



Women's Representation in Ethiopia's New Political Leadership

A Gender Analysis of Federal, Regional and City Administration Appointments

Introduction

The formation of Ethiopia's new federal government and the establishment of new regional and city administrations mark an important moment in the country's political and institutional trajectory. Following the 7th general election and the commencement of the seventh parliamentary term, the composition of political and administrative leadership provides an important opportunity to assess the extent to which women are represented in the institutions responsible for shaping public policy, allocating national resources, responding to citizens' priorities, and determining the country's political and development direction.

Against this backdrop, TIMRAN undertook a gender analysis of women's representation within the newly appointed federal, regional, and city administration leadership structures. The analysis recognizes the appointment of women to senior public leadership positions as an important indication of progress, while also examining the continuing structural and institutional gaps that limit women's meaningful and equitable participation in political decision making.

TIMRAN warmly congratulates the women appointed to leadership positions at the federal, regional and city administration levels. Their appointments represent recognition of women's competence, professional experience, leadership capacity and contribution to Ethiopia's public life.

At the same time, representation must be understood not only in terms of the number of women appointed but also in terms of the level, influence, distribution and substantive authority associated with those positions.

1. Federal Level Representation: Progress with a Continuing Gap

At the federal level, 23 cabinet level appointments were announced, of which 9 are women, representing approximately 39.1 percent of the appointments. The current federal cabinet includes women leading portfolios such as Finance, Justice, Trade and Regional Integration,



Health, Revenues, Culture and Tourism, Mining, Women and Social Affairs and Innovation and Technology.

This level of representation reflects the presence of women in Ethiopia's federal cabinet and recognizes their qualifications, experiences and leadership capacity however, still women remain underrepresented, with their share of cabinet positions below equal representation and declining compared with the October 2018th cabinet appointment. This highlights the persistent limitations in women's representation at the federal executive level and the broader structures of political and administrative power.

The issue, therefore, is not whether women are capable of occupying senior leadership positions. The appointments themselves provide further evidence that qualified women are available and capable of assuming such responsibilities. The more fundamental question is whether Ethiopia's political and institutional systems are consistently creating equitable pathways for women to enter, remain in, and advance within positions of political authority.

The current cabinet composition reflects both women's continued presence in high level appointments and a concerning decline in their overall representation by approximately 10.9 percent in comparison from the previous cabinet appointment. This decline highlights the need for sustained commitment to ensuring women's meaningful and equitable participation in Ethiopia's executive leadership and decision making processes.

2. Representation at Regional and City Administration Levels

The gender gap becomes more pronounced when the analysis moves beyond the federal level. TIMRAN's review of appointments across 11 regional and two city administrations identified 415 appointments, of which 344, or 83 percent, were men, while only 71 or 17 percent were women.

At the cabinet level specifically, women constituted only 18.8 percent of 282 appointments, compared with 81.2 percent for men. These figures demonstrate that the progress observed at the federal level has not translated proportionately into sub-national political and administrative structures.

This disparity is particularly important because regional and city administrations constitute some of the most immediate institutions through which citizens experience government. These structures influence access to public services, local development priorities, justice, peace and security, economic opportunities, social protection, and community-level governance.



Consequently, women's underrepresentation at this level has implications beyond numerical equality. It affects whose experiences are reflected in policy discussions, whose priorities enter public decision-making processes, and whose perspectives shape responses to the challenges faced by women and communities across different parts of Ethiopia.

The substantial gap between federal and sub-national representation also suggests that progress in women's political participation remains uneven and insufficiently institutionalized across levels of government.

3. Women's Representation at the Highest Levels of Political Authority

The most significant concern emerging from the analysis is the limited presence of women at the very top of regional and city political leadership.

Among the 13 regional and city administrations reviewed, only Addis Ababa and Gambela are led by women. This is an important indicator because leadership at the highest executive level carries considerable political authority and influence over the direction, priorities, institutional culture, and allocation of resources within an administration.

The limited number of women serving as heads of regional or city administrations demonstrates that the challenge is not simply increasing the number of women within cabinets. It is also about ensuring women's access to the highest levels of political authority and executive leadership.

Women's meaningful participation cannot be fully realized if they remain disproportionately concentrated in lower or less influential levels of political decision-making. The distribution of appointments across administrations further demonstrates considerable variation. While Addis Ababa has comparatively stronger representation of women within its cabinet, other administrations demonstrate significantly lower levels of representation. Dire Dawa, for example, has only one woman among its cabinet appointments. Such variation highlights the importance of examining not only national trends but also regional and local patterns of inclusion and exclusion.

4. The New Political Cycle as an Opportunity for Institutional Change

The establishment of the new federal government following the 2026 general election creates an important opportunity to consolidate gains and address persistent gaps in women's political participation.



The appointment of women to senior federal leadership positions recognizes their competence and leadership capacity. However, women's representation has declined from the historic 50% achieved in the previous cabinet in October 2018 to 39.1% in the current cabinet. Building on this milestone presents an opportunity to sustain previous gains and advance toward gender parity. The significantly lower representation of women in regional and city administrations further underscores the importance of strengthening women's meaningful participation across all levels of government and decision-making.

A political system in which women remain significantly underrepresented risks excluding important experiences and perspectives from public decision-making. This is particularly consequential in contexts where women experience distinct challenges related to peace and security, access to justice, economic participation, political violence, public services, and social protection.

Women's political participation should therefore be understood not as symbolic inclusion or a concession to gender equality, but as an essential component of effective, responsive, inclusive, and accountable governance.

TIMRAN welcomes the appointment of women to senior federal, regional, and city leadership positions and congratulates all women entrusted with these responsibilities. While these appointments reflect the recognition of women's leadership capacity, the findings highlight the need to build on previous gains and address persistent gaps in representation. Sustained efforts to advance equitable and meaningful participation remain essential to ensuring that women's voices and leadership are reflected across all levels of government.

For TIMRAN, the objective is therefore not representation for its own sake. The goal is a political system in which women have equal opportunity to enter political leadership, influence decisions, exercise authority, shape public priorities, and advance to the highest levels of public office. The current political transition provides an important opportunity to move in this direction.



Conclusion

The composition of Ethiopia's newly established political leadership highlights the continued underrepresentation of women across all levels of government. At the federal level, women hold only 9 of the 23 cabinet level positions, accounting for 39.1 percent of the total. The gap is even more pronounced across regional and city administrations, where women account for only 17 percent of all appointments reviewed and 18.8 percent of cabinet level appointments.

The fact that only two of the 13 reviewed regional and city administrations are headed by women further demonstrates the persistent concentration of political authority in male dominated leadership structures. Taken together, these figures highlight the continued underrepresentation of women across Ethiopia's political and administrative structures and the challenges to achieving equitable representation in political leadership.

The next phase of the country's political development requires sustained efforts toward institutionalized gender equality in political leadership. Women's participation must extend beyond being present in government institutions to having a meaningful role in defining priorities, shaping policies, exercising authority and influencing decisions that affect the country's future.

As Ethiopia enters a new political and institutional cycle, ensuring women's meaningful participation at federal, regional and city levels is not only a gender equality commitment but also an essential investment in the legitimacy, inclusiveness and effectiveness of Ethiopia's democratic governance.

TIMRAN remains committed to advancing women's political participation and leadership and to working with government institutions, civil society, political actors, development partners and women leaders to strengthen women's meaningful and substantive participation in Ethiopia's public life.