GenderJustice Women's Rights

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Gender, IFIs and Food Insecurity Case Study: Ethiopia

Rural Ethiopians, the majority of whom are women and girls, experience chronic food insecurity. Despite decades of agricultural investments from International Finance Institutions (IFIs), including the World Bank (WB), overall productivity in Ethiopia's agriculture "perennially dependent on food security programs, and several million more [who] are susceptible to food insufficiency in the event of adverse climatic shocks" (WB, 2008a). Although the WB has invested a total of US$2.5 billion in agriculture and food security projects in Ethiopia since 1970, a 2010 WB project appraisal document (PAD) stated that "the capacity of [Ethiopia's] agricultural institutions is still weak," "yields remain low, and many geographical areas have unexploited potential for productivity growth" (WB, 2010). The WB also noted how Ethiopia's poor have suffered disproportionately from the global economic crisis, as "the price of goods consumed by the poor is estimated to have risen by 78 percent in urban areas and 85 percent in rural areas" between 2008-2010 (WB, 2010). Households are often forced to fulfill basic food needs by selling assets, reducing the number of meals eaten per day, or borrowing food or money (FAO, 2009).

Agriculture is the foundation of Ethiopia's economy, employing 80 per cent of the country's 82 million people. The vast majority of Ethiopians live in rural areas and engage in rain-fed subsistence agriculture. Household food security therefore largely depends on external factors including "rainfall patterns, land degradation, climate change, population density, low levels of rural investment and the global market" (World Food Program, 2011). Ethiopian women and girls bear the greatest burdens of food insecurity, since they play a significant role in livestock maintenance, crop production and marketing of rural produce (Ethiopian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2010). Despite these critical roles, women farmers still face multiple gender inequalities, including difficulty obtaining credit, land, extension services and other productive resources (United Nations, 2004; Frank, 2009). Rural Ethiopian women must work up to twice as many hours per day compared to men, since they are primarily responsible for their households, including gathering firewood and water, cooking, cleaning, and providing child care (Frank, 2009). Women's low education status and lack of access to decision making processes and leadership positions in their communities further exacerbates poverty and food insecurity (United Nations, 2004).

Gender Analysis Methodology and Findings

This case study applies Gender Action's Essential Gender Analysis Checklist to all four active IFI projects in Ethiopia that primarily focus on agriculture, rural development and nutrition. Totaling US$384 million and funded by the WB, none of these projects approach agriculture and food security from a human rights perspective, promote gender equality or analyze differential impacts on men and women, boys and girls. The WB's private sector arm, the International Finance Corporation (IFC), also invests in Ethiopia: in 2010, the IFC extended a "risk-sharing facility" worth up to US$10 million to Ethiopia's Nib International Bank to increase the number of loans offered to 70 coffee farmer cooperatives. Although the IFC claims that its focus on agribusiness and industry benefits small and medium enterprises by "helping them access finance" (2010), small-scale and subsistence farmers—the majority of whom are women—are unlikely to benefit from such large-scale investments. The African Development Bank has also invested in agriculture projects in Ethiopia, but its most recent agriculture project closed in 2010.

Food Insecurity's Disproportionately Negative Health Impacts on Women and Girls

Chronic food insecurity takes a severe toll on the health of all household members, but research suggests that women and girls suffer the most. According to a recent study of food security in southwest Ethiopia, girls who are food insecure are twice as likely to report suffering from an illness compared to boys (Belachew, et al., 2011). A 2009 study found that stunting and chronic under-nutrition is higher among female children compared to male children, and higher overall in female headed households (Haidar & Kogi-Makau, 2009).

The WB's Agricultural Growth Program (AGP), 2010 (US$150 million)

The WB's AGP aims to "increase agricultural productivity and market access for key crop and livestock products" with enhanced youth and women's participation. Although the AGP does not approach agriculture from a human rights perspective, the PAD acknowledges Ethiopia's "considerable gender imbalance" in regard to education, decision-making and development benefits. The PAD's social assessment also identifies "women and female-headed households" as a particularly vulnerable group, including women without access to farmland and women in polygamous marriages who lack independent property rights. In response, the project aims to "enhance opportunities of women to access and manage natural resources and finance, and to participate more fully in social organizations and decision-making" (WB, 2010).

Despite its promise that women's participation will be "encouraged," however, the PAD does not indicate whether women provided input during the planning process. The PAD simply indicates that "farmers, their groups, associations, cooperatives and community institutions" were consulted, as well as "private sector beneficiaries," without specifying if women and men were consulted on an equal basis. The PAD also fails to promote equal outcomes for male and female beneficiaries. On the contrary, it aims to enhance "large commercial farms, farmer organizations, traders, agro-processors"—all of which are male-dominated. Since the project does not include any sex-disaggregated indicators, it is impossible to measure the project's differential impacts on men and women, boys and girls.

Applying Gender Action's Essential Gender Analysis Checklist:

Gender and Human Rights: The PAD does not approach agricultural growth from a human rights perspective.

Gender In/equality: The PAD acknowledges a "considerable gender imbalance" in regard to poverty rights and natural resource management. In response, the PAD promises to enhance women's opportunities to access and manage natural resources and to participate more fully in social organizations and decision-making."

Gender Data: None of the project indicators are sex-disaggregated.

Gender in Context: The PAD offers minimal context in which to understand gender relations with regard to agricultural growth and food security in Ethiopia.

Gender Access: Despite its explicit support for women's project participation, the PAD does not explicitly promote women's equal access to project benefits.

Gender Input: The PAD does not indicate that male and female beneficiaries were equally involved in project planning and implementation process.

Gender Output: The PAD does not explicitly promote outcomes that equally benefit men and women, boys and girls.

Gender Impact: The project does not examine differential impacts on women and men, boys and girls.

The WB's Second Pastoral Community Development Project II, 2008 (US$33.25 million)

The WB's Second Pastoral Community Development Project acknowledges pastoral women's "weak economic position" and provides context to explain gender roles in Ethiopian pastoral societies. For example, the PAD states that women are responsible for all domestic tasks, such as gathering firework and water, cooking, cleaning and childcare, in addition to "caring for livestock, milking cattle and goats, and processing and selling milk products" (WB, 2008b). Men, meanwhile, "typically control factors of production in livestock keeping and crop farming, and dominate decision-making in the traditional socio-political structures" (WB, 2008b).

The PAD indicates that pastoral men and women will "design and implement Community Action Plans (CAPs) that reflect their development priorities," and that "particular attention will be paid to poorer subgroups and to women" when CAPs are chosen for funding. The PAD also promises to ensure that development projects meet women's needs by encouraging their involvement in "situation analysis" and by promoting the development of women -pastoral savings and credit cooperatives. Despite measures to "ensure that all members of the community (men, women, young, old, rich, poor) are able to express their views and needs," however, the PAD does not include any indicators to measure men's and women's actual input and participation. In fact, only one indicator—the percent of community members who attend project-related meetings—is sex-disaggregated. While this indicator determining how many women were physically present during project meetings is important, it fails to measure the extent to which participating women engaged and actually contributed to project decision making.

Although the PAD claims that the project will "promot[e] gender and poverty-sensitive decision making" in order to increase beneficiaries' capacity to manage sustainable development, it does not outline specific ways to ensure that decisions will be made in a gender-sensitive manner. Given the project's lack of sex-disaggregated indicators, it is impossible to actually determine the project's gender equity and sustainability, as well as its differential impacts on pastoral men, women, girls and boys.

Applying Gender Action's Essential Gender Analysis Checklist:

Gender and Human Rights: The PAD does not approach pastoral development from a human rights perspective.

Gender In/equality: The PAD acknowledges gender inequality in Ethiopian pastoral communities and claims to promote gender equity in the project itself.

Gender Data: Only one project indicator is gender disaggregated: "percent of community members who attend project-related meetings."

Gender in Context: The PAD offers some context in which to understand gender relations in pastoral communities, noting women and men's different gender roles and men's dominance in decision-making and socio-political structures.

Gender Access: Although the PAD states that women and men will design and implement their own "community action plans," the project does not include any indicators to measure women and men's actual project participation.

Gender Input: There is no indication that male and female beneficiaries equally provided input throughout the entire project cycle.

Gender Output: The PAD promises to "promot[e] gender and poverty-sensitive decision-making," but does not outline specific ways in which it will ensure gender-sensitive decision making or monitor its implementation.

Gender Impact: The project does not examine its differential impact on women and men, boys and girls.

Gender Inequality in Pastoral Labor

"We women work the whole day from early morning to late at night. In the morning we prepare the fire, cook the breakfast and clean the house. Then we collect water and firewood, we grind corn which is hard work, and we look after our children. When [my husband] comes home in the evening, it is my job to serve him coffee and then to serve his meal, as if he has worked hard the whole day. I am supposed to be his servant. But he has only walked through pastures and sat on stones while the cattle grazed, and I have worked much harder the whole day."

—Ethiopian pastoral woman, as told to Simpson-Herbert, 2005

Gender Inequality Harms Pastoral Girls' Education

Pastoralist women are "less able than pastoralist men to participate in the decisions that affect their lives and livelihoods...[they] must work longer and harder than men, fulfilling 'female' roles in the household, as well as making money from tasks traditionally deemed to be 'women's work'...This labor is in such demand that girls are often removed from school in order to work."

—Minority Rights Group International, 2008

The WB's Nutrition Project in Ethiopia, 2008 (US$30 million)

The WB's Nutrition Project is intended to "improve child and maternal care behavior, and increase utilization of key micronutrients, in order to contribute to improving the nutritional status of vulnerable groups" (WB, 2008c). Instead of approaching maternal and children nutrition from a human rights perspective, however, the PAD justifies the project by noting malnutrition's "significant costs on the Ethiopian economy" (WB, 2008c). "Gender" is mentioned only once in the 115 page PAD.

The PAD neither acknowledges gender inequality in regard to nutrition nor explicitly promotes gender equality. Its iron and folate supplement component, for example, mainly targets pregnant women, while iron supplementation and nutritional counseling are only aimed at adolescent girls. (Boys' nutritional needs are never discussed in the entire document). Although the PAD includes a chart of sex-disaggregated child stunting and wasting statistics, it fails to explain gender inequalities and nutrition disparities in Ethiopia. The PAD's social assessment merely states that "the project [will] recognize the considerable importance of social and cultural beliefs and practices that influence maternal and child care, and eventually nutrition and health outcomes," and claims that the project will address these issues throughout project design and implementation.

As there is no indication that female beneficiaries provided any input throughout the project cycle, it is hardly surprising that many project activities are completely gender-blind. The project's first component, for example, excludes men in its goal to "promot[e] improved caring practices for children and women to prevent malnutrition" (WB, 2008c). Although the project aims to improve child nutrition by enhancing "adolescent care," it does not distinguish between boys and girls. Gender issues are also ignored in the project's "capacity building and training" interventions. While the project intends to train health care workers, midlevel managers, nutritionists and so-called "higher-level, super nutritionists," the PAD does not promote men's and women's equal access to these training opportunities. Since the project fails to include sex-disaggregated indicators, it is impossible to determine the project's differential impacts on men and women, boys and girls.

Ethiopia Malnutrition and Food Insecurity Indicators

Population (2009)	82,825,000
Life expectancy at birth for ages 15-59 (2009)	56
Percent infants with low birth weight (2005-2009)	20
Percent of children < 6 months who are exclusively breastfed	49
Percent of children <5 years who are underweight	38
Percent of children < 5 years who are stunted	51
Percent of children < 5 years who are wasting	12
Vitamin A Supplementation Rate (6-59 months)	84
Percent of households consuming iodized salt	20

—UNICEF, 2010

Applying Gender Action's Essential Gender

Gender and Human Rights: The PAD does not approach nutrition from a human rights perspective.

Gender In/equality: The PAD does not acknowledge or seek to redress gender inequality.

Gender Data: The PAD includes a chart of stunting and wasting by gender, but does not include sex-disaggregated indicators to monitor them over the course of the project's life.

Gender in Context: The project fails to provide sufficient context to understand gender issues related to nutrition.

Gender Access: The PAD does not promote equal access to project activities and benefits for men and women, boys and girls.

Gender Input: The PAD does not indicate whether women, girls or other marginalized groups were involved in the design, implementation or monitoring/ evaluation of the project.

Gender Output: The PAD does not promote outcomes that equally benefit men and women, boys and girls.

Gender Impact: The PAD fails to examine the differential impact on women and men, boys and girls.

Select Health Consequences of Malnutrition Throughout the Course of Life

Newborn: low birth weight and iodine deficiency disorder (IDD), which leads to growth and developmental retardation, brain damage

Infant and Young Child: protein-energy malnutrition (PEM); increased risk of infection; blindness; anemia; developmental retardation; high risk of death

Adolescent: PEM, IDD, folate and calcium deficiencies that lead to stunted height; delayed/retarded intellectual development; inadequate bone mineralization; blindness; anemia

Pregnant Woman: PEM, IDD, folate and calcium deficiencies that lead to insufficient weight gain and high risk of maternal mortality

Adults: PEM, IDA that lead to thinness; lethargy, heart disease; osteoporosis

—World Health Organization, 2011

The WB's Sustainable Land Management Project, 2008 (US$29 million)

The WB's Sustainable Land management aims to assist smallholder farmers to adopt sustainable land management practices in order to "reverse land degradation in agricultural landscapes, increase agricultural productivity and income growth, and protect ecosystem integrity and functions" (WB, 2008d). Although the project intends to benefit 500,000 smallholder farms, the majority of which are managed by women, women are mentioned only once in the 91 page PAD.

The PAD does not approach land management from a human rights perspective, nor does it explicitly promote men's and women's equal access to project benefits. On the contrary, the PAD includes activities that "beneficiaries" must pay for themselves: the WB finances 25 percent of the project's farmland and homestead development sub-component, which "would have mostly private benefits," and calls for "the intended beneficiaries [to] cover the cost of the remaining 75 percent in the form of labor and cash from their own resources" (WB, 2008d). The project's "community infrastructure" sub-component, which funds small-scale, water harvesting systems (i.e. farm ponds and storage tanks), demands that communities provide labor as an "in kind contribution," instead of providing payment.

Applying Gender Action's Essential Gender Analysis Checklist:

Gender and Human Rights: The project does not approach sustainable land management from a human rights perspective.

Gender In/equality: The PAD neither acknowledges nor seeks to address gender inequality.

Gender Data: The PAD does not include or analyze gender disaggregated data; the PAD also lacks sex-disaggregated indicators.

Gender in Context: The project does not any context in which to understand gender relations in regard to land management in Ethiopia.

Gender Access: The project does not explicitly promote equal access to project activities and benefits for men/women, boys/girls. On the contrary, some project components actually call upon "beneficiaries" to fund activities themselves, and provide "in kind contributions" of labor.

Gender Input: The PAD does not indicate whether women, girls, or other marginalized groups were involved in the project design, implementation or monitoring and evaluation.

Gender Output: The project does not promote project outcomes that equally benefit men and women.

Gender Impact: The PAD states that the project will have "overall positive social impacts," but does not examine its differential impacts on men and women and men, boys and girls.

The project's second component, which focuses on land certification, intends to "expand the coverage and enhance the land certification project aimed at strengthening tenure security for smallholder farmers," the majority of whom are women. Although the PAD cites a 2007 study that found the Ethiopian land certification process does not discriminate against women and female-headed households, research has shown that "structural, cultural and economic constraints are still likely to limit women's access to and control of land" (Akinyi-Nzioki, 2006). Since the PAD only measures the "increase in the number of beneficiary farmers with a sense of tenure security compared with non-beneficiaries" (WB, 2008d), it is impossible to determine how many female and male farmers benefited from this project component. None of the project's other indicators are sex-disaggregated.

The PAD does not indicate whether male and female beneficiaries were equally involved in project design, implementation or monitoring and evaluation. The PAD indicates that project implementation was assigned to "local authorities and communities" with no reference to men's and women's involvement. Although the PAD claims that the project will have "overall positive social impacts," it does not examine how the project will differentially impact men and women, boys and girls.

Gender Action Recommendations

IFIs Must:

✓ Approach agriculture and food security investments from gender and human rights perspectives

✓Eliminate investments that undermine developing countries' local agricultural markets and harm the livelihoods of poor women and girls

✓ End harmful conditionalities, such as requiring that developing countries privatize businesses and remove subsidies and tariffs

✓ Explicitly promote the integration of women throughout food security project cycles and promote outcomes that increase food security, especially for women and girls

The G20 Must:

✓ Pressure IFIs to integrate the needs of women and girls into agriculture investments, and promote outcomes that equally benefit men and women, boys and girls

✓ Follow through on pledges of development assistance for hardest hit countries in order to alleviate malnutrition among the poor, of whom the majority are women and girls

✓ Take urgent measures to avoid continued food price volatility and future food crises: reverse the deregulation of commodity-derivative markets and insist that IFIs permit countries to re-instate tariffs on food imports to low-income countries

Civil Society Organizations Can:

✓ Use Gender Action resources to advocate for IFIs to increase food security investments that directly benefit women and girls; pressure IFIs to strengthen and fully implement their gender policies with regard to food security projects

✓ Help those who are negatively impacted by IFI agriculture and food security projects to bring gender discrimination cases to IFI accountability mechanisms; help them gather information about IFI policies and procedures

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Gender Action's mission is to promote women's rights and gender equality and ensure women and men equally participate in and benefit from International Financial Institution (IFI) investments in developing countries.

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