

## How about the gender equity in education?

Solving the Global Learning Crisis podcast, text transcript

Ms Selome Fantahun talks about gender issues in Ethiopian education.

Welcome to this podcast series on solving the global learning crisis. We'll discover how Ethiopia, Nepal and Mozambique are reshaping their higher education programs in response to the changing demands of the 21st century. (Music playing)

**Eila:** Hello and welcome to the podcast. I am Eila Burns and today with me is Ms Selome from Ethiopia, welcome.

**Selome:** Thank you, thank you.

**Eila:** Selome, I don't know too much about you yet. I know that you are from Ethiopia and you work in this international project. Would you first tell us something about yourself? So for example, where do you work and what kind of work do you do? Please.

**Selome:** Thank you again. I work in Ethiopian Technical University as a construction technology lecturer. I teach construction to my students, how to construct buildings.

**Eila:** How to construct buildings that's interesting. What about this this project? This project is called MOPEDE - capacity building for Modernizing TVET pedagogy in Ethiopia. So what? What is your role in the project?

**Selome:** I am an e-learning team member. After completion of my training, I will disseminate the e-learning concept to my colleagues and teachers. Specially to those who live in rural regions.

**Eila:** So are you located in a capital city?

**Selome:** Yes, of course in the capital in Addis Ababa.

**Eila:** So the aim of the project is to reach teachers that are will be outside the capital.

**Selome:** Yeah, so the goal of MOPEDE is to introduce and implement e-learning throughout Ethiopia. I suppose it is the Technical University that is in a potential place to disseminate these concepts and to implement them across the regions. We have 15 satellite colleges in Ethiopia. When the teachers come to our campus to upgrade their skills, we have a chance to disseminate e-learning concept for the teachers. When they go back to their regions and we assume they are going to implement them.

**Eila:** Very, very interesting. Our aim today is to talk more to talk about gender and gender issues in Ethiopia. I know you did the baseline study for this project. I looked at the respondents and noticed that you had 53 respondents and only four of them were female. This is quite a quite a big difference. So generally, can you tell us something about the gender issues in Ethiopian education and related to this baseline study please?

**Selome:** Yeah, when you see gender issue in Ethiopia regardless with participation in education, the number of women nowadays is greater than men. Even more than 1/2 of the population are women according to World Bank's report. Higher education or schools or general schools are for men or women. So in that case we can say that the participation of women is assured.

That they are engaging in schools nowadays. However, when we see women participation with leadership positions, particularly in educational sector, especially in higher education, women are underrepresented. The college leadership positions are male dominant, so women are not participating in decision making. Women are not participating or they are really underrepresented in leadership positions in higher education.

**Eila:** Yes well, that's reflected to other countries as well, but why are gender issues, and particularly females' underrepresentation in the leadership you mentioned important to talk about?

**Selome:** Education is a human right. So everyone should access it. Women should have to participate equally with men, but we are lacking to get the opportunity to outshine, to express our feelings. Even to represent ourselves, because especially as I said earlier, the majority leadership is possessed by men especially in higher education leadership positions. Everything is male favored. They held the government for the last three decades and worked harder on education and accessibility.

However, the quality of education is compromised as there are still cultural barriers remaining in Ethiopia. For example, in rural areas people traditionally believe that women should stay at home to take care of her children to feed her husband and to be a housewife. Not to go to school and to start taking courses. When we see women in educational sector, specially in leadership, more women should come on board. But real scenario indicates that there is insignificant number of women in leadership positions. Women are 1/2 of the population in Ethiopia. They have a right to get education as well as to participate in decision making events. If they get opportunity, just to give a chance for women because we are the half of the population we need to have represented. I think like that.

**Eila:** Definitely, that's very interesting. So if you would have a wish, what would you like to change in terms of gender equality in education sector in Ethiopia?

**Selome:** Yes, awareness creation has to be done. There is some awareness, but it's not enough. As discrimination and stereotypes are still an issue here in Ethiopia.

To tell my experience the first time that I taught my subject, and I entered the classes, all with one sound said: " Oh no woman again" . Then, after a hard working, after the end or the completion of the course, they understand that ,yes, a woman can teach in higher education. So the discrimination is still remaining.

Even we are working harder to create our system, I suppose women ourselves have to strive for the right. They are right and ready themselves to be on board, especially in leadership position.

To become a leader, to be a part, especially in decision making event, they should have greater assignments in the future. Research revealed results that according to their recommendations they put a quota as a tool for assigning leadership in higher education academics so. I think it's better, it's a good opportunity to give option using quota as a tool for assigning women in leadership position.

**Eila:** Thank you Selome. That's a step forward already. If I go back at the beginning, you said you work in construction. In the field, which is very male dominant at least here in Finland.

Why did you choose this field?

**Selome:** Actually, I didn't choose the field. You don't have any option. They assign you to the specific field for the first time. I feel so sad to be a part of this department. Why? Because it needed my efforts. My time was very difficult for me. I thought because these thoughts come from the population, the tradition. It's if someone give me a chance I can. So I think I accomplish my task by.

By accomplishing my study with a good grade. I think I love I. I love the department. As you said earlier, it's very tiresome and male dominant. But if we are engaged fully and if we try harder, we can do it. So this is a great witness. My experience.

**Eila:** Yes good words. Clearly you are a good example of a lady of a female who can achieve a lot if you want to do it. Is there anything else, Selome that you would like to say to our listeners related to this gender issue?

**Selome:** The gender issue is not the issue of women only, it is the issue of men also why? Because without willingness of the male, the woman could not able to come up with their dreams. We cannot fulfill our dreams come true without their involvement. So the awareness creation has to be done for specially for men because they treat us as a charity model.

Not because of our rights. They give a position for us, because we are so pretty and we need support. They give a chance and always they want to be a boss. Always they want to be at the higher of you to support you to guide you. I am the only one who can do anything, so I will show you they said. They should have to believe that women by themselves can do anything if they give a chance in a work.

**Eila:** Absolutely, I totally agree that women can be as good as men. If the right conditions are giving to them. eExcellent.

Thank you very much Selome. I certainly hope that we can hear you again sometimes in this podcast talking about this issue or something else. Hopefully we see you and hear you again. Thank you very much.

**Selome:** Thank you, thank you.

Podcast outro:

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