

## WOMEN –SOCIO ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES IN THE HORN OF AFRICA



*Caption by: Ethiopian women group doing basketry for business.*

## WOMEN ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

Women in Africa have made an enormous contribution to economies in businesses, farmhands, entrepreneurs, and employees as well as unpaid homemakers. This experience has gained them the knowledge to solve issues concerning gender equality, poverty eradication, and other forms of discrimination against women.

Governments should come up with National plans, policies, strategies, budgets, and justice mechanisms to be able to strengthen women's Economic Empowerment to increase stability, capacity, build assets, steady income, and business leadership roles.

Women empowerment initiatives involve only women and their activities to enhance women's confidence and strengthen skills that enable them to achieve their goals. It is therefore the process of transformation whereby women/girls have the opportunity to explore their capabilities, exercise their voice, at home and/or in the workplace.

Society should also allow women to participate in decision making, by engaging and promoting them in The National Electoral Systems and political parties as this encourages equality towards women candidates and support each other's development forums.

Most African countries value **education** for women as it is one of the most important components to women's equality and a foundation to exercise their skills in different fields.

The Horn of Africa countries should also embrace and note that the economic strength of women is instrumental towards achieving more pillars of sustainable development.

### ETHIOPIA

Agriculture is one of the major foundations in Ethiopia's Economy.

### Strategies used to empower women in Ethiopia

- Assisting in learning special activities such as introducing sewing and stitching by use of machines
- Educating women on numerical reasoning and studying English for communication purposes breaking down language barriers during their business interactions
- Educate them about hygiene and women rights
- Help the students in producing and filing documentation using computers and printers for submission and organization.
- Exploring new ways of earning money and becoming financially independent.
- Assist women to build confidence especially in their new ventures in business and education.
- Providing emotional, mental, and tangible support

### SOMALIA

*In Somalia, women acquire inadequate education compared to men, However, the few who are privileged to get higher education have managed to overcome various challenges and become competitive players in different fields e.g. business, agriculture, livestock keeping, poultry keeping, etc, While many activities are geared towards supporting women in Somalia, eg. International Agencies and NGO's yearly introduce an economic empowerment program that targets poor urban and rural women who have the business/entrepreneurial potential and link them with strategic partners and private sectors to help them improve access to financial services.*



*Caption by : ILO (International Labor Organization) during an interview with one of the Somali women(Zaynab) who started her business after training.*

### Challenges faced in Somalia:

- Women are underrepresented in Social, Economic, and political environments
- Lack of gender-sensitive policies
- Lack of economic capacity in supporting women
- Cultural limitations and domestic burdens and clan base representation system dominated by men and their opinions
- Widespread ignorance among the community and women and girl children.

### Solutions

- Equipping women with the necessary skills and knowledge to start their own business
- Increase of their financial abilities to enable them to purchase food for their families
- Educate their children (Boy and girl child)

**Ensuring elimination of all kinds of violence against women and children.**

### KENYA

During the last decade, The Government of Kenya has shown its serious commitments to enhancing gender equality and women's empowerment through Policies, legislature, and ratification of various international and regional commitments. Women have been allowed to participate in decision-making either in politics and their area of specialization contributing to the growth of the country's economy since education has been made available and very easy to access.

Women in Kenya also play a vital role in agriculture whereby they contribute a large proportion of their work in food grain production.

Women occupy the majority of the agricultural labor field in Ethiopia- However, women still face recurring gender discriminating barriers that negatively impact their business e.g.limited access to credit and resources in comparison to their male counterparts who are regarded as the head of the household and primary breadwinners.



*Caption by: Sustainable Development Goals Fund*

The UN through **Feed the Future** initiative has been working together to support and transform the agriculture sector by promoting higher productivity which enables them to gain greater profits.

These investments improve the competitiveness of value chains such as beans, wheat, coffee, honey, potatoes, livestock, and Poultry. The program has also strengthened small and medium-sized businesses by giving them the ability to access credit and technical support.

These improvements have brought jobs and income opportunities to rural households that have led to sustainable growth.

Women also face challenges in the process of achieving this transformation. Some of the challenges faced are:

- Lack of enough skills for the new technologies in agriculture
- Limited resources for the women.
- Lack of enough capital to start a business.
- No market links

### *Success story*

**Zaynab** is among 150 women who signed up for an ILO-EU sponsored project - "Promoting Gender Equality and Women's empowerment in Somalia. The project aimed to coach women with skills Zaynab used to help open, run and maintain her business.

A training program was organized by ILO-EU to support and create skills to promote; management, organizational, and marketing skills to help her business venture. Additionally, she learned how to record transactions, package and process products and how to join co-operations.



*Caption: Somali women in Kismayo during training.*

### *Culture & Heritage, Tradition in the Horn of Africa*

The Horn of Africa consists of diverse communities with many tribes who practice their unique character, culture, and tradition. What makes it a source of income for women across Africa?

They always do an exhibition on how they practice culture by drawing (Art) Wood carvings, cultural outfits, Cultural food, Beading by uses of beads, use animal skin to make Baskets, shoes, use sisal fibers to make bags (Kyodo)

Others have ventured into entrepreneurship and specialized fields including Healthcare officers, teachers, etc.



*Photo: Association of women Agriculture, Kenya*

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### *Cultural heritage in the Horn of Africa as a Source of Income*

They also have songs that they sang during different events to make an age set - crossing over to the next level of life (Circumcision of Boys) Traditional wedding, Dowry payments, During the slaughter of a bull to bless one of the leaders and during celebration with their families (especially when new baby is born.

It is one of the tourism attraction In this countries and it improves economies when tourists come to see culture and if interested they buy our products to mark their visit to a particular Country.



Beading - women doing beading to sell during the Culture Exhibition day.



Sisal basketry in Kenya :Masaai Maket



Men and women during Somali Cultural dance



South Sudan during cultural ceremony.



A Picture showing Somali culture exhibition



Maasai of Kenya in their cultural attires

During exhibition days women get a large amount of income by preparing the culture items and clothes for this culture day thus it is term to as Tourism industry (Culture and Heritage)

#### **Conclusion:**

Girls education is a strategic development priority, educating women enables them to participate more in the formal labor market, earn higher incomes, engage in family planning, marry at a later age and enable better healthcare and education for their children.

Should they choose to become mothers; all these factors combined can help lift, household's community and nations out of poverty



Ethiopia culture day

