WOMEN’S POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT IN ETHIOPIA

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Introduction – Why call for women’s increased participation in political leadership?

Brief Historical Review of Ethiopian Women’s Role and Challenges in Political Leadership.

Overview of Current Challenges and Constraints

Recommendations
Why do we need equal participation of women in political leadership?

- Equality of women as an end in democracy
- Representation of women’s voices and interests
- Necessity of transforming inequitable gender roles
- Infusing political system with feminine values
BRIEF HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF WOMEN AND POLITICAL POWER IN ETHIOPIA
Political culture dominated by patriarchy

Historiography

Powerful queens and wives of kings

Women after 1955 Constitution
WOMEN IN SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

- The Ethiopian popular revolution as breakthrough for political participation
- Women in armed groups
  - Women and the TPLF/EPRDF
WOMEN AND THE DERGUE

- “Empowerment” without power
- Wide activities of mass organization without genuine civil society activity
- Only few women in government offices and legislature
Symbolic gestures to hijack women’s questions to party’s needs.

Labeling against women’s question
Politics of persecution

Limited participation in positions of power

The 2005 elections and the role of women
CURRENT CHALLENGES AND CONSTRAINTS TO THE POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN IN ETHIOPIA
SYSTEM-WIDE POLITICAL CONSTRAINTS

- Political violence and intensive persecution

- Increased regimentation of social life which makes independent women civil society organization difficult.
**CONSTRAINTS PARTICULARLY RELEVANT TO WOMEN**

- Absence of strong women’s network and movement
- Social, economic and cultural burdens
- Limited interest to be involved in politics
- Political discourse which doesn’t allow sufficient sphere to the issues of women
- Insufficient attention to political empowerment of women
RECOMMENDATIONS
WHERE TO GO FROM HERE?

- Bear pressure on the regime in power
- Support and strengthen civil society organizations especially independent women organizations in Ethiopia
- Support and strengthen programs and initiatives aimed at empowering women in Ethiopia
WHERE TO GO FROM HERE? (Contd.)

- Establish and strengthen initiatives among women in the Diaspora:
  - promote democratic culture and tolerance
  - work on conflict prevention and resolution
  - Advocacy and International networking