



Country fact sheet: Ethiopia

Ethiopia's approach to child marriage is closely linked to its work to end FGM and is guided by a National Strategy and Action Plan on Harmful Traditional Practices against Women and Children, which was launched in 2013. The government committed to further action at the Girl Summit in 2014 and plans to hold a Girl Summit in Ethiopia in 2015 to discuss implementation.

Child marriage prevalence and context

- 41% of women aged 20-24 years are married by the age of 18, and 16% by the age of 15.¹
- Child marriage prevalence varies greatly by region, but is highest in Amhara Region (44.8%), followed by Tigray (34.1%), Benishangul Gumuz (31.9%) and Addis Ababa (32.3%).²
- It is a deep rooted tradition in many Ethiopian communities, perpetuated by poverty, lack of education and economic opportunities, and social customs limiting rights of women and girls.
- The legal age of marriage in Ethiopia is 18 years for both girls and boys.
- Ethiopia's national approach to child marriage is closely linked to its work eradicating harmful traditional practices that affect women and girls. These include Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C), which is highly prevalent in the Afar (60%) region, and marriage by abduction (a cultural practice used by men to take a girl as a wife by force) which is highest in Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' Region (SNNPR) at 17.5%.³

Development of the National Strategy on Harmful Traditional Practices

- The National Strategy and Action Plan on Harmful Traditional Practices (HTP) against Women and Children in Ethiopia emerged from the existing national strategic framework, the Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP), a five-year national plan aimed to improve the country's economic growth from 2010-2015. This plan contained specific targets for the reduction of child marriage, abduction and FGM/C as part of broader targets for gender and equity.⁴
- The development of the National Strategy and two year action plan began in 2011 and was officially launched in June 2013 under the leadership of Minister of MoWCYA Zenebu Tadesse W-Tsadiq. The strategy was developed by a multi-sectoral task force put together by the federal Ministry of Women, Children and Youth Affairs (MoWCYA).
- The National Implementation and Monitoring Platform is responsible for coordinating and implementing the strategy and action plan.
- The launch of the National Alliance to End Child Marriage (now known as the National Alliance to End Child Marriage and FGM/C) coincided with the national strategy launch, and was influential in directing the HTP strategy's development.

¹ Percentage of women aged 20-24 who were married or had entered into union before the age of 15 and 18, as cited by UNICEF, The State of the World's Children 2015

² Figures on harmful traditional practices from the National Strategy and Action Plan on Harmful Traditional Practices against Women and Children in Ethiopia, 2013, p. 5

³ Figures on harmful traditional practices from the National Strategy and Action Plan on Harmful Traditional Practices against Women and Children in Ethiopia, 2013, p. 5.

⁴ Part of Pillar 7 of the Growth and Transformation Plan.

At the Girl Summit in London in July 2014, the government committed to further action aimed at eradicating child marriage and FGM/C by 2025:

1. Incorporate relevant indicators in the National Plan and the National Data Collection Mechanisms, including the 2015 Demographic and Health Survey to measure the situation of FGM/C and Child, Early and Forced Marriage (CEFM) and to establish a clear bench mark;
2. Enhance the coordination and effectiveness of the National Alliance to End Child Marriage and the National Network to End FGM⁵ by engaging different actors with key expertise;
3. Ensure strong, accountable mechanisms for effective law enforcement; and
4. Ensure an increase of 10% in financial resources to eliminate FGM/C and CEFM from the existing budget.

Strategy overview

- Ethiopia's national strategy on HTPs has eight objectives, which include:
 1. Social mobilisation through a comprehensive national communication strategy;
 2. Harmonising policy and legal framework and effective law enforcement;
 3. Enhancing the capacity of service provision;
 4. Institutionalising evidence-based planning, supervision, monitoring and evaluation, feedback and best practice assemblage and scale-up mechanisms;
 5. Ensuring strategic partnerships with all actors;
 6. Designing effective national resource mobilisation with accountability mechanisms;
 7. Enhancing participation of all rights holders; and
 8. Establishing a national and regional database to systematically show data around child marriage trends and prevalence to inform interventions.
- The strategy has a two-year action plan to guide its implementation.

Next steps

- The government plans to hold a Girl Summit led by the Deputy Prime Minister in 2015 to discuss how the key strategic areas of the national strategy and commitments made at London's Girl Summit in 2014 can be put into action, and how to bring all sectors together to discuss how to address child marriage in a multi-sectoral way.
- Greater clarity from the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development about what financial resources previously existed and how the 10% increase will be distributed across sectors is expected during the Girl Summit.

⁵ The National Alliance and National Network are currently in a process of merging as one entity.