



**Australian Government**  
**Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade**



# **DFAT COUNTRY INFORMATION REPORT ETHIOPIA**

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## ACRONYMS

|       |   |
|-------|---|
| ATP   | Anti-Terrorism Proclamation 2009                                  |
| CSO   | Civil Society Organisations                                       |
| EHRC  | Ethiopian Human Rights Commission                                 |
| ENDF  | Ethiopian National Defence Force                                  |
| EPRDF | Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front                 |
| FGM   | female genital mutilation   |
| HoF   | House of the Federation (upper house of Parliament)               |
| HoPR  | House of the People's Representatives (lower house of Parliament) |
| NISS  | National Intelligence and Security Service                        |
| OFC   | Oromo Federalist Congress   |
| OLF   | Oromo Liberation Front  |
| ONLF  | Ogaden National Liberation Front                                  |
| TPLF  | Tigray People's Liberation Front                                  |

# 1. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

1.1 This Country Information Report has been prepared by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) for protection status determination purposes only. It provides DFAT's best judgement and assessment at time of writing and is distinct from Australian government policy with respect to Ethiopia.

1.2 The report provides a general, rather than an exhaustive country overview. It has been prepared with regard to the current caseload for decision-makers in Australia without reference to individual applications for protection visas. The report does not contain policy guidance for decision-makers.

1.3 Ministerial Direction Number 56 of 21 June 2013 under s 499 of the Migration Act 1958 states that:

Where the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade has prepared a country information assessment expressly for protection status determination processes, and that assessment is available to the decision maker, the decision maker must take into account that assessment, where relevant, in making their decision. The decision maker is not precluded from considering other relevant information about the country.

1.4 This report is based on DFAT's on-the-ground knowledge and discussions with a range of sources in Ethiopia. It takes into account relevant and credible open source reports, including those produced by Amnesty International, Freedom House, Human Rights Watch, International Monetary Fund, International Organisation for Migration, Reporters without Borders, Transparency International, UK Home Office, UN Development Programme, UN High Commissioner for Refugees, UNICEF, US Department of State, World Health Organisation and the World Bank. Where DFAT does not refer to a specific source of a report or allegation, this may be to protect the source.

1.5 This updated Country Information Report replaces the previous DFAT report released on Ethiopia published on 1 April 2016.

## 2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

### RECENT HISTORY

2.1 Ethiopia is Africa's second most-populous country, and the most populous land-locked country in the world. A federal republic located in the Horn of Africa, it is bordered by Kenya to the south, Somalia to the south and east, Djibouti to the east, Eritrea to the north, and Sudan and South Sudan to the west. Topographically, the country is diverse; it includes the largest continuous mountain range in Africa (reaching more than 4,500 metres), as well as the Danakil depression, which is more than 100 metres below sea level. The capital city, Addis Ababa, is the third highest capital city in the world at around 2,400 metres. Modern humans are thought to have evolved in the region now known as Ethiopia, before moving to west Asia and beyond.

2.2 With the exception of a brief Italian occupation from 1936-41, Ethiopia is the only African country never to have been colonised by a European power. In 1974 the long-serving Emperor Haile Selassie was removed from power by a Marxist military junta, the Derg. After a period marred by oppression, instability, poverty and drought, the Derg were overthrown by the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF). Ethiopia's current constitution entered into force on 21 August 1995. The first multi-party democratic elections were held in May 1995. These elections were won by the EPRDF, which has remained in power ever since, having been re-elected in 2000, 2005, 2010 and 2015. In each of these elections, with the exception of 2005, the EPRDF increased its parliamentary majority. The 2015 election resulted in the EPRDF and its affiliates winning every seat in the parliament.

### DEMOGRAPHY

2.3 The UN estimates Ethiopia's population to be around 104 million people. Population growth is relatively high at around 2.5 per cent per year, but has been declining since its peak of around 3.7 per cent in 1992. There are more than 80 different ethnic groups in Ethiopia, although Oromos, Amharas, Somalis and Tigrayans make up around 75 per cent of the population. Geographically, the population is broadly divided into Christian groups in the highlands, Muslim groups in the lowlands, followers of animist religions in the south, and a mixture of these three groups in the south-west of the country. The official national language is Amharic, although there are different official working languages in regions such as Oromia, the Somali region, Tigray and Afar. English is the most widely-spoken foreign language, and is taught in all secondary schools.

2.4 Around 80 per cent of the population of Ethiopia lives in rural areas. Oromia is the largest region by population, with around 37 per cent of the total population, followed by Amhara (23 per cent), Southern Nations, Nationalities and People's Region (SNNP – 20 per cent), the Somali region (six per cent) and Tigray (six per cent). The capital, Addis Ababa, has an estimated population of around 3.6 million people in the city, and around five million people in the greater metropolitan area. It is the only city in Ethiopia with a population exceeding one million people.

## ECONOMIC OVERVIEW

2.5 Despite very high growth rates, averaging more than 10 per cent per year over the last decade, Ethiopia remains a very poor country. According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), per capita GDP in Ethiopia is around USD795, lower than all but 22 of the 190 countries for which data is available. More than a third of the population lives in extreme poverty (as measured by the World Bank's international extreme poverty line of \$1.90 per day), and around another 40 per cent of the population is clustered just above this poverty line. The largely rural population is heavily dependent on agriculture, which accounts for around 36 per cent of GDP and 85 per cent of employment. Coffee is its major export commodity (around 27 per cent of all exports) along with other agricultural products, while major imports include machinery, metals and petroleum products.

2.6 While agricultural productivity has improved since the 1980s, Ethiopia's continuing reliance on agriculture means the economy remains vulnerable to natural disasters, particularly droughts. Continuing drought since 2015 will result in an estimated 15 million people requiring food aid in 2017 and 350,000 people suffering severe acute malnutrition. DFAT assesses that food insecurity, poverty and a lack of economic opportunity are significant 'push' factors behind migration from Ethiopia.

2.7 The government retains substantial control over the Ethiopian economy. All land is owned by the state, which provides long-term leases to residents. State-owned enterprises operate in almost all industries, and have monopolies in the telecommunications and utilities sectors. Foreign ownership is prohibited in the finance sector. Telephone and internet services are expensive and of poor quality. As a result, according to the World Development Indicators there are only around 43 mobile phone subscriptions per 100 people in Ethiopia, compared with around 133 per 100 people in Australia. Only around 12 per cent of Ethiopians use the internet, compared with around 86 per cent in Australia. Approximately 25 per cent of the Ethiopian population has access to grid electricity, despite more than half the population being located geographically close to the grid. While the government's budget deficit is estimated to be only around 2-3 per cent in 2017, the stock of public and publicly-guaranteed debt is estimated to be more than 50 per cent of GDP. These debt and deficit levels mean that the government is fiscally constrained in its ability to respond to economic shocks such as drought.

2.8 The strong capacity of the government's intelligence services and its commitment to addressing corruption, including for security purposes, mean that corruption is somewhat less of a problem in Ethiopia than in many other African countries. A lower level of corruption is cited by the government as one of the reasons that terrorist groups such as al-Shabaab have been less successful at launching attacks in Ethiopia than in neighbouring countries such as Kenya. Nonetheless, corruption does occur. Ethiopia ranks 108<sup>th</sup> out of 176 countries on Transparency International's 2016 Corruption Perceptions Index, on a par with Algeria, Cote d'Ivoire, Egypt and Guyana. While there are occasional crackdowns on corruption, including against senior government figures, there is a perception by some in the community that those with connections to the government, particularly the intelligence services, can benefit from corruption with impunity.

## Health

2.9 Ethiopia's health system has undergone a significant transformation over the last two decades, including an expansion of health facilities and an increase in the number of health professionals working across the country. There have been strong improvements in some health outcomes; however, these improvements have come from a very low base. According to the World Development Indicators, the maternal mortality ratio in Ethiopia halved between 2007 and 2015, to around 353 deaths per 100,000 live births (compared with six deaths per 100,000 live births in Australia). The under-5 mortality rate has reduced from 93.8 per 1,000 live births to 59.2 per 1,000 live births over the same period (compared with a rate of

3.8 per 1,000 live births in Australia). Life expectancy at birth has increased to 64.6 years in 2015 compared with 56.3 years in 2005.

2.10 Despite these significant improvements, Ethiopia still lags on a number of important health indicators. Rates of skilled attendance at births in Ethiopia are among the lowest in the world. Malnutrition rates are high, and around 40 per cent of children under the age of five exhibit moderate or severe stunting. The continuing drought has exacerbated a significant outbreak in 2017 of Acute Watery Diarrhoea with 27,000 cases reported in the first four months of the year.

## Education

2.11 As with the health system, substantial economic growth rates have allowed the Ethiopian government to increase expenditure on education across the country over the past decade. While educational attainment has expanded across all levels, the focus has been on primary education. Primary education (typically from 7 years to 15 years of age) is officially free and compulsory. National gross enrolment rates (GERs) at the primary level are somewhat higher than the average for sub-Saharan Africa at around 100 per cent, although this masks significant discrepancies across the country. According to the Education Policy and Data Center, the Afar region has the lowest GER at around 40 per cent, whereas Gambella has the highest GER at around 132 per cent. The GER can exceed 100 per cent as it represents the total number of people—regardless of age—enrolled at a particular level of schooling as a percentage of the number of people in the age group corresponding to that level of schooling. The net enrolment rate (i.e. the proportion of primary school-aged children enrolled in primary school) is around 86 per cent, almost triple the rate in 1994. Secondary school enrolment rates have also increased, but remain well below primary school enrolment rates.

2.12 There is evidence that education outcomes are improving, albeit from a very low base. The adult literacy rate is nearly 50 per cent, compared with around 36 per cent in 2004, but literacy rates still lag behind the global average of around 86 per cent and the sub-Saharan Africa average of around 60 per cent. Female literacy, at around 40 per cent, lags still further. The youth literacy rate (for the population aged 15-24 years) is nearly 70 per cent, broadly similar to the average for sub-Saharan Africa, which reflects the recent improvements.

## Employment

2.13 Most Ethiopians live in rural areas, and approximately 85 per cent of the population is engaged in the agricultural sector, primarily subsistence agriculture. The continuing drought has had a significant impact on the wellbeing and livelihoods of the rural population and on Ethiopian food security (see [Economic Overview](#), above).

2.14 Ethiopia has a high population growth rate—around 2.4 per cent per year—and around 60 per cent of Ethiopians are under 25 years of age. Strong economic growth, particularly outside the subsistence agriculture sector, will need to continue to provide employment opportunities for the large number of people entering the workforce over the next few decades. Increasing urbanisation is also placing pressure on urban infrastructure, housing and service provision. While Ethiopia has a large, young, low-cost workforce, its land locked status reduces its international competitiveness in labour-intensive industries. A key challenge for Ethiopia is to improve opportunities for formal paid employment, particularly in urban areas and particularly for women. Women disproportionately work in the informal sector and in unpaid family work in the home or on the family farm. Employment is a significant driver of both internal migration (typically to Addis Ababa), and formal and informal external migration, particularly to Saudi Arabia where there are a

large number of Ethiopians employed as domestic workers (women) and construction workers (men). Saudi Arabia has periodically cracked down on undocumented migrant workers from Ethiopia (see [Treatment of Returnees](#) below).

## POLITICAL SYSTEM

2.15 Ethiopia's 1995 Constitution established the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia as a bicameral parliamentary federation made up of states (often referred to as regions) delineated according to 'settlement patterns, language, identity and consent of the people concerned'. The method of delineation has led to Ethiopia being described as an 'ethnic federation'. In addition to the states, the Constitution established Addis Ababa as the self-governing national capital.

2.16 The federal parliament consists of the House of the Peoples' Representatives (HoPR) and the House of the Federation (HoF). Members of the HoPR are elected by a plurality of votes within each electoral district, with a minimum of 20 seats (out of a total of up to 550) held by 'minority Nationalities and Peoples'. State Councils elect members of the HoF. The President is the head of state (a largely ceremonial role) and the Prime Minister is the head of government.

2.17 The Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) controls Ethiopian politics. After winning around 83 per cent of the vote and winning 473 of the 547 seats in the HoPR in Ethiopia's first democratic elections in 1995, the EPRDF and its affiliated parties subsequently won elections in 2000, 2005, 2010 and 2015. The only meaningful challenge to the EPRDF came in 2005, when opposition parties made significant gains, particularly in urban areas, winning 174 seats. Opposition parties disputed the results of the 2005 elections. Subsequent protests resulted in violence between protesters and government security forces, during which nearly 200 protesters died. A crackdown on opposition parties, independent organisations and media freedoms followed. In 2009, the government introduced the *Anti-Terrorism Proclamation* (the ATP), under which it has arrested large numbers of opposition figures and journalists. The EPRDF and its affiliated parties won all but two seats in the 2010 general election, and all 547 seats in the 2015 general election, as well as winning 1,966 of the 1,987 seats in the 2015 regional council elections, thus retaining control of all regions of the country. Opposition groups raised concerns about access to polling stations, harassment of voters and restrictions on campaign activities (see also [Political Opinion \(Actual or imputed\)](#) below).

2.18 Ethnicity is an important factor influencing politics in Ethiopia. The EPRDF is a coalition of predominantly ethnically based political parties, dominated by the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF). In addition to the parties aligned with the EPRDF, there are a number of ethnically based opposition political groups. The Tigray People's Democratic Movement (based predominantly in Eritrea near the Ethiopian border), the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF, based in the Somali region) and the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF, with leadership based in Eritrea and a presence in the US and Europe) have armed militant wings that occasionally launch attacks against government facilities and personnel. The Ethiopian government has declared these groups to be terrorist organisations and has outlawed them. Of the main legal political opposition groups, Medrek (also known as the Forum for Democratic Dialogue in Ethiopia) is a coalition of political parties, some of which are ethnically-based, while the Semayawi Party (widely known as the Blue Party) is a nationwide, non-ethnically-aligned party made up of (predominantly young) people opposed to the ruling EPRDF.



## HUMAN RIGHTS FRAMEWORK

2.19 Ethiopia has ratified a number of major international human rights instruments, including: the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination; the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women; the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment; the Convention on the Rights of the Child; and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Chapter Three of the Constitution further sets out a series of fundamental rights and freedoms, including: the right to life, security of person and liberty; a prohibition against inhuman treatment; freedom of religion, belief and opinion; the right of assembly, demonstration and petition; freedom of association; and freedom of movement. In practice, application of these provisions is uneven: other instruments such as the ATP led to the detention of journalists and vocal opponents of the government (see [Political Opinion \(Actual or imputed\)](#) and [Media](#), below).

### Ethiopian Human Rights Commission

2.20 The International Coordinating Committee of the National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights (ICC) rates Ethiopia's national human rights institution, the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC), as not fully compliant with the Paris Principles. In its latest assessment in 2013, the ICC noted that the EHRC had not provided any advice to the government on laws that have an impact on human rights, including the *Charities and Societies Proclamation* 2009 and the ATP, despite concerns raised by non-government organisations (NGOs) and international human rights organisations. It also noted that the EHRC does not have an explicit mandate to monitor conditions of detention in Ethiopia. Its main roles are: awareness raising; training (including prison officer training); provision of legal aid; investigating complaints of human rights abuses; and working with the community to provide support for vulnerable groups and to promote community harmony. Advocacy and publication of human rights monitoring activities are not key roles for the Commission. The EHRC is largely funded by the government, and is generally not regarded outside Ethiopian government circles as an independent institution.

## SECURITY SITUATION

2.21 Several of Ethiopia's border areas with neighbouring countries face significant security challenges. In the late 1990s, Ethiopia fought a border war with neighbouring Eritrea (which had been part of Ethiopia until the early 1990s). While this war ended in December 2000, some areas around the border remain politically contested. This conflict is dormant rather than resolved; the disputed border area is highly militarised and further clashes remain a risk. The area is also prone to violent crime, including kidnappings.

2.22 Ethiopia's borders with Sudan and South Sudan are also not secure, largely due to continuing conflict in those countries. These conflicts have resulted in large flows of refugees into Ethiopia—UNHCR estimates that the Gambella region of Ethiopia has almost 365,000 refugees, mostly from South Sudan. The refugee population is estimated to outnumber the local resident population of Gambella, and up to 200,000 more South Sudanese refugees are expected to arrive in Ethiopia over the next 12 months. According to UNHCR, Ethiopia hosts nearly 840,000 refugees in total across the country, mostly in camps. Ethiopia is the second largest refugee-hosting country on the African continent (after Uganda). The influx of (predominantly Nuer) South Sudanese refugees into Gambella has effectively made Gambella a majority-Nuer population, and has led to some ethnic-based violence between Nuer and Anuak people. For example, in February 2016 violent clashes between Anuak and Nuer populations in Gambella resulted in an estimated 60 deaths, with reports that even members of the Regional Special Police were fighting amongst themselves along ethnic lines. In

April 2016, a group of armed South Sudanese men from the Murle ethnic group crossed the border into Gambella region and reportedly killed more than 200 women and children, kidnapping a further 100 children and adding further instability to the region.

2.23 Border areas between Ethiopia and Somalia tend to experience higher levels of violence than many other parts of the country, with violence, some terrorism activity and kidnappings. Al-Shabaab reportedly maintains a presence in areas of Somalia close to the Ethiopian border. Ethiopia is a leading troop contributor under AMISOM, the African Union Mission in Somalia. Ethiopian border areas with Kenya tend to have higher rates of crime, including violent robbery, than most other parts of the country.

2.24 While recognition of regional ethnic identities through Ethiopia's federal constitution has limited ethnic conflict in most parts of the country, clashes sporadically erupt, particularly around regional borders. Information on these clashes is difficult to find and independently verify, but DFAT understands there are typically around four or five such incidents per year, resulting in a couple of dozen deaths. These clashes tend not to be severe enough to be classified as 'armed clashes', but they typically involve the use of firearms. Clashes usually involve people from different ethnic groups near regional border areas competing for scarce resources. These clashes can occur in any of the regional border areas within Ethiopia, but are most prevalent on the border of Somali and Oromia regions. Authorities are generally able to bring such clashes under control quickly.

2.25 Outside of national and state border areas, the government largely controls the security situation in Ethiopia, and the country tends to be safer than a number of its neighbours. However, in recent years there have been a number of sustained, large-scale political protests, particularly across Oromia and Amhara regions, which have resulted in violence. Protesters have made allegations of abuses by authorities against the protesters, and the authorities have made allegations of unprovoked violence from protesters. Large-scale protests led to the government introducing a nation-wide State of Emergency, under which it has arrested thousands of protesters, opposition leaders and other critics (see [Protests and the 2016 State of Emergency](#), below). Areas previously affected by the protests have remained mostly calm since the State of Emergency came into effect (see [Political Opinion \(Actual or imputed\)](#), below).

2.26 While terrorist groups such as the Somalia-based al-Shabaab are known to be present, including Addis Ababa, the government has so far been largely successful in preventing the kinds of major terrorist incidents that have occurred elsewhere in the region. However, terrorist incidents can occur. In October 2013, a bomb exploded in a residential area of Addis Ababa. The bomb appears to have exploded prematurely, killing two suspected al-Shabaab operatives who had intended to attack a major sporting event. On 11 December 2015, a grenade attack on a mosque in Addis Ababa reportedly killed one person and injured several others. DFAT assesses that these types of incidents are rare, and do not reflect the normal security situation across Addis Ababa or much of the rest of the country.

2.27 Aside from the examples given above (which mostly involve international and regional border areas or large-scale political protests), DFAT assesses that the government delivers a high level of stability across most of the territory of Ethiopia and it is able to maintain a high level of public order in major population centres.

## 3. REFUGEE CONVENTION CLAIMS

### RACE/NATIONALITY

3.1 Article 25 of the Constitution states that ‘all persons are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to the equal protection of the law’. It provides that the law shall give protection ‘without discrimination on the grounds of race, nation, nationality, or other social origin, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, property, birth or other status’. Article 46 of the Constitution provides the basis for Ethiopia’s states or regions to be delimited ‘on the basis of the settlement patterns, language, identity and consent of the people concerned’, which in effect involves the creation of regions that are broadly consistent with the geographic locations of major ethnic groups. In practice, this ‘ethnic federalism’ can create some tensions and societal violence, particularly in regional border areas. It also allows for issues that are fundamentally economic in nature (e.g. the relative economic performance of different regions, or policy decisions that affect a particular region) to be cast in a light of ethnic discrimination. However, for the most part ethnically motivated societal violence is rare in most parts of Ethiopia. If clashes occur, the government is typically able to intervene and restore peace quickly. Often, however, the underlying tensions between groups competing for resources remain, leading to further violent incidents (see [Security Situation](#), above).

3.2 There are more than 80 different ethnic groups in Ethiopia. While most political parties are ethnically based, the ruling EPRDF is a coalition of several of these parties, in effect making it a multi-ethnic coalition, albeit with certain ethnic factions. Most opposition organisations, both political and militant groups, are either ethnically based or contain coalitions of smaller groups that are ethnically aligned (see [Political System](#) above).

3.3 DFAT is aware of some concerns that ethnic Tigrayans dominate positions of power in the, intelligence services, the military and business, despite Tigrayans making up only around 6 per cent of the Ethiopian population. Around 90 per cent of the military leadership is reportedly Tigrayan. Long-term EPRDF leader Meles Zanawi was Tigrayan, but his successor, Hailemariam Desalegn, is from the Wolayta ethnic group in the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples’ (SNNP) region. Tigrayans, Amhara and Oromo share senior public service positions, and Tigrayans have complained that Amhara and Oromo dominate the public service (although these groups comprise a much larger proportion of the Ethiopian population).

3.4 DFAT assesses that, in most cases, official discrimination (such as systematic state-sanctioned discrimination, denial of public services, or higher detention rates) based on race and/or ethnicity is rare in Ethiopia. This assessment is in line with the constitutional prohibitions on discrimination, and in part reflects the need for the government to maintain its legitimacy through inclusiveness, given the large number of diverse ethnic groups within the country.

3.5 Societal discrimination based on ethnicity can occur, but is predominantly in the form of positive discrimination in favour of a particular ethnic group (especially Tigrayans in the government/public service sector and the military and intelligence services) rather than active discrimination against people of a different race or ethnicity. However, there are some exceptions to this general tendency (see sections on individual ethnic groups below). Official policies can also limit opportunities for some groups; for example,

the use of Oromiffa as the language of instruction in schools in Oromia region can limit opportunities for Oromos in the public sector if they do not also speak Amharic and English.

## Oromos

3.6 Oromos make up the largest single ethnic group in Ethiopia, at around 35 per cent of the population. Oromos live predominantly in south, central and western parts of Ethiopia, and in northern Kenya. Reliable, recent and detailed data are difficult to obtain but, according to the 2007 census, about half the population of the Oromia region (90 per cent Oromo) is Muslim, 30 per cent is Orthodox Christian, 18 per cent is Protestant or Catholic, and 3 per cent follow a traditional, monotheistic religion. Some Muslims and Christians follow a traditional religion in parallel. Oromos speak Oromiffa (also known as Afaan Oromo), which is the language of administration and schooling in Oromia.

3.7 Despite being the largest ethnic group in Ethiopia, Oromos have not enjoyed a level of political influence commensurate with their numbers. However, since the EPRDF came to power, Oromos have participated directly in the governing coalition through the Oromo People's Democratic Organization (OPDO). OPDO members are ministers in the federal government and hold a range of public positions of power and influence at the federal level. Tensions between some Oromo groups and the federal government have arisen from perceived oppression and the displacement of Oromos from traditional lands on which the capital, Addis Ababa, is built. Addis Ababa, which is surrounded by the Oromia region, has rapidly expanding industrial and residential areas on its outskirts. Protests in Oromia in 2014, 2015 and 2016 led to violent clashes between protesters and security forces, several hundred deaths and the detention of thousands of protesters.

3.8 While there was widespread violence against and detention of protesters across Oromia in 2015 and 2016, DFAT assesses that this violence was not ethnically targeted, but reflected the government's sensitivity to some forms of political opposition. People from all ethnic groups in Ethiopia are at risk of violence and detention if they actively and openly oppose the EPRDF. DFAT is aware of reports that authorities dealt more harshly with protesters in Oromia than protesters in Amhara. DFAT understands that the security forces' different tactics in Oromia and Amhara reflected a concern over the high proportion of firearm ownership in Amhara and a risk that a tough response to Amhara protests could lead to a more sustained conflict. In this context, DFAT assesses that the response to protests in Oromia does not represent ethnically motivated violence. For more information on the protests and the government response, see [Protests and the 2016 State of Emergency](#), below.

3.9 Overall, DFAT assesses that Oromos in Oromia face a risk of societal discrimination, due in part to Ethiopia's 'ethnic federation' which means that Oromos in Oromia tend to live in Oromo-dominated communities. Oromos can face some discrimination in employment, particularly at more senior levels of government, the military and the intelligence services. DFAT assesses that Oromos face a low risk of official or societal violence on the basis of their ethnicity. However, people in Oromia who openly protest against the government may face a higher risk of official violence than protesters in other regions.

## Somalis

3.10 Ethnic Somalis live predominantly in the arid Somali region in the south-east of Ethiopia, which borders Somalia. Prior to the adoption of the revised Constitution in 1995, this region was known as the Ogaden region. Somalis are Muslim, and mostly pastoralists. They comprise around six per cent of the total Ethiopian population. The Somali region is underdeveloped compared to many other parts of Ethiopia, with poor infrastructure and limited access to government services such as education. The government

acknowledges this, and cites the continuing armed rebellion of the Ogaden National Liberation Front (ONLF) as the reason for the lack of development.

3.11 The ONLF is an armed anti-government group, consisting of members of the Ogaden clan group (the dominant clan group in Somali region), which seeks self-determination and secession from Ethiopia. It describes itself as a ‘grassroots social and political movement’; the Ethiopian government classifies it as a terrorist organisation. The ONLF moved its headquarters to Mogadishu, Somalia, in 2013, but its conflict with Ethiopian authorities—including the Somali regional paramilitary police force, the Liyu police—is continuing. The ONLF (and its affiliated armed wing the Ogaden National Liberation Army or ONLA) retains a following in Somali region and receives funding from parts of the Ethiopian diaspora and groups in Somalia and Eritrea.

3.12 According to Human Rights Watch, there have been reports of extrajudicial killings, arbitrary detention and violence against civilians perceived to be connected with or supportive of the ONLF. Because movements to and within the Somali region are restricted for international observers, DFAT is unable to independently verify these claims, but assesses that they are credible. There are also credible reports of the ONLF carrying out similar abuses.

3.13 While authorities might target any individuals with real or perceived links with the ONLF, there is no credible evidence that this extends to targeting people solely because of their Somali ethnicity in the absence of any political element. As such, DFAT assesses that ethnic Somalis in Ethiopia face a low risk of serious or systemic discrimination or violence from authorities based purely on their ethnicity. As is the case with other groups opposed to the government, Somali individuals who are known or perceived to be associated with the ONLF or other opposition or terrorist groups face a higher level of risk (see [Political Opinion \(Actual or imputed\)](#), below).

## Anuak

3.14 The Anuak is a small Nilotic population—between 300,000 and 350,000 people—that lives in South Sudan and Gambella region of south-western Ethiopia. Anuaks are almost exclusively Christian, and make up around a quarter of the Ethiopian resident population of Gambella region (excluding South Sudanese refugees). Most Anuaks are farmers and herders.

3.15 Historically there have been allegations of abuse by Ethiopian authorities against the Anuak people. In the early 2000s, an increase in the number of ‘highlanders’ (groups such as Amharas, Oromos and Tigrayans) moving to and settling in Gambella led to tensions with the local community. These tensions peaked in 2003 when, in response to a series of alleged attacks by Anuak people, the Ethiopian National Defence Force (ENDF) reportedly joined with highlander groups in violent attacks in which more than 400 people, predominantly Anuaks, died. The general situation has improved markedly since this major incident.

3.16 Some international human rights organisations have raised concerns about the government’s policy of ‘Accelerated Development’, also known as the ‘villagisation’ plan, under which large numbers of people were forcibly moved from their traditional rural lands into towns and villages. Villagisation occurs across several regions in Ethiopia, including Gambella, Benishangul-Gumuz, SNNP, Somali and Afar, and the program affects many ethnic groups, although the reported impact on Anuaks received greater international coverage. The stated purpose of the policy is to improve people’s access to government services such as healthcare, education, electricity and clean water, as well as improving resilience to natural disasters. Some groups have accused the authorities of forced evictions, violence, intimidation and sexual assault in the implementation of the policy. According to the US State Department, international donors have undertaken more than 18 visits to villagisation sites since 2011 and have not found evidence of systematic human rights abuses, but rather have found problems with the delivery of promised services and infrastructure.

3.17 DFAT is not aware of any credible evidence of systematic violence and intimidation in the implementation of the villagisation policy. Nor is the policy targeted at any particular ethnic group: while concerns around the impacts of villagisation on the Anuak population have a relatively high profile, the policy also applies to other ethnicities across Gambella (including the Nuer and Majangere), as well as across different ethnic groups within other regions of Ethiopia.

3.18 DFAT assesses that Anuak people do not face a higher risk of official violence or discrimination based on their ethnicity compared to other groups in Gambella region. Anuak people who openly oppose the government, including vocal opponents of the villagisation policy, face a higher risk of harassment, violence and detention from authorities, in line with the treatment of active opponents of the government from other ethnic groups (see [Political Opinion \(Actual or imputed\)](#), below).

## Eritreans and Ethiopians with Eritrean Heritage

3.19 During the border war with Eritrea in the late 1990s, the Ethiopian government withdrew the citizenship of people who were of Eritrean origin, either because Eritrean Ethiopians were a security risk or because the government considered those who had voted in the 1993 referendum on Eritrean independence to have renounced their citizenship. Government forces arrested and forcibly deported an estimated 75,000 people from Ethiopia to Eritrea during the conflict. The deportations reduced dramatically after 2000. According to a 2008 Refugees International Report, 'many, perhaps most, Eritreans living in Ethiopia reacquired citizenship under a nationality proclamation enacted in 2003'. Some of these people reportedly have identity cards that show a 'previous nationality' as Eritrean. There is no credible evidence to suggest that Ethiopians of Eritrean heritage have faced deportation to Eritrea since the early 2000s. People who left Ethiopia prior to the 2003 proclamation and have not resided long-term in Ethiopia since may face difficulties in providing sufficient documentation to establish their right to Ethiopian citizenship.

3.20 According to UNHCR, there are more than 160,000 Eritrean refugees in Ethiopia. Unlike refugees from other countries, Eritrean refugees are permitted to live in the community rather than in refugee camps, provided they can support themselves financially; more than 70,000 Eritreans previously registered in camps have now settled in urban areas, particularly Addis Ababa. However, DFAT understands that Eritrean refugees are not permitted to work in the formal sector or access government services, but instead tend to find vulnerable work in the informal sector.

3.21 Tensions between Ethiopia and Eritrea at a political level remain high. The Ethiopian government has reportedly accused Eritrea of providing safe-haven and funding to armed Ethiopian opposition groups. However, following the 2003 Proclamation regularising the status of Ethiopians with Eritrean heritage, there is no recent credible evidence that Eritreans face a higher risk of official or societal discrimination or violence based on their ethnicity. The political-level tensions between Ethiopia and Eritrea may mean that people with links to Eritrea who actively and openly oppose the Ethiopian government may attract a greater level of attention from authorities than other members of Ethiopian society. Overall, however, DFAT assesses that Ethiopians with Eritrean heritage do not face a significantly greater risk of official or societal discrimination or violence than other groups in Ethiopia based on their ethnicity.

## RELIGION

3.22 Ethiopian society is deeply religious, and religion plays a strong part in daily life. According to the US State Department's 2015 International Religious Freedom Report (the latest available), around 44 per cent of the population belongs to the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, 34 per cent are Sunni Muslim and 19 per cent belong to Christian evangelical and Pentecostal groups. There are also small numbers of Catholics, other

Christian groups, Jehovah's witnesses, Jews and followers of traditional indigenous religions. There is also a group of around 800 Rastafarians living on land set aside for them by Emperor Haile Selassie in the 1940s. The Orthodox, Islamic, Catholic and Jewish communities are not required to register with the government as religious groups, but all other groups must register with the Directorate of Faith and Religious Affairs at the Ministry of Federal and Pastoral Development Affairs to gain legal standing. Registered groups must provide annual reports on their activities and their financial situation.

3.23 Article 11 of the Ethiopian Constitution declares the separation of state and religion, prohibits an official state religion and bans the interference of the state in religious matters as well as the interference of religion in state affairs. Article 25 of the Constitution (Right to Equality) specifically provides for equal treatment of all persons under the law without discrimination on the grounds of religion, and Article 27 provides for freedom of religion, including religious observance and establishment of religious institutions, subject to limitations under the law. Article 34 provides for disputes involving personal status issues (marriage, divorces, child custody, etc.) to be determined by customary and religious systems, allowing, for example, Sharia courts to decide on personal status issues where both parties to the dispute are Muslim and both consent to the process. Article 816 of the criminal code prohibits 'blasphemous or scandalous utterances or attitudes' about religion in public, including gestures or words that are 'grossly offensive to the feelings or convictions of others or towards the Divine Being or the religious symbols, rites, or religious personages'. Such behaviour is punishable with a fine or arrest and detention 'not exceeding one month'. The law also does not allow religious instruction in schools, and bans the formation of religion-based political parties.

3.24 In practice, there are no credible reports of formal government policies discriminating against people based on their religion in any significant way in recent years. The requirement for only some religious organisations to register with the government creates an administrative barrier, but it is not prohibitively onerous. The registration requirements do not have a significant direct impact on the followers of smaller religions nor their ability to practise their faith.

3.25 Low-level informal and societal discrimination does occur on the basis of religion. A religious group that forms a minority in a particular area or region may face some discrimination. For example, according to the US State Department, Protestant Christians have claimed that they face unequal treatment by local government officials on matters such as religious registration and obtaining land for churches and cemeteries. Muslims have also complained of difficulties obtaining permission to build mosques from local authorities in Axum, an area that contains many of the oldest Orthodox churches in the country. The Ministry of Federal and Pastoral Development Affairs has reportedly claimed that these perceived inequalities are the result of poor local administration. DFAT assesses that such examples of perceived discrimination represent acts of societal discrimination by individuals within local administrative centres rather than a systematic policy of discrimination by the government.

3.26 While there are some tensions between religious groups across Ethiopia, these tensions rarely result in serious, systematic discrimination or violence between different groups. The two largest religious groups, Orthodox Christians and Muslims, generally respect each other's right to practise their religion, despite some low-level mutual mistrust between the groups. While intermarriage and religious conversions are rare, the broader Ethiopian community generally tolerates both, although there may be issues at a household level around familial acceptance of inter-religious marriage. DFAT has observed people of different faiths openly attending their respective religious services without facing discrimination or harassment. In many parts of the country, particularly Oromia region and major cities such as Addis Ababa where there are large numbers of Orthodox Christians and Muslims, mosques and Orthodox churches are located within close proximity of each other, with no evidence of hostility or tension. DFAT assesses that the risk of serious, systematic societal discrimination or violence on the basis of religion in Ethiopia is low.

## Muslims

3.27 There have been numerous protests, particularly between 2011 and 2013, by members of the Muslim community regarding perceived interference in Islamic affairs. In particular, there were complaints that a training program run jointly by the government and the Ethiopian Islamic Affairs Supreme Council (EIASC) was aimed at introducing a ‘foreign religious philosophy’ known as ‘al-Ahbash’. Protesters alleged that the government, concerned about religious-based violence and a rise of Salafism and Wahhabism in Ethiopia, brought in al-Ahbash clerics from Lebanon to train all Ethiopian clerics. Al-Ahbash is an Islamic group that is based in Lebanon but its founder was an Ethiopian (the Arabic name ‘Al Ahbash’ refers to Habesha a name use by Ethiopians for Ethiopia’s highland region). The government’s decision in 2011 to close the Awolia College, the only Islamic College in the country, also attracted protests.

3.28 As is the case with other forms of anti-government protests, a number of participants in these protests were arrested and detained. For example, in August 2015 a court sentenced 18 Muslims, including clerics and journalists, to between seven and 22 years imprisonment under the ATP for their role in a protest in July 2012. Five of the 18 people arrested—who are known as the Arbitration Committee Members—were pardoned and released in September 2015, and a further nine members were pardoned in September 2016. However, supporters of the Arbitration Committee Members have continued to be detained and sentenced. For example, on 21 December 2016 the High Court found 20 Muslims, including two journalists, guilty of terrorism-related offences for protesting the detention of the Arbitration Committee Members, including through columns in Islamic newspapers and on social media.

3.29 Physical protests against perceived government interference in Islamic affairs have been less prevalent in the years since 2013, but criticism of the government online and in news publications continues. DFAT assesses that people who openly oppose or criticise the government, including through these forums, face a risk of harassment, arrest and detention. This is true of all people who criticise the government, including those critical of perceived government interference in religious matters. In this context, DFAT assesses that the arrest and detention of Muslim protesters is a result of a complex interaction of religious, security and political factors.

## POLITICAL OPINION (ACTUAL OR IMPUTED)

3.30 Article 25 of the Constitution provides for equality under the law, without discrimination on the grounds of political or other opinion; Article 30 provides for freedom of assembly, demonstration and petition; Article 31 provides for freedom of association; and Article 38 provides for the right to vote, to be elected and to be a member of a political organisation.

3.31 In practice, political freedoms in Ethiopia are very restricted, and became more restricted following the introduction of a State of Emergency in October 2016 (see [Protests and the 2016 State of Emergency](#), below). Opposition groups and independent commentators such as journalists and bloggers who oppose the government’s policies are regularly harassed and detained. While the wording of the ATP is similar to legislation in some western countries such as the UK and Australia, its implementation is significantly more restrictive of political freedoms, and the government has been criticised for perceived breaches of human rights. These alleged breaches include restrictions on the freedom of expression, freedom of association and the activities of civil society organisations and journalists, as well as more serious allegations of extrajudicial killings, torture, arbitrary detention, harassment and abuse, particularly against political opponents and independent journalists and bloggers. There are reports of public servants who are not EPRDF members having their career progression curtailed. Government security forces reportedly regularly detain and torture—and sometimes commit extrajudicial killings of—vocal opponents of government policies. Armed



opposition groups, including the ONLF and the OLF, have also been accused of carrying out abuses and violent attacks on government forces and civilians.

3.32 Prominent members of all opposition groups—including legal opposition groups not classified as terrorist organisations—are regularly monitored, harassed, arrested and either charged under the ATP or detained without charge. Periods of detention can vary from a few days to several years. There were reports of a crackdown in the lead-up to the 2015 elections. For example, on 8 July 2014 four prominent members of three opposition parties, the Unity for Democracy and Justice, the Arena Tigray Party and the Blue Party were arrested and held in the Maekelawi detention facility. At least one of those arrested claimed to have been tortured in detention, and all were reported to have been denied access to lawyers and family members. The four were charged in October 2014 under the ATP. In August 2015, more than 12 months after their arrest (and several months after the 2015 elections) the Federal Court found no evidence that these individuals had links to terrorist acts or organisations.

3.33 Arrests of protesters and opponents of the government have continued since the 2015 elections, particularly in the context of large-scale protests and the imposition of a State of Emergency in October 2016 (see [Protests and the 2016 State of Emergency](#), below). This includes, but is not limited to, high profile opposition leaders. For example, the leader of the opposition party the Oromo Federalist Congress (OFC) and the MEDREK opposition coalition, Merera Gudina, was arrested in December 2016 shortly after returning from a trip to Europe. While in Europe, Mr Gudina had made a speech to the European Parliament about large-scale arrests in Ethiopia under the State of Emergency, and appeared publicly with Berhanu Nega, the leader of the banned opposition group known as Ginbot 7. Mr Gudina had reportedly been warned by his supporters not to return to Ethiopia, but had not heeded these warnings. Mr Gudina was charged under the ATP in February 2017, and at the time of publication he remains in custody and is standing trial on terrorism charges.

3.34 DFAT assesses people who openly oppose the government face a high risk of being monitored, harassed, arrested and detained as a result of their political opinion. All vocal opponents of the government face this risk, including high-profile opposition leaders but also otherwise low-profile people who attend anti-government protests (see [Protests and the 2016 State of Emergency](#) and [Media](#) below). There are also reports that family members and neighbours of members and supporters (or perceived supporters) of opposition groups may be monitored, harassed, arrested and detained by authorities.

## Protests and the 2016 State of Emergency

3.35 In April and May 2014, there were large-scale protests against the government's announced intention to expand the federally administered Addis Ababa further into Oromia region, including into towns and agricultural lands currently under the control of the Oromia regional government. This planned expansion, known as the Addis Ababa Integrated Development Master Plan (or simply 'the Master Plan') would likely involve the displacement of farmers, and the official language of schools, businesses and administration in these areas would change from Oromiffa to Amharic. The announcement of the Master Plan led to major demonstrations, centred on the town of Ambo, originating at Ambo University before spreading to the town itself and then surrounding areas. The protests started out peacefully, but once the security forces moved in violence occurred against unarmed protesters. At least 17 protesters were killed in these initial protests in April-May 2014. According to the OFC, a registered opposition political party, up to 500 of its members were arrested in association with the protests.

3.36 Protests against the proposed Master Plan occurred again in Oromia in late 2015 and continued into 2016. In January 2016, the government announced that it was no longer planning to implement the Master Plan. The protests continued, however, across many parts of Oromia region and Addis Ababa and, from July

2017, protesters also demonstrated in Amhara region. The Amhara protests ostensibly reflected grievances over the historical demarcation of the border between Amhara and Tigray regions that resulted in the Tigray regional government administering Amhara land. While the protests in Amhara and Oromia had different origins, they later expanded into calling for political and economic reforms.

3.37 On 2 October 2016 there was a protest during an Oromo cultural festival in Bishoftu (around 50 km south-east of Addis Ababa in Oromia region) which generally attracts very large crowds. Authorities fired tear gas into the crowd, causing panic. According to the government, around 56 people died in the stampede; opposition groups claim that the death toll was around 678. Following the incident, further protests broke out across Oromia, including on the outskirts of Addis Ababa. Some of the violence at these protests targeted foreign- and government-owned properties and businesses, as well as property and businesses owned by Tigrayans.

3.38 In response to the increasing frequency and intensity of the protests, the government declared a nation-wide State of Emergency on 9 October. Measures contained in the State of Emergency included the ability for authorities to detain people and search private property without a court order, provisions for travel restrictions and curfews, and restrictions on broadcast and internet media, including social media. The practical effect of the State of Emergency was to formalise and expand practices that were largely already in place.

3.39 DFAT understands that the government arrested and detained around 26,000 people under the State of Emergency. This number includes journalists, bloggers, opposition party members and large numbers of people who were thought to have participated in anti-government protests, including children. Arrests and detentions were not limited to protest organisers or to high-profile opponents of the government. Large numbers of detainees were released following a 're-education' program, however DFAT understands that between 2,000 and 5,000 people remain in detention. Those released were mostly lower profile 'grass roots' protesters, while those who remain in detention tend to be suspected protest leaders. Some of those detained claim to have been tortured (see [Torture](#), below).

3.40 Following the declaration of the State of Emergency, there have been no significant large-scale protests. The government extended the State of Emergency, which was originally scheduled to end in April 2017. The State of Emergency officially ended in August 2017, although its measures may continue in practice. A report by the EHRC into the protests and the government response found that 669 people, predominantly civilians, died during the violence. The EHRC also found the government response was largely proportionate, but that authorities killed 131 people through unnecessary or excessive use of force. Opposition groups criticised the report for being too lenient on the government and for understating the death toll.

3.41 DFAT assesses that all people who openly attend anti-government protests face a high risk of being monitored, harassed, arrested and detained. During protest events, protesters may also face a risk of violence from authorities. These risks apply to all anti-government protesters, although high-profile protesters and protest organisers face a greater risk of longer-term detention.

## GROUPS OF INTEREST

### Human Rights Organisations

3.42 On 13 February 2009 the Ethiopian government introduced the CSO proclamation, which imposed significant restrictions on the activities and financial operations of NGOs. Article 14 of the proclamation

restricts activities related to the ‘advancement of human and democratic rights’ to domestic charities and societies. The CSO proclamation defines domestic charities and societies as those that receive 10 per cent or less of their funding from international sources. As a result of the CSO proclamation’s prohibitions on foreign NGOs operating in the human rights space, and on domestic NGOs raising money from overseas, there are very few NGOs undertaking monitoring, reporting or advocacy activities on human rights issues in Ethiopia. Members of the few domestic NGOs that work in the field of human rights report severe funding restrictions and monitoring, harassment, arrest and detention of their workers, as well as physical violence and torture against those held in detention. The government denies allegations of harassment, arbitrary detention and abuse.

## Media

3.43 The Ethiopian Constitution explicitly protects the rights of freedom of expression and freedom of the press, including a prohibition on any form of censorship and a guarantee of legal protection for the press ‘to ensure its operational independence and its capacity to entertain diverse opinions’. The criminal code contains a number of limitations to these rights, including defamation and restrictions on the criticism of public officials. The ATP also contains a number of restrictive provisions that have been used to charge journalists critical of the government or supportive of opposition parties. The State of Emergency declared in October 2016 placed further restrictions on print, television, radio, internet and social media.

3.44 In practice, freedom of speech and the media are severely restricted in Ethiopia. The government controls the only nationally-broadcast television station in the country and the two radio stations with the biggest broadcast area. Foreign media broadcasts are occasionally jammed, and opponents of the government who are interviewed by foreign-based media outlets (such as outlets run by the Ethiopian diaspora) can be arrested and detained for extended periods of time. Ethiopia is ranked 150<sup>th</sup> out of 180 countries on the 2017 World Press Freedom Index produced by Reporters Without Borders.

3.45 Authorities regularly arrest and detain journalists and bloggers who are perceived as critical of the government or supportive of opposition parties. These journalists and bloggers are typically charged under the ATP. There was a reported increase in arrests and detention of critical journalists in the lead-up to the 2015 elections, and a number of independent newspapers were closed down. In 2016, the State of Emergency banned people from listening to or watching broadcasts by the foreign-based Ethiopian Satellite Radio and Television (ESAT) and Oromo Media Network (OMN). The government also imposed internet and telephone blackouts and blocked certain social media sites.

3.46 In addition to harassment and restrictions on privately-run news outlets, the government restricts the activities of political websites and blogs, enabled in part by the government-controlled monopoly in the telecommunications sector. News websites, political blogs and websites run by opposition groups are regularly blocked. Contributors to these websites are also regularly monitored, arrested and detained. In October 2016, a blogger from the well-known Zone-9 group was arrested along with two friends for making comments critical of the government in a restaurant. According to Freedom House, foreign journalists working for Bloomberg News and the US Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) were also detained while reporting in Ethiopia during 2016.

3.47 DFAT assesses that independent journalists and bloggers who are more than mildly critical of the government, its policies or the EPRDF face a high risk of monitoring, harassment, arrest and detention by authorities.

## Women

3.48 Article 35 of the Constitution sets out a number of rights for women, including: equality with men in the enjoyment of rights and protections under the Constitution; equal rights in marriage; the entitlement to 'affirmative measures' to remedy the historical legacy of inequality and discrimination against women in Ethiopia; the right to maternity leave at full pay; equal rights to property, including land, such as in the inheritance of property; equal rights in employment; and the right of access to family planning education, information and capacity.

3.49 In practice, women in Ethiopia face some official and societal discrimination and societal violence, although some progress is being made, particularly in regard to direct official discrimination. The current parliament (elected in 2015) contains 37 per cent women, including some Ministers. For example the position of Minister for Women and Children's Affairs is currently held by a woman for the first time. Some regional councils have an even higher representation of women. The country's first female Deputy Prime Minister was appointed in 2014. The government has also made gender rights a significant component of its 2015-2020 Growth and Transformation Plan. Credible non-government interlocutors told DFAT that the government is showing strong leadership around increasing women's representation. While women still face some discrimination around land-use rights, progress has been made in this area. Increasingly, women are recognised as users of farmland following the death of their husband, although widows and divorced mothers remain highly economically vulnerable; this is particularly an issue in the context of a high prevalence of child marriage and the early age at which many Ethiopian girls have their first child (see [Children](#), below). In parts of the country traditional land tenure systems continue to be used in practice, which can lead to restrictions on women's land use rights because of traditional gender roles.

3.50 There has been significant progress towards gender equality in education, and Ethiopia met its Millennium Development Goals in this area, but the progress to date has largely been limited to lower levels of education; only 30 per cent of tertiary students in Ethiopia are female. Women also have lower literacy rates (see [Education](#)).

3.51 Ethiopia is a conservative society and women face high levels of societal discrimination. While women officially have access to police and the court system, societal norms mean that they seldom pursue that right. Limited infrastructure and low levels of financial independence exacerbate this problem, particularly in rural areas. Sharia law is permitted for use, where both parties are Muslim and with both parties' consent, in cases involving personal status issues in Ethiopia. Women can face some difficulties in gaining equal access and influence to these processes. Women typically have fewer employment opportunities than men, in both urban and rural areas. This is influenced by societal discrimination, norms around women's roles and women's generally lower levels of educational attainment.

## Violence

3.52 Domestic violence is explicitly prohibited in the Ethiopian criminal code and is punishable by up to 20 years' imprisonment, but this is rarely enforced. There are a number of other gaps in the formal legal framework; for example, the law does not explicitly prohibit spousal rape.

3.53 In practice, gender-based violence (including physical, psychological and sexual violence) is common across all regions, ethnic groups and religious groups in Ethiopia. Societal norms and a lack of financial independence lead to under-reporting, particularly in rural areas. According to a 2011 survey by the government Central Statistical Agency, around 45 per cent of men across Ethiopia considered a husband to be justified in hitting or beating his wife if she burned the food, argued with him, left the house without telling him, neglected the children or refused to have sexual intercourse with him. The survey found greater acceptance of domestic violence among younger men; more than half of the men surveyed who were 15-19

years old considered such violence to be justified. Fewer than 20 per cent of women considered such hitting or beating to be unacceptable. Violence against women also makes them more vulnerable to health risks, including HIV.

3.54 Violence against women is prevalent across all parts of the country, but is reportedly most prevalent in the Somali and Afar regions, where the vast majority of the population is Muslim and the family legislative framework is based on traditional practices and Sharia law and is not aligned with the corresponding laws at the federal level. There are very limited support facilities for women escaping from domestic violence. There is no credible up-to-date data on the incidence of rape and sexual violence and harassment, but sexual violence is widely considered to be highly prevalent, and perpetrators are rarely punished.

3.55 DFAT assesses that women in Ethiopia face a high risk of domestic violence and sexual harassment. Women in Ethiopia also face a moderate risk of rape and sexual assault, including spousal rape. Practices such as female genital mutilation (FGM), marriage by abduction and child marriage are also highly prevalent (see [Children](#), below).

## Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

3.56 Homosexual acts are illegal in Ethiopia, and are punishable with up to 15 years' imprisonment under Article 629 of the criminal code. There are reports that anti-gay activists are pushing for Ethiopia to extend the application of the death penalty to people convicted of homosexual acts. In 2014 the Ethiopian government considered legislation that would make convictions for homosexual acts non-pardonable under the law, similar to the treatment of some serious violent crimes. This legislation was not passed, reportedly due in part to pressure from international donors. There are no laws prohibiting discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or intersex (LGBTI) people, nor are there specific hate-crime laws.

3.57 LGBTI people face high levels of societal discrimination in Ethiopia, and often conceal their sexual orientation or gender identity to avoid severe social stigma, including from their families. According to the US State Department, the AIDS Resource Centre in Addis Ababa reported that 'the majority of self-identified gay and lesbian callers ... requested assistance in changing their behaviour to avoid discrimination. Many gay men reported anxiety, confusion, identity crises, depression, self-ostracism, religious conflict, and suicide attempts'. There are some reports of people being jailed for allegedly engaging in homosexual acts. There are also reports of violence against LGBTI individuals, but these incidents are highly likely to be under-reported due to the illegal nature of homosexual activity and the high level of societal discrimination against LGBTI people.

3.58 DFAT assesses that LGBTI people in Ethiopia face high levels of official and societal discrimination and violence.

## Children

3.59 Children face a number of risks in Ethiopia, including FGM, underage marriage, marriage by abduction, sexual violence and child labour.

3.60 FGM is illegal under the criminal code, and is punishable by up to ten years' imprisonment, but these laws are rarely enforced. DFAT is not aware of any criminal charges laid for practising FGM, and the practice remains highly prevalent. Rather than taking a law and order approach to the problem, the government is reportedly attempting to change cultural and societal attitudes to FGM by working with communities, including schools and religious institutions. While rates of FGM in Ethiopia remain high, there is some evidence they are declining. According to a 2005 household survey undertaken by the Central Statistics

Agency (the latest available data—more recent surveys have not covered FGM), around 74 per cent of Ethiopian women and girls aged 15-49 years have undergone FGM, down from nearly 80 per cent in the late 1990s. The incidence of FGM is highest in Somali (97.3 per cent), Dire Dawa (92.3 per cent) and Afar (91.6 per cent) regions, while Gambella (27.1 per cent) and Tigray (29.3 per cent) regions have the lowest rates in the country.

3.61 Early marriage and marriage by abduction are prevalent across Ethiopia, with girls sometimes married by the age of seven. The legal age for marriage is 18, but this law is inconsistently applied. The incidence of child marriage has reportedly declined in recent years, but remains highly prevalent. Early marriage also leads to early child-bearing, with associated health impacts on mothers whose own bodies may still be developing. Girls generally leave school on marriage, so early marriage also affects female education outcomes. According to the 2011 Demographics and Health Survey by the Central Statistics Agency (the most recent reliable data available), the median age of first marriage for Ethiopian women is 16.5 years (below the minimum age of marriage under the law). In Amhara, the median age of first marriage for girls was 14.7 years. However, early marriage rates for younger cohorts in the survey were much lower than for older cohorts, suggesting significant progress in reducing early marriage rates in recent years.

3.62 Child marriage by abduction has historically occurred across the country, but according to UNICEF and the Overseas Development Institute, the incidence of marriage by abduction has declined significantly in recent years, except in parts of SNNP region.

3.63 Ethiopia has ratified all major international conventions on child labour, but child labour continues to occur across the country. The minimum legal age for paid employment is 14 years, with children between the ages of 14 and 18 banned from hazardous or night work. Nonetheless, these laws are rarely enforced and child labour does occur, particularly in family-owned businesses (including agricultural work) but also in the construction and mining industries. According to the US Department of Labor, the 2011 Demographic and Health Survey found that around 22 per cent of children aged between five and 14 were engaged in work. Girls also undertake paid domestic work, where they are vulnerable to mistreatment and sexual abuse. Prosecution rates for domestic trafficking of children for forced labour and sexual exploitation are reportedly low. Girls as young as 11 are reportedly trafficked to work in brothels. Unmarried girls who fall pregnant after being forced into sex work or raped have little in the way of support. Facilities such as shelters are limited, and families often shun these girls because of social stigmas. DFAT is not aware of any reports of child recruitment for the armed forces, or by armed opposition groups.

3.64 DFAT assesses that girls in Ethiopia face a high risk of genital mutilation, domestic violence and early and forced marriage. Boys and girls in Ethiopia face a high risk of labour exploitation.

## 4. COMPLEMENTARY PROTECTION CLAIMS

### ARBITRARY DEPRIVATION OF LIFE

#### Extra-Judicial Killings

4.1 There are credible reports of incidents involving arbitrary deprivation of life by government forces and opposition groups in Ethiopia. According to a report by the NGO Human Rights Council, at least 19 people have been subjected to extra-judicial killings since the declaration of the State of Emergency in October 2016. The EHRC found that at least 669 people, predominantly civilians, were killed in the widespread protests that led to the State of Emergency being declared (see [Protests and the 2016 State of Emergency](#), above).

4.2 Credible sources have told DFAT that extrajudicial killings by government forces are not systematic or chronic, but can occur, and punishment of government officials is rare. Armed opposition groups such as the ONLF reportedly target both civilians and government forces in their attacks.

#### Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances

4.3 According to the US State Department, some people arrested as part of the government response to protest activities in 2016 disappeared. Families reportedly found it difficult to locate detained relatives, in part because of poor prison administration.

#### Deaths in Custody

4.4 Access to detention centres by independent bodies for monitoring purposes is severely restricted, and there is no reliable publicly available information on deaths in custody in the Ethiopian prison system. The US State Department and the UK Home Office have reported that conditions in prisons are harsh and, in some cases, life threatening (see [Detention and Prison](#), below). A fire at Qilinto Prison on 3 September 2016 led to several deaths, and allegations that the government used it as an opportunity to get rid of opposition figures. The government rejects these claims and is currently trying a number of opposition figures and others for causing the fire.

### DEATH PENALTY

4.5 Under the Ethiopian criminal code, the death penalty to some serious crimes, including crimes against the State (armed uprising or high treason), crimes against international law (genocide or war crimes), various military offences, and serious personal crimes such as aggravated murder. In 2015, the government

considered two pieces of legislation to extend the list of offences punishable by death to include homosexual acts and people trafficking offences; neither bill passed.

4.6 In practice, courts rarely impose death sentences, and DFAT is not aware of any instances where the death penalty has been carried out since 2007, when a former military officer was executed for killing the former Chief of Security and Immigration. Prior to that, the last recorded execution was in 1998. According to Amnesty International, Ethiopian courts sentenced two people to death in 2016, bringing the total number of people under sentence of death to ten at the end of 2016. The criminal code does not specify the method of execution, but it explicitly prohibits hanging. The reported method of execution for Ethiopian military members is by firing squad.

## TORTURE

4.7 There are widespread, consistent and credible reports of torture in police stations and prisons across Ethiopia. According to Human Rights Watch, police, security forces and prison officials beat detainees, including minors, in order to obtain information and confessions. According to Amnesty International, methods of torture reported in recent years include beating, burning, electric shocks, tying prisoners in stress positions, and prolonged periods of forced physical exercise. Access to detention centres by independent bodies for monitoring purposes is restricted.

4.8 Political prisoners such as opposition party members, journalists, bloggers and other people perceived to oppose the government or its policies are reportedly particularly at risk of torture. There are reports that torture is routine in facilities holding political prisoners, such as the Maekelawi federal police detention facility in Addis Ababa. According to a 2013 Human Rights Watch report, torture methods at Maekelawi include beating, the hanging of detainees by their wrists from the ceiling, pouring water over detainees, and solitary confinement for periods of a year or more. Torture reportedly often applies as a method of extracting a confession, but is also a form of punishment. The Ethiopian authorities deny allegations of torture.

4.9 There are limited opportunities for people claiming to have been tortured to seek legal redress, and courts are reportedly reluctant to hear complaints of torture or mistreatment. For example, according to Amnesty International, two detained leaders of the opposition Oromo Federalist Congress, brought before the court in their underwear, claimed that prison officials had beaten them in detention and taken away their clothes. The court did not order an investigation into their allegations of torture and other ill-treatment. The US State Department reports that prisons do not have an ombudsman to respond to or investigate complaints of mistreatment. Prisoners may also be reluctant to make complaints for fear of further punishment. A lack of legal representation during interrogations limits the extent to which claims of torture and mistreatment can be substantiated.

## CRUEL, INHUMAN OR DEGRADING TREATMENT OR PUNISHMENT

4.10 Article 424 of the criminal code prohibits treatment of prisoners or suspects 'in an improper or brutal manner, or in a manner which is incompatible with human dignity or his office, especially by use of blows, cruelty or physical or mental torture, be it to obtain a statement or a confession, or to any other similar end, or to make him give testimony in a favourable manner'. Such acts are punishable with up to ten years' imprisonment.



4.11 In practice, prisoners have reported incidents of physical punishment and torture. People detained under the 2016 State of Emergency have complained of mistreatment including beatings, overcrowding, extreme heat, lack of water and solitary confinement during their detention and 'rehabilitation'. Given the restrictions on access to prisons, it is difficult to verify claims of mistreatment. However, according to the UN Committee Against Torture, significant numbers of prisoners have made consistent claims over a long period against the security forces, police and prison officers. The Ethiopian authorities deny allegations of mistreatment of prisoners.

## Arbitrary Arrest and Detention

4.12 Article 423 of the criminal code prohibits 'unlawful arrest or detention', which is punishable by up to ten years' imprisonment.

4.13 In practice, there are numerous reports of people held without charge or trial, often for long periods. This is particularly the case for journalists, bloggers, protesters, members of opposition groups and other people perceived as being opposed to the government or its policies. The 2016 State of Emergency removed the requirement for police to obtain a court order before arresting an individual; while arrests without a court order were reportedly already occurring prior to the State of Emergency, such arrests became much more widespread once it came into effect. According to the US State Department, security forces went door-to-door after some protests, and arrested and arbitrarily detained opposition party members and supporters, whom they accused of inciting violence.

## 5. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

### STATE PROTECTION

5.1 The Ethiopian government maintains an extensive security and intelligence regime, which assists in protecting people from major crimes, including terrorism. However, this security and intelligence apparatus is also used to monitor and suppress dissent. While security forces are largely effective at maintaining law and order and avoiding major terrorist attacks, security forces were able to use disproportionate violence against protesters with impunity.

#### Military

5.2 The Ethiopian National Defence Force (ENDF) comprises ground forces and the Ethiopian Air Force. Combined, these forces have around 186,000 personnel. Ethiopia is land-locked and has no naval capacity.

5.3 Military service is not routinely compulsory, but the military retains the right to conduct call-ups. According to Article 284 of the criminal code, a refusal to perform military service can attract a penalty of up to ten years' imprisonment. The minimum age for military service is 18 years. The US provides funding for a range of training programs for the ENDF, including peacekeeping, professional military education, military training management and counter-terrorism operations. Much of the ENDF's military equipment is reportedly outdated. Ethiopian military spending is relatively low at around 0.7 per cent of GDP (compared to a global average of around 2.3 per cent).

5.4 Members of the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF) reportedly dominate senior ranks in the military. According to the International Crisis Group, most senior military commanders, as well as the Chief of Staff of the ENDF, are former fighters from the TPLF, which forms a major part of the EPRDF and is the party of the late Prime Minister Meles Zenawi.

5.5 The ENDF has been accused of human rights abuses including beatings, sexual abuse and arbitrary detention in relation to the villagisation program in Gambella region and extrajudicial killings of civilians in relation to the widespread protests in Oromia and Amhara regions and the counter-insurgency operations against the ONLF in Somali region.

5.6 DFAT assesses that excessive violence and abuse against civilians by ENDF personnel is not a systemic or chronic issue outside of responses to large-scale protests, although some incidents of abuse may occur. The ENDF was involved in the response to the protests in Oromia and Amhara regions in 2015-2016, in which the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission found excessive force had been used (see [Protests and the 2016 State of Emergency](#), above). Avenues for victims of alleged abuse or their families to access rigorous, independent and transparent investigative processes are limited. Reports of impunity for those in the military and the police forces accused of abuses in Ethiopia are widespread.

## Police

5.7 The Ethiopian Federal Police Force reports to the Ministry of Federal and Pastoralist Development Affairs and is responsible for preventing and investigating crimes that fall under the jurisdiction of the Federal Court, such as terrorism, drug trafficking and human trafficking. In addition, all regions have their own regional police forces reporting to their respective regional governments. The Federal Police Force is responsible for coordinating regional police commissions and setting national policing standards, and provides training and operational support to regional police forces. Many regions also have some form of informal local militia. Militia operate independently, although there is often some degree of coordination with regional and federal police forces in practice. According to the US State Department, the militias sometimes operated as an extension of the ruling EPRDF. There are reports of abuses by some of these militia groups, in particular the 'Liyu police' in Somali region. The Liyu police have been accused of extrajudicial killings, torture, rape, and other violent acts in Somali region. For example, according to Human Rights Watch, on 5 June 2016 members of the Liyu police started shooting villagers in eastern Somali region after an officer was wounded in a dispute with local traders. Police reportedly killed at least 14 villagers, and it is unclear if there has been any investigation into the incident. Human Rights Watch also report that the Liyu police have attacked communities outside Somali region, including in neighbouring Oromia region and across the border in Somalia. Restrictions on travel to Somali region mean it is difficult to verify these claims.

5.8 There are reports of abuses committed by federal and regional police forces, including beatings, arbitrary arrest and detention, rape, torture and extrajudicial killings, including in (but not limited to) the context of the 2015-16 protests held across Oromia and Amhara regions. Investigation of such incidents is not transparent, and the results are usually not published, limiting accountability. Under the ATP and the State of Emergency, police have the power to arrest people without a court order under certain circumstances. These powers have been used extensively, particularly since during State of Emergency (see [Protests and the 2016 State of Emergency](#), above).

## Intelligence services

5.9 The Ethiopian government maintains a strong and highly capable domestic intelligence system. The National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS) is an autonomous federal government office, directly accountable to the Prime Minister. While reliable data on the size and staffing of the NISS is not available, it is broadly considered to have a strong capacity to monitor the activities of persons of interest in Ethiopia. A civilian monitoring and reporting system supports the intelligence network, whereby individuals report on the activities of others in their community or household, including the activities of political activists or opposition supporters. One individual will typically report on the activities of around five others, leading to the system being known as the 'one-to-five' system.

5.10 In addition to the NISS, the government operates a cyber-intelligence and security organisation called the Information Network Security Agency, whose role includes online surveillance and censorship, and investigations into potential threats to national security, including potential cyber-attacks on critical infrastructure.

5.11 The Ethiopian intelligence agencies are highly capable. DFAT assesses that individuals who actively protest against the government or its policies—physically or online, in Ethiopia or overseas—are unlikely to escape the attention of authorities.

## Judiciary

5.12 Article 78 of the Constitution provides for an independent judiciary, and Article 79 establishes a dual judicial system of federal and state (regional) courts. In civil matters and in criminal cases that do not have political implications, DFAT assesses that the judicial system operates in a reasonably fair and independent manner with regard to routine legal matters, but suffers from a lack of capacity. In cases involving independent journalists, bloggers, opposition supporters and members, or anti-government protesters, there are consistent, credible reports questioning the independence of the judiciary. According to the US State Department, the Ethiopian criminal court system is weak, overburdened and subject to political influence. Defendants have a right to legal representation under the Constitution. In practice, defendants in sensitive cases can be held for long periods without charge, obstructed from accessing legal representation and denied access to the evidence against them. Publicly appointed defenders are typically inexperienced and poorly paid. Hearings of sensitive cases are sometimes closed, notionally to protect national security and the safety of witnesses. This has the effect of reducing the transparency of proceedings.

## Detention and Prison

5.13 According to the US State Department there are six federal and 120 regional prisons in Ethiopia, as well as a number of unofficial detention centres across the country. With the large-scale arrests following the protests in Oromia and Amhara regions and the declaration of a State of Emergency, people were also reportedly detained in military facilities, local administration offices and makeshift detention centres in government-owned properties. While in normal circumstances male and female prisoners are held in separate facilities, there are reports that some male and female prisoners were co-located for the purposes of 're-education' programs because of the large number of people arrested under the State of Emergency. Children are also sometimes incarcerated with adults.

5.14 Prisons are reportedly severely overcrowded, and access to adequate food, healthcare and sanitation is limited. The US State Department describes prison and pre-trial detention facilities in Ethiopia as being harsh and, in some cases, life-threatening. There have been some new prisons built in recent years, and these facilities are reportedly closer to international standards. However, the government restricts access to prisons by international monitoring bodies, so it is difficult to independently verify claims around treatment. There are reports that prisoner complaints to courts are sometimes not heard or given due consideration, including claims of torture (see Torture, above).

## INTERNAL RELOCATION

5.15 Article 32 of the Constitution provides all Ethiopians with the right to freedom of movement around the country, including the freedom to choose a place of residence and the freedom to leave the country. According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), there were more than 843,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) across Ethiopia in April 2017, with Somali and Oromia regions hosting the largest numbers of IDPs (457,000 and 280,000, respectively). Conflict displaced around 46 per cent of IDPs, with the rest displaced by natural and other disasters (largely drought). Only around 29 per cent of displacement sites have sufficient latrines to cater for the number of people located there; only seven per cent of sites have gender-segregated latrines. Lighting, waste disposal and access to markets and livelihoods are significant problems in most IDP sites. Some regions, particularly Somali and Afar regions, are reportedly reluctant to resettle IDPs from other regions, due in part to a federal payment funding structure that (unintentionally) provides incentives to maintain mono-ethnic populations.

5.16 Food insecurity, poverty, water shortages and poor economic prospects are significant factors in many people's decision to relocate to other parts of Ethiopia (or to other countries), including those who move to Addis Ababa. However, economic factors may also act as a barrier to people's ability to relocate, particularly vulnerable people such as divorced women, young mothers and victims of domestic violence. Aside from the so-called villagisation policy (see [Anuak](#), above) and the unintended funding incentives discussed in the previous paragraph, DFAT is not aware of any formal government policies that act to prevent internal relocation, although some people may lose access to certain government payments by moving. For example, the Productive Safety Net Programme, which aims to increase the resilience of people facing chronic food insecurity, targets the woreda level (the third-level administrative division in Ethiopia); people moving to woredas that do not have access to the program risk losing support. Ethnicity and language differences can act as barriers to internal movement and relocation. Amharas and Tigrayans have more freedom to move around the country given the presence of these groups in many different regions and the fact that Amharic is the official national language.

5.17 The government security and intelligence services operate across all parts of the country. This includes the operation of the 'one-to-five' system (see [Intelligence services](#), above). DFAT assesses that political activists, independent journalists, bloggers and other people perceived to oppose the government or its policies are unlikely to be able to avoid attracting the attention of officials by relocating within Ethiopia.

## TREATMENT OF RETURNEES

5.18 Ethiopia is a source, transit and destination country for international migration. Large numbers of people attempt to move from Ethiopia to other countries in search of better economic opportunities. These people typically travel along three routes: through Somalia, Djibouti or Eritrea to Yemen and then on to Saudi Arabia; north through Sudan and Libya in an attempt to reach Europe; or south, in an attempt to reach South Africa. The numbers of people travelling by air to western countries tend to be much smaller.

5.19 In recent years, the Saudi Arabian government has launched a series of crackdowns on undocumented migrants. The most recent of these, announced in March 2017, provided a 90-day amnesty for undocumented workers to leave Saudi Arabia voluntarily or face forced repatriation. The 90-day amnesty expired on 29 June 2017. There are reportedly an estimated 400,000 undocumented Ethiopian migrants in Saudi Arabia. As at 23 June, only around 35,000 people had returned to Ethiopia. The Ethiopian government has also attempted to restrict irregular migration from Ethiopia in recent years. However, even with restrictions on legal migration, crackdowns on undocumented migrants, and the war in Yemen, some people still use people smugglers to travel through Yemen to Saudi Arabia in search of domestic work (women) or construction jobs (men). Of those who travel south, many are stopped prior to making it to South Africa and returned to Ethiopia. According to credible sources in Addis Ababa, some of these people use the reintegration assistance provided upon their return to fund another migration attempt.

5.20 DFAT understands that there are very few successful involuntary returns to Ethiopia of failed asylum seekers from western countries. Authorities typically welcome voluntary returnees to Ethiopia who are not outspoken opponents of the government. The government has on occasion publicised voluntary returns, in recognition of the Ethiopian diaspora's contribution to the economy through remittances. There have been some reports of authorities monitoring voluntary returnees for a period following their return, but DFAT is not aware of any credible reports of voluntary returnees who are not active opponents of the government facing problems stemming from their status as failed asylum seekers.

5.21 However, DFAT assesses that people who return to Ethiopia and who are perceived as being political activists opposed to the government are likely to face a high risk of being monitored, harassed, arrested and detained, particularly if they continue to engage in political activities upon their return. DFAT also assesses

that people who openly criticise the Ethiopian government while they are outside Ethiopia face a high risk that the Ethiopian authorities will be aware of these activities and take action against these people upon their return. This includes people who actively oppose the Ethiopian government on broadcast media, internet-based news sites or blogs, or social media. The Ethiopian authorities have significant intelligence-gathering capabilities and are likely to be aware of significant protest activity undertaken in other countries and online. Ethiopian authorities have tried, convicted and sentenced a number of political and human rights activists and journalists *in absentia*.

## Exit and Entry Procedures

5.22 Ethiopians travelling internationally by air are subject to security and identification checks at the airport, and immigration stations at airports have photograph and fingerprinting facilities. Ethiopian passports are machine-readable and have a range of security features (see [Documentation](#), below). Biometric security measures linked to national databases apply at formal entry and exit points across the country. NISS has primary responsibility for intelligence and border security processes.

5.23 Ethiopia has a number of borders that are not secure, including those with Sudan, South Sudan, Eritrea, Somalia and Kenya. Many Ethiopians use people smugglers to help them cross the border in an attempt to reach Saudi Arabia, Europe or South Africa. Credible sources in Addis Ababa told DFAT that Ethiopia is also increasingly becoming a migration hub for people in other parts of Africa, in part due to the expanding Ethiopian Airlines network. Renovations to Bole International Airport in Addis Ababa are expected to increase the airport's capacity to 20-22 million passengers per year by 2018.

## DOCUMENTATION

### Birth and Death Certificates

5.24 Local administrative offices known as 'kebele' issue birth certificates for applicants residing in their area at the time of the birth. The Addis Ababa City Government Administration issued birth certificates to applicants born in Addis Ababa, prior to January 2009. Since January 2009, local kebele offices (of which there are more than 100 in Addis Ababa) issue certificates. An applicant under the age of 18 must provide ID cards for both parents, two passport-sized photos and a notification of birth either from a hospital (if the birth took place in a hospital) or from the kebele office (if the birth took place at home) in order to obtain a birth certificate. Applicants over the age of 18 must present their ID card or passport, a completed application form and two passport-sized photos. All applicants, regardless of age, must present a statutory declaration issued by a court and signed by three witnesses. Credible sources in Ethiopia have advised DFAT that birth registration rates are very low at around seven per cent.

5.25 Adoptive parents can obtain a birth certificate for their adopted children reflecting the names of the adoptive parents as the parents of the child. This can be obtained following the grant of an adoption order, which is required to be presented in support of the birth certificate application. The birth certificate will in these cases contain a footnote indicating that the parents are adoptive parents.

5.26 Local kebele in the area of residence of the deceased issue death certificates. As with birth certificates, the Addis Ababa City Government Administration issued death certificates prior to January 2009 for all residents of Addis Ababa; thereafter death certificates were issued by local kebele in Addis Ababa.

5.27 Proof of death is needed to register a death. A letter from the kebele is required. If the death occurred at home, whereas if the death occurred in a hospital, a certificate from the hospital attesting to the death is required. Applicants need to provide a statutory declaration issued by a court and signed by three witnesses attesting to the details of the death. Applicants, who must be an immediate relative of the deceased, must also present the ID card of the deceased. In cases where a minor child is an orphan with no identified guardian, the minor child is able to obtain death certificates for their parents.

5.28 The formats of birth certificates and death certificates vary from region to region, but all legitimate birth and death certificates should contain a photo of the applicant and wet seals of the issuing authority. Birth and death certificates should be issued in two languages: English; and either Amharic or the local language of the region of issuance.

## National Identity Cards

5.29 Ethiopia issues kebele cards, which are similar to national identity cards. Kebele offices issue ID cards to applicants who are resident in their local area of responsibility upon reaching 18 years of age. Kebele in the Somali and Oromia regions sometimes issue kebele ID cards to individuals upon reaching 16 years of age.

5.30 Kebele maintain household records showing when a house was acquired, and all individuals declared to be resident in the house, as well as each resident's relationship with the head of the house. Responsibility for updating these records lies with the household members, but this is not always done and records can be several years out of date.

5.31 The format of ID cards varies between regions, but all ID cards should contain: a photograph of the holder; the name and address of the holder; and the date of issue. New-style ID cards issued in Addis Ababa are computer generated and similar in appearance to a credit card. ID cards issued in rural areas may be handwritten, and may appear as a small booklet or cardboard ID card.

## Police Certificates

5.32 For migration purposes, Ethiopian Certificates of Good Conduct can only be issued by the Federal Police Forensic Investigation Department in Addis Ababa. Any person who has resided in Ethiopia for more than six months can obtain a police certificate following payment of a fee and presentation of the following documents: a formal request letter seeking issuance of a police certificate for migration purposes; a copy of the applicant's ID card or passport; three passport-sized photographs; and original fingerprints of the applicant.

5.33 Applicants who resided in Ethiopia as refugees are required to present their Ethiopian government-issued refugee ID card or refugee travel document in cases where the applicant has departed Ethiopia through a resettlement process. Applicants who lived in Ethiopia as refugees but were not registered refugees are unlikely to be able to obtain a police certificate. Individuals who have a criminal record are unable to obtain a police certificate.

5.34 The police department began issuing a new style of certificate in 2012, and is currently issuing several different formats of police certificates. The details appearing on the certificates should be completed in English, and in some cases Amharic. Parts of the certificates such as the reference number and the date of issuance may be completed by hand. Processing can take up to 10 days for applicants resident in Ethiopia and possibly more than one month for applicants resident outside of Ethiopia.

## Passports

5.35 All Ethiopian citizens are entitled to an Ethiopian passport. To obtain a passport the applicant needs to present: a completed application form; an application fee; a kebele ID card or government employee card (for applicants over the age of 18); a birth certificate (for applicants between 6 months and 18 years of age); a clinic card or letter from the institution of birth (for applicants under six months of age); passport photographs; and a recently issued police certificate. Fingerprints are taken at the time of application.

5.36 Until April 2010, Ethiopian missions abroad issued handwritten passports. While this has officially ceased, some handwritten passports remain in circulation and are valid for travel. Ethiopia issues one-year, non-renewable Alien passports to Eritrean nationals resident in Ethiopia who cannot obtain Eritrean passports. These enable the holder to return to Ethiopia without a residence permit. Alien passports have the same security features as an Ethiopian passport, but have a grey cover.

5.37 Ethiopian passports have a number of security features. The 'prayer page' contains an oval Optically Variable Device (OVD) showing Amharic writing in the centre and the letters 'ETH' repeated. Micro-printing and a latent image in Amharic are also present on the prayer page, which under UV light shows the Ethiopian pentagram and repeated writing 'Ethiopian passport' in Amharic (this also appears on the inside back cover). Page one of the passport has a barcode and the passport number, both of which react under UV light. The biodata page has a digitised photo of the holder on the left side, and this photo is also superimposed over the passport details. There is a holographic pattern incorporated onto the laminate that covers the whole page. Under UV light a pattern appears over the top half of the page which repeatedly reads 'FEDERAL DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF ETHIOPIA' in English and Amharic. The biodata page also has a code that can only be read by a decoder that contains the holder's biodata as well as an image of the passport holder.

5.38 The passport number is laser perforated from Page 17 through to the back cover. There is a watermark on all inner passport pages, as well as security thread reading 'ETHIOPIAN PASSPORT' in English and Amharic and micro-printing in Amharic under the word 'VISA' on each page. There is rainbow printing across adjoining pages, and under UV light there is a pattern across adjoining pages that repeatedly reads 'ETHIOPIAN PASSPORT' in English and Amharic. The stitching does not reach the edge of the passport and reacts under UV light, and page numbers appear at different locations on each page under UV light. On the inside back cover, there is intaglio printing for the patterns on the sides as well as micro-printing that repeatedly reads 'FEDERAL DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF ETHIOPIA' and a latent image that reads 'ETHIOPIA'.

## Prevalence of Fraud

5.39 The NISS controls travel documentation. Fraudulent passports are rare and expensive to produce because of security features, but they do appear. Credible contacts in Addis Ababa told DFAT that Ethiopian passports are typically genuine and reliable, but sometimes contain falsified visas to build up a fake travel history. Also common are genuine passports based on fraudulent feeder documents.

5.40 Ethiopian civil documents such as birth and death certificates are issued on the basis of statements made by the applicant and supporting witnesses with limited supporting documentation required. Documents such as medical and school records tend to be more reliable in determining age and guardianship compared to civil documents, but these can also be easily falsified.

5.41 Documents considered to be higher-risk in terms of fraud include birth certificates, death certificates and national ID cards. Medical/hospital records and school records are also a high risk of fraud, but can be more easily verified. Documents assessed as being low-risk include police certificates, adoption orders, bank statements and university documents. Passports also tend to be low risk, although as noted above, genuine passports may be based on fraudulent feeder documents.