

**“Sites of Resistance: Challenges to Gendering Education Policy”**

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## Introduction

Improving education, and women and children's access to education, has long been viewed as an important factor in alleviating societal problems. Women's access to education is correlated with declining fertility rates, increased use of contraception, and improved children's health (Ainsworth et al, 1996; Subbaro and Raney, 1995). While these correlations are sometimes in questioned (Jeffery and Jeffery, 1998), and many academics warn against the use of "instrumentalist" reasoning to extend education to women in the hopes that it will spur economic growth (Subrahmanian, 2002), improving educational access for women and girls remains central to developing the capacity of women. Yet in many places, girls' access to education is so uncommon that "the term empowerment has been used to mean mere participation in the formal system" (Stromquist, pg. 24). This line of thought ignores important questions about educational content and societal expectations of schooling. As international efforts are being undertaken to improve women's position relative to men, the development of gender-equitable education policies and the effective implementation of such policies should be a key priority.

The Platform for Action delivered at the Fourth United Nations Conference on Women in Beijing outlined a global plan for gender mainstreaming, with national governments agreeing to undertake gender-sensitive policy development and implementation. While there has been no shortage of attention paid to the themes of gender in development practice in recent years, progress under the rubric of gender mainstreaming remains negligible. The failure of state governments to make concerted, ongoing efforts to mainstream gender with regard to local conditions has in part hindered the effectiveness of gender mainstreaming as an international feminist project. Scholars have argued that to be effective, gender mainstreaming must occur "within each stage of the research and policy process. A substantive incorporation of a gendered analysis requires that gender be entrenched within each stage of the research rather than added on as an optional variable," (Rankin and Vickers, pg. 30). Moreover, this process also requires scholars and policy-makers to consider the historical context, the current policy climate and comparative information from other jurisdictions, (Rankin and Vickers, pg. 31). Thus, the commitment to gender mainstreaming must be ongoing and thorough, which complicates the process.

However, efforts have been made by the national governments of some developing countries to mainstream gender into education policies. While the UN Millennium Project Task Force reports that both Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia experience the "worst shortfalls" of out-of-school children and that these regions, in combination with East Asia and the Pacific, are where 83% of all out-of-school girls live (Birdsall et al, pg. 1), countries within these regions have made efforts to improve girls' access to education. In particular, Ethiopia has made important strides toward improving educational access and enrollment of young girls in primary education, yet they have experienced widely different results in their implementation. Superficially, Ethiopia's efforts seem to have largely failed, but further inspection reveals that the state faces ongoing challenges and resistance to change. Despite high-level commitments to gender

mainstreaming and female empowerment through a number of national policies, Ethiopia faces entrenched social norms and attitudes regarding gender. These attitudes are often further enforced by the economic needs of rural populations. This confluence of factors has prevented the Ethiopian government from meeting its own benchmarks for gender equity in primary school enrollment.

Because of these policy difficulties and others throughout both the developed and developing world, gender mainstreaming has been regarded as a failed strategy in many respects. Although the practice of gender mainstreaming has been reportedly effective within some international institutions, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and transnational corporations, its effectiveness as a state-level strategy has been questioned and has reinforced notions of “gender mainstreaming” as a largely white, Western, feminist project with little consideration for the immediate realities of the lives of women. This paper explores the factors that affect the implementation of gender mainstreaming at the state level. Analyzing education policies in Ethiopia, this paper highlights the need to consider societal norms and mores in the implementation of new educational policies. To be effective, female achievement in education must not conflict with local customs and needs. This compatibility is necessary not just to ensure that the achievement of gender equity in enrollment may translate into substantial educational and professional development for girls and young women, but so that the forms of educational development undertaken are organic to the communities in which they are undertaken and are not imposed by Western models of educational development.

This paper provides an analytical framework by examining the policy implementation literature and the myriad actors and elements that both participate in and hinder the policy implementation process. What follows is a brief assessment of the government policies in Ethiopia that have endeavoured to improve education for girls. As this study will demonstrate, gender inequity is often a product of lasting histories and overlapping societal disadvantages, which have proved to be formidable obstacles to effective policy implementation, along with several hazards within the policy process itself.

## **Policy Implementation**

The issue of implementation is a recurrent theme in national analyses of gender mainstreaming projects, as the case study of Ethiopia will illustrate. Broadly, the study of policy implementation must examine both the content – including the divisibility of benefits among the population, behavioural change required, and the clarity of goals – and the environmental context within which the policy content is undertaken, including the actors, interests and political power positions involved (Grindle, pg. 3). The conventional policy implementation literature divides these areas into three major elements in the implementation process that facilitate closer analysis: the nature of the social problems and their amenability to change; the governance and organizational arrangements where the policy operates; and the will or capacity of the people charged with implementation (Spillane et al, pg. 389). In addition to these elements, Burt (2007) further identifies the general system capacity to support policy implementation, which

captures factors such as political support, economic context, and general public support. All of these elements appear to varying degrees in the analyses below and they speak specifically to the complexity of designing and implementing education strategies in communities that might not yet be receptive to social change.

### *The Nature of the Social Problems*

In the case of Ethiopia, the nature of the social problems is perhaps the most salient issue and highlights the problems related to both policy content and context. Burt outlines the range of factors that determine the tractability of an issue, including its breadth, the clarity and precision of objectives, the diversity of the target group, and the extent of behavioural change required (Burt, 2007). In the case of gender mainstreaming, and in the educational policies below, these factors are repeatedly seen as critical points of tension. Addressing the causes of gender discrimination in educational policy and facilitating increased female enrollment necessitates an examination of both educational and broader social environments. Yet it also requires precise educational benchmarks in order to encourage substantive change. Most importantly, it requires behavioural changes not only of policy administrators and teachers, but also among entire communities. As explored in the following chapters, improving girls' educational achievement requires setting specific goals while also being mindful of the broader context within which they operate.

### *Organizational Capacity*

In addition to the nature of the social problems being addressed, the capacity of governance and organizational structures to implement policy effectively must be assessed. To do so requires a consideration of integration between agencies, commitment to policy objectives, the geographical location of implementing agencies, the training of officials, and the availability of resources (Burt, 2007) within the government departments and branches responsible for the policy area (Vogel and Burt, pg. 14). These and other factors are a testament to the complexity of governance and policy implementation. Pal (2001) highlights the role of clearance and decision points through implementing agencies and how decisions made throughout agencies block effective policy implementation despite commitment at higher levels (Pal, 2001, pg. 186-187). Thus, in spite of high-level political commitment to a policy, the administrative process often creates several instances for decision-making through implementing agencies. This complex process thus provides several sites for bureaucratic resistance to new policies.

### *Individual Capacity*

This concern about the number of decision-makers in the policy implementation process also relates to the question of individual capacity to undertake new policy. Here I use the term individual capacity to refer to "individual skills and competencies in the areas of negotiation and/or communication; leadership abilities; establishing partnerships and/or coalition-building; and the ability to mobilize technical resources," (Vogel and Burt, pg. 13). Specifically of concern for this paper are the skills and commitment of

officials and stakeholders in the policy (Burt, 2007). Quaid (2002), however, goes further to explore the various ‘hazards’ involved in the policy implementation process, including: politicians and political commitment; policy-makers and the failure to produce adaptive and suitable policy; administrators and the reluctance to embrace change; the target group and their hesitant or reluctant obedience; and evaluators and problems of whether or not policy is being assessed properly and accurately (Quaid, 2002).

### *System Capacity*

Analyzing the system capacity to implement new policies captures many of the contextual elements policy content operates within. Here, the concept of the “system” refers to “the entire policy community, including government, interest groups, and the attentive public,” (Vogel and Burt, pg. 16). Vogel and Burt identify four variables within the system:

values (support of powerful lobby groups, opinion leaders, and government); ideology (epistemic communities); politics (political will, advocacy strategies, the overall political agenda); and economics (funding for implementation; evidence of cost effectiveness). (Vogel and Burt, pg. 16)

While there is obviously some overlap between the overall system capacity and the aforementioned actors and organizational limits, a broad examination of system capacity also captures, in the case of education policy, the environment within which better-educated citizens operate. As explored below, it is not enough to merely consider the education system as it operates as a singular entity, but how the broader economic, political and social contexts react to improved education. Specifically, there must be an understanding of how the economic, political and social contexts respond to more educated girls and women.

Given these myriad elements and actors, it is obvious that effective policy implementation must be more than a top-down procedure, unresponsive to disparate opinions and realities. As Pal notes, if top-down control is the standard, “then almost by definition that is unlikely to happen, given what we know about the limits of organizations and the impact of politics of decision-making,” (Pal, pg. 189). Rather, as Pal argues “implementation is evolution... when we act to implement a policy, we change it” (Pal, quoting Majone and Wildavsky, pg. 189). Pal describes “backward mapping” of policy making, wherein flaws in implementation are remedied with the aid of service delivery agents. Resolving the problems in policy implementation thus requires recognition of its intrinsic complexity.

Ultimately, successful policy implementation requires compliance among officials, administrators and the public as well as responsiveness by policy administrators in order to facilitate constructive change. As Grindle explains:

The problem for policy administrators is to ensure an adequate amount of responsiveness to provide flexibility, support and feedback, while at the same time maintaining enough control over the distribution of resources to achieve the stated goals. (Grindle, pg. 13)

However, achieving this precarious balance is difficult for policy administrators anywhere, let alone in communities where there are deep-seated cultural hesitations and resistance to new policies designed to alter behaviours. Cleaves (1980) suggests that to achieve the best results “the content of the policy should reinforce many of the propensities of the target populations so that their support is likely to abet the implementation process,” (Cleaves, pg. 303). While this certainly points to the need for flexibility in policy implementation, reinforcing set cultural standards that perpetuate systemic gender discrimination is antithetical to the project of gender mainstreaming. Thus, the feedback and flexibility that is recommended should be employed to improve community education programs and directly address concerns about female education. As described below, addressing pervasive gender norms in societies is an obstacle that communities must dedicate resources to overcoming in order to close the gender gap in education.

### **Gender Mainstreaming in Practice - Ethiopia**

Ethiopia presents a fascinating case in the efforts to improve access to education generally and specifically for young girls. With a long, difficult history of education provision, marked with political instability and civil war, Ethiopia’s efforts to incorporate gender considerations into education policy in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century should be applauded. Yet these policy efforts have not translated into widely successful results. Since the end of the war, Ethiopia has been actively trying to improve access to education. Even prior to the Beijing conference Ethiopia had endeavoured to mainstream gender policies, and was one of the few African countries to appoint a woman to a policy-making position.

However, into the 21<sup>st</sup> century there is still a significant gender gap in primary school enrollment in Ethiopia, despite noteworthy increases in enrollment in primary education. The World Bank estimated a primary GER in 2001-02 of 61.6 per cent compared to just 20.5 per cent in 1993-94 (World Bank, pg. 37). What went wrong? The above account of Ethiopian customs provides a useful starting point for understanding the construction of gender roles and how these roles are reflected in attitudes towards girls’ primary education. However other problems affecting policy implementation have also been clearly evident.

#### *History*

Ethiopia’s education system under monarchical rule in the 20<sup>th</sup> century was heavily influenced by European modes of education. Textbooks were mainly from the UK and the US, and were not adapted to local culture. The languages of instruction were either English or French (until 1955). And the system retained a strong Christian bias, with Muslims discriminated against in a variety of ways (Colclough et al, 2003, pg. 122). When Ethiopia’s monarchy fell in 1974, primary GER (Gross Enrollment Rate) stood at only 12 percent after having expanded six-fold in the past fifteen years (Colclough et al, 2003, pg. 123).

Under the rule of the *Derg*, a group of military officers that seized power in 1974 and implemented socialist policies, access to education failed to improve despite efforts to provide free education. Existing problems in the educational system were aggravated by resource constraints as the *Derg* not only eliminated certain taxes, but diverted funds from social sectors into defense (Colclough et al. 2003, pg. 123). Thus, while there were early gains in gross enrollment rates in the *Derg* period, they were quickly eroded by these diversions, as well as drought and famine in the 1980s. "...[P]rimary enrolments in the country fell from their peak of 39 per cent in 1982/83 to scarcely 20 per cent of the age group a decade later," (Colclough et al., 2003, pg. 125). Interestingly, despite declining enrollment overall, the trends in 1991/92 show that during the war years, the gender gap narrowed substantially. Colclough et al. explain that this occurred because the enrollment of boys fell faster than that of girls. Boys wished to avoid conscription, the risks being greater among school attendees. But with the end of the war and a new government, in 1993, both the enrollments and the gender gap grew again (Colclough et al., 2003, pg. 125).

Despite efforts made by the Transitional Government of Ethiopia and the growth in overall enrollment, Ethiopia's GER still remained among the lowest in Sub-Saharan Africa in the mid 1990s – 24% compared to a 74% average in 1995 – with a significant gender gap in enrollment (Rose and Samarrai, 1997, pg. 5)

### *Policy Design*

With the new transitional government coming into power in 1991, followed by the Federal Democratic Government of Ethiopia in 1995, there have been renewed efforts to expand access to education and specifically efforts to ensure young girls were receiving education. Initial efforts indicated that gender issues were to receive high priority in education policy, with the objective of changing attitudes towards the role of women in development (Rose, 2003; Colclough et al, 2003). Proposals in the Education and Training Strategy introduced in 1994 by the Transitional Government of Ethiopia were designed to give special attention to gender issues in curriculum design, with special emphasis on the recruitment, training and assignment of female teachers, and also the provision of financial support to increase the participation of women in education (Rose, pg. 7; Colclough et al, pg. 128). Rose further notes the intent of the Transitional Government to raise awareness about women's health and safety issues, including education about the harm done to women through female genital mutilation and marriage before puberty (Rose, Pg. 7). Strategies outside the realm of education were also created to stimulate demand for female education, including encouraging women to take jobs in the civil service and to participate in local and national governance (UNESCO, 2003, pg. 162). Specific policy efforts of the Education and Training Strategy, the National Policy for Ethiopian Women, and supporting efforts in the Population and Social Policy, included:

- Increasing the minimum age at marriage for girls from 15 to 18 (the same age as boys);
- Giving financial support to increase the participation of women in education;

- Providing vocational guidance to women at all institutions of education;
- Ensuring women had access to the same curricula as men  
(Colcough et al, pg. 129; Rose, pg. 6-7)

Building on the policies of 1994 and responding to the Beijing Platform for Action in 1995, the Ethiopian government introduced the Ethiopia Education Sector Development Programme (ESDP I) in 1997, a sector-wide approach that attempted to mainstream gender issues across the education system. In practice, this approach established Women's Affairs Officers at national, regional, and district levels (Aikman and Unterhalter, pg. 76). This programme further pledged the inclusion of gender-disaggregated data in regional analyses. Other proposed efforts in ESDP I included:

- Constructing more new schools in rural areas with separate latrines;
- Campaigning against harmful traditional practices;
- Sensitizing the community about the importance of girls schooling;
- Introducing a flexible school schedule, to permit students to help their parents during their free time or out of school hours;
- Rewarding schools and for their efforts to increase the female enrollment and retention in the school;
- Undertaking affirmative action to increase the number of females in teacher training and in higher education;
- Providing assertiveness training to female students who join higher institutions.

(Prime Minister's Office, Ethiopia, pg. 6)

Despite these increased efforts to improve female access to education, the ESDP I still failed to meet the target of increasing female primary enrollment to 45 per cent of the total by 2002 (Rose, 2003, pg. 7). ESDP II was launched in an effort to learn from past mistakes. For example, efforts such as the community sensitization programmes regarding the value of education often increased boys' enrollment, rather than the enrollment of girls (Rose et al, pg. 114).

The combination of these efforts is generally indicative of the political will to implement gender sensitive educational policies at the highest level. Yet while overall enrollment has demonstrated an upward trend in Ethiopia as a result of these policies, the gender gap has failed to narrow. Throughout the 1990s, the primary enrollment ratio for girls remained much lower than for boys, at 19 per cent and 30 percent respectively in 1997 (Rose and Al-Samarrai, 1997, pg. 5). Moreover, the gender gap remains pervasive within a number of analytical categories, including completion rates and educational level of attainment. There exists ongoing problems with repetition and drop out rates in primary schools: The Oxfam Education Report (2000) notes that it takes the average Ethiopian student (male or female) 7 years to complete a Grade 5 education, compared to a global standard of 5 years (Watkins, pg. 90). Moreover, boys take an average of 6.4



years to complete primary school and girls an average of 6.7 years<sup>1</sup> (Rose et al, pg. 93). The difference in time may not seem significant. However, if girls take this amount of time to complete primary school and they have started school at the official starting age (seven years), they will likely reach puberty before they have completed study. Due to the social expectations explored further below, this makes it highly unlikely that a girl will complete school.

A number of factors contribute to low levels of educational completion even where enrollment has been attained. Yet what these statistics on repetition and dropouts reveal is that the target of enrollment remains slightly myopic. While primary and secondary school enrollment does not capture the full range of educational problems, this specific focus does provide “a useful indicator of one dimension [of gender discrimination].” (Watkins, pg. 92) In order to fully assess the complexity of achieving full gender equality in education, a deeper analysis is required.

### *Nature of the Social Issues: Cultural Resistance and Gender Norms*

In Ethiopia, a range of economic constraints and social practices create deep cultural resistance to behavioural change. Where efforts have been made to improve access to education for girls, there are often strong cultural and economic disincentives for girls to attend school. Thus, regardless of the high-level policy commitment to gender mainstreaming, broader attitudinal shifts are required.

Household demands, opportunity costs, and gender roles are all factors in dictating when a girl is married in Ethiopia. In rural communities, families commonly marry off girls as young as eight years old, despite the set legal age limits for marriage. In some areas it has been considered an embarrassment if a girl is not married before the age of ten (Colclough et al, pg. 149). Marriage often takes girls out of school as they are expected to undertake household duties within their new family (Worku, 2001; Rose and Al-Samarrai, 2001). With this in mind, and the reality of few job prospects for women, educating girls is often deemed to be unnecessary. The early age of marriage for girls has the effect of keeping completion rates low, as continuing school after marriage is considered childish for young women (Rose et al, pg. 75), but often not for young men (Colclough et al, pg. 148).

Underpinning these social expectations are enduring gender-based stereotypes, which persist both in households and classrooms. Rose et al report several interviewees in Ethiopia who speculated that girls do not attend school because they are “less interested in attending school and make less effort to do so,” and are “shy and lack physical strength and perseverance,” while others made the case on religious grounds, either Muslim or Christian Orthodox (Rose et al, pg. 74). Surveys conducted in Ethiopia further reveal that some teachers in the education system continue to believe gendered stereotypes about

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<sup>1</sup> It is also worthy to note that primary school in Ethiopia is divided into two four grade ranges, lower and upper primary school. Here, the amount of time to complete school is for the four-year lower primary school range.

girls and boys, asserting boys are more intelligent and more interested in learning than girls (Colclough et al, pg. 153). Such attitudes raise concerns not only about the perpetuation of gender stereotyping, but also about the quality of teacher training and the curricula being taught.

Safety concerns en route to school should also be a primary policy focus for the Ethiopian government: The uneven distribution of schools in urban rather than rural areas is particularly problematic because of the fear of kidnapping – for the purposes of marriage – associated with long travel distances (Colclough et al, 2003). And girls’ sexual and physical safety is an added concern within the classroom. The lack of female teachers, separate and hygienic latrines, and co-ed classrooms are common causes of concern for parents. Even where male teachers are sensitive to the needs of girls, particularly as they reach puberty, teachers hesitate to offer guidance as it may be construed as sexual provocation (Colclough et al, 2003, pg. 145). The issue of separate and safe latrines is particularly important as girls reach puberty, although the few schools with latrines often fail to be safe enough hygienically for either boys or girls (Colclough et al, 2003, pg. 142). Despite concerted policy efforts to address the lack of safe latrines in ESDP I, the issue continues to be of concern for parents in Ethiopia.

These issues speak to the need to not only address gender biases in community cultures, but also to create gender-sensitive policies in order to respond to the physical security needs of young girls. Specifically we can identify the need for “backward mapping” of policy development, where the needs of girls must be echoed back to policy makers to improve the safety of transport and school conditions, as well as the training of teachers.

### *Organizational Capacity*

Despite the identified high-level enthusiasm and political commitment in Ethiopia, implementation by intermediary agencies has been patchy, due to “insufficient clarity about responsibilities for monitoring gender and education policies,” (UNESCO, 2003, pg. 163) and “the weak discipline in the allocation of resources across schools” (World Bank, pg. xlvi). Gender initiatives in Ethiopia have not been afforded budgetary allocation, raising questions about which agency is responsible for implementation (Rose, 2003, pg. 10). Moreover, the lax enforcement of laws prohibiting early marriage has contributed to the failure of a range of Ethiopian policies designed to enhance female participation in education. The results of this feeble implementation have resulted in internal inefficiencies within the school system, demonstrated by the high rate of repetition in Ethiopian schools, poor teacher training, unsafe facilities, and a failure to improve primary curricula such that it ceases to reinforce negative gender stereotypes.

Rose et al propose several strategies to improve the learning environment and introduce new curricula in Ethiopian schools, including the publication of more and better textbooks in local languages, the development of local teaching and learning aids, and even mass media education programmes that use radio broadcasts in the classrooms (Rose et al, pg. 120-1). While some of the policies were already in effect in certain

schools in Ethiopia, broader implementation had been hindered by an almost universal lack of resources. The lack of funds also limits the physical quality of educational facilities, again preventing schools from installing safe and separate latrines and building a fence around the school to prevent girls from being kidnapped (Rose et al, pg. 123).

These financial limitations in the Ethiopian educational system affect different regions to varying degrees and it is often the children in rural communities who are the most disadvantaged. The results of two studies suggest that enrollment is biased against those that had to walk more than 30 minutes to get to school (Rose et al, pg. 6). Moreover, historical data demonstrate that urban areas with a greater number of schools are often the sites of higher female enrollment and that student-teacher ratios vary widely between regions (Rose et al, pg. 27). These regional differences are indicative of how educational policy implementation can be hindered by the dispersion of administrative units. Clearly, educational development needs are differentiated by geography, which is certainly a problem for a state with limited infrastructural and financial capabilities as is the case here.

### *Individual Capacity*

As discussed above, gender biases among teachers in Ethiopia is evidence of the pervasiveness of established gender norms in Ethiopian society. However, it also testifies to the failure of the Ethiopian government to provide and mainstream gender-sensitive training of teachers. In Ethiopia, not only are many primary-school teachers under-qualified, but there is evidence that efforts to introduce gender-awareness teacher training have come only in the form of an additional seminar, rather than as an integrated element of primary school curricula (Colclough, pg. 187). And while the Ethiopian government has stated that gender training continues to be given to curriculum developers and textbook authors (Prime Minister's Office, Ethiopia, pg. 8), external observers remain skeptical about its potential effectiveness and are mindful that such strategies are not formally outlined for "the primary, technical and vocational, adult education and non-formal, special needs education or tertiary sectors," (Rose, pg. 10). The failure to infuse gender training into curricular development at the primary level is noteworthy, as the use of established curricula could serve to reinforce negative gender stereotypes from a young age as well as provide and a means by which the quality of classroom instruction could be improved.

There has thus been an obvious failure to develop the individual capacity of program administrators and teachers. In addition, regional Women's Affairs Officers have not been successful in all communities. Although Women's Affairs Officers were involved in the planning of ESDP I, Rose (2003) specifically identifies the lack of capacity of Women's Affairs Officers to implement policy as a key problem (Rose, pg. 7). But she concedes that is largely due to both "insufficient clarity about implementing and monitoring gender and education strategies" (Rose, pg. 11) as well as a lack of financial resources. Given this lack of investment into administrators of the policy, Rose concludes that the strategies proposed are more token recognition of the gender problem rather than a genuinely mainstreamed gender policy (Rose, pg. 11).

The problem of under-prepared Women's Affairs Officers is further suggestive of the multidimensionality of policy implementation. Here, the lack of individual capacity stems from organizational and governance problems surrounding the clarity of objectives as well as financing. Thus, while the Women's Affairs Officers have been part of the problem, it is as a consequence of greater organizational difficulties, which operate within the broader societal system.

### *System Capacity*

The culmination of all of the above factors results in a complex policy area that demands a gender mainstreamed approach. As discussed above, a number of scholars have noted policy commitment to gender issues in education in Ethiopia throughout the 1990s and into the twenty-first century. However, household and community hesitation towards female education have hindered efforts to improve female enrollment, as have organizational problems resulting in a lack of individual capacity. Again, while policy commitment at the highest levels has been strong, the overall system capacity to adapt to new policies has been poor.

Yet the Ethiopian government did not overlook the need for ongoing policy commitment and constant mainstreaming of gender sensitivity when it put forth the ESDP I, which, as noted above, failed to meet its own targets for female enrollment. Rose attributes the failure not only to the entrenched social attitudes identified above but also other factors that constrained implementation, which include "diminishing political commitment to reform at lower levels of the decentralised system; lack of commitment of resources to support the strategies; and limited capacity of women's affairs officers, who are responsible for their implementation, particularly at regional and district levels." (Rose, 2003, pg. 7) These myriad factors speak to all of the aforementioned obstacles to policy implementation and together are indicative of the lack of system capacity to support the initiative.

### *Economic Constraints and Opportunity Costs*

Additional constraints on policy implementation are the economic conditions of rural Ethiopian communities and the perceived opportunity costs of sending girls to school. These factors create widespread resistance and further reinforce the cultural standards that keep girls from attending school. Among the most cited causes of dropouts and repetition in Ethiopia are household labour demands and the perceived opportunity costs of sending children to school. The average household demands on Ethiopian girls far exceed those of Ethiopian boys and discourage educational achievement. While some studies appear to disagree on the precise impact of the higher indirect or opportunity costs of sending girls to school, a USAID survey reported that at least the perceived costs of sending girls to school is frequently a factor in the decision. "Gender differences in enrollment were mainly attributed to higher opportunity costs of girls' time: in the USAID study, girls out of school reported spending an average of 14-16 hours a day on a variety of tasks, leaving them no time to attend school." (Rose and Al-Samarrai, 2001,

pg. 41) Colclough et al's analysis reinforces this idea, suggesting that girls are more likely to attend school if they are from a larger family, but less likely to attend if the larger family has fewer female members because the gendered division of labour (Colclough, et al, 2003, pg. 141).

These household demands and their impact on repetition rates can have the effect of reinforcing gender inequalities in primary education. Higher repetition rates for girls further heighten the perceived opportunity costs of sending girls to school. This "lost labour-time," and the resulting costs to households can reinforce the existing gender roles within the household (Watkins, pg. 91). Thus, in conjunction with the cultural resistance outlined above, real or perceived opportunity costs to Ethiopian families continue to be a barrier to increasing girls' educational enrollment. Systemic economic challenges thus must also become an important factor in policy-making and implementation, along with efforts to challenge entrenched gender norms.

Furthermore, the extent of behavioural change required cannot be underestimated as a key point of tension within the overall Ethiopian system. It must be noted that the economic realities of the household alone often fail to fully account for low enrollment rates among girls. Rose and Al-Samarrai's (1997) study of the household constraints on education in Ethiopia focused on the seemingly concrete economic issues which they felt lent themselves directly to policy development that could address economic hardship and improve educational achievement for girls. At the same time they acknowledged the role of cultural barriers that might further prevent enrollment and completion (Rose and Al-Samarrai, 1997, pg. 31). Within the context of their study economic variables and labour demands are easier to identify. But completely separating the economic from the social proves to be a difficult task for fully assessing all of the issues that prevent gender equity in educational achievement.

What is clear in the case of Ethiopia is that there is a myriad of ongoing problems that are preventing gender mainstreaming from being effective. As described above, cultural norms and socio-economic needs often dictate if and when girls enroll in or complete primary schooling. Ongoing analysis and decentralized governance is required to study and meet the needs of Ethiopian families in rural communities. Such efforts include not only ensuring that both girls and boys have access to safe and clean school facilities, but that pedagogical methods and curricula are suited to challenge gendered norms and attitudes. Moreover, challenging these attitudes among adults in these communities is essential. While Rose and Al-Samarrai conclude that strategies to reduce the direct costs of schooling and improve the literacy of parents will likely improve attendance rates for their children they must ultimately qualify this finding: "Although such strategies are necessary for both girls and boys, they are unlikely to be sufficient for girls unless cultural barriers to their participation in school are also addressed," (Rose and Al-Samarrai, 1997, pg. 31).

It would be naïve to assume that one-dimensional goals such as gender parity in enrollment without support from broader social policies will truly empower Ethiopian girls and women. Systemic change is clearly required to shape the attitudes of parents and

teachers, as well as improve organizational structures in order to encourage female enrollment and school completion. Thus, while internationally set targets may be necessary to stir state-level efforts to improve access to primary education, clearly, ongoing gender-based analysis and policy development over time will be required to make meaningful change. Ethiopia has made significant advances in enrollment and laudable changes to social and education policies. However, such efforts must be made with immediate financial commitments and long-term visions of systematic change, rather than comparatively shallow short-term goals. A long-term vision is essential to challenge both deep-rooted social expectations as well as drastic urban-rural divides.

## Conclusion

This study set out to answer the question of what factors have been preventing gender mainstreaming from being effectively implemented at the state-level, with particular attention to the social realities at work in a given context. By using the analytic categories which examine the nature of the social problems, the organizational capacities, the individual capacities, and, perhaps most importantly, the system capacity, this paper identifies myriad bureaucratic obstacles and points of social resistance operating in this national context and suggests analytical perspectives for further research.

Some of the obstacles in this study are reflective of similar implementation problems that persist in both international institutions and developed and developing countries, suggesting that entrenched organizational cultures are common challenges to gender mainstreaming around the world. While policy evaporation and resistant organizational cultures have been identified as problems within international organizations and Western state governments, the same problems clearly exist within Ethiopia as well. This widespread problem suggests that perhaps new strategies need to be developed to respond to anticipated problems surrounding implementing governments and agencies.

**Table 1 – Barriers to and Facilitators of Policy Implementation**

### Ethiopia

<b>Barriers</b>	<b>Facilitators</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- History of political turmoil</li> <li>- Cultural Resistance</li> <li>- Lack of organizational resources, enforcement</li> <li>- Failure to train teachers and Women’s Affairs Officers</li> <li>- Economic constraints on the population</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- High-level political support</li> <li>- National strategies and policies, e.g. Education and Training Strategy; Education Sector Development Programme I and II.</li> <li>- Policy evaluation and revision</li> </ul>

From the policy obstacles faced above, three main points of interest emerge. The first is the role of the historical and political environment within which educational policies are being constructed. Ethiopia, despite high-level national commitments to gender mainstreaming, has a recent history marked by political turmoil. Moreover, even prior to this political tumult, Ethiopia had a largely malfunctioning educational system. As such, all of Ethiopia's recent educational policy efforts have come in the last fifteen years since the new, stable Ethiopian national government has been established.

The second point of interest is the persistence of cultural norms and expectations premised on the social identities of gender, race, class, ethnicity, and religion and the difficulty of addressing these social issues through policy. In Ethiopia, gender roles are deeply entrenched into the functioning of poorer and rural communities, wherein girls are expected to undertake a great deal of household responsibility and marry young. Female education is deemed to be unnecessary since gendered stereotypes question female intelligence and capability. These social divisions appear to be further exacerbated by regional differences in income, as well as rural/urban divides, which must also factor into further policy-making. The diversity among these populations complicates policy implementation, particularly of the scope involved in improving educational access for all.

The third and final point of interest is the interrelationship of organizational and individual capacities and their combined ability or inability to effectively implement policy. In Ethiopia, poor organizational capacity, largely stemming from a lack of financial resources, but also affected by a failure to assign responsibility for some gender policies, has prevented a number of identified problems from being effectively resolved. Moreover, it has also had a substantial impact on individual capacities to assume new responsibilities, as many teachers remain under-qualified or have not received the necessary gender-sensitization training that is required to ensure the classroom is a welcome place for young girls. Women's Affairs Officers have also received little in the way of direction, limiting their ability to monitor, report, and improve upon existing gender policies in Ethiopia.

The case of Ethiopia illustrates the need to examine the context wherein all of these elements of the policy implementation literature operate. Assessing the overall system capacity to support what could be a tumultuous policy endeavour is critical in order to identify possible sites of resistance within the targeted groups, the limits of the financial context, and ongoing public support. In Ethiopia, not only does the government system face financial limitations, but also rural households have had to consider the opportunity costs of educating young girls who would otherwise be put to work at home. Moreover, given concerns about girls' safety and persistent attitudes about women's role within Ethiopian society, parents remain skeptical about educating their daughters.

Ethiopia's ongoing commitment to redesigning and implementing new gender sensitive strategies is providing a solid foundational base of policy efforts to shift attitudes in Ethiopia. Moreover, mainstreaming gender into educational evaluations and policy-making will improve gender equity over time. As problems such as teacher training and rural implementation are identified through a gender lens, improvements can and must be made. The concept of "backward mapping" in policy implementation appears to be taking hold with Ethiopia's efforts to improve upon the gender policies in ESDP I with the second phase in ESDP II. Yet in order to be truly effective, Ethiopia must still make concerted efforts to improve organizational and individual capacities in educational delivery as well as continue to challenge strongly held gender biases and harmful traditional practices.

The fundamental reality is that change is slow. While global agreements such as the Beijing Platform for Action and the Millennium Development Goals are indicative of progressive thought, their implementation remains a challenge. While the MDGs do provide benchmarks and an important focus on enrollment, this one-dimensional approach does not encourage the systematic change that is so obviously required. Gender mainstreaming, however, understood as an ongoing process, should be encouraged for the gender-disaggregated data such a process ideally produces and the gender-aware policies such data can yield. Mindful of these realities, Ethiopia's education policy should be regarded as a work in progress.

The promulgation of international agreements and standards may or may not be constructive for improving gender equity in education. Regardless, international agreements should recognize the complex and variegated reality on the ground and provide needed supports. Inherent in this study, that traces global initiatives through to national-level policy implementation, is the extraordinary challenge of global advocacy and governance. Setting global goals for social change is no doubt undertaken in the most noble of intentions. However, translating these intentions into benefits and empowerment for the people that need them most is a long and difficult process. In order to attain gender equity in education, a gender mainstreaming strategy should be conscious of and responsive to social realities. Thus, in order to be truly effective, gender mainstreaming and education reform cannot be considered as a "one-size-fits-all" approach for states to undertake. These processes must be dynamic and responsive to local needs, particularly where local interests appear to conflict with national strategy. Moreover, if gender mainstreaming is to reform its reputation as an ineffective Western feminist project, it must answer to local realities by becoming integral to policy-making and research. Thus, for gender to be truly "mainstreamed", policy-makers, administrators, and educators must continue to be sensitive to gender inequalities throughout the educational reform process and vigilant in responding to these inequalities.



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