



የኢትዮጵያ ሴቶች መብት ማዕከል (ኢ.ሴ.መ.ማ) Center for the Rights of Ethiopian Women (CREW)

"በዓለም አቀፍ ለኢትዮጵያ ሴቶች ማህበራዊ ፍትህና በራስ የመተማመን አቅማቸውን ለማጎልበት ቆመናል"

"Striving for social justice and empowerment of Ethiopian Women worldwide"

Fourth International Conference of Ethiopian Women in the Diaspora

March 7, 2015

Washington DC, USA

The Role of Civil Society Organization (CSOs) in the Upcoming Elections in Ethiopia

Call for papers

Civil society organizations (CSOs) flourished in Ethiopia from early 1990s to 2005 better than ever before. Some of these civil society organizations focused on service delivery, others on civil rights, gender equality and good governance, and still others on consciousness raising and the environment.

In 2009, the Government of Ethiopia enacted a new law, the Societies and Charities Proclamation. The law drastically restricted the activities of many nongovernmental organizations, prohibiting them to work on human rights and good governance. Currently, CSOs have no role in raising awareness of democracy, human rights, rule of law, and citizenship in the country. Meaningful participation of CSOs in activities related to the upcoming election is highly unlikely.

Individual initiatives through CSOs are based on the inalienable right to participate in vital political, social, economic or other issues, without belonging to political parties (in or outside government). Civil society organizations are autonomous means of participating in public life. They are systems of taking initiatives for ensuring that people follow their preferred directions to their political, economic or social lives. Without the active role of CSOs therefore, creating awareness of the rights and responsibilities of citizens and having fair and free elections is going to be impossible. That is, the 2015 elections could simply result in a one-party dominated election similar to that in 2010. Citizens will not participate freely to build a democratic society that will reflect their needs.

At its 4th annual international conference, therefore, the Center for Rights of Ethiopian Women (CREW) plans to consider the role of civil society organizations in the upcoming elections in Ethiopia. The main objective is to create an understanding of the magnitude of the negative impacts of the Societies and Charities Law on the activities of nongovernmental organizations. As a women's civil society organization, CREW will also pay special attention to Ethiopian women's participation in the political process. Thus, one of the major questions that the conference will address will be the role of women's organizations in mobilizing women to use their rights towards fair and free elections.

With that in view, the conference is intended to cover the following themes:

1. Assessment of the Societies and Charities Law and its impact on the activities of civil society organizations in the upcoming elections:
 - Lessons learned from previous elections; and
 - Challenges and opportunities for the upcoming elections
2. Women's participation in the political process:
 - Women's advocacy for free and fair elections
 - Plan of action and advocacy on women's participation in the political process
 - Strategies for encouraging women to seek political leadership positions.
- 3 Encouraging the international community to promote free and peaceful elections in Ethiopia.

If you are interested in presenting papers on any of these areas, please send us a one-page proposal by January 30, 2015. The proposal should state the topic and show the pertinence of your presentation to our theme. If you have any questions, please write to us via our e-mail: ethiowomen@gmail.com.