Ethiopia

Country Overview

Politics

Ethiopia is a federal parliamentary republic in East Africa. It is currently controlled by the Prosperity Party, created in December 2019 with the merger of three ethnically based parties formerly part of the Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF). In April 2018, Abiy Ahmed became Prime Minister resulting in positive changes in Ethiopia’s human rights landscape. In June 2018 the government lifted the state of emergency set in place after the previous Prime Minister left office and released political prisoners from detention. The government has since signed a peace agreement with Eritrea nearly two decades after the countries went to war and undertook revisions of repressive laws. However, this period of reforms has also been marked by increased ethnic violence and demands for greater regional and ethnic autonomy.

Economy

Ethiopia is classified by the World Bank as a low-income economy. Ethiopia is the fifth-fastest growing economy among member nations in the International Monetary Fund, with a reported GDP growth rate of 7.7 percent in 2017/18. Ethiopia has had steady and broad-based growth over the past 10 years due to the expansion of the agriculture, construction and service industries. The agricultural sector employs 72.7 percent of the labor force, industry makes up 7.4 percent, and services make up 19.9 percent. The service industry generates 43.6 percent of the GDP, while agriculture and industry generate 34.8 percent and 21.6 percent respectively. The current administration plans to prioritize the privatization of state-owned enterprises (SOEs) in addition to opening up sectors of the economy to potential foreign investors.

Social/Human Development

The Ethiopian population is growing rapidly, with more than 40 percent of the population under the age of 15. Eighty percent of the population lives in rural areas and are reliant on agriculture for survival. According to the United Nations Development Programme, 83.5 percent of Ethiopians are living in multidimensional poverty and the country ranks 173 out of 189 on the Human Development Index. In 2015, droughts and floods led to the displacement of approximately 585,540 people and humanitarian aid was required. Further, in recent years, hundreds of thousands of Ethiopians have been internally displaced due to ethnic and border based disputes.

Ethiopia is home to over 80 different ethnic groups. The largest are: Oromo (34.4 percent), Amhara (27 percent), Somali (6.2 percent), Tigray (6.1 percent), Sidama (4 percent), Gurage (2.5 percent), Welaita
(2.3 percent), Hadiya (1.7 percent), Afar (1.7 percent), Gamo (1.5 percent), Gedeo (1.3 percent), Silte (1.3 percent), and Kefficho (1.2 percent).  

**U.S. Department of State TIP Report Summary (2019)**

**U.S. Department of State TIP Ranking: Tier 2**

Trafficking was reported in potentially exported supply chains including agriculture and weaving. Read the full TIP Report at: [https://www.state.gov/reports/2019-trafficking-in-persons-report/](https://www.state.gov/reports/2019-trafficking-in-persons-report/)

**Migrant and Other Vulnerable Populations**

Ethiopia experiences net negative migration at a rate of -0.2 migrant(s) for 1,000 people. About one percent of the country’s total population is migrants. The largest source countries for migrants are Somalia and South Sudan.

There were an estimated 3.52 million persons of concern in Ethiopia at the end of 2018. Of these, approximately 900,000 were refugees, constituting about 25.6 percent of the total estimated persons of concern according to UNHCR. Ethiopia is the second largest host of refugees in Africa and one of the largest refugee hosts in the world. Refugees arrive in Ethiopia from countries including Somalia, South Sudan and Eritrea.  

![Migrants to Ethiopia](image-url)
Top destination countries for migrants from Ethiopia were the United States, Saudi Arabia, and Israel.\textsuperscript{21}

### Exports and Trade

Ethiopia’s top exported goods in 2019 were coffee, (in the broader category coffee, tea, and spices), oil seeds, cut flowers (within the category of trees and plants), and apparel.\textsuperscript{22}
The top importers of goods from Ethiopia according to mirror data were the United States, China, Saudi Arabia, Germany and Japan.23

![Ethiopia Export Partners (USD/Thousands)](image)

Ethiopia was the 97th largest supplier of goods to the United States in 2018. Top exports to the U.S. included coffee, footwear, woven apparel and knit apparel.24

**Trafficking in Persons Risk Factors Analysis**

**Policy/Legal Risk Factors**

**Level of Legal Protection for Civil Liberties and Workers’ Rights**

**Freedom of Association**

The law provides workers, the ability to form and join unions and engage in collective bargaining and strikes, with some exceptions for workers in the public sector. However, the U.S. Department of State notes that many of these rights, especially collective bargaining and striking are limited by the law, complex legal formalities, and a lack of enforcement of protective labor laws. The government reserves the right to deny registration of a union if requirements are not met and can take punitive action if a union engages in prohibited activities, notably political action.25
In addition to public sector employees, the law prohibits freedom of association rights for managerial workers, care workers, educators, and volunteers, and does not protect informal workers. The ITUC reports that collective bargaining is authorized by ministry approval upon major economic change and can be initiated by employer or employees.26

**Working Conditions**

Ethiopia has no national minimum wage. The law limits the workweek to 48 hours with a 24-hour rest period, but it was reported that many foreign, migrant, and informal sector workers worked hours that exceeded this limit in practice. The U.S. Department of State reports that workers excluded from freedom of association laws were unable to benefit from health and safety regulations. Migrant and informal sector workers worked over 48 hours per week which is the legal limit under labor laws. The Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs’ inspection department was reportedly unsuccessful in standards enforcement. In the country’s significant agricultural sector, hazardous working conditions are common, especially among seasonal workers.27

**Discrimination**

According to the U.S. Department of State, the law prohibits discrimination based on race, ethnicity, national origin, nationality, gender, marital status, religion, political affiliation, political outlook, pregnancy, socioeconomic status, disability, or “any other conditions.” The law does not explicitly prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity, and HIV-positive status. Discrimination against women was noted to be common, especially in rural parts of the country.28

**Forced Labor**

Any form of forced or compulsory labor is prohibited by law, though courts are permitted to use forced labor as a disciplinary means.29

**Child Labor**

The legal minimum age for wage or salaried employment is 14, although this did not apply to children who were self-employed or performed unpaid work. Hazardous work, night work and working more than 7 hours per day is prohibited for children between 14 and 18 years of age, however children under the age of 16 attending vocational school are exempt from the hazardous work restriction. Education is not compulsory by law.30

**Civil Society Organizations**

According to the U.S. Department of State, in 2019, the revised Civil Society Proclamation was passed that allows foreign government and private sector funding for any advocacy Civil Society Organization
(CSOs), including human rights organizations. Previously CSOs and NGOs operated within Ethiopia under significant government restriction. This new law also allows foreign volunteers to work in CSOs for a period of time and is part of a larger trend of government reforms.31

**Immigration Policies Limiting the Employment Options or Movement of Migrants**

Ethiopia maintains an open-door policy for refugees, which protects those seeking asylum and humanitarian access. In 2019, the government revised existing law to include more rights for refugees, making the country’s policies one of the most progressive in Africa.32 These provisions include permitting refugees to work and live outside of a defined refugee camp, to access primary education and financial services, and to register births and marriages.33

According to the U.S. Department of State, migrant workers reportedly face discrimination in work environments.34 There are over 900,000 refugees, mostly from South Sudan, Somalia, Sudan and Eritrea currently residing in Ethiopia.35

**Ratification of ILO Conventions Related to Human Trafficking or Rights of Workers and Migrants**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ILO Convention</th>
<th>Status</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ILO 29 Forced Labor</td>
<td>In force</td>
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<tr>
<td>ILO 87 Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organize</td>
<td>In force</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ILO 98 Right to Organize and Collective Bargaining</td>
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<tr>
<td>ILO 100 Equal Remuneration</td>
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<tr>
<td>ILO 105 Abolition of Forced Labor</td>
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<tr>
<td>ILO 111 Discrimination</td>
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<tr>
<td>ILO 138 Minimum Age</td>
<td>In force</td>
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<tr>
<td>ILO 181 Private Employment Agencies</td>
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<tr>
<td>ILO 182 Worst Forms of Child Labor</td>
<td>In force</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ILO 97 Migration for Employment</td>
<td>Not ratified</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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**Political Risk Factors**

**Political Instability or Conflict**

Ethiopia scored a 94.6 in the 2020 Fragile States Index, making it the 21st most fragile state in the world.37 Its score has decreased from a recent high of 101.1 in 2017 due to a series of government reforms. These reforms include ending State of Emergency order, releasing thousands of political prisoners, and amending repressive laws regarding CSO groups and counterterrorism.38 However, the country has seen an increase in interethnic tensions that has displaced many and contributed to a breakdown of law and order in some regions.39
Level of Crime and Violence

The World Economic Forum *Global Competitiveness Report* ranked Ethiopia at 87 out of 140 for organized crime. As of 2014, Ethiopia had a homicide rate of 12 homicides per 100,000 people, above the African regional average, according to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. Recent demonstrations and inter-ethnic tension have contributed to unrest and violence in regions of the country.

State Persecution

In 2018, the government of Ethiopia took steps to reform many of its harsh policies by repealing laws regarding CSO groups and counterterrorism that had been exploited by past administration and correcting oppressive actions. However, as indicated by a 2020 Amnesty International Report, many security forces still adhere to old patterns of violence. This includes security forces carrying out “extrajudicial executions, arbitrary arrest and detention, torture and other forms of ill-treatment, forced evictions and destruction of property” in some regions, in addition to being complicit in interethnic violence.

Level of Corruption

The Transparency International Corruption Perception Index scores Ethiopia as 37 out of 100, where 0 indicates “Highly Corrupt” and 100 indicates “Very Clean.” Ethiopia ranks 96 out of 198 on the index. According to the U.S. Department of State, while there are criminal penalties for corruption, the government does not enforce the law effectively or comprehensively and thus corruption remains a large concern.

Socio-Economic Risk Factors

Level of National Economic Development

The United Nations Human Development Index (UN HDI) places Ethiopia in the low human development category, ranking the country 173 out of 189 countries in 2017, with an index score of 0.463, an increase from 0.283 in 2000.

Level and Extent of Poverty

Ethiopia has a high level of poverty, with 83.8 percent of the population determined to be living in “multidimensional” poverty according to the United Nations. When adjusted for inequality, the Human Development Index Score falls to 0.331, a loss of 28.4 percent. This demonstrates a higher degree of inequality within the country than noted in the country index score.
Degree of Gender Inequality

Ethiopia is ranked 117 out of 149 on the 2018 Global Gender Gap Index, indicating a sizeable gender gap.\textsuperscript{50}

Because roughly 80 percent of the population resides in rural areas, traditional judicial systems, such as sharia (Islamic law) courts and councils of elders, are relied on in practice. Some women have reported lacking access to free and fair hearings under their communities’ traditional court systems, and have cited strong discrimination in rural areas.\textsuperscript{51}

On a federal and regional level, laws support women’s ability to lease government land and inherit property acquired through marriage. In practice, however, women who are separated or widowed are reportedly likely to lose their house and property. Under the traditional customs of most regions, land is reportedly passed on to sons.\textsuperscript{52}

Women are reportedly disadvantaged in employment, in part due to attaining lower educational levels on average than men and the traditional belief that women should focus on being mothers and wives, although the law prohibits discrimination based on gender with respect to occupation and employment.\textsuperscript{53} Equal pay for equal work is not mandated.\textsuperscript{54}

Landlessness and Dispossession

The U.S. Department of State has reported that recent displacement has been caused primarily by interregional and interclan conflicts.\textsuperscript{55} In 2018, millions were displaced because of conflicts between Oromo and Somali people along its regional border, Gedeo and Guji Oromo tribes in West Guji and Amhara and Qeumant communities in the Amhara region.\textsuperscript{56} Flooding, other natural disasters, development projects and social tensions have also contributed to hundreds of thousands being displaced.\textsuperscript{57}

According to the U.S. Department of State, private land ownership does not exist and the government “retains the right to expropriate land for the common good,” which it defines to include expropriation for commercial farms, industrial zones and infrastructure development.\textsuperscript{58}

Human Rights Watch has documented forced relocation of Ethiopians in areas where land was being leased by foreign investors for commercial agriculture.\textsuperscript{59}

Environmental Factors

Rural areas in several regions of the country have been reported to be vulnerable to recurring droughts.\textsuperscript{60} The CIA has described drought as a main factor driving Ethiopia’s internal and external migration since the 1960s.\textsuperscript{61} In 2015, for example, droughts and floods led to the displacement of approximately 585,540 displaced people.\textsuperscript{62} Deforestation, overgrazing, soil erosion, desertification, and poor water resource management are additional ongoing environmental concerns that may present livelihood challenges, particularly for rural populations.\textsuperscript{63} Locusts, in particular, have been a challenge in
recent years; one of the indirect consequence of climate change for Ethiopia has been a surge of locust swarms. Locus have the potential to destroy many of the crops the country is reliant on and leave millions hungry.  

**Documented Trafficking in Persons Risk Factors in Key Commodity Supply Chains**

**Livestock**

**Livestock Overview**

Ethiopia has one of the largest livestock populations in all of Africa, and according to government statistics, there are roughly 50 million cattle, 50 million goats and sheep, and a large number of assorted horses, donkeys, camels, and chickens. Livestock accounts for 27 percent of the country’s GDP, and 40 percent of agricultural GDP. The livestock sector in Ethiopia has been growing rapidly over the past two decades. The government’s development objectives for the industry include meeting a growing demand for meat within the country and increasing exports of meat to earn more foreign exchange. Livestock herds provide income for more than 11 million rural households.

**Documented Trafficking in Persons Risk Factors in Livestock Production**

The 2018 U.S. Department of Labor List of Goods Produced by Child Labor or Forced Labor, notes child labor in cattle herding in Ethiopia. Herding is reportedly culturally viewed as appropriate child’s work. Livestock ownership is a key aspect of social status in some communities. Some analysis has noted that even when families can afford school fees for children, herding may be seen as a preferable activity.

**Gold**

**Gold Overview**

Ethiopia is estimated to have more than 200,000 tons of gold minerals in reserve, and gold mining represents the largest portion of revenue in the Ethiopian extractives sector (40.7 percent). There are 137 companies licensed to work in the industry by the Ministry of Mines, of which 34 are licensed for high level production and 22 are licensed for lower level production. The country has a history of mostly unlicensed artisanal mining. Artisanal miners in Ethiopia tend to be from marginalized and poor
populations, many of whom are also subsistence farmers.\textsuperscript{72} However the government under Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed is encouraging formal investment and branding Ethiopia as “Africa’s Ideal New Mining Destination.”\textsuperscript{73}

Gold is mined in both open-pit and underground shafts.\textsuperscript{74}

**Documented Trafficking in Persons Risk Factors in Gold Production**

According the 2018 U.S. Department of Labor *List of Goods Produced by Child Labor or Forced Labor*, gold is produced with child labor in Ethiopia.\textsuperscript{75}

There are at least 1.26 million artisanal and small scale miners currently working in the country, with over 7.5 million dependent on the industry for income.\textsuperscript{76} For many, it is their primary source of income.\textsuperscript{77} Many miners are internal migrants from other areas in Ethiopia, with 50-70 percent migrants in some mining regions, which tend to be isolated, remote and lacking in basic infrastructure or services.\textsuperscript{78} Most small-scale miners are not licensed, and most marketing is conducted by informal traders.\textsuperscript{79} The result of this informality is that most of the supply chain operates outside of government oversight. Miners working outside of safety protocols are exposed to “dust, poor ventilation, rock falls/collapse, water-borne diseases, malaria and HIV/AIDS.”\textsuperscript{80} Informal traders may act to “undermine the prices of gold by creating confusion about the quality standard of the mineral,” thus depriving miners of a fair price. Deforestation and land degradation caused by tree clearing around artisanal mines may contribute to ongoing environmental concerns in Ethiopia.

**Apparel**

**Apparel Overview**

Ethiopian textile exports were worth approximately USD 129 million in the 2019-2020 fiscal year, falling short of its 160 million goal.\textsuperscript{81} In the past 15 years, Ethiopia’s economy, particularly its textile industry, has been growing steadily in part due to a model of state sponsored development. There are five government built industrial parks that have created 45,000 jobs, in addition to four private parks, with plans of creating 30 overall by 2025 to help strengthen the industry’s exports.\textsuperscript{82} The government is supporting the growth of the industry by allowing and mandating: the import of capital goods duty free, multiyear income tax exemptions, no export tax on Ethiopian export productions, and special financing and capital remittances privileges.\textsuperscript{83}

These programs, combined with the lowest base wage in the global garment supply chain at approximately USD 26 per month, have brought Ethiopia into competition with textile manufacturing hubs in Southeast Asia, and there are currently firms from the U.S., the E.U., Turkey, and China moving into the country at a rapid clip.\textsuperscript{84} There has also been a push to develop the cotton industry in the country to increase competitive advantage on the international market.\textsuperscript{85}
Documented Trafficking in Persons Risk Factors in Apparel Production

The U.S. Department of Labor reports that hand-woven textiles have been found to be produced with both child and forced labor in Ethiopia.86 Children – particularly boys – begin apprenticing as young as 12. 87

A study among female garment workers in Ethiopia found that most had never worked in the formal sector prior to their apparel sector employment.88 Migrant workers have not been systematically documented in Ethiopia’s garment production sector. However, a McKinsey survey of sourcing professionals found that, in addition to Ethiopia’s low wage rates, the low cost of obtaining documentation for migrant workers was considered a benefit, suggesting that they are present.89 Many women migrant from rural areas in Ethiopia to urban areas in order to work in the industry and gain freedom from their family structures.90

Coffee

Coffee Overview

Ethiopia produced 7.35 million (60kg) bags of coffee and exported 4 million (60 kg) bags in 2019.91 Ethiopia is the largest coffee producer in Africa, and the tenth largest exporter in the world.92 There are four methods of growing coffee in Ethiopia: forest, semi-forest, garden, and plantation.93 It is estimated that coffee directly or indirectly affects the livelihoods of more than a quarter of the country’s population.94 Small scale growing operations account for 95 percent of the country’s coffee production, while the remaining 5 percent is grown on modern commercial farms.95

Documented Trafficking in Persons Risk Factors in Coffee Production

Casual hired labor was noted as widespread in a 2014 study of coffee production in Ethiopia.96 A 2014 study on workers in Uganda and Ethiopia noted the presence of seasonal migrants, but did not specify their origins.97 However, the research did note that seasonal migrants tended to be workers who lacked access to their own land; some were from land-scarce, poor, rural regions while others were women who could not secure their own property.98

It is estimated that by the end of the century Ethiopia could lose nearly half of its coffee growing areas due to droughts and lack of rainfall induced by climate change. These changes pose a significant risk to smallholder farms, as they typically do not have access to the same resources to cope as large-scale commercial farms.99
Vegetables

Vegetables Overview

Agricultural production systems include subsistence crops, smallholder farming and larger scale commercial farms. Ethiopia has favorable climate conditions for several types of vegetables. That said, there is still a component of seasonality, with each crop having a limited harvest period. Exported vegetables are primarily irrigated crops harvested during the dry season between September and March.

Crops produced include lettuce, cabbage, kale, tomatoes, peppers, green beans, potatoes and bulb crops like onions. Tubers – including potatoes and sweet potatoes are the dominant crop in terms of production. Cabbage is the most-produced crop by small-scale farmers. Green beans is the most significant vegetable export crop; they are exported primarily to European markets. Green beans are a labor-intensive crop that also requires machinery and irrigation. The vegetable export sector is a priority for the government’s economic development plans to increase production and food security. The government under Prime Minister Abey plans to increase the productivity of smallholders farms and expand commercial farms via irrigation development, post-harvest loss reduction, supporting increased mechanization, and encouraging natural resource management.

Documented Trafficking in Persons Risk Factors in Vegetables Production

The U.S. Department of State reports a high incidence of child labor in Ethiopian agriculture. Boys, especially, are exploited in forced labor in Ethiopian agriculture, although specific crops or supply chains are not specified. Approximately 80 percent of the labor force in Ethiopia works in agriculture, which is not covered by most of the labor code. While there are laws in place to combat child labor, these programs do not sufficiently target the agriculture sector.

Flowers

Flowers Overview

The cut flower industry is growing rapidly in Ethiopia, due to government support and foreign investment. Ethiopia now rivals Kenya as Africa’s largest flower exporter. The sector earned USD 280 million in the 2018 fiscal year and is considered one of the economic pillars of the country. Flower companies are exempted from duties on key inputs such as fertilizer, and receive a corporate tax exemption for their first five years of operation. Varieties include roses, carnations and chrysanthemum. Most companies operating in the sector are foreign, and Europe is the market for 80 percent of Ethiopia’s flowers. Over 16,000 workers are employed in the sector, engaged in tasks such as seeding, cultivating, packing and exporting.
Documented Trafficking in Person Risk Factors in Flowers

As in other countries, most workers in the cut flower supply chain are low-skilled female workers, suggesting a vulnerable workforce. There are anecdotal reports of sexual harassment of female workers.

Employment in the sector appears to be highly casualized, as most workers typically have short-term contracts on a reviewed on daily basis. This type of relationship gives workers little job security and makes them vulnerable to arbitrary dismissal.

There is evidence that the hazardous chemicals used in the growing of cut flowers in Kenya and Ethiopia have produced adverse health effects in some industry workers. Specific abuses include spraying pesticides in greenhouses while workers were laboring inside, fumigation of cold storage facilities as workers labored inside of them, and working in extreme heat with little or no breaks. One study of Ethiopian workers in the industry found a “high prevalence of respiratory and dermal symptoms” that did not exist in control testing, and noted that workers that were laboring inside of greenhouses were significantly more likely to develop symptoms than those who worked outside.

Workers in the flower sector in Ethiopia have reported that they have been barred from attempts to organize or bargain collectively.

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39 Human Rights Watch. Ethiopia: Abiy’s First Year as Prime Minister


90 London School of Economics (LSE). The lives of migrant women factory workers in industrialising Ethiopia


