahidar	24	4.4	0
7	Adama	5.5	3.7	0
8	Arbaminch	7.3	0	0
9	Gondar	7.5	4.3	0
10	Mekelle	8.5	2.8	0
Total		**12.6**	**6.7**	**3.2**

Source: Compiled from the Ministry of education 2007/08 Annual Abstract, MoE, 2009

Female teachers help assure girls' access, but not equality. Absence of female models at the university level to set precedents that could reconfigure the worth of Ethiopian women beyond the role of mother and wife does not make things any easier. As depicted in Table 9, in the 2006/2007 academic year the proportion of female faculty in the ten old universities under consideration stood at 9.4 percent average for the three academic levels. This is much lower than the world average of female teachers in tertiary education which was 41% in 2005 (UNESCO, 2008). Further studies are needed to clearly identify the problems behind the low share of female teaching staff in Ethiopian HEIs. However, among other factors it is clear that the transition of female students to the higher level of education is low, and this has led to low proportion of female teaching staff. The few women academic staff who hold positions are largely concentrated in fields considered typically feminine, and even there, in the lower ranks of their faculty (Tesfaye, 2007; Tehome , 2007).

Conclusion and Policy Implication

The preceding analysis reveals that there has been considerable improvement in the participation of girls during the past five years at all levels of the education system. Although the increase in enrolment has been more significant at the primary level, compared to the other levels, progress has been made. Data from the educational statistics abstract, for example, shows an increase in total girls' enrolment of 19.2 percent in primary schools and 12.6, percent in lower secondary schools from 2004 to 2008 (MoE, 2010). The gender gap in primary school gets closer for the year 2008/09 in terms of enrollment of boys and girls, with girls being behind by about 6.9 percent points. This is a promising achievement in the Ethiopian education system.

The GER of both boys and girls have shown steady increases at all levels of the education system, but considerable gender gaps remain particularly at the upper secondary and higher education levels. GER of boys as well as of girls are much lower at the upper secondary level than primary and lower

secondary levels. The GER of boys was much higher than that of girls at the upper secondary level but when the GER of boys increased by 97.6 percent the increase for girls was around 106 percent between 2004 and 2008. Moreover, girls are now "surviving" in lower primary better than boys. But the data shows that more than 46 percent of females did not continue into the second cycle of the primary over the last five years.

The analysis in this paper also throws some lights on considerable variations in the growth of gender parity across the regional states. In many regional states there was a significant improvement in GPI during the five years between 2004 and 2008. Gender parity is highest in Addis Ababa, Tigrai, and Amhara, and lowest in Benshangul-Gumuz, Somali and Harari.

In general, wide gender disparities in enrolment followed by long-standing gendered divisions in society still exist in the underserved regional states (Afar and Somale). In the majority of regional states, girls have lower enrolment rates than boys, whereas they have higher rates of enrolment than boys in Addis Ababa.

In addition to improvements in the enrolment of girls, a simultaneous decline in drop out rates has also contributed to the overall increase in school participation. Dropout rate from 2002/03 to 2006/07 consistently decreased from 18.5% to 11.6% respectively. Generally, both repetition and dropout rates were in favor of girls in all grades in 2006/07. The data indicates that once they enter primary education girls stay more than boys in the system.

Generally, access, process, and outcomes are distinct aspects of the education tiers that need to be examined separately. The trends in these areas often do not coincide with one another, and consequently separate explanations of these the education system are needed. For example, women remain a minority in HEIs and are disadvantaged in terms of rank and institutional prestige. Yet, women do not represent a majority of students at all levels of the education tiers. Clearly, treating women's standing among

the staff and in the student body as one phenomenon will not do, since the extent of women's progress differs between these two status types.

To conclude, challenges in achieving gender equality remain significant, and recent policy initiatives are silent on many of the critical issues of quality and mainstreaming gender within the education system as a whole. Lessons since the mid-1990s point to the need for intensive process-based, multi-sectoral approaches to sustain gains made in enrolment rates. Whether this is possible without major administrative reforms is an important question. A pragmatic view would be to accept that this cannot happen and therefore push for a greater decentralization and more innovative ways to encourage local communities to achieve change. As long as weak incentives continue to be offered to a large and opaque education bureaucracy, the kinds of change required are unlikely to take place in the near future.

Several gaps continue to exist in research on gender and education in Ethiopia. First, there is a need to understand the forces (push and pull) that shape women's access to education, especially in the context of the recent rapid transformation of Ethiopian society. Second, the education landscape is also changing within this wider social transformation, and a better understanding of these changes may help identify new spaces and language to promote greater gender equality. Third, the impact of the current strategies needs to be monitored and assessed in order to ensure that current expenditures are actually translated into change or, where necessary, they can be more effectively re-structured.

Therefore, in addition to checking whether existing resources reach their intended recipients, there is a wider question about the value of incentive schemes in terms of their actual impacts on demand and participation. A number of tough questions need to be asked and further studies are needed to focus on these questions in order to support improvements in gender equality across the country.

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