

Ethiopia

1. Discrimination in the family

a) Overarching legal framework for marriage

The law provides women with the same rights as men to enter into marriage (Family Code, art. 12 & Constitution, art. 34). Marriage is based on free and full consent of both spouses (Family Code, art. 6). Forced marriage is prohibited (Family Code, art. 6 & 14). Harmful practices against widows are prohibited, such as levirate marriage (where a widow is required to marry her deceased spouse's sibling) (Family Code, art. 9). Three forms of marriage are recognised in the legal framework: the civil, religious and customary marriage (Family Code, art. 1, 3 & 4). Whatever the form of the marriage, it produces the same legal effect (Family Code, art. 40). Informal or de-facto unions are not regulated by law.

The Family Code of 2000 entails principles of gender equality, however the CEDAW Committee (2011) highlights that some regions continue to enforce previous discriminatory laws.

Furthermore, article 34 (5) of the Constitution states that the adjudication of disputes relating to personal and family laws in accordance with religious or customary laws shall not be precluded as long as both parties to the dispute consent to it. However, the CEDAW Committee (2011) stresses that free and informed consent of women to such processes may be influenced by pressure from their husbands, families or communities. Moreover, the CEDAW Committee (2011) notes that decisions of sharia courts cannot be appealed to the regular courts, unless there is a ground for legal error.

b) Child marriage

The legal age of marriage for women and men is 18 years old (Family Code, art. 7). The Minister of Justice can allow women and men under the legal age of marriage to marry for serious cause (Family Code, art. 7). Child marriage is prohibited (Family Code, art. 7 & Criminal Code, art. 648). Whoever concludes a marriage with a minor apart from circumstances permitted by the relevant provisions of the Family Code is punishable of imprisonment of three years when the victim is 13 years old or older and seven years of imprisonment when the victim is younger than 13 years old (Criminal Code, art. 648).

The National Strategy and Action Plan on Harmful Traditional Practices against Women and Children in Ethiopia includes child marriage as a harmful traditional practice (MoWCYA, 2013). The National Strategy aims to institutionalise prevention mechanisms and ensure social change while offering multi-sectoral protection for victims (MoWCYA, 2013). The National Strategy is supported by a budget (MoWCYA, 2013).

Child marriage is declining in Ethiopia; from 2005 to 2011 there was a 20% decline in rates of child marriage (UNFPA, 2012). However, child marriage persists (CEDAW, 2011). According to a study by the Overseas Development Institute and UNICEF (2015), there are three types of child marriage in Ethiopia: arranged marriage, marriage via abduction and marriage by choice. Marriage via abduction

persists in some regions but is relatively low. It is criminalised under article 587 of the Criminal Code and is punishable of imprisonment of three to ten years (ODI & UNICEF, 2015). In urban areas, marriage by choice is becoming more common in late adolescence or early adulthood (ODI & UNICEF, 2015). Child marital rape is not uncommon, however there is usually an agreement between families to protect the bride's virginity until she is mature (ODI & UNICEF, 2015). In some communities, it takes the form of a contractual arrangement (oral or written) called "*gaido*" which states that the groom will not have intercourse until the bride is mature (ODI & UNICEF, 2015).

Ethiopia is a diverse country, populated by different communities, and the reasons for child marriage are various (ODI & UNICEF, 2015). To generally map the reasons behind child marriage, economic considerations and poverty are important to understand child marriage, as well as social norms and expectations of women's roles and responsibilities as wives and mothers within society and the family (ODI & UNICEF, 2015). Furthermore, the practice of child marriage is reportedly seen as a way to ensure girl's wellbeing through security and social status (ODI & UNICEF, 2015).

c) Household responsibilities

The law provides women with the same rights as men to be recognised as the head of household (Family Code, art. 40 & 50). Women are provided with the same rights as men to be the legal guardians of their children during marriage and in informal unions (Family Code, art. 219 & Constitution, art. 27). Furthermore, the law provides women with the same rights and responsibilities as men with regards to their children during marriage (Family Code, art. 50). The law provides women with the same rights as men to choose where to live (Family Code, art. 54 & Constitution, art. 32).

Estimations show that 28% of Ethiopian households are headed by women, with a majority in urban areas (UNICEF, 2012). The CEDAW Committee (2011: 5) stresses the "persistence of adverse cultural norms, practices and traditions as well as patriarchal attitudes and deep-rooted stereotypes regarding the roles, responsibilities and identities of women and men in all spheres of life (...) including (...) in marriage and family relations". An analysis of unpaid care work reveals that women in Ethiopia are more involved in unpaid care work, such as collecting water or firewood than men and devote more time than men to those activities (OECD Development Centre, forthcoming).

d) Divorce

The law provides women with the same rights as men to initiate divorce (Family Code, art. 76). Additionally, the law stipulates that the causes and effects of dissolution of marriage shall be the same whichever the form of celebration of the marriage (civil, religious or customary) (Family Code, art. 74). Women and men have the same requirements to finalise a divorce or annulment (Family Code, art. 81). The law provides women with the same rights as men to be the legal guardians of their children after divorce and they have the same rights and responsibilities with regards to their children after divorce (Family Code, art. 221 & 113).

While legally no reason is necessary to file for divorce, it is estimated that men are likely to divorce if their wife is childless or cannot bear children (Emery, 2013). Additionally, it appears that one of the major reason women seek divorce for is when they have been married too young (Emery, 2013). Regarding custody of the children, children under five years old are reportedly placed in the mother's custody while children over five years old are placed in the father's custody (Emery, 2013). There is no

provision regarding child support in the law (Emery, 2013). Furthermore, the CEDAW Committee (2011) notes that women may often lose their property when divorcing.

e) Inheritance

The law provides daughters with the same rights as sons to inherit land and non-land assets (Civil Code, art. 837 & 842). Female surviving spouses are granted the same rights as male surviving spouses to inherit land and non-land assets (Constitution, art. 35). Women and men are provided with the same right to make a will (Civil Code, art. 857).

However, inheritance customary norms and practices continue to be applied (CEDAW, 2011). Customary norms regarding inheritance tend to follow a patrilineal inheritance system (FAO, n. d.). These include notably that sons inherit family land as daughters are expected to marry and move to the husband's house and widows may be deprived of their right to inherit land as it may be ceased by the husband's family (CEDAW, 2011).

2. Restricted Physical integrity

a) Violence against women

There is no law addressing violence against women, including a comprehensive approach to address violence against women with specific provisions for investigation, prosecution and punishment of the perpetrator and protection and support services for survivors.

Nonetheless, the Government has implemented several measures aiming at ensuring the prosecution and punishment of perpetrators of violence against women, such as child and women protection units in police stations, the Violence against Women Investigation and Prosecution Team in Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa, as well as child and victim friendly benches within Federal and Regional courts (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 2014).

Additionally, the Women, Children and Youth Affairs offices at various levels (federal, regional and woreda) provide legal aid to women (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 2014). Under a Flagship Joint Programme on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment developed by the Government in cooperation with UN Agencies, four safe houses and two one stop gender-based violence centres are providing women victims of violence with multi-sectoral assistance services, such as medical and psychological treatment, legal support, and shelter (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 2014). The Government in cooperation with civil society organisations additionally leads educational and awareness-raising programmes on gender-based violence and gender equality (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 2014).

However, the CEDAW Committee (2011) notes that gender-based violence is underreported because of cultural taboos and victims' lack of trust in the legal system and there is a lack of effective management, knowledge of laws and coordination between different actors.

b) Domestic violence

Domestic violence is a criminal offense under article 564 of the Criminal Code, which stipulates that the provisions on grave wilful injury (art. 555), common wilful injury (art. 556) and assault (art. 560)

notably are applicable to a person who, by doing violence to a marriage partner or a person cohabiting in an irregular union, causes grave or common injury to his/her physical or mental health. Penalties range from three months to 15 years of imprisonment (Criminal Code, art. 555-560). Dugasa Fite (2014) however stresses some shortcomings in the legislation: while article 564 of the Criminal Code refers directly to domestic violence, it is limited to intimate partner violence and refers only to crimes against the person and health (Criminal Code, art. 555-560). Additionally, the provision encompasses physical and psychological violence, but there is no mention of sexual or economic violence within the family in the legislation. Moreover, Dugasa Fite (2014) notes that there are no civil remedies available to victims of domestic violence in Ethiopian law, such as protection order, compensation, custody order, residence order, shelter or medical benefits.

A Flagship Joint Programme on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, gathering the Government and UN Agencies, has developed centres providing shelters and services to victims such as medical and psychological treatment, for women victims of violence, including domestic violence (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 2014). Additionally, the Government and civil society organisations conduct awareness-raising and education campaigns on domestic violence (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 2014).

Several factors are found to be associated with domestic violence, such as alcohol consumption, khat chewing, family history or decision-making power (Semahegn & Mengistie, 2015). According to studies, wives are likely to tolerate being beaten if the husband has a justifiable reason, such as disobedience of the wife or if she leaves the house without notifying the husband (Semahegn & Mengistie, 2015). There is a culture of silence surrounding domestic violence, however women tend to report it to their families, the local elders or religious leaders (Semahegn & Mengistie, 2015). Women seldom report domestic violence to the police for sentiments of shame, lack of trust, fear of retaliation or because they consider it a family issue (Semahegn & Mengistie, 2015).

c) Rape

The Criminal Code addresses sexual violence under articles 622-627. Rape is considered a criminal offense (Criminal Code, art. 620 & 621). The law is not based on lack of consent, but refers to compelling a woman outside wedlock to submit to sexual intercourse by the use of violence or grave intimidation or after having rendered her unconscious or incapable of resistance (Criminal Code, art. 620). Rape is punishable of five to 15 years of imprisonment (Criminal Code, art. 620). Marital rape is not criminalised and a wife cannot file a complaint as article 620 of the Criminal Code only refers to rape outside wedlock.

The law repeals discriminatory practices such as escaping punishment if the perpetrator marries the victim in the case of marriage by abduction. Article 587 of the Criminal Code states that when the act of abduction is accompanied by rape, the perpetrator is liable to punishment prescribed for rape and the conclusion of a marriage shall not preclude criminal liability.

Sexual violence is reportedly prevalent in Ethiopia; a study conducted amongst female students at university level shows that the main forms of sexual violence perpetrated are: attempted rape, rape, physical harassment, verbal harassment and forced sexual initiation (Tora, 2013). Perpetrators usually include boyfriends, friends, family members and relations from work, school, etc. (Tora, 2013).

d) Sexual harassment

Sexual harassment is covered in the legislation under article 625 of the Criminal Code on taking advantage of the distress or dependence of a woman and article 846 on immoral soliciting and debauchery and is punishable by imprisonment and/or a fine. The law does not include civil remedies. The definition of sexual harassment covers the workplace, educational establishments and public places (Criminal Code, art. 625 & 846). Sporting establishments and cyber harassment are not covered by the legal framework. There is no national action plan regarding sexual harassment.

A study done amongst 1401 female high school students reveals that 74% of the participants experienced sexual harassment (Dugasa Fite, 2014). Another research conducted amongst female student at the university level in 2014 on sexual harassment shows that the self-reported prevalence rates of physical, verbal and non-verbal sexual harassments were 78%, 90% and 80% respectively (Mamaru et al., 2015). The various forms of sexual harassment reported by the students were for instance university students and off campus people shouting or telling them shameful sexual words; to a lesser extent, other students declared obtaining a bad grade after refusing sexual intercourse with their professor (Mamaru et al., 2015). Verbal harassment was found to be the most prevalent form of sexual harassment, but victims seldom report it to authorities due to feelings of shame and a lack of information on the procedures for reporting; sexual harassment through the use of technology is reportedly common in the university setting (Mamaru et al., 2015).

Sexual harassment in the workplace is reportedly common. However, it is difficult to assess its prevalence as women are reluctant to talk about such practices. It appears that sexual harassment is mostly perpetrated by male supervisors and co-workers and occur mostly in the service and agriculture sectors (MoWCYA, 2013).

e) Female genital mutilation

Female genital mutilation (FGM) is a criminal offense and is punishable of imprisonment from three months to three years and imprisonment of five to ten years if it results in an injury of body or health (Criminal Code, art. 565-566). The law includes criminal penalties for medical practitioners, parents and other practitioners of FGM (Criminal Code, art. 565, 566 & 569). Victims are entitled to legal redress and compensation (Criminal Code, art. 101 & Criminal Procedure Code, art. 154). The Ethiopian Human Rights Commission dispenses legal assistance for victims (Proclamation to Provide for the Establishment of the Human Rights Commission, art. 6).

The National Strategy and Action Plan on Harmful Traditional Practices against Women and Children in Ethiopia encompasses FGM (MoWCYA, 2013). It foresees to implement three strategic pillars, namely prevention (to improve community awareness and community mobilisation for better understanding of harmful traditional practices impacts and to bring about behaviour change in communities); protection (to strengthen and improve the policy and legal framework, ensure effective law enforcement and build institutions for the effective implementation of anti-harmful traditional practices efforts); and provision (to provide rehabilitative services and support to women and children affected by harmful traditional practices, focusing on all vulnerable groups and victims of harmful traditional practices) (MoWCYA, 2013).

The measures implemented by the Government include community dialogue to support social change (UNICEF, 2012). Community and religious leaders meet with facilitators from youth and women organisations or the health sector to explore attitudes and beliefs surrounding FGM, as well as to hear testimonies of women who have undergone FGM (UNICEF, 2012). Additionally, teaching and awareness-raising activities from the perspective of health, religion and legal awareness have been led (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 2014).

FGM rates have reduced significantly since 2000 for girls aged 0 to 14 years old (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 2014). However, despite measures and efforts by the Government and the notable decrease of FGM amongst younger girls and in urban areas, the CEDAW Committee (2011) stresses that FGM is prevalent in rural and pastoralist areas. FGM is a practice embedded in social constructs on gender roles and values and is practiced by different communities in Ethiopia (UNICEF, 2012). Its prevalence and the age girls undergo FGM vary across regions and communities (UNICEF, 2012). One of the reasons invoked by some communities for the practice of FGM is the preservation of women's chastity (UNICEF, 2012). It also occurs that parents encourage the practice as uncircumcised girls are likely to be marginalised and socially excluded in some communities, and would face difficulty to be married (UNICEF, 2012).

f) Abortion

Abortion on request is illegal and a woman who seeks an abortion for herself is punishable with simple imprisonment (Criminal Code, art. 545). Whoever performs an abortion on another is punishable of simple imprisonment (Criminal Code, art. 547). However, the Court can mitigate punishment if the pregnancy was terminated on account of extreme poverty (Criminal Code, art. 550). Legal termination of pregnancy is authorised within a medical institution if the pregnancy is the result of rape or incest, to preserve the physical health of the woman, due to foetal unviability or to save a woman's life (Criminal Code, art. 551).

More

Trafficking of women and children is criminalised under article 597 of the Criminal Code and is punishable of imprisonment of five to 20 years and a fine. Despite this legal prohibition and measures taken by the Government, the CEDAW Committee (2011) stresses that women and girls living in poverty as well as refugee and internally displaced women and children remain particularly vulnerable to internal trafficking for forced labour and sexual exploitation. Additionally, the CEDAW Committee (2011) highlights the lack of protection mechanisms for victims of human trafficking and the low rates of prosecution.

3. Restricted Access to productive and financial resources

a) Secure access to land and assets

Regarding land, property and other non-land assets, the law provides married women with the same rights as married men to own, use, make decisions and use as collateral (Family Code, art. 57, 58 & 59), as well as unmarried women and men (Constitution, art. 35) and . Furthermore, women and men are granted the same rights after divorce or separation to own, use, make decisions and use as

collateral land, property and other non-land assets (Family Code, art. 85 & 90). Women's right to acquire, administer, control, use and transfer of property and to use, transfer, administer and control land is specifically enshrined in the Constitution under article 35 (7). Moreover, regarding marital property, a married woman has the same rights as a married man to administer (Family Code, art. 66). Additionally, the law provides for joint land titling for land used or acquired by married couples and informal unions (Family Code, art. 62 & 102).

The Government has led actions aimed at increasing land holding certificates and ownership titles for women, notably through the Rural Land Administration and Use Proclamation which provides women with the right to use rural land through the issuance of holding certificates (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 2014). Additionally, the Government's housing scheme allocates 30% of constructed houses for women (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 2014).

Despite initiatives implemented by the Government, the CEDAW Committee (2011) notes that rural women depend mostly on men for economic support. There is a diversity of religious and ethnic groups in Ethiopia and customary norms regarding women's access to land and resources vary across the country (FAO, n. d.). Generally, customary norms regarding access to land and resources are based on patriarchal rules and are detrimental to women's rights (FAO, n. d.). Men own land and cattle and women can own household goods and small animals (FAO, n. d.). For instance, in the northern Tigray and Amhara regions, women cannot use land or in the southern region of Oromiya and Southern Nations and Nationalities People's Regions, women are not allowed to own land and can only access land through marriage (FAO, n. d.). Nonetheless, some communities enforce more egalitarian rules where women play a central role in cultivation and farming (FAO, n. d.).

b) Secure access to formal financial resources

The law provides married women with the same rights as married men to open a bank account at a formal financial institution (Family Code, art. 64). Married/unmarried women are granted with the same rights as married/unmarried men to obtain credit (Family Code, art. 70 & Constitution, art. 35).

A national Micro and Small Enterprises strategy has been developed and includes strategic objectives targeting women, through facilitating access to finance through credit (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 2014). Micro-finance institutions reportedly provide credit to women to start small-scale income-generating activities (CEDAW, 2011).

Women continue to face barriers to accessing credit, due notably to their limited access to own land and property and thus to use it as collateral, as well as gender divide in financial literacy (CEDAW, 2011).

c) Workplace rights

Ethiopia has ratified several conventions from the International Labour Organisations, namely the Equal Remuneration Convention (No. 100), the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention (No. 111) and the Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention (No. 156).

The law mandates non-discrimination on the basis of sex in employment and covers hiring, promotions, and termination (Constitution, art. 35 & Labour Code, art. 87). The Constitution

guarantees equal remuneration for work of equal value (art. 42). Pregnant women are not allowed to work at night (Labour Code, art. 87). Additionally, the Labour Code stipulates that professions that are considered arduous or harmful for the health are prohibited for women (art. 87).

Maternity leave of 13 weeks is available with full wages paid by the employer (Labour Code, art. 88). The law protects women's employment security when they are on maternity leave (Labour Code, art. 87). The law does not mandate parental leave. However, workers are allowed to five unpaid days off in the case of exceptional and serious events (Labour Code, art. 81).

The law does not require women to have permission from their husband or legal guardian to choose a profession or work or to register a business (Constitution, art. 41).

The Ethiopian Human Rights Commission and the Office of the Ombudsman can receive complaints from citizens and take cases of discrimination and human rights violations (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 2014).

The Government has put in place several measures aiming at improving women's access to income-generating activities and small businesses, such as training on management and business livelihood skills, technical training, organising markets and creating networking forums (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 2014). Additionally, the Ethiopian Chapter of Women Entrepreneurs was founded in 2013 (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 2014).

The CEDAW Committee (2011) reports on the high unemployment rate of women and the high percentage of women working in the informal sector, due to a lack of access to training and resources, family responsibilities and the expected role of women within society and the family. Additionally, the CEDAW Committee (2011: 11) notes discriminatory practices in employment, including "unequal pay and benefits, discriminatory hiring and promotion practices and unfair dismissals based on gender, marital status, family responsibility or pregnancy".

4. Restricted Civil liberties

a) Citizenship rights

There is no legal discrimination affecting women's citizenship rights or legal rights to apply for identity cards or passports, and there are no discriminatory practices that may restrict those rights.

The law provides married/unmarried women with the same rights as married/unmarried men to acquire, change and retain their nationality (Nationality Proclamation, art. 4, 6, 16, 19 & 22). Additionally, the law provides married women with the same rights as married men to confer nationality to their spouse (Nationality Proclamation, art. 6) and children (Nationality Proclamation, art. 3).

The law does not provide women with the same rights as men to register the birth of their children, as article 101 of the Civil Code stipulates that the birth of a child shall be declared by the father or in his default by the mother.

The Constitution does not recognise and prohibit multiple or intersectional discrimination but ensures equality before the law without discrimination on grounds of race, nation, nationality or other social

origin, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, property, birth or other status (art. 25). Additionally, the Constitution includes an article solely dedicated to women's right mentioning women's equal rights in marriage; women's entitlement to affirmative actions to enable them to compete and participate in political, social and economic life; prohibition of harmful customs; right to maternity leave; right to consultation in the formulation of national development policies and projects; right to equal access to property and land and equal treatment in inheritance; equal right in employment and right of access to family planning, education, information and capacity (art. 35).

Furthermore, the law provides married/unmarried women with the same rights as married/unmarried men to apply for identity cards (Nationality Proclamation, art. 13) and passports (Proclamation on the Issuance of Travel Documents and Visas and Registration of Foreigners in Ethiopia, art. 5). Women and men enjoy the same rights to acquire passports and other travel documents for their minor children (Embassy of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia in Ireland, 2010). Married/unmarried women are granted the same rights as married/unmarried men to travel outside the country (Constitution, art. 32).

b) Voting

The law provides married/unmarried women with the same rights as married/unmarried men to vote (Constitution, art. 38). There is no legal discrimination of women's voting rights and there is no information on discriminatory practices that may restrict those rights.

c) Political voice

The law provides women with the same rights as men to hold public and political office, including legislature, executive and judiciary (Constitution, art. 38, 54, 70 & 81). There are no legal quotas nor special measures to promote women's political participation at the national or local level. Nonetheless, the Constitution mandates under article 35 that affirmative measures for women should be implemented to enable them to compete and participate on the basis of equality with men in political, social and economic life as well as in public and private institutions. Quotas are voluntary but are not mandated by law; in 2004, the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (ruling party) instituted a 30% party quota (Quota Project, 2011).

There has been a constant increase of women's representation in Federal Parliament since 1995 (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 2014 & CEDAW, 2011). This increase can be partly explained by the economic empowerment of women and a better access to education, as well as affirmative actions, such as 30% of women candidates by the ruling party and campaigns to encourage women candidates by the national electoral commission (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 2014).

The CEDAW Committee (2011) notes the increased participation of women in Parliament; nonetheless women remain underrepresented in senior positions in the Government, in the judiciary and in diplomatic service. Women continue to face barriers in accessing positions in the political and public sphere, such as negative cultural attitudes, including reservations about women's leadership as well as a lack of affirmative actions, such as mandatory quotas or training activities (CEDAW, 2011).

d) Access to justice

The law provides married/unmarried women with the same capacity as married/unmarried men to be sued and to sue (Constitution, art. 25 & 37). Furthermore, a married/unmarried woman's testimony carries the same evidentiary weight in court as a married/unmarried man's in all types of court cases such as: civil, criminal, family court and tribunal (Constitution, art. 25). The Ethiopian Human Rights Commission provides legal assistance and receives and investigates complaints free of charge (Proclamation to Provide for the Establishment of the Human Rights Commission, art. 6 & 22).

The Ministry of Women, Children and Youth Affairs is the dedicated body to gender equality (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 2014). It has the mandate to promote women's rights, to follow-up and evaluate the integration of a gender perspective in policies and programmes at all levels of government and to conduct advocacy as well as to monitor and implement programmes to empower women (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 2014). Additionally, the Women Affairs Standing Committee and the Women's Caucus in parliament are mandated to monitor the implementation of the gender equality objectives within the various sectors of the executive (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 2014). The Central Statistics Agency elaborates sex-disaggregated statistics within time use survey as well as poverty and welfare monitoring (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 2014).

The Ethiopian Human Rights Commission can receive and resolve complaints of human rights violations (Proclamation to Provide for the Establishment of the Human Rights Commission, art. 6). Additionally, the Commission has a Commissioner heading the Children and Women Affairs (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 2014). It also has a mandate to dispense human rights education including on women's rights (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 2014).

The Ethiopian Human Rights Commission established 111 free legal aid centres across the country, targeting vulnerable groups including women (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 2014). Additionally, circuit courts that travel across the country regularly to dispense justice have been implemented, as well as plasma courts where justice seekers can access judicial services in their own locations (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 2014).

Furthermore, victim-friendly benches in federal courts were instituted as well as special units to investigate and prosecute crimes against women in prosecutors' offices in Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa and in some regional states (CEDAW, 2011). Training on women's rights for judges, prosecutors and police officers were also dispensed (CEDAW, 2011).

However, women face several barriers in accessing justice, including pressure from their families or community elders to settle disputes through traditional justice systems or within the family (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 2014). Additionally, it is reported that women are not allowed to participate within traditional justice systems (Africa for Women's Rights, n. d.).

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