



# Media Monitoring Report

*Analyzing Representation and Portrayal of Women in Selected  
News And Entertainment  
(April 2024 - November 2024)*

December 2024





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**ኅብረት ለምርጫ (CECOE)**  
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Coalition of Ethiopian Civil Society  
Organizations for Elections

Netherlands Institute for  
**Multiparty Democracy**



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## About CECOE

The Coalition of Ethiopian Civil Society Organizations for Elections (CECOE) is a coalition established in 2019 comprising 176 CSOs focused on elections, human rights, and democracy. A key goal is coordinating Ethiopian CSO efforts in election observation, monitoring, voter education, and post-electoral conflict prevention. A highlight of CECOE's work was the meticulous monitoring of media outlets during the 2021 elections through its Media Monitoring Unit (MMU). This crucial media monitoring measured electoral coverage, identified news bias, and assessed media access with additional attention to women's participation. The outcomes yielded critical insights into imbalances in the coverage and portrayal of women across print, broadcast, and social media. The coalition has published a Media Monitoring Report for the June 2021 parliamentary elections in Ethiopia<sup>2</sup>, along with voter education and media monitoring assessment reports. Overall, CECOE remains committed to promoting democratic values through election observation, media monitoring, voter education, and elevating women's voices in the political sphere.

## Executive Summary

This report provides an analysis of media coverage and portrayal of women across various Ethiopian media platforms from April 2024 to November 2024. Employing a mixed-methods approach, including quantitative and qualitative techniques, the monitoring encompassed radio, television, print, and online media. The media monitoring used content analysis to examine media messages and themes, selecting twelve diverse media Programs for detailed review.

Key findings highlight the underrepresentation of women and a lack of in-depth engagement with gender issues across media content. In radio programs “Yechewata Engida” and “Mekoya”, female representation was limited, with only one and three episodes featuring women as central figures respectively. “Mekoya” displayed a relatively stronger focus on bringing up gender issues. Overall, While women’s issues were raised in both programs, it appeared incidental rather than deliberate, with opportunities for deeper engagement often missed.

Television programs, particularly sitcoms and infotainment shows, also reflected a mixture of traditional and progressive gender portrayals. “Besintu” and “Bemehal” presented a mixture of traditional and progressive characterization and storytelling, with “Bemehal” leaning towards a more progressive portrayal. “Ke Sera Behuala” and “Bale Tedaroch” discussed gender-based violence, gender roles and marital relationships among others. Overall, “Baletedaroch” strongly leans towards presenting traditional views on gender roles and marriage, emphasizing male leadership and female submission. “Ke Sera Behuala” had important and timely discussions on social issues but overall remained rooted in traditional views.

Print and online media showed similar patterns of underrepresentation. Women appeared in only 21% of print media articles, mainly in political and leadership contexts, and 10-12% of articles in online outlets mentioned women. Key themes on online media included gender-based violence, women in leadership, and occasional expert contributions, though coverage lacked depth and consistency.

To address the findings, the report proposes several recommendations. First, there should be increased and diversified coverage of women in various roles across all media platforms. Positive and empowering portrayals of women, especially in non-traditional roles, should be promoted to challenge existing stereotypes. Additionally, media creators should focus on depicting complex female characters, promoting gender equality, and encouraging progressive discussions on gender issues. Engaging women’s rights defenders, Afro-feminists, and other advocates as contributors and providing gender-sensitivity training for writers and producers will be crucial in fostering more inclusive, balanced, and transformative storytelling.

In conclusion, while progress has been made in addressing gender issues in Ethiopian media, substantial improvements are needed. By implementing these recommendations, media outlets can contribute to the promotion of gender equality and help shape more equitable societal norms. It is incumbent upon media creators to not only improve but excel in inclusive and transformative storytelling across all platforms.

## Background

In recent years, Ethiopia has made progress in advancing women's political presence such as appointing women as half of the cabinet ministers and the President in 2018. However, women still face significant challenges and barriers in accessing and influencing positions of power and decision-making at different levels of government such as legal discrimination, socio-economic inequalities, cultural stereotypes, violence and harassment, and lack of support and resources.<sup>1</sup> The media wields considerable influence in molding public opinion, operating in various ways, particularly within the realm of women's empowerment.<sup>2</sup> Through the dissemination of information, education, and entertainment, the media sets the agenda for public discourse. Thus media can either facilitate or hinder women's societal and political empowerment, depending on how it covers and portrays women in both social and political spheres. Key Factors include the portrayal of their visibility, credibility, diversity, achievements, challenges, and opinions. Problematic media portrayals that reinforce gender stereotypes in society can influence public perceptions of women as political actors. It is important to analyze media representations of women across social and political contexts to identify systemic biases.

That being said, the media is not neutral or objective but rather a reflection and reproduction of the existing power structures and relations in society, which are often biased against women and marginalized groups.<sup>3</sup> To improve media practices on women's political participation and overall positive representation, it is essential to monitor and analyze the media's coverage and portrayal of women. This will help identify gaps, biases, and challenges that women face in the media sphere and provide evidence-based insights and recommendations. From August 2023 to March 2024, CECOIE conducted an eight-month media monitoring initiative, focusing on news programs and articles across online, broadcast, and print platforms.

The assessment revealed consistent underrepresentation of women, limited diversity among women portrayed, and a predominantly neutral tone of coverage, with some exceptions. While these findings provided critical insights, they also highlighted the need for a more expansive approach to media monitoring.

As a result, the scope of the analysis was adjusted to include sitcoms and infotainment programs. This shift was necessary to capture a broader spectrum of media content that influences societal norms and cultural narratives, particularly those impacting perceptions of gender roles. Sitcoms and infotainment programs often reach diverse audiences and have a subtler but significant role in shaping public attitudes toward women. By analyzing these formats, CECOIE aims to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how media can both reflect and challenge societal biases against women, and ultimately drive advocacy for gender-sensitive media practices.

This monitoring exercise serves to:

- *Evaluate the extent and tone of media coverage of women.*
- *Assess the diversity of women portrayed and overall representation.*
- *Assess the overall portrayal of women in popular media programs*
- *Identify biases and stereotypes*

Through this analysis, CECOIE seeks to inform advocacy efforts with media regulators and platforms, promoting policies and guidelines that foster gender-sensitive coverage and amplify women's voices in public discourse.

<sup>1</sup> Enguday Alemayehu. (2018). Gender in Ethiopian media landscape: A baseline study. Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung. <https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/aethiopia-en/14793.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Santos, Í., Carvalho, L. M., & Portugal e Melo, B. (2022). The media's role in shaping the public opinion on education: A thematic and frame analysis of externalisation to world situations in the Portuguese media. *Research in Comparative and International Education*, 17(1), 29-50. <https://doi.org/10.1177/17454999211057753>

<sup>3</sup> Haraldsson, A., & Wängnerud, L. (2019). The effect of media sexism on women's political ambition: Evidence from a worldwide study. *Feminist Media Studies*, 19(4), 525-541. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2018.1468797>

## Legal Framework

### Media Proclamation No. 1238/2021

In this proclamation, the definition of “information diversity” specifically encompasses the concept of gender inclusion.<sup>4</sup> It emphasizes that achieving diversity in information isn’t just about presenting a variety of perspectives or topics but also ensuring that gender representation is both balanced and proportional. Public service broadcasting licensees are also obliged to provide news and programs that reflect the country’s gender diversity. Additionally, they are obliged to provide specialized programs for women.<sup>5</sup> The proclamation requires community service broadcasting license holders to specifically address and cater to the gender-related needs and concerns of the community.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, it prohibits its language and content that contributes to gender hostility and violence on online media.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, it explicitly prohibits the production, publication, and dissemination of content that encourages child grooming and cyberbullying.<sup>8</sup> The proclamation prohibits content that fosters hate or contempt based on gender.<sup>9</sup> To promote gender equality in politics, the media authority is obligated to distribute airtime fairly among all political parties during elections. The amount of airtime allocated to each party is proportional to the number of female candidates they have fielded.<sup>10</sup>

### Hate Speech and Disinformation Prevention and Suppression Proclamation No 1185/2020

The proclamation prohibits hate speech, which is defined as any language that intentionally targets individuals based on their identity, such as gender, and seeks to incite hatred, discrimination, or violence against them.<sup>11</sup> The proclamation also prohibits discrimination, which is defined as any act that targets individuals based on their gender or other protected characteristics and seeks to harm or exclude them.<sup>12</sup>

on their gender or other protected characteristics and seeks to harm or exclude them. This proclamation seeks to establish standards that prohibit individuals from using language that targets others based on their gender and promotes hatred or discrimination against them.<sup>13</sup>

### Mass Media Policy

The mass media policy mandates that administrative assignments and employment in the media sector reflect gender diversity. To ensure universal access, media services must be provided equitably and justly to all members of society. Community, commercial, public, and print media outlets should strive to meet the needs of the Ethiopian people while prioritizing marginalized groups through specialized programming tailored to their unique requirements. The government is committed to supporting these initiatives to ensure that all Ethiopians have access to diverse and inclusive media content.<sup>14</sup>

4 Media Proclamation, Proclamation No 1238/2012, Fed. Negarit Gazeta 27th Year No. 22, Addis Ababa, 5 April 2021. Art. 1 Sub. 35  
5 Ibid Art. 56 Sub. 1(a and m)  
6 Ibid Art. 59 Sub. 1(g)  
7 Ibid Art. 61 Sub. 1  
8 Ibid Art. 61 Sub. 6  
9 Ibid Art. 68 Sub. 2(e)  
10 Ibid Art. 71 Sub. 4(c)  
11 Ibid Art. 2 Sub. 2  
12 Ibid Art. 2 Sub. 5

13 Hate Speech and Disinformation Prevention and Suppression Proclamation , Proclamation No 1185/2020, Fed. Negarit Gazeta 26th Year No. 26, Addis Ababa, 23 March 2020. Art. 3 Sub. 1  
14 Federal democratic republic of ethiopian mass media policy

## Methodology

This media monitoring utilizes both qualitative and quantitative methodologies to examine the coverage and portrayal of women and women's issues. Content analysis serves as the primary framework for this evaluation.

## Sampled Media Platforms

The media monitoring team used a purposive sampling method to select media platforms based on two primary criteria: popularity and accessibility. Popularity was determined by viewership and listenership, while accessibility referred to the ease of obtaining content across different platforms.

The media monitoring includes a selection of ten media outlets, covering both state-owned and privately-owned media:

- *Television Stations: EBC, EBS, and Kana*
- *Radio Stations: Sheger 102.1*
- *Print Media: The Reporter, The Reporter Amharic, and Fortune.*
- *Online News Platforms: Wazema Radio, Addis Standard, and Ethiopian Insider*

This selection ensures a diverse representation of media types and ownership structures. According to Statista<sup>15</sup>, EBC, EBS, and Kana are among the top three most-watched television stations in Ethiopia. Sheger FM is a popular radio station with high listenership. Online platforms like Addis Standard and Ethiopian Insider feature in the top 20 news websites, as per AllaboutEthio's metrics.<sup>16</sup> The selected media outlets also provide readily accessible content across multiple platforms. The inclusion of both television and radio ensures coverage of urban and rural demographics, as radio remains a crucial medium for reaching rural areas where the majority of Ethiopians live.<sup>17</sup>

The data collection process primarily focuses on sitcoms and Infotainment programs, as well as news articles published in print and online media.

## Data Collection and Analysis

For sitcoms and infotainment programs, the following steps were taken:

1. **Transcription:** Key dialogues and statements from each episode were transcribed to ensure all relevant details were documented.

2. **Thematic Analysis:** Recurring themes related to gender were identified and examined. The analysis focused on patterns in content, including the representation of gender roles, reinforcement or challenge of stereotypes, and the portrayal of progressive views on gender equality.

By employing content analysis, we were able to delve deeply into the substance of the episodes, moving beyond surface-level observations.

For news articles, a structured codebook was developed to guide the analysis, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative indicators. Data was collected using Google Forms and Excel sheets for entry and storage.

## Quantitative Analysis

Key quantitative indicators included:

- *Coverage of Women: Measuring the frequency of women-focused content.*
- *Diversity of Coverage: Assessing the scope of topics related to women.*
- *Tone of Coverage: Evaluating whether the tone was positive, negative, or neutral.*

## Qualitative Analysis

Key qualitative indicators included:

- *Gender roles and Stereotypes: Examining whether traditional gender norms were reinforced or challenged.*
- *Problematic Portrayals: Highlighting instances of bias or misrepresentation.*
- *Missed Opportunities: Noting instances where meaningful representation or coverage of women could have been included but was absent.*
- *Positive Portrayals: Recognizing constructive and empowering representations of women.*

<sup>15</sup> Statista. "Ethiopia: TV stations audience share." Statista. Accessed August 15, 2023

<sup>16</sup> All About Ethiopia. (n.d.). 20 of the Best Ethiopian News Websites. Retrieved from <https://allaboutethio.com/20-best-ethiopian-news-websites.html>

<sup>17</sup> BBC News. (2011, May 6). Ethiopia profile. Retrieved from BBC News

## Background of Monitored Media Outlets

### Radio

SHEGER 102.1 FM is a popular radio station based in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, renowned for its dynamic programming and wide-reaching influence. The station plays a pivotal role in shaping the media landscape by offering a mix of entertainment, news, and cultural programming tailored to the tastes of its diverse audience. SHEGER 102.1 is known for its vibrant content that resonates with young and middle-aged listeners, blending music, talk shows, and live interviews with influential personalities from various sectors.

With a focus on both local and international issues, SHEGER 102.1 covers a broad range of topics, including politics, social issues, music, lifestyle, and entertainment. Through its engaging shows, SHEGER 102.1 fosters a sense of community by encouraging listener participation and providing a space for public discourse.

### Television

The Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation (EBC) TV has a long history tracing back to its 1962 launch with British assistance. After reorganizing in 1991 into a more independent broadcaster, EBC TV continues informing and entertaining viewers.

The Ethiopian Broadcasting Service (EBS TV) is a television network based in Ethiopia. Established in 2008. The network broadcasts primarily in Amharic and features a range of entertainment content, including talk shows, game shows, movies, and dramas.<sup>18</sup> The channel aims to promote Ethiopian and African values, cultures, and traditions globally.<sup>19</sup>

Meanwhile, Kana TV has quickly risen to become Ethiopia's most popular satellite channel since starting in 2016. Owned by Moby Group, Kana TV is acclaimed for its voice-over translated foreign programs and Turkish serial dramas. Its diverse and compelling programs further drive Kana TV's growing audience engagement.

### Web-based Online Media

Wazema Radio is an independent media outlet founded by Ethiopian exiled journalists in 2014. Initially based outside Ethiopia, it has since established a presence in Addis Ababa. Wazema focuses on current affairs, politics, and social issues.

The platform offers news updates through its website and social media channels.

Wazema Radio is known for its critical and investigative journalism, focusing on current affairs, politics, and social issues. The platform offers daily news updates, special briefings, and in-depth discussions through its website, social media channels, and podcasts.

Addis Standard is a well-regarded independent media outlet based in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Established in 2011 by Tsedale Lemma, it publishes content in English, Afaan Oromoo, and Amharic, catering to a diverse audience. The platform is known for its comprehensive coverage of politics, social issues, economics, and culture, providing in-depth analysis and investigative journalism. Despite facing challenges, including a temporary suspension by Ethiopia's media regulator in 2021, the outlet continues to be a critical voice in Ethiopian media, offering insightful perspectives on national and regional issues.

Ethiopian Insider is another influential online media outlet founded by Tesfalem Waldyes. It focuses on delivering news, analysis, and features on various topics relevant to Ethiopia and the surrounding region. The platform provides breaking news, in-depth analysis, and features on politics, social issues, and entertainment.

### Newspaper

The reporter is a private newspaper founded in 1955 and published in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. It appears in both English and Amharic, and is owned by the Media and Communications Center.<sup>20</sup>

Reporter English is a prominent English-language newspaper in Ethiopia, known for its comprehensive coverage of national and international news. It provides in-depth analysis and reports on various topics, including politics, economics, social issues, and culture. The newspaper caters to the English-speaking population in Ethiopia.<sup>21</sup>

Reporter Amharic is the Amharic-language counterpart of Reporter English, serving a broader Ethiopian audience. It covers a wide range of topics, including local news, politics, business, and entertainment. Reporter Amharic is known for its detailed reporting and insightful commentary on issues affecting Ethiopia.

Fortune, a prominent English-language weekly newspaper based in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, plays a pivotal role in shaping Ethiopia's business landscape.

<sup>18</sup> "EBS TV (Ethiopia)," Wikipedia, accessed January 2, 2024

<sup>19</sup> Smith, J. (2024). Breaking the Glass Ceiling: The EBS TV Story. Her Campus. Retrieved from <https://www.hercampus.com/school/vcu/breaking-glass-ceiling-ebs-tv-story/?form=MG0AV3>

<sup>20</sup> Wikipedia. (2024, October 24). The Reporter. In Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia. Retrieved from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Reporter\\_\(Ethiopia\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Reporter_(Ethiopia))

<sup>21</sup> The Reporter Ethiopia," n.d., <https://www.thereporterethiopia.com/about-the-reporter-ethiopia-news/>

Established as an independent publication, Fortune has consistently provided insightful analysis, breaking news, and in-depth features on the country’s economic, political, and social developments.<sup>22</sup> Its dedicated team of journalists delves into the intricacies of Ethiopia’s evolving business environment, covering sectors such as finance, technology, agriculture, and infrastructure. The magazine is committed to journalistic integrity and aims to foster informed public discourse in Ethiopia.<sup>23</sup>

Findings

Over the eight months, the following programs were monitored in the following platforms:

| Media        | Stations/Platforms                             | Program/Articles Monitored | Focus                                                                           |
|--------------|------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Radio        | Sheger FM 102                                  | 63 programs                | “Yechewata Engida” and “Mekoya”                                                 |
| Television   | EBC, EBS TV and Kana                           | 99 programs                | Besintu (EBS) Baletedarochu (EBS), Bemehal (EBC), and Ke Sera Behuala (Kana TV) |
| Print Media  | The Reporter (Amharic & English) and Fortune   | 849 Articles               | News articles in print media                                                    |
| Online Media | Ethiopia Insider, Wazema Radio, Addis Standard | 498 Articles               | Online news articles                                                            |

Table 1: Summary of Media Platforms and Content Monitored

Radio Programs

This report provides an in-depth analysis of two prominent radio programs aired on Sheger 102.1 FM—Yechewata Engida and Mekoya. The evaluation focuses on how these programs represent women and engage with gender-related issues, drawing insights from the monitored episodes. “Yechewata Engida” is a popular radio show known for its engaging interviews with notable personalities. Hosted by Meaza Birru, the weekly show captivates audiences with in-depth conversations on various topics.

“Mekoya” is a popular radio show that explores the biographies and experiences of famous people in politics, science, sports, art and other fields, as well as current global issues. Hosted by Eshete Assefa the show is known for its engaging narrations of notable personalities.

Women’s Representation

Yechewata Engida

Throughout the monitoring period, which covered 33 episodes of Yechewata Engida, only one episode featured a female guest. This was the November 23 episode, which showcased Dr. Yemiserach Hailemichel. During this interview, Dr. Hailemichel shared her entire life story, from her childhood to the present. While women were occasionally mentioned in various contexts—often related to the central guest or when discussing issues relevant to women—these mentions were not the primary focus of the interviews and were typically brief. For example, in May’s episode, Tekle Desta briefly referenced historical gender disparities in land ownership, providing context for societal changes over time. Similarly, some male guests praised women in their personal lives, but these references lacked depth and did not lead to substantive discussions about gender dynamics.

Mekoya

Mekoya demonstrated a relatively better representation. While the majority of episodes centered on male figures and narratives, there were exceptions where women’s stories took precedence. Out of the 30 episodes reviewed, only three featured women as central focus:

22 Wikipedia. (2024, October 24). Addis Fortune. In Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia. Retrieved from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Addis\\_Fortune?form=MG0AV3](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Addis_Fortune?form=MG0AV3)  
23 Addis Fortune. (n.d.). Addis Fortune. Retrieved November 26, 2024, from <https://addisfortune.news/?form=MG0AV3>

- **May 9:** The story of a woman whose name and story was in the scriptures, Ester was covered. The story highlighted her courage, faith, and how she used her beauty and position to protect her community.
- **November 9 & 16:** Helena Citronová's story as a Holocaust survivor highlighted her complex relationship with her Auschwitz captor, offering a perspective on resilience and survival under extreme circumstances.
- **November 25:** Dr. Ruja Ignatova's rise and fall as the founder of OneCoin shed light on her controversial leadership and personal resilience.

Other episodes touched on women's issues as secondary narratives, such as:

- **June 3:** Mahsa Amini's tragic death and the ensuing protests in Iran.
- **June 24:** The sexual violence against Rohingya women during the Myanmar genocide.
- **June 12:** Coercion of women into marriage by Jean-Bédél Bokassa.
- **July 1:** Kenya's tax on women's hygiene products, emphasizing its disproportionate impact on women.

## Engagement with Gender Issues

Gender issues were addressed more explicitly in Mekoya compared to Yechewata Engida, yet both programs fell short of consistently integrating these themes into their content.

### Yechewata Engida

The monitored programs demonstrated a limited engagement with gender issues. While there were occasional references to gender-related topics, these were not extensively explored. Notable mentions include:

- **May's episode:** Tekle Desta's interview included a reference to historical gender disparities in land ownership, highlighting a familial situation where women were restricted to working on land rather than owning it. This acknowledgment of gender inequalities in property rights was a positive note as it shows the progress made in gender equality over time, providing context for how societal norms have evolved.
- **November 23:** During an interview with Dr. Yemeserach Hailemeskel she shared her struggles balancing a medical career and caregiving roles, societal expectations for women as primary caregivers, and the need for self-care. She also criticized cultural norms that oppress women and narrated examples of unequal dynamics in married couples during consultations.

- **November 16:** During the interview with Colonel Yonas Hailemikaël he discussed his work as a human rights defender and highlighted gender discrimination as a significant issue, along with race and religion.
- **November 9:** Interview with Ato Worku Habtemariam. Discussed his experience with equality in Canada and rejected the idea of "men's jobs" versus "women's jobs." He shared how he adapted to domestic roles, including changing diapers and washing clothes, which he hadn't done in Ethiopia.

### Mekoya

The monitored program briefly addressed women's issues within broader discussions on politics, history, and societal events. In some instances, women's experiences were highlighted in the context of global and regional issues, including legal restrictions, gender-based violence, and social norms.

- **June 3:** An exploration of Iran's modesty laws and systemic oppression of women following Mahsa Amini's death. This episode positioned women not merely as victims but as active agents driving change in their societies.
- **June 24:** A detailed account of sexual violence against Rohingya women.
- **July 1:** Discussion of Kenya's tax on women's hygiene products, highlighting its implications for gender equality.
- **July 14:** Brief mention of Thomas Sankara's progressive policies on women's rights.
- **June 13:** Analysis of unusual global laws with gendered implications, such as Bolivia's restrictions on married women drinking wine.

While these discussions provided valuable insights, they were often limited to specific episodes and lacked integration across the series.

### Missed Opportunities

Both programs missed opportunities to integrate gender perspectives into broader narratives, which could have enriched their discussions and provided more inclusive storytelling.

### Yechewata Engida

- **April's episode:** Dr. Asmamaw Kelemu's discussion on intelligence and diplomacy could have included insights into women's experiences and gender imbalances in these fields.
- **May's episode:** Tekle Desta's mention of addressing women's issues in his book could have been expanded to explore these topics in greater detail.

## Mekoya

- **April 15:** Rwandan Genocide Although widespread sexual violence was a prominent aspect of the conflict, this was not emphasized in the discussion, missing an opportunity to highlight the gendered impacts of the war and genocide, especially the violence faced by women.
- **April 28:** Pope Shenouda III of Alexandria the coverage mentioned his efforts to improve women's rights within the church. However, the discussion did not delve into the specifics of these advancements, missing an opportunity to explore gender equality within the religious context.
- **June 12:** Bokassa's coercion of women could have been contextualized within systemic gender-based violence in political regimes.
- **July 24:** The episode on Lee Kuan Yew could have examined women's roles in Singapore's transformation.
- **August 17:** Sergei Aleshkov's story could have highlighted the impact of war on women and families.

## Television Programs

Television programs are pivotal in shaping public perception and addressing societal issues through accessible and engaging mediums.<sup>24</sup> Sitcoms, with their light-hearted narratives and relatable characters, often reflect everyday life while subtly weaving in commentary on social, cultural, and economic matters. Similarly, Infotainment programs blend information with entertainment, providing viewers with valuable insights while maintaining an engaging format. These genres are particularly important in the context of how they portray gender dynamics, as they influence societal attitudes and norms.

To evaluate this impact, the findings from the media monitoring report are presented in two sections. The first examines sitcoms, and the second focuses on infotainment programs, with a particular emphasis on assessing the coverage of women and women's issues in these formats.

### Findings on Television Sitcoms

"Besintu" is a popular Ethiopian TV show airing on the EBS channel, averaging 500,000 viewers. The show revolves around Besintu and his family and friends. The sitcom series blends entertainment with subtle themes on socio-economic issues.

"Bemehal" is a popular Ethiopian TV show airing on the EBC channel, averaging 60,000 viewers. The show is known for its engaging storylines on friendship, family, marriage, social issues and more. The story mainly revolves around a group of friends and their lives.

### 1. Characterization

**Besintu (EBS):** The series portrays its female characters with limited complexity. The characters may lack exploration and are rarely depicted beyond their roles as wives or mothers. Among the central figures are Hirut, the wife of the main character Besintu, and Meaza, Hirut's mother. While other female characters appear in the narrative, these two are the central to the storyline. However, their characterization lacks exploration. For instance, Hirut is introduced as an architect, a detail that could add depth to her character, this aspect of her character is not prominently featured in the monitored episodes. While this may be due to the show's primary focus on the main character Besintu, adding these details could not only add layers to her character but also present a more nuanced portrayal of women in the workforce.

Throughout the series, women are mainly seen in domestic roles, such as cooking or serving meals, even though these roles are not explicitly emphasized. As the 'comedic relief' character, Besintu often assumes the role of a carefree and immature husband, relying on Hirut to manage household responsibilities. The show occasionally addresses these dynamics by showing Hirut confronting Besintu about his lack of responsibility at home. In this context, Hirut is portrayed as assertive and tackles the issues she perceives with Besintu directly.

Hirut does occasionally step outside traditional roles, with references to her career (e.g., in the August episodes). She is mostly portrayed as level-headed and mature, balancing both personal and professional responsibilities. Her independence is highlighted in key moments, such as when she campaigns against Besintu (July 11 episode) and confronts his behavior (November 21 episode). Although Hirut sometimes defers to Besintu's decisions, her assertiveness in critical situations underlines her resistance to passivity. Conversely, Besintu often appears emotionally and practically dependent on Hirut.

**Bemehal (EBC):** Bemehal distinguishes itself through the depiction of complex female characters who appear beyond traditional roles. The series features three primary female characters Hareg, a successful actress; Chuchu, an academic researcher; and Aster, an aspiring actress. These characters are not defined solely by their relationships to men but are presented as independent individuals with personal aspirations.

<sup>24</sup> Ward, L. M., & Grower, P. (2020). Media and the development of gender role stereotypes. *Annual Review of Developmental Psychology*, 2(1), 177-199. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-devpsych-051120-010630>

The inclusion of emotionally expressive male characters further enriches the narrative. The narrative particularly excels in portraying women as autonomous decision-makers. For instance, Aster's storyline provides a compelling example of female agency, as she navigates motherhood and relationships on her own terms. In an episode from July, she questions whether having a child with Teddy necessitates marriage, challenging his readiness to be a husband and father. In addition Aster's decision to work as a housekeeper to pursue her dream of becoming an actress shows how ambitious her character is. This ambition is further illustrated in another episode where, despite being a new mother, Aster commits herself to a demanding theatrical project. Similarly, Hareg is characterized as an accomplished actress and defies certain gender norms, as seen when she chooses to play the king in Macbeth (July 22 episode) instead of the female role of Lady Macbeth. This idea was encouraged by a male character on the show, which indicates the show's commitment to portraying progressive views.

## 2. Stereotyping

**Besintu (EBS):** The series mostly avoids overtly stereotypical portrayals, although some patterns are evident. The women are not portrayed as irrational or overly emotional. While at times Hirut may appear emotionally erratic; her responses are mostly justified. For instance, her frustration with Besintu's immaturity or his decisions impacting their family is portrayed with a sense of measured composure. In contrast, Besintu's frequent overreactions, such as his response to Hirut questioning his leadership (July 11 episode), present him as a more charged character, subverting traditional gender stereotypes.

Hirut often embodies a nurturing role, managing household tasks and supporting Besintu. Even during pregnancy, her caring demeanor is central to her characterization. While she occasionally conforms to traditional expectations, such as tolerating Besintu's antics, her assertiveness is evident in several episodes (e.g., July 11).

**Bemehal (EBC):** The series occasionally reverses stereotypes by portraying male characters in roles typically associated with women. For instance, one episode features a male character as an opportunist targeting wealthy women for personal gain, challenging the stereotypical "gold digger" trope often attributed to women. In addition, some episodes depict male characters experiencing emotional crises and crying (e.g., April episodes). This challenges the notions of toxic masculinity where men are discouraged from crying as it is associated with femininity and weakness.

## 3. Gender Roles

**Besintu (EBS):** The series navigates traditional and progressive gender roles, though the portrayal often leans towards restrictive roles. Male characters frequently exemplify traditional roles, such as when a male character remarks that no meal was prepared because "the women" were absent (August 15 episode). This statement reinforces the stereotype that cooking is exclusively a woman's responsibility. A more gender-sensitive approach could have replaced "women" with "the cook" or "housemaid."

Episode 37 highlights the tension between traditional and progressive norms. Hirut challenges gender roles by asking Besintu to prepare a traditional coffee ceremony, a task typically assigned to women. Besintu's resistance, coupled with his list of "manly" tasks, reinforces traditional stereotypes. However, Hirut's admission that she finds him performing the task unappealing suggests a nuanced internalization of these norms.

The series also explores shifting norms, as seen in the September 12 episode, where Besintu organizes a baby shower, traditionally perceived as a woman's role. This act challenges restrictive gender roles, a point explicitly addressed through dialogue in the episode.

**Bemehal (EBC):** This series largely avoids restrictive gender roles. Male characters are frequently shown engaging in traditionally feminine tasks, such as cooking and cleaning. However, some problematic phrases undermine this progress. For instance, in Episode 13, male characters cooking for themselves reaffirm stereotypes through remarks like "ወንድ ወንድ የሚል ምግብ" ("a meal obviously made by a man") and comments implying that women would prepare food better.

## Findings on Infotainment Programs

"Ke Sera Behuala" on Kana Television is a talk show that serves as a platform for engaging discussions on various social issues. Blending casual and entertaining conversations with thought-provoking commentary, the show alternates between episodes featuring guest speakers and those focused on dialogue among the core hosts.

"Baletedarochu" on EBS is a popular show hosted by Mekdes Debesay. It features married couples who share their stories and experiences about their marriages. The program is both engaging and educational, offering insights while also being entertaining. It often highlights couples who have been married for many years.

## 1. “Ke Sera Behuala” (KANA)

The analysis focuses on how women and women’s issues are addressed, the reinforcement or challenging of gender stereotypes, and the inclusion of gender-sensitive discussions. The findings are based on the show’s handling of gender dynamics, with specific episodes cited as examples.

- **Representation of Women’s Issues:** The August 23 and 31 episodes addressed significant societal issues affecting women, including gender-based violence (GBV), systemic oppression, and societal expectations. These episodes highlighted the tragic case of a 7-year-old girl who was raped and killed. The episode effectively dismantled several misconceptions about Ethiopian culture related to GBV.
- **Historical Context:** The discussion provided historical context on gender-based violence in Ethiopia, addressing long-standing issues such as child marriage and female genital mutilation (FGM). This helped to highlight the systemic nature of GBV and the need for comprehensive solutions.
- **Cultural Beliefs:** Traditional beliefs that perpetuate gender inequality were challenged, emphasizing the importance of cultural evolution and the rejection of harmful practices that discriminate against women.

The episode also confronted certain misconception on women empowerment groups:

- **Inclusivity and Men’s Role:** It was highlighted that men should actively participate in gender empowerment movements rather than waiting for invitations. This perspective helped to counter the stereotype that feminists exclude men from these movements.
- **Feminist Movements:** By highlighting the inclusive and collaborative nature of feminist movements, myths that feminists are antagonistic towards men or traditional values were dispelled. It’s important to note that the presence of the feminist activists in the GBV episodes of the “Kesera Behuala” program was instrumental in raising important issues affecting women, challenging rooted beliefs and promoting gender equality. By providing historical context, addressing stereotypes about feminists, and advocating for systemic solutions, the women empowerment advocate contributed to a more informed and balanced discussion on GBV and gender dynamics in Ethiopia. This highlights the importance of inclusive and gender-sensitive perspectives in media discussions to foster a more progressive society.

**Gender Roles and Stereotypes:** The program reflects a society in transition, with both traditional viewpoints and progressive ideals presented. Progressive gender roles are debated in this show, but these efforts are often overshadowed by persistent fall back on traditional views. The July 13 episode encouraged breaking down harmful notions of masculinity by normalizing men expressing emotions. Another example is a holiday episode where traditional roles were reversed—men engaged in traditionally feminine tasks, and women performed traditionally male roles.

Despite these efforts, traditional viewpoints often dominate. For instance, in the 5 May 2024 holiday episode, attempts to challenge gender roles by reversing traditional tasks ultimately reinforced stereotypes. Women’s abilities in traditionally male roles were frequently questioned or undermined by male hosts and vice versa.

Similarly, when discussing tasks like cooking, women’s skills were attributed to innate talent rather than experience, reinforcing restrictive gender norms. Men’s involvement in household tasks was framed as “helping the wife when she is tired,” implying secondary responsibility for these activities.

Discussions about gender roles often described women as “natural nurturers” and primary caretakers, while men were framed as “leaders” and “providers.” These narratives were repeated throughout the series without critically examining their impact on women’s autonomy and equality.

Episodes that explored men’s involvement in household tasks highlighted persistent beliefs about “masculine” and “feminine” behavior. While some hosts attempted to address these strict roles, they often reverted to describing domestic tasks as secondary roles for men. For example, tasks like making injera were avoided due to their perception as purely feminine.

## 2. Bale Tedaroch (EBS)

The ‘Bale te’daroch’ program provides an insightful platform for discussing marital relationships by featuring diverse couples. However, the analysis reveals recurring themes and patterns that highlight the program’s strengths and weaknesses in addressing gender dynamics and evolving societal norms.

- **Gender Roles and Expectations:** The show often reinforces traditional gender roles, with a significant emphasis on women's submission to their husbands and their primary responsibilities within the household. Despite featuring accomplished women, the conversations frequently revert to stereotypical expectations, such as cooking, cleaning, and caregiving, without equally addressing men's roles in these areas. The role of women as caretakers, submissive partners, and emotional anchors within marriages is frequently highlighted. On September 8, the discussion included wives "mothering" their husbands by checking on their well-being, reinforcing the stereotype that women should take on nurturing roles within marriage. The show often focuses on women's domestic responsibilities and sacrifice, framing these as central to marital success, while the roles of men as equal partners remain underexplored.
- **Female Submission in Marriage:** A dominant theme throughout the show is the reinforcement of patriarchal views, particularly the notion that women must submit to their husbands, while men are positioned as the authorities responsible for "loving" and "leading" their wives. Episodes from July 14 and August 11 featured women emphasizing the importance of submitting to their husbands, often justified through religious beliefs. One wife shared how she abandoned her beliefs in gender equality to embrace Biblical teachings on wives' submission. This narrative is echoed by other wives who described themselves as "obedient wives" or one who stated that while she sees herself as equal to men, she does not consider herself equal to her husband. Another wife mentioned that being obedient and always saying "yes" to her husband, even when she disagreed, was part of her definition of being a "good wife." The show rarely challenges these problematic narratives and, at times, perpetuates them. In one episode, the host asked the husband of an accomplished woman how he managed to "tame" his wife, suggesting a troubling view of marital dynamics. Although some couples shared progressive views, such as emphasizing mutual respect and shared leadership, these perspectives were not consistently highlighted or supported by the program, limiting its potential to challenge traditional gender norms.
- **Double Standards:** Episodes revealed conflicting societal expectations around women. For example, while men are celebrated as providers, women are often discouraged from prioritizing financial stability in choosing partners, emphasizing "growth together" instead.

This double standard creates a contradictory narrative that burdens women with both traditional and modern roles without acknowledging the imbalance. In addition, while there was significant emphasis on what makes a "good wife" (obedience, patience, and submission), there was little discussion about what constitutes a "good husband." The host asked multiple questions about how women should behave in marriage but didn't equally explore the responsibilities of men, further highlighting the imbalance in expectations.

- **Progressive Narratives:** Despite its predominantly traditional focus, the program occasionally introduces refreshing perspectives that challenge norms. Progressive couples provide a counterpoint to traditional narratives by emphasizing equality, shared responsibilities, and mutual respect in marriage.
- **Equal Partnership:** In the August 4 episode, a couple discussed their commitment to equality and mutual empowerment, challenging traditional gender roles. The husband emphasized his desire for a partner who could challenge him intellectually and engage in shared leadership.
- **Household Contributions:** The June 16 and September 15 episodes featured discussions on husbands contributing to household work, highlighting the need for balance in household duties and shared responsibilities.
- **Mutual Respect:** Several episodes featured couples expressing admiration and mutual respect for each other. In the June 30 and July 21 episodes husbands praised their wife's intelligence and mind. One husband praised his wife's referring to her as the 'prime minister' and 'boss' of their house. While the episodes often show mutual respect and admiration, these dynamics are frequently presented within the framework of traditional gender roles.
- **Rejecting Stereotypes:** A few discussions explicitly rejected patriarchal norms, with husbands openly supporting their wives' ambitions and dismissing societal stereotypes about controlling strong women. These moments demonstrate that alternative dynamics can thrive, offering valuable insights into evolving marital relationships.

**Problematic Narratives:** Several discussions featured problematic elements that reinforced patriarchal norms.

**Submission and Sacrifice:** Episodes where wives described submitting to their husbands or prioritizing family needs over their own aspirations were framed as virtuous and praiseworthy. These narratives often sidelined the emotional or professional toll on women.

**Host’s Line of Questioning:** The host frequently framed conversations in a way that emphasized traditional expectations, such as asking wives how they balance professional success with domestic obligations. This created an implicit bias, suggesting that such balancing acts are solely a woman’s responsibility.

**Undermining Women’s Achievements:** Even when highlighting successful women, the focus often shifted to how their achievements were “managed” within the context of marriage. This framing subtly undermined their independence and positioned their success as secondary to their marital roles.

Print Media

This report presents an analysis of women’s representation in three prominent Ethiopian newspapers: Reporter (Amharic) and Reporter (English), and Fortune, over an eight-month period.

| Platform     | Total Articles | Articles Mentioning Women |
|--------------|----------------|---------------------------|
| The Reporter | 168            | 31                        |
| Reporter     | 608            | 118                       |
| Fortune      | 73             | 34                        |

Table 2: Overview of Articles Reviewed

Coverage of Women

The overall presence of women in the three newspapers over eight months reveals that coverage remains limited and often lacks depth. Across The Reporter (English and Amharic) and Fortune, women’s issues accounted for a small proportion of the total content. Specifically, approximately 21% of all articles reviewed mentioned women. While this indicates some level of recognition, the majority of these mentions were brief and did not provide extensive or in-depth analysis. Most of the coverage consisted of passing references or occasional articles featuring women, rather than substantive exploration of women’s issues or achievements.

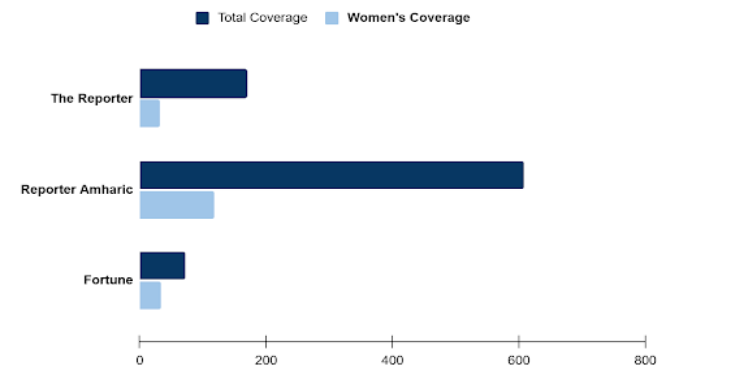


Figure 1: Overview of Article Coverage: Total vs. Women’s Issues

The analysis reveals notable variations in the coverage of women across the three publications:

- Fortune provided the highest coverage of women, with an average of 45% of its articles featuring women in their output. The highest percentage reached 56% of total coverage in August.*
- The Reporter (English) and Reporter Amharic maintained lower averages, with women featured in 15–20% of articles during the same period.*
- Reporter Amharic, with a broader pool of articles, allocated 19.41% of its coverage to women. The lowest coverage was at 8% in August.*
- In The Reporter, 18.45% of the total articles monitored mentioned women.*

Tone of Coverage

The overall tone of coverage was predominantly neutral, with no significant instances of overtly positive or negative portrayals of women.

Diversity in Representation

Overall, political and leadership topics dominate the content, while coverage of women’s issues remains consistently low, suggesting a need for more balanced representation. Other categories, such as commentary, expert contributions, and features on business, artists, and athletes, are less frequently covered, reflecting a narrower focus in these newspapers’ editorial priorities.

The roles in which women were portrayed differed across the monitored outlets:

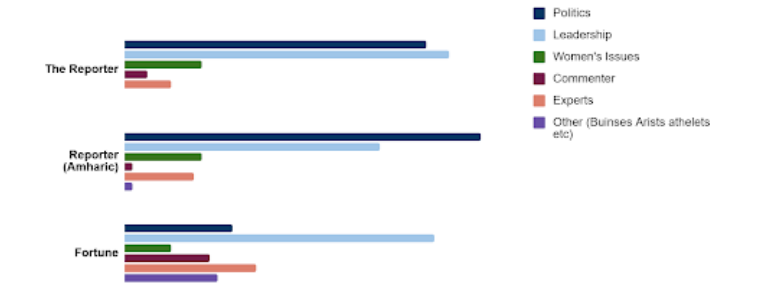


Figure 2: Diversity of coverage in the monitored newspapers

- Political Figures:** Political leaders and government officials dominated the coverage in Reporter Amharic and The Reporter (English), accounting for 70–80% of articles featuring women in these outlets. In The Reporter, politics and leadership topics account for a combined 81% of the total coverage. Reporter Amharic similarly emphasizes politics and leadership, which make up 79% of its coverage. Politics and leadership dominate fortune as well at 54%. Speeches and public appearances were the main

focus. Reporting often centered on women’s involvement in governmental initiatives.

- Women in Leadership:** Coverage of women in leadership roles beyond the political sphere showed notable diversity but varied in depth across the three newspapers. This category dominated coverage in most months, with percentages exceeding 30%-45%. In June, leadership and politics shared prominence equally (36% each). In October, Leadership roles accounted for 45% overall coverage. Fortune publications frequently featured women leaders in finance, Business, and agriculture giving them a platform as leaders in various industries. The Reporter (English) followed, but with fewer stories, and Reporter Amharic provided minimal coverage.
- Expert Contributions:** Women were moderately visible as experts in various fields, contributing to the discourse on important issues, with notable peaks in August (31%) and September (21%). Fortune had the highest representation of women experts, with 17% of its coverage falling into this category. Reporter (amharic) and Reporter (English) had a more moderate focus, with around 9% and 6% of their coverage dedicated to women experts respectively.

Web Based

This report presents the coverage of women’s issues across three Ethiopian Web news outlets—Addis Standard, Ethiopian Insider, and Wazema Radio—between April and November 2024. While there is some attention to women’s roles and issues, the depth, frequency, and thematic focus vary across the outlets.

| Platform          | Total Articles | Articles Mentioning Women |
|-------------------|----------------|---------------------------|
| Addis Standard    | 272            | 20                        |
| Ethiopian Insider | 190            | 22                        |
| Wazema Radio      | 81             | 3                         |

Table 3: Total Women’s Mentions in reviewed Articles

Coverage

The coverage of women across Addis Standard, Ethiopian Insider, and Wazema Radio highlights an underrepresentation of women and women’s issues. Addis Standard and Ethiopian Insider offer more consistent attention to women compared to Wazema Radio, but the overall inclusion remains limited. Importantly, Wazema Radio produces significantly fewer articles each month in its news segment, which partly explains its low numerical representation of women.

However, even considering its smaller output, the inclusion of women in its reporting remains low. Across all three sites, there are occasional spikes in coverage, but these are exceptions rather than the norm.

- Addis Standard:** Addis Standard demonstrates a moderate focus on women, with mentions or features appearing sporadically in its relatively higher article output each month. For example, June and October had the most significant coverage, with six and ten articles featuring women, respectively. However, there are months like May and July where women’s inclusion was negligible, with no articles explicitly focused on women in May and only one in July.
- Ethiopian Insider:** Ethiopian Insider stands out as the platform with the most consistent attention to women, relative to its monthly article output. In July and August, for example, 13 and 10 articles, respectively, featured women or women’s issues, marking its most significant contributions. The site also maintained a steady focus in months like June and October. However, like Addis Standard, the coverage fluctuated, with months such as May and November showing significantly fewer mentions of women.

**Expert Wazema Radio:** Wazema Radio produces considerably fewer articles per month in its news segment compared to Addis Standard and Ethiopian Insider, which explains its limited numerical coverage. However, even with its smaller output, the inclusion of women is disproportionately low. Months such as April, May, and October had no articles addressing women or their issues. Even during months with slightly higher coverage, like June and July, only two articles briefly mentioned women. The lack of sustained attention to women, combined with Wazema’s minimal overall output, highlights a significant gap in its reporting and a missed opportunity to contribute meaningfully to gender representation in the media.

Diversity of Coverage

Gender-Based Violence (GBV):

- Addis Standard and Ethiopian Insider covered a range of women’s issues, particularly gender-based violence and human rights violations..*
- Addis Standard highlighted alarming GBV statistics in Tigray (July).*
- Ethiopian Insider reported on cases like the murder of Heaven Awet and sexual harassment allegations (August).*
- Articles on displaced women and pregnant mothers impacted by conflict and food shortages (June).*

- Mention of women's roles in protests, such as Mekelle demonstrations against GBV (June).
- Stories of women affected by violence, displacement, or systemic neglect were often framed within broader political or social issues.
- Wazema Radio had limited coverage of women's issues, primarily focusing on brief mentions of women affected by conflict or social problems.

### Women in Leadership and politics:

- All three outlets featured women in prominent leadership positions, including government officials, business leaders, and civil society activists.
- Figures like Adanech Abebe (Addis Ababa Mayor), Rakeb Messele (Ethiopian Human Rights Commission), Firehiwot Tamiru (Ethio Telecom Director) and Sahle-Work Zewde (former President) frequently appeared.
- Ethiopian Insider emphasized women in governance, such as Selamawit Dawit and Melat Wok Haile.

### Women featured as Experts:

- Women were occasionally featured as experts in their fields, providing insights on various topics.
- Addis Standard and Ethiopian Insider were more likely to include women's expert opinions.

### Activists and Advocates:

- Women were occasionally featured as experts in their fields, providing insights on various topics.
- Addis Standard and Ethiopian Insider were more likely to include women's expert opinions.

### Activists and Advocates:

- Women like Selamawit Giday (Rise and Shine Women's Protection Center) were featured in advocacy roles.

## Summary and Recommendations

### Summary

The monitored radio programs revealed a significant underrepresentation of women as central figures or guests. Yechewata Engida only featured one female guest during the monitoring period and included minimal discussion of women's issues. While women were occasionally mentioned in various contexts often related to the central guest or when discussing issues relevant to women—these mentions were not the primary focus of the interviews and were typically brief.

Mekoya demonstrated a relatively stronger attention to addressing gender issues. While the program only aired three episodes where women were the central focus, other episodes highlighted women's experiences within the context of global and regional challenges, such as legal restrictions, gender-based violence, and social norms. Notable episodes included discussions on the Rohingya genocide and the political oppression of women in Iran, exemplified by the case of Mahsa Amini.

Despite these efforts, both programs fell short of consistently integrating gender perspectives into their narratives. Coverage of women's issues appeared incidental rather than deliberate, with opportunities for deeper engagement missing. This underscores the need for a more intentional approach to incorporating women's stories and gender issues in future programming.

The analysis of television shows - "Ke Sera Behuala," "Bemehal," "Besintu" - and "Baletedaroch" reveals a complex and evolving landscape of gender representation in the media. These programs collectively reflect a society in transition gender norms while still deeply influenced by traditional beliefs and stereotypes.

"Ke Sera Behuala" exemplifies this struggle most prominently. While it attempts to challenge traditional gender roles, it often inadvertently reinforces stereotypes through dialogue. A holiday special episode, for example, reversed traditional roles but still included restrictive and gender-specific remarks. This series highlights a society in transition, striving for progressive ideas but frequently falling back on stereotypes. This inconsistency highlights the ongoing challenges in media representation of gender issues. On a positive note, two episodes were dedicated to addressing important issues in gender issues. These episodes emphasized systemic change, including addressing child marriage, FGM, and harassment.

The speakers provided insightful commentary while promoting men's active participation in gender empowerment movements.

“Bemehal” offers a more balanced approach, focusing on individual talents and promoting images of shared responsibilities in relationships. The show portrays more complex female characters who are defined beyond their relationships to male characters or traditional roles. This portrayal suggests a more progressive stance. However, some episodes contain potentially problematic phrases, highlighting the need for careful attention to language and stereotypes.

“Besintu” strikes a middle ground, presenting a mix of traditional and progressive elements. While featuring strong female characters like Hirut, the show occasionally falls back on traditional stereotypes, particularly in its use of humor and dialogue.

The “Baletedaroch” program largely focuses on traditional gender roles and presents several problematic ideologies surrounding marriage dynamics. The interviews perpetuate gender stereotypes, such as the idea that men must “control” or “tame” women. These outdated views emphasize male dominance and female submission, framing marriage as a power imbalance rather than a partnership. A dominant theme throughout the episodes is the reinforcement of patriarchal expectations, particularly the notion that women must submit to their husbands while men hold the authority and responsibility to “love” and “lead” them. Women in the program are portrayed as obedient and sacrificing, and the presence seems to heavily evolve around the idea of the ‘good wife’ without the counterbalance of the ‘good husband’. The host does little to challenge these problematic narratives and sometimes even reinforces them.

Overall, political and leadership topics dominate the content, while coverage of women's issues remains consistently low, suggesting a need for more balanced representation. Other categories, such as commentary, expert contributions, and features on business, artists, and athletes, are less frequently covered, reflecting a narrower focus in these newspapers' editorial priorities.

In The Reporter, politics and leadership topics account for a combined 81% of the total coverage, leaving limited room for other subjects. Women's issues represent 10% of the total, with little to no coverage in other categories like women in business, arts, or athletics.

Reporter Amharic similarly emphasizes politics and leadership, which make up 79% of its coverage. Women's issues also comprise just 10%, and categories such as commentary and features on experts or other diverse topics are notably underrepresented.

Fortune demonstrates more diversity in its content. While politics and leadership still dominate at 54%, the newspaper allocates more attention to experts (17%) and women in business (12%). However, women's issues remain the least covered at only 6%, further emphasizing the overall underrepresentation of women across all three newspapers.

These trends suggest a heavy concentration on topics such as politics and leadership, with little room for a wider range of subjects or in-depth exploration of women's issues. Efforts to diversify coverage could help create a more balanced and inclusive media narrative.

## Recommendations

To address these findings and enhance the representation and portrayal of women in Ethiopian media, the following recommendations are proposed:

- **Enhance Complexity in Female Characters:** To combat the prevalent one-dimensional portrayal of female characters, shows should develop female characters with depth, autonomy, and personal ambitions that extend beyond their roles as mothers or wives.
- **Challenge Gender Stereotypes in Dialogue and Plot:** The portrayal of gender roles often falls back on traditional stereotypes, especially in terms of household responsibilities. Writers and producers should be intentional in avoiding reinforcing these stereotypes, even in humor. For instance, episodes like those in “Bemehal” that feature men cooking or doing domestic work should avoid commentary that reduces these actions to mere jokes or perpetuates stereotypes.
- **Present Gender Equality as a Partnership:** Rather than framing domestic tasks as “helping” the wife, as seen in “Ke Sera Behuala” and “baletedaroch” programs should emphasize the importance of shared responsibilities in a partnership. This includes portraying men and women as equally responsible for household duties, childcare, and other aspects of family life, shifting the narrative from women “guiding” men to both partners being actively engaged in the relationship.
- **Show different Examples of Gender Roles:** Programs should feature more examples of men and women who challenge traditional gender roles successfully and demonstrate that non-traditional roles can lead to healthier, more balanced relationships. Episodes that explore the topic of marriage should avoid framing women as submissive or overly accommodating to their husbands' demands, as seen in “Baletedarochu”.

- ***Incorporate More Progressive Discussions on Gender Equality:*** Talk shows like “Ke Sera Behuala” and “Baletedarochu” should incorporate more progressive voices and discussions that directly challenge traditional views. This could be achieved by inviting experts on gender equality and progressive relationships to provide alternative perspectives, ensuring that harmful norms are consistently questioned rather than reinforced.
- ***Incorporate Women Rights Defenders /Afro-feminists in Content Creation:*** To improve content, shows should include women’s rights defenders or Afro-feminists as hosts or in creative roles. For example, “Ke Sera Behuala” benefited greatly from featuring an Afro-feminist on August 21 and 31, addressing gender-based violence and empowering women. Including such voices ensures diverse perspectives and enriches the content.
- ***Encourage Media Training for Writers and Producers:*** To ensure more nuanced and progressive portrayals of gender roles, writers and producers should undergo training on gender sensitivity and representation. This would help them recognize and avoid subtle reinforcements of gender stereotypes in their scripts and allow for more informed and intentional storytelling.

By implementing these recommendations, television programs can contribute to a more equitable and nuanced representation of gender roles, helping to shift societal perceptions and promote more balanced, healthy relationships in both media and real life.

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In April 2024, CECOE launched the second phase of the media monitoring initiative, 63 radio programs, 99 television programs, 849 print articles, and 498 web-based articles were analyzed. From interviews to sitcoms and entertainment content, the goal was clear: to capture how women are portrayed and how gender issues are addressed in the media.

Key findings reveal both persistent gaps and moments of progress. The findings underscore the continued underrepresentation of women and limited engagement with gender issues in the monitored radio programs. “Yechewata Engida” and “Mekoya,” showed limited female representation, with only one and three episodes respectively featuring women as central figures. “Mekoya” did, however, touch on gender issues more frequently.

Television shows, including sitcoms and infotainment programs, displayed a mix of traditional and progressive gender portrayals. While “Bemehal” leaned towards progressive storytelling, “Ke Sera Behuala” and “Bale Tedaroch” often reinforced traditional gender roles.

In print and online media, women appeared in only 21% of print articles and 10-12% of online content, usually in political and leadership contexts.

Progress is already visible but now is the time to build on the momentum.CECOE calls on media creators to not only reflect but lead. By engaging women’s rights defenders, and advocates as contributors, and by equipping writers and producers with gender-sensitivity training, we can foster storytelling that reflects the full richness of women’s experiences.

Join CECOE in this crucial journey to ensure that women’s stories are told and celebrated, enriching every corner of our media with the vibrant and varied experiences of women.



**ኅብረት ለምርጫ (CECOE)**  
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