

Proceeding of the Dialogue Workshop on the Role of the Private Sector in Advancing Gender Equality

INTRODUCTION



The national effort to realize gender equality in Ethiopia is a multi-stakeholder activity that requires the engagement of a wide range of actors. In this regard, the level of involvement of the private sector in supporting endeavors of gender equality has been low.

Besides, there exists lack of a clear awareness about the actual roles and contributions of the private sector to the national effort in promoting gender equality.

The private sector for one is expected to undertake its business within its own sphere by respecting the principles and practices of gender equality, and for another, make contributions to society by discharging its corporate social responsibility of supporting and financing initiatives of gender equality.

As part of the series of the high-level gender dialogue, this edition of the workshop emphasized on the analysis of the role of private sector and private business organizations in promoting gender equality in Ethiopia.

OBJECTIVES OF THE WORKSHOP

The core objective of this workshop was to increase the role and contributions of private sector in advancing Gender equality for sustainable development in Ethiopia. Other specific objectives of the workshop included creating clarity on the role of the private sector in gender equality and thereby advance its sectoral contributions; increase understanding on the future way forward and strategies to strengthen the private sector's role in furthering gender equality in Ethiopia; as well

as establish networks which later on may fruition to a platform for advancing gender equality between the CSO and Private Sector, among others.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

At the end of this dialogue workshop, it is hoped that there will be clarity on the overall situation of gender equality within the private sector and existing initiatives, efforts and endeavors. In addition, there would be an increased understanding about the current challenges and barriers facing the private sector in its effort to advance gender equality; an increased grasp on the future way forward and avenues for interventions and actions, an interfacing and networking among the private and CSO sector and academic institutions working in the field.

SUMMARY OF THE PROCEEDING OF THE WORKSHOP

In her opening remark Mrs. Hana W/Gebriel, Program and Development Director at the council, emphasized the dual responsibility of the Private Sector in ensuring gender equality within its own sphere as well supporting societal efforts aimed at the promotion of gender equality. She also noted that the private and the CSO sector need to step up efforts to jointly work on issues of common agenda.



The presentation that followed was made by Dr. Abrahm Tarekegne, Assistant Professor at Addis Ababa University. His presentation, entitled the “*role of the Private Sector in Advancing Gender Equality in Ethiopia*”, was structured along three lines. The first part operationalized the concepts of the private sector and gender equality. The second part provided an overview of the socio-economic conditions of women in Ethiopia, while the third and the final section dealt with the roles and responsibilities of the private sector in promoting gender equality in Ethiopia. Accordingly, the private sector is defined as “the part of the economy which is owned by private groups and individuals.” In many countries, the private sector employs the majority of the work force. A 2013 study by the International Finance Corporation (part of the World Bank Group) identified that 90 percent of jobs in developing countries are in the private sector. Gender empowerment was also defined as having three key

elements involving of agency and choice of women, creating an institutional and enabling environment for women, and access to resources. Save to the details, women in Ethiopia were said to continue to face gender inequalities and economic marginalization with limited access to, and control over, the resources (such as land) and services (access to finance, extension, and training) necessary to enhance their ability and capacity to participate in the economy.

In line with the framework presented above, the roles of the private sector in promoting gender equality were outlined as follows:

1. Agency – the private sector can make contributions by building capacity, financially backing promising entrepreneurs, providing employment opportunities, creating collaboration and supporting associations as well as providing funding for women empowerment projects in the form of outreach program, child care facilities.
2. Institutional Structure –. Gender relations are underpinned by norms, laws and policy built by the family, market and the state. And these need to be transformed for them to become conducive for women. Private Sector and Private business Organizations can work towards the reforming of the laws and policies related to Gender. This could be for example the development and enactment of a law on equal pay for equal work, providing – child care facilities.
3. Resources: This mainly entails providing resources and assets to promote the integrity and social consciousness of women. This is expressed in the private sector support efforts that promote the building of the personal wellbeing and integrity of women.



During the discussion that followed, questions and comments relating to the government’s commitment in promoting gender equality, the need for human rights-based approach to women’s right, and bringing men aboard in promoting the empowerment of women were discussed. It was emphasized, among others, by the presenter that it has become a cliché these days to talk about every one taking its “share and responsibilities”,

but this needs to be actionable and done immediately.

The workshop was concluded with closing remarks given by Dr. Kalewongel who thanked all the participants and called on the private and the CSO sector to strengthen partnerships.

