

Status of Gender Parity in the Ethiopian General Education

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Abstract: The main purpose of this study is to critically examine as to how the education sector is moving towards gender parity in primary and secondary education in terms of school enrollment related issues, male-female teacher ratio, gender sensitiveness of facilities, and study barriers for achieving gender parity. Document review was used to collect data from official documents including the six years' educational statistics annual abstracts, the recent Education for All global monitoring report, the Education Sector Development Programs and different research reports. The documents were mainly examined by focusing on the four areas (parameters) listed above. The result indicated that there is a remarkable improvement in gender parity across the years in both primary and secondary schools in terms of female students' enrolment. However, there are problems in dropout, repetition, and completion rates and different barriers are affecting girls' education that negatively influences the move towards achieving gender parity especially in secondary schools. Implications of the outcomes of the study for practice and research are described.

Keywords: gender parity, safety, enrollment, barrier, Ethiopia

Introduction

The Dakar Framework for Action, which is a re-affirmation of the vision set out in the World Declaration on Education for All (EFA) in Jomtien in 1990, set six education goals aim to meet the learning needs of all children, youth, and adults by 2015 (UNESCO, 2000). These goals focus on issues of early childhood care and education, universal primary education, learning and life-skills programs for youth and adults, adult literacy, gender parity and equality, and quality of education.

One of the EFA goals, achieving *gender parity and equality*, focuses on eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015. As described in the EFA global monitoring report 2013/14 (UNESCO, 2014, p. 75), gender parity is explained in terms of the following key indicators.

- equal enrolment ratios for girls and boys by 2005
- creating a schooling environment that is free of discrimination and provides equal opportunities for boys and girls to realize their potential
- making sure the school environment is safe
- improving school facilities to be gender sensitive (provide, for example, separate latrines for girls and boys)

- training teachers in gender sensitivity
- achieving gender balance among teachers
- rewriting curricula and textbooks to remove gender stereotypes

Thus, logically, achievements in gender parity have to be measured in terms of developments observed in relation to these parameters.

The EFA goals target every country that showed commitment to the attainment of the goals. Countries are encouraged to develop their own strategies to achieve these international goals. Ethiopia, one of the diverse and the second most populous country in Africa, had showed commitment to work towards achieving EFA goals and is using different mechanism for that. Although Ethiopia's economy is one of the poorest in the world and about more than 85% of its population live in rural areas, access to education including female participation is one of the top priorities of the Ethiopian government. Because of prevalent biased attitudes and social values, norms and beliefs that the Ethiopian society held for centuries about women and girls, we see more boys than girls in schools. These deep-rooted prejudices need intensive intervention to bring about a desirable change in gender parity as recent studies also affirm that socio-cultural barriers are still affecting girls' education in Ethiopia (Ministry of Education - MoE & UNICEF, 2012).

One of the efforts of Ethiopia for gender parity is reflected in the emphasis given to the rights of women as stated in the constitution (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia [FDRE], 1995). The Constitution states the following:

In recognition of the history of inequality and discrimination suffered by women in Ethiopia, women are entitled to remedial and affirmative measures. The purpose of such measures shall be to enable women to compete and participate on the basis of equality with men in political, social and economic life, and to gain access to opportunities and positions in public and private institutions. Women have the right to protection by the state from harmful customs. Laws, customs and practices that oppress women or cause bodily or mental harm to them are prohibited (Ethiopian constitution art. 35, 3& 4).

As can be understood from the contents of the above quote, the constitution asserts that females have the right to benefit from affirmative measures, to get opportunities so that they can participate on the basis of equality, to be supported to access opportunities and positions that were inaccessible in the past, and to be protected from bodily and mental harm.

To enhance the achievement of gender parity in the education sector, the education and training policy (FDRE, 1994) emphasized the need to give special attention for females at all levels of the education system. To materialize these constitutional and policy agendas, the Education Sector Development Project (ESDP) has been developed and is being implemented. Currently ESDP IV is being implemented with the aim of improving access to quality education for all, with special emphasis to empowering females so that they can fully

participate in the social, economic and political issues of the country and contribute for the government's aspiration to make Ethiopia one of the middle income countries (MoE, 2010).

The purpose of the study is examining as to how the education sector is moving towards achieving gender parity in primary and secondary schools. Thus, the main research questions of the study are:

- To what extent gender parity is enhanced in school enrollment related issues?
- What is the status of gender parity in relation to male-female teacher ratio?
- How conducive is the school environment in relation to gender sensitivity in terms of facilities?
- What are the barriers for achieving gender parity?

As the study is a critical review of documents that directly or indirectly describe gender issues in the Ethiopian general education sector (grades 1-10), its target is showing the general picture at a national level. General education is the focus of the study because it is the main target of EFA in which Ethiopia showed commitment. As the EFA deadline is approaching, studies that examine achievement and challenges in gender parity and other EFA goals provides insights to strengthen and/or improve practices. In doing so, the study provides useful ideas to different stakeholders ranging from the top ladder (like policy makers and funding organizations) of the education sector to the lower levels (schools and parents). It can show the impact of the efforts being made at Ministry, Zonal, Woreda, school and family levels and the remaining tasks that each stakeholder has to do in order to achieve gender parity in a short period of time.

Methodology

In order to get answers to the research questions, data were gathered from different documents. Document review was chosen because it can enable to see the broader picture of gender parity at national level. However, it would have been best if it had been supplemented by some other methods. This can be considered as a limitation. The documents reviewed include national annual education abstracts (from 2007/8-2012/13), the EFA global monitoring report 2013/14, the ESDPs, and different research reports. The analysis documents focused on examining gender parity issues in terms of the parity indicators discussed above: male-female student enrolment ratio, male-female teacher ratio, safety of and gender sensitivity in school facilities. Using these key issues as a guide, the documents were critically reviewed by the two authors individually. This is meant for caring for the quality of the analysis. The two reviewers then brought the outcomes of their analyses and interpretations. Thorough discussion was made between the two. This helped to come up with list of themes that gave answers to the research questions. In analyzing quantitative data obtained from the Ethiopian education statistic annual abstracts, percentage was used. Time series analysis is used to trace changes observed across the years by comparing the statistical data. Thus, through analyses and interpretations made based on the document review, the

study tried to demonstrate the general picture of status of gender parity in the Ethiopian education sector.

Results and Discussion

Enrolment related status

In this section, we try to elaborate gender parity in terms of student enrollment, dropout, repetition and completion rates, and gender parity index in primary and secondary schools.

Enrolment in schools

Table 1: Gross Enrolment (%)

School level	2007/8		2008/9		2009/10		2010/11		2011/12		2012/13	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
1-4	133	122.5	126.7	118.4	123.2	114.3	128.8	119.1	127.0	118.1	129.7	119.8
5-8	64.8	55.5	65.6	60.5	67.4	63.5	67.4	64.8	65.9	65.3	63.5	62.5
1-8	100.5	90.5	97.6	90.7	96.6	90.1	99.5	93.2	97.9	92.9	98.2	92.4
9-10	44.4	29.6	43.7	32.4	43.5	34.7	41.8	34.9	39.5	34.6	39.9	36.9

Source: Ethiopian education statistic annual abstracts

As can be seen from table 1, the gross enrolment of girls in lower primary school (1-4) is above 100%. As gross enrolment includes both over and under-aged students, the percentage is over 100. When we compare the difference between the gross enrolment of boys and girls, for example in the year 2007/8 and 2012/13, we see a 10% difference. That means, in both years boys were ahead of girls by 10% in the gross enrolment. Thus, in between the six years, the gender disparity did not show any change.

Similarly, as seen in the table above, there is an increase in the enrolment of girls in the upper primary school (5-8) from 55.5% in the year 2007/8 to 62.5% in 2012/13. Unlike the lower primary gross enrolment, the difference between enrolment of boys and girls does not show a big gap, except for the year 2007/8. In the year 2007/8, the difference between boys and girls gross enrolment in upper primary schools was about 10%, whereas in the year 2012/13, the difference is only 1%. This indicates that a considerable change was achieved in terms of enrolment of girls. It is clear that these percentages are calculated based on the number of each target groups. That is the percentage of boys is calculated in line with their total population and the same is true for girls. As the Ethiopian population is almost fifty-fifty in terms of sex, we can infer that the gender disparity in upper primary schools is relatively low.

When we see the gross enrolment in secondary schools (grade 9-10), according the national annual abstracts, there is growth in gross enrolment of girls from 29.6% in the year 2007/8 to 36.9% in the year 2012/13, which is 7.3%, while the gross enrolment of boys shows a decrease by 4.5%. When we compare the difference between boys' and girls' enrolment, in 2007/8 it was 14.8%, whereas in 2012/13, it was 3%, indicating the trend of narrowing the gender gap.

Table 2: Net Enrolment (%)

School level	2007/8		2008/9		2009/10		2010/11		2011/12		2012/13	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
1-8	86	80.7	84.6	81.3	83.7	80.5	87	83.5	86.8	83.9	87.7	84.1
9-10	15.4	12.2	15	11.9	16.8	16.1	16.4	16.2	16.9	17.6	18.8	20.1

Source: Ethiopian education statistic annual abstracts

As can be seen from table 2, the net enrolment of girls in primary school (1-8) showed slight growth, which is from 80.7% in the year 2007/8 to 84.1% in the year 2012/13. When we compare this data with the gross enrolment data, we can clearly see the extent to which under or over school aged children are affecting the statistics on primary school enrolment and enrolment of proper school aged children in general. In general, 40 – 50 % of the primary school enrolment is occupied by out of school-age children. For example, in the year 2012/13 girls' gross enrolment in primary education (1-8) was 92.4%, whereas girls' net enrolment is 84.1%. From this, one can notice that either educational opportunities for the under school aged children are still limited (such as kindergarten) or there were multifaceted problems in the previous time so that those who are out of school age could not get the opportunity to be enrolled at appropriate ages.

Although the net enrolment of girls in primary school is above 80%, girls' net enrolment in secondary school did not go beyond 20%. However, its growth rate is better in the six years. For example, in the year 2007/8, the net enrolment of girls in secondary school was 12%, whereas in the year 2012/13, it became 20%. This clearly displays that even though progress is observed in female students' net enrolment, undeniably, there is great number of females failing to continue their secondary education due to various reasons. This fact is considered in the ESDP IV which explains the challenge of gender gap at all level, especially in secondary schools (MoE, 2010).

Student progression

Table 3: Primary school (1-8) repetition rate (%)

	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
Male	7	4.7	7.2	8.7	8.1	8.1
Female	6.3	5.2	10	8.2	7.7	7.7

Source: Ethiopian education statistic annual abstracts

As can be seen from table 3, the repetition rate of girls in primary schools does not show improvement across the years. The comparison between boys and girls repetition rate does not show much difference. When we compare the repetition rate of students (both boys and girls) across the years, we did not see a decrease in repetition rates. For example, in the year 2007/8, the repetition rate of girls was 6.3%; in the remaining years, repetition rate increased at least by 1.2% as compared to the year 2007/8 (except in the year 2008/9). Generally, it is possible to conclude that very slight improvement have been observed in reducing repetition rates in the six years for boys and girls. Girls' repetition rate was higher in the year 2009/10, high reduction was observed in the following year, but then it seems that it stacked. This implies that there were limited efforts to reduce the repetition rates in primary schools in the

last couple of years. This high repetition rate at primary education level might be one of the reasons for female students' low enrolment rate at secondary education.

Table 4: Primary school (1-8) dropout rate (%)

	2007/8	2008/9	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
Male	15.9	18.2	13.3	17.4	16.2	15.9
Female	13.2	19	13.5	15.1	16	15.4

Source: Ethiopian education statistic annual abstracts

As can be observed in table 4, the dropout rate of girls is almost equal to that of boys. Similar to the repetition rates (see table 3), dropout rate of girls in primary schools also did not show a decrease in the six years. Even, the dropout rate is higher than the repetition rate, the latest being 16%). As we are approaching to the EFA deadline, dropout rate should have gone down, but it did not. This indicates that although enrolment of girls seems increasing, the dropout rate shows that a large number of girls are leaving schools before completion, thus, hampering progression of girls towards the next levels of education. This can also be considered as one of the factors that contributed to the lower enrolment of girls in secondary education.

Table 5: Primary school (1-8) completion rate (%)

	2007/8		2008/9		2009/10		2010/11		2011/12		2012/13	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Grade 1-4	71.7	67.0	79.4	78.4	77.5	73.7	72	66.1	74.1	73.4	77.1	75.1
Grade 5-8	49.4	39.9	48.4	40.5	51	44.5	52.5	46.2	52.4	51.9	53.3	52.2

Source: Ethiopian education statistic annual abstracts

Although there is fluctuation across the years, we see an increase in girls' lower primary school completion rate from the year 2007/8 – 2012/13 (67 to 75.1%) (see table 5). The completion rate of girls in upper primary school also shows continuous increment from 39.9% in the year 2007/8 to 52.2% in the year 2012/13. However, the primary school completion rate of girls is slightly lower than that of boys. For example, at lower primary school level, in 2012/13, the completion rate of girls was 75.1%, whereas that of boys is 77.1% and in upper secondary school, the completion rate for girls was 52.2%, whereas that of boys is 53.3%. Generally, lower primary school completion rate is much better than upper primary completion rates for both boys and girls. Girls' completion rate in upper primary school showed continuous increment but there is fluctuation in girls' lower primary school completion rates. In the last two years (2011/12 & 2012/13), upper primary school completion rate of boys and girls is almost equal, an achievement that needs to be maintained. However, it is unwise to ignore the fact that although the disparity is decreasing and primary school completion rate is improving, the data clearly indicates that almost half of the primary school children do not complete primary schools, which calls for serious attention to identify hindering factors and devise appropriate intervention.

Table 6: Gender parity index by region & year in primary education

Region	Year					
	2007/8	2008/9	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
Tigray	0.98	1	1	1	1.01	0.99
Afar	0.77	0.86	0.92	0.96	1.07	1.1
Amhara	0.96	0.98	1.01	1.01	1.01	1.01
Oromiya	0.85	0.88	0.89	0.89	0.91	0.91
Somali	0.85	0.84	0.80	0.91	0.95	0.97
Benishangul	0.76	0.76	0.78	0.78	0.81	0.81
SNNP ¹	0.84	0.87	0.88	0.88	0.90	0.90
Gambela	0.83	0.84	0.89	0.90	0.90	0.92
Harari	0.83	0.82	0.83	0.84	0.84	0.84
Addis Ababa	1	1.03	1.03	1.01	1	0.98
Dire Dawa	0.85	0.89	0.9	0.91	0.91	0.90

Source: Ethiopian education statistic annual abstracts

As presented in table 6, most regions narrowed the gender gap in their primary schools. Afar, Amhara, and Somali regions can be mentioned on the top, their gender parity index being 1.1, 1.01, and 0.97 respectively in the year 2012/13. Afar showed continuous changes in increasing gender parity across the years; its gender parity index was 0.77 in the year 2007/8 and 1.1 in the year 2012/13. Next to Afar, Amhara (1.01) and Tigray (0.99) regions maintained their high gender parity index from the year 2009/10 to 2012/13. However, Harari region showed almost no improvement in narrowing gender gap, where the gender parity index in the year 2007/8 was 0.83 and after five years, it is 0.84. Oromiya, Benishangul, SNNP and Dire Dawa showed a few changes in the gender parity index from the year 2007/8 to 2012/13. Although gender parity had already been achieved in the year 2007/8 in Addis Ababa, in the year 2012/13, Addis Ababa showed an increase in gender disparity (parity index 0.98).

According to ESDP IV (MoE, 2010), the improvement observed in most regions to narrow the gender gap resulted from the different activities undertaken by each region. The actions include awareness-raising activities, improvement of facilities for girls, the creation of girls' clubs and councils, and affirmative action such as monetary support and boarding school for girls. The EFA 2013/4 global monitoring report (UNESCO, 2014) emphasizes that poverty and residence have great impact on achieving gender parity. That is the probability of achieving gender parity is higher for urban and rich people and lower for rural and the poor communities. Thus much attention has to be given for supporting the rural children and students from the poorest families.

Table 7: Primary and secondary school gender parity index by year- National level

Levels	2007/8	2008/9	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
Primary	0.90	0.93	0.93	0.94	0.95	0.94
Secondary	0.67	0.74	0.80	0.83	0.88	0.92

Source: Ethiopian education statistic annual abstracts

¹ Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples

In general, at a national level, there is an improvement in gender parity at primary and secondary school levels. In primary school, gender parity index moved from 0.90 to 0.94 between the years 2007/8 to 2012/13. In the EFA 2013/14 report (UNESCO, 2014), Ethiopia is listed as one of the countries with high probability of achieving primary school gender parity by 2015 ($\geq 95\%$). The gender parity index for secondary schools also showed much progress, from 0.67 in the year 2007/8 to 0.92 in the year 2012/13. Nevertheless, this seems contradictory with the description by Lasonen, Kemppainen and Raheem (2005) and UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2010) which put Ethiopia under the list of countries that are at risk of not achieving gender parity in secondary schools by 2015. It also seems to contradict with the ESDP IV (MoE, 2010) that describes the challenge of gender gap in secondary schools. However, it seems wise to comprehend UNESCO's projection regarding the difficulty of achieving gender parity in secondary schools by 2015 given the large dropout and repetition rates observed in primary schools and the small primary school completion rates for girls. Besides this, studies indicate that education of Ethiopian females is still hampered by limited access and socio-cultural barriers (MoE & UNICEF, 2012) although Ethiopia showed remarkable achievements in narrowing gender gap in the education sector (Clarke, 2011). Therefore, the various initiatives being undertaken to promote participation of girls have to be strengthened further to combat required changes in gender parity. Therefore, much attention has to be given to initiatives like awareness creation campaigns, monitoring schools for violence against girls, efforts in recruitment of women teachers, efforts to fulfill separate toilette requirements, establishing girls clubs, and taking affirmative measures. These kinds of interventions were considered as basic elements that brought the changes being observed in promoting participation of girls (MoE, 2010; Clarke, 2011).

Male-female teacher ratio

As described in the introduction part of this paper, achievements in gender parity not only address student enrolment issues but also include proportion of female teachers in schools. In this subsection, we try to illustrate how achievement in gender parity is explained in relation to this issue.

Certified female teachers (%)

Table 8: Certified primary and secondary school teachers by year and gender

Level	2007/8		2008/9		2009/10		2010/11		2011/12		2012/13	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Lower primary	97	97.5	90.8	92.3	14.6	16.6	19.1	23.3	27.3	34.7	38.9	50.3
Upper primary	64.1	72.5	69.6	76.8	82.4	76.8	84.2	85.2	89.3	93.8	90.7	95.1
9-12	88.6	11.4	88.2	11.8	89.7	10.3	81.6	18.4	85.1	14.9	85	15

Source: Ethiopian education statistic annual abstracts

Remark: for primary school teachers, the data from the year 2009/10 -2012/13 does not include teachers with TTI; rather it includes diploma and above.

As can be noticed from table 8, almost in all the years 2007/8 to 2012/13, the proportion of certified female primary school teachers excelled that of male primary school teachers. In the ESDP IV (MoE, 2010), it is also stated that the representation of female teachers in primary schools is better than in secondary schools. The gender disparity is high when one goes to the upper levels of the education ladder, that is secondary schools and above. This can have a negative impact in perpetuating the wrong beliefs and stereotypes about females' capabilities (e.g. females are meant for lower level). The very limited number of female teachers in secondary schools can also have negative impact on female students' participation and success in secondary schools and above because they do not see enough role models (Lasonen, Kempainen & Raheem, 2005). Thus, if we are striving to achieve one of the EFA goals, that is gender parity, we have to work hard towards increasing the proportion of female teachers in secondary schools. Of course, this gap had been comprehended in ESDP IV (MoE, 2010) and its impact will be observed in the coming two or three years.

School environment and safety

Conduciveness of the school environment and safety issues are one of the focus area of measuring gender parity. Although schools need to have facilities like library, laboratory, clinic, electricity, electronic media, internet, water and latrine to effectively run educational activities, for this study, we focused on water and latrine which are considered as basic facilities for the wellbeing and safety of female students than male students. This is because of biological behaviors like menstruation that necessitate the availability of latrine and water supply for girls than boys, and the taboo for a girl to urinate in a field unlike boys who are not discouraged for using fields as toilets. In table 9, a summary of the availability of water and latrine facilities is presented.

Table 9: School facilities (%)

		2007/8	2008/9	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
Primary	Water	32.3	34.2	37.4	34.4	36.9	40.7
	Latrine	90.6	90.5	90	90	90	92
Secondary	Water	67.9	67.8	69.9	71.5	72.5	83.8
	Latrine	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Ethiopian education statistic annual abstracts

In the primary schools, the provision of water is below 40% (see table 9). That means 60% of the primary schools in Ethiopia do not have access to water. The data also shows that there is almost no improvement in the latrine service in primary schools. From the year 2007/8 to 2011/12, the latrine facility is available only in 90% of the schools. On the other hand, all the secondary schools have latrine services and their water supply reached 84% in the year 2012/3. That means only 16% of the secondary schools lack water supply.

From this data, it is possible to infer that in primary schools, female students would suffer from the lack of water supply and unavailability of latrine services. When we relate this with

the Ethiopian discriminatory harmful practices that allow boys/men to urinate anywhere and discourage girls to do so, the unavailability of latrine services in schools can have a great impact on the wellbeing and safety of school girls. This can create even a much severe problem for girls who are experiencing menstruation. It may encourage absenteeism, misbehavior and hating school environment. On the other hand, the hundred percent latrine service provisions in secondary schools can be considered as a great achievement; however, without adequate water supply, the usability of the latrines is questionable. Using latrines without water creates bad smell and pollute the school environment in general and disturb the teaching-learning process as well as the health of the school community. Besides unavailability, ESDP IV (MoE, 2010) also described problems in the designs and location of latrines. The design and location did not address gender concerns, privacy and security because, in most cases, toilets are shared by boys and girls. Research also indicated that absence of separate latrine for boys and girls is one of the obstacles for education of girls, forcing them to dropout (MoE & UNICEF, 2012).

Barriers for achieving gender parity

According to a study by Swedish Agency for Development Evaluation -SADEV, poor school facilities, poverty, low enrolment, low retention rate, widening gender gap at higher education levels, and low achievement in school are affecting girl's education in Ethiopia (SADEV, 2011). Jennings (2011) also describes that early marriage, parents' need for labor and income, the low value put on girls' education, and violence against girls and sexual harassment contribute for impeding girls' education. The situation analysis study by the Ethiopian Ministry of Women's Affairs (2006) also indicated that boys and girls do not get equal opportunity and treatment with regard to household task assignments and study time, in which females are expected to undertake huge amount of household activities, and they have more little time to study than boys. A study also identified parental gender bias (against girls) while making decisions to send children to secondary schools (Delelegn, 2007). Besides this, harassment experiences create discomfort for females to attend schools and prohibit them from freely participating in the teaching-learning process. These practices harm the girls both physically and mentally and devalue their constitutional rights. Different research works reported the physical and mental harms school girls are experiencing because of rape, early marriage or marriage by abduction and other forms of gender-based violence, and household chores (Mulugeta, 2004; Gorfu & Demsse, 2007; MoE & UNICEF, 2012).

Although the Ethiopian Constitution (FDRE, 1995), clearly states that females have the right to be protected from practices that can result in physical or mental harm, female students are still facing early marriage, child labor, sexual violence and harassment (Mulugeta, 2004; Jennings, 2011; FDRE, December 2012). It is obvious that these harmful practices jeopardize the physical and mental health of girls and discourage them from attending schools. The fact that these issues are still being considered as challenges of promoting girls education indicates the limited effort being in place to materialize policy and legislative issues. Because of lack of protection for girls from sexual abuses and violence, parents also fear about the

safety of their daughters when they have to travel for long distance or have to leave their homes for schooling. This is especially true for secondary school girls. As the 2012/13 educational statistics annual abstract (MoE, 2013) indicates, the number of Ethiopian secondary schools is 1912 in the year 2012/13 while the number of primary schools is 30,534. From this data, we can infer that there is a possibility of getting a primary school in a nearby area than a secondary school. For females, leaving their parents' house or traveling long distances for schooling is challenging because of fear of abduction, rape and other sexual harassments besides economic problems. Parents also are reluctant to send their daughters into another place because they do not want to miss the labor gained from children. Because of that, parents are forced to terminate educating their daughters even if they want to. This can indicate the extent to which secondary school distance can influence the progression of girls into secondary schools.

One of the main targets of the ESDP IV (MoE, 2010) is minimizing impacts of harmful traditional practices by integrating it into teacher education programs. Although this is a good initiative, it cannot be enough as the issue is a deep-rooted problem that the society carried for centuries. Additional mechanisms have to be devised to educate the society about equality of men and women, the rights of men and women, and the consequence (social, economic, health and legal) of the harmful traditional practices being imposed on girls. As the study by Delelegn (2007) shows, interventions need to target family level changes because changing the attitude and practices at family level can create an efficient way to challenge the problem more systematically. As one of the causes that restrain girls' from proceeding to the higher level of education is poverty (SADEV, 2011), poverty reduction programs can also play a great role in encouraging the poorest girls' enrolment and completion of primary and secondary education. In addition to this, the wrong attitudes the society held towards girls' education has to be addressed in an organized manner so as to encourage girls' education (MoE & UNICEF, 2012).

Conclusions and implication

The analysis and discussion in the previous sections indicate that there is increment in girls' enrolment and better gender parity in primary schools in general. However, primary school girls' dropout and repetition rates are high. Female students' progression towards upper levels of the education system, secondary school, is low. This is due to the influence of early marriage, child labor, less value for educating girls, safety concerns, high repetition and dropout rates in primary schools, and very limited access to secondary schools. Male-female teacher ratio in primary schools is appreciable. Yet, the male-female teacher ratio in secondary schools is disappointing. School facilities are not adequately gender sensitive and girls are not adequately protected from harms. Thus, concerted efforts of stakeholders in designing, implementing and monitoring interventions that can reduce and ultimately eliminate hindering factors are necessities to achieve gender parity in secondary schools. Increasing upper primary school completion rate of girls needs to be a top priority because it helps to increase enrolment of girls in secondary schools, reduce early marriage, child & mother mortality rates and serve as a catalyst to improve the lives of girls even if they do not

continue secondary education. Literature indicated that women who completed primary education lead a better life for themselves, their children and the society at large (UNESCO, 2014).

Another priority area is expanding access to secondary schools. It is unfair to talk about achieving gender parity in secondary schools with the currently available limited number of secondary schools. Strengthening support mechanisms to girls from rural and poor economic backgrounds needs to be emphasized. This is because, in addition to being females, girls from rural areas and from poorest families are over burdened with the challenges of economic and socio-cultural barriers. Unless appropriate and targeted intervention is designed, such groups of students will remain over disadvantaged. As the majority of the Ethiopian population lives in the rural parts of the country with a hand-to-mouth existence, until poverty is eradicated, mechanisms of supporting girls from such economies need to be capitalized. Educating the society about equality of men and women, rights of men and women, and consequence (social, economic, health & legal) of harmful traditional practices being imposed on girls also needs to be done aggressively using various media outlets. Besides this, taking strict and educative measures on those who cause physical and/or mental harm on school girl needs to be strengthened at all levels. To enhance the availability of female role models, it is essential to attract females into secondary school teaching jobs either by recruiting more females into pre-service teacher education programs or giving special attention to promote experienced and capable primary school teachers into the secondary school teaching jobs through in-service teacher education programs.

As clearly stated in the EFA global monitoring report (UNESCO, 2014), achievements in gender parity need to be seen in terms of school enrolment ratio of boys and girls, ratio of male and female teachers, the conduciveness of school environment for the physical and psychological safety of females, and gender sensitivity of curriculum and teacher training. Thus, attention has to be given to all the parameters during practice, while reporting and doing research so that it gives proper picture as to how gender parity is improving in relation to these criteria.

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