

## The 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual National Women Economic Empowerment Forum (August 27-28, 2024)

The National Women Economic Empowerment Forum (NWEFF) is a Forum that came into reality in April 2022 with the main objective to promote the economic empowerment of women in a coordinated and integrated manner and to contribute to the realization of the equal rights of women to accelerating economic growth and development pioneered by UN Women, the Ministry of Women and Social Affairs (MOWSA), ActionAid Ethiopia (AAE), Ministry of labor and Skills, Ethiopian Chamber of Commerce and Sectoral Associations, and have pioneered. Since its establishment annual forums had been held and this year, the 3<sup>rd</sup> NWEFF was hosted by ActionAid Ethiopia in collaboration with MOWSA and UN Women under this year IWD theme of “inspire inclusion” from August 27- 28, 2024.

In the event more than 100 stakeholders from regional bureaus of women and social affairs; WEE actors, policy actors, community representatives, CSOs, sector office representatives, financial institutions, associations and private sectors took part. The event started by welcome remarks by ActionAid Ethiopia Country Director (Tinebeb Berhane), UN Women WEE Program Analyst (Simegn Kuma), and opening speech by Seleshi Tadesse (MOWSA) delegate to the state minister and Executive of Women Right Protection and Response.



*Ato Seleshi, MOWSA, providing opening speech at the start of the event*

After the opening, there was a presentation on achievements by the Forum by Getachew Kassie (MOWSA). In line with the theme, relevant sessions on inclusion including but not limited to hearing the voices of marginalized; presentations on GRB as a tool to promoting inclusive development; status of public procurement in including women and financial institutions' programs and efforts towards inclusive packages were the highlights of this year's forum towards drawing actions for continuous follow up. Additionally, the agenda of women only SACCOS was raised to assess any progress made towards having the regulation approved.

The next agenda was a panel discussion by women in small business/organized in SACCOS by AAE from Elfeta (Oromia Region) and Semen Bench (Southwest Region) LRPs including those from marginalized communities. The vibrant women boldly shared their success stories from being supported to organize on their own to meaningfully benefit from the profits in changing theirs and their family lives, making decisions and exercising leadership. The forum had been an advocacy space for the women cooperatives and allies to further promote the agenda of women only SACCOS as per the discretion of the women. An expert from the National Cooperatives Commission also presented the progress made. Although the directive couldn't still be adopted a guideline had been recently prepared to facilitate for women and persons with disabilities to organize by themselves.



*Tinebeb Berhane, ActionAid Country Director opening remarks at the 3rd NWEFF*





AAE established SACCOs presenting on their achievements, challenges and support they need

After the opening, there was a presentation on achievements by the Forum by Getachew Kassie (MOWSA). In line with the theme, relevant sessions on inclusion including but not limited to hearing the voices of marginalized; presentations on GRB as a tool to promoting inclusive development; status of public procurement in including women and financial institutions' programs and efforts towards inclusive packages were the highlights of this year's forum towards drawing actions for continuous follow up. Additionally, the agenda of women only SACCOs was raised to assess any progress made towards having the regulation approved.

The next agenda was a panel discussion by women in small business/organized in SACCOs by AAE from Elfeta (Oromia Region) and Semen Bench (South West Region) LRPs including those from marginalized communities. The vibrant women boldly shared their success stories from being supported to organize on their own to meaningfully benefit from the profits in changing theirs and their family lives, making decisions and exercising leadership. The forum had been an advocacy space for the women cooperatives and allies to further promote the agenda of women only SACCOs as per the discretion of the women. An expert from the National Cooperatives Commission also presented the progress made. Although the directive couldn't still be adopted a guideline had been recently prepared to facilitate for women and persons with disabilities to organize by themselves.

The last agenda for day one was sharing of experience on regional cascading of the forum by Addis Ababa BOWCA as they were the only ones who took the necessary actions and other regions were again encouraged to do the same.



Women in business selling their products on a side event

During the two-day forum, there was also a side event during the forum where women in business including those with disabilities and marginalized groups sold their products. Nigist Haile (Ph.D.), from CAWEE presented on research conducted and how women are significantly missing out from a huge opportunity in public procurement due lack of access to digital platforms and indecent requests for women in exchange for an opportunity in a male dominated network. There was also a presentation from WISE, based on a study conducted by Genet Ejeta on WEE inverse relationship with GBV in the case of WISE supported SACCOs. The last agenda for day one was sharing of experience on regional cascading of the forum by Addis Ababa BOWCA as they were the only ones who took the necessary actions and other regions were again encouraged to do the same.



## Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB)

The main agenda for discussion on day two was GRB. After the presentations by Jemal Ahmed (PSI) and Azeb Kelemework (UEWCA) on the status of GRB application in Ethiopia and practical steps taken for strengthened application, a panel discussion was held where panelists from Ministry of Finance (MoF), Ministry of Agriculture (MoA), MOWSA, And Organization for Development of Women and Children (ODWaCE) were represented. Based on the guiding questions, they spoke on major achievements, challenges and the way forward for GRB. During the panel, efforts so far towards instrumentalizing of GRB since its adoption in Ethiopia thirteen years ago were discussed. MOA as a champion of the year in implementation of GRB and in conducting due gender analysis before doing the budgets was highlighted as best practice that should be adopted by all sector Ministries. The other highlight was the progress made by the MOF in developing a toolkit that would soon be endorsed.

All panelists agreed that as a way forward it would be important to strengthen collaborative efforts to work on capacity building of actors; enhance accountability towards using GRB as a tool towards an inclusive development and gender equality. Following that, there were presentations by CBE, BoA, Vision Microfinance on the special packages and arrangements that they have availed for better convenience to women to access credit services. The final agenda was work planning where participants were organized thematically under GRB, Women Only SACCOs, public procurement subgroups to concretize on the major follow up actions.



Group picture of participants of the forum

**Email:** [comms.ethiopia@actionaid.org](mailto:comms.ethiopia@actionaid.org) or [Admin.ethiopia@actionaid.org](mailto:Admin.ethiopia@actionaid.org)

**Telephone:** +251-932-025-053 or +251-932-024-633

**Website:** [Ethiopia.actionaid.org](http://Ethiopia.actionaid.org)

**Twitter/X:** [@ActionaidE](https://twitter.com/ActionaidE)

**Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/actionaidethiopia>