Gender Dimensions to Livelihoods in Ethiopia

In 2011/2012, Ethiopia’s Central Statistical Agency, in collaboration with the World Bank, conducted the first wave of the Ethiopia Rural Socioeconomic Survey (ERSS), which collects detailed data on household welfare and income-generating activity. The ERSS’ sample includes 4,000 households that are representative of small towns and rural areas; wave 2 will be expanded to include urban areas and will run from 2013 to 2014. This note uses ERSS-wave1 data to explore basic gender dimensions to livelihoods in Ethiopia.

Education and Health

Fifty-two percent of men, compared to 36 percent of women, are able to read and write in at least one language. This parallels the gender discrepancy for having ever attended school. Fifty-seven percent of men have ever attended school, compared to 44 percent of women (see Table 1). However, we note a significant decrease in this gender difference for school-aged children currently attending school\(^1\). In fact, girls are more likely to be currently attending school than are boys (62 vs. 59 percent). This suggests that progress has been made to decrease gender inequality in the education system.

Table 1: School Attendance, Ever and Current

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Male (%)</th>
<th>Female (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ever attended school</td>
<td>57***</td>
<td>44***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Currently attend school</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*** Difference is significant at the 0.1% level

Females are also significantly more likely than males (51.3 vs. 34.3 percent) to cite marital or domestic obligations as the reason for not currently attending school. Boys are more likely to cite other reasons, including a lack of teachers, time, and/or money. Analysis reveals no statistically significant gender difference for illness prevalence, type of healthcare sought, or reasons for not seeking medical treatment.

Employment and Time Use

Only 3 percent of rural and small town individuals (4 percent of men and 1 percent of women) participated in paid work for someone outside their family in the past 12 months. Rather, the majority of Ethiopians work for household enterprises, including farming, fishery, or livestock activities, and non-agriculture businesses. We note clear differences in how men and women spend time participating in these activities. While women spent more time on non-agricultural activities during the 7 days leading up to the interview, men spent nearly twice as many hours on agricultural activities than did women (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Time Spent on Household Enterprise Activities

Respondents were also asked to indicate the amount of time spent on daily household tasks on the day before the interview. Nationally, women spent more than three times longer collecting water (39 vs. 11 minutes), and almost twice as long collecting firewood (31 vs. 16 minutes), than their male counterparts. Regionally, this difference is particularly pronounced in Amhara, where

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\(^1\) School-aged children are those 7 to 18 years old.
females’ time use for water collection is eight-fold that of males’ (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: Time spent collecting water, by gender and region

![Hours spent collecting water yesterday](chart)

**Gender Control of Agriculture and Livestock**

In addition to allocating more of their time to agricultural activities, men hold more financial and decision-making power with respect to farm income than women. Seventy-eight percent of farmland holders are men, with women comprising only 22 percent of ownership. On top of the fact that most farmholders are men, men are also more likely to have land that supports both crops and livestock (see Table 2).

Table 2: Farm type, male and female holders

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Farm Type</th>
<th>Farm Holder (%)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crop</td>
<td>9***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Livestock</td>
<td>7***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both</td>
<td>84***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*** Significant at the 0.1% level

More than 85 percent of farm holdings have only one farm holder and, among these, male-owned holdings are 1.5 times as large as female-owned holdings, on average (14,600 vs. 9,600 sq. meters). For farm holdings with two owners (9 percent), we again note an increase in land size as we shift from two female owners, to mixed gender owners, to two male owners (see Figure 4). Surveyed respondents are asked to identify the two primary household members responsible for making decisions regarding crop-generated income. The data indicate that 32, 21, and, 47 percent of crops sold are managed by men only, women only, and mixed genders, respectively.

Figure 4: Land area for holdings with two owners, by gender makeup of owners

![Land size for holdings with two owners](chart)

The average female farm holder owns 2 livestock, while the average male holder owns 3.5 livestock. Further analysis reveals that some animals are more likely to be owned by a woman than a man, including sheep, horses, donkeys, camels, and hens. However, 82 percent of cattle, the country’s most pervasive livestock animal, live on male-headed farm holdings.

**Summary**

In general, investment is lower in women, both in terms of human capital development and access to productive resources such as land. Some progress has been made to minimize the gender gaps, as can be seen with the increase in female school enrollment as of late. However, our findings highlight the need for more investment in women, particularly with respect to income generating activities. Failure to invest in half of the productive population is a lost opportunity for economic growth, poverty reduction, and boosting shared prosperity.

This brief is based on data collected by the Central Statistical Agency as part of the Living Standards Measurement Study – Integrated Surveys on Agriculture (LSMS-ISA) project. The full dataset is available for download at CSA via [http://www.csa.gov.et](http://www.csa.gov.et).