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GENDER NEEDS ASSESSMENT FOR MEKELLE CITY, ETHIOPIA

Prepared by

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ABBREVIATIONS

AIDS	Acquired Immuno Deficiency Syndrome
CNHDE	Center for National Health Development in Ethiopia
CSA	Central Statistical Agency
EFY	Ethiopian Fiscal Year
EWLA	Ethiopian Women’s Lawyers Association
DECSI	Dedebit Credit & Finance Institution
DHS	Demographic and Health Survey
FDRE	Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
FHH	Female Headed Household
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HTP	Harmful Traditional Practices
ILO	International Labor Organization
IMR	Infant Mortality Rate
MCI	Millennium Cities Initiative
MCH	Maternal and Child Health
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MOFED	Ministry of Finance and Economic Development
MOH	Ministry of Health
MSE	Micro and Small Enterprises
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PLWHA	People living with HIV/AIDS
PRB	Population Reference Bureau
SRH	Sexual and Reproductive Health
STI	Sexually Transmitted Infection
TWAB	Tigray Women’s Affairs Bureau
TWLA	Tigray Women’s Lawyers Association
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
WAD	Women’s Affairs Department
WAO	Women’s Affairs Office
WAT	Women’s Association of Tigray

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2004, then UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan declared that empowering women “is crucial to efforts to combat poverty.” Since that time, women’s health, rights and economic empowerment have been increasingly acknowledged as critical cross-cutting issues essential to attaining the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Women’s physical and mental health, freedom from violence and from fear of violence, and the protection and enforcement of these fundamental rights are now widely understood to be measures of how prepared any government and civil society are to maximize the human potential of its entire population, an aspiration that today can be measured as progress toward achieving the MDGs.

This needs assessment is focused explicitly on achieving gender equality and women’s empowerment, or MDG3. The research for this study was conducted in Mekelle, the capital city of the Tigray National Regional State, situated 780 kilometers north of Addis Ababa, Ethiopia’s capital. Tigray is one of Ethiopia’s five poorest regions, with a projected 2008 population of 227,505¹ and a poverty head count index of 42 percent in the year 2000 (MOFED, 2002).² With national policies and laws in place to protect women and girls’ rights, there has never been a better time to address gender equality issues in Mekelle and across the Tigray region. The Millennium Cities Initiative (MCI) estimates, on the basis of the MDG-based costing model utilized in this needs assessment,³ that with an annual additional investment of only \$2 per capita annually, Mekelle City has the potential to achieve MDG3 by the target date of 2015.

MCI’s research has shown that attention to gender equality has increased across all sectors of Mekelle society. Nevertheless, significant gaps still exist. Violence against women, including rape, remains a problem. With few if any support services, little effective law enforcement and scant awareness of the issue, this abuse often remains invisible, even accepted as normative social behavior. Given the costs of such violence to women’s and girls’ physical health as well as mental health, confidence and self-esteem, it is imperative that law enforcement becomes seriously engaged and that government, NGOs and the private sector launch public awareness campaigns. Victims and law enforcement agents, including presiding judges in cases involving such abuse, must be fully educated as to the rights of women, as of all citizens.

Women’s physical health is equally critical to their own economic development and to that of the city as a whole. In 2005, the city’s HIV-prevalence rate was estimated at 13.3 percent, higher than the national urban prevalence of 10.5 percent (FMOH and HAPCO, 2006). This serious health challenge has had a more deleterious effect on women in Mekelle, who already face the stresses brought on by poverty and societal gender biases. Positive diagnoses can be devastating, possibly leading to even greater stigmatization and isolation by the community.

¹ This population was projected using data from the 2007 census, an exponential growth function and an average growth rate of 5.4 percent. Of this number, 51.3 percent were female.

² According to the 2002 *Poverty Profile of Ethiopia* report.

³ The needs assessment instrument utilized here was developed under the United Nations Millennium Project, under then-Secretary General Kofi Annan and his Special Advisor and Earth Institute Director Jeffrey D. Sachs. The UN Millennium Project costing model, now administered by the UN Development Programme and member states for use at the national level, is being applied for the first time at the municipal level by MCI.

Mekelle does have sexual and reproductive health (SRH) awareness campaigns and education. Yet with such high HIV prevalence, community health workers and local authorities must continue to spread knowledge and awareness in order to ensure prevention, protection and empowerment.

This needs assessment puts forward a number of practical interventions to help strengthen support for enforcing the rights of girls and women. These include:

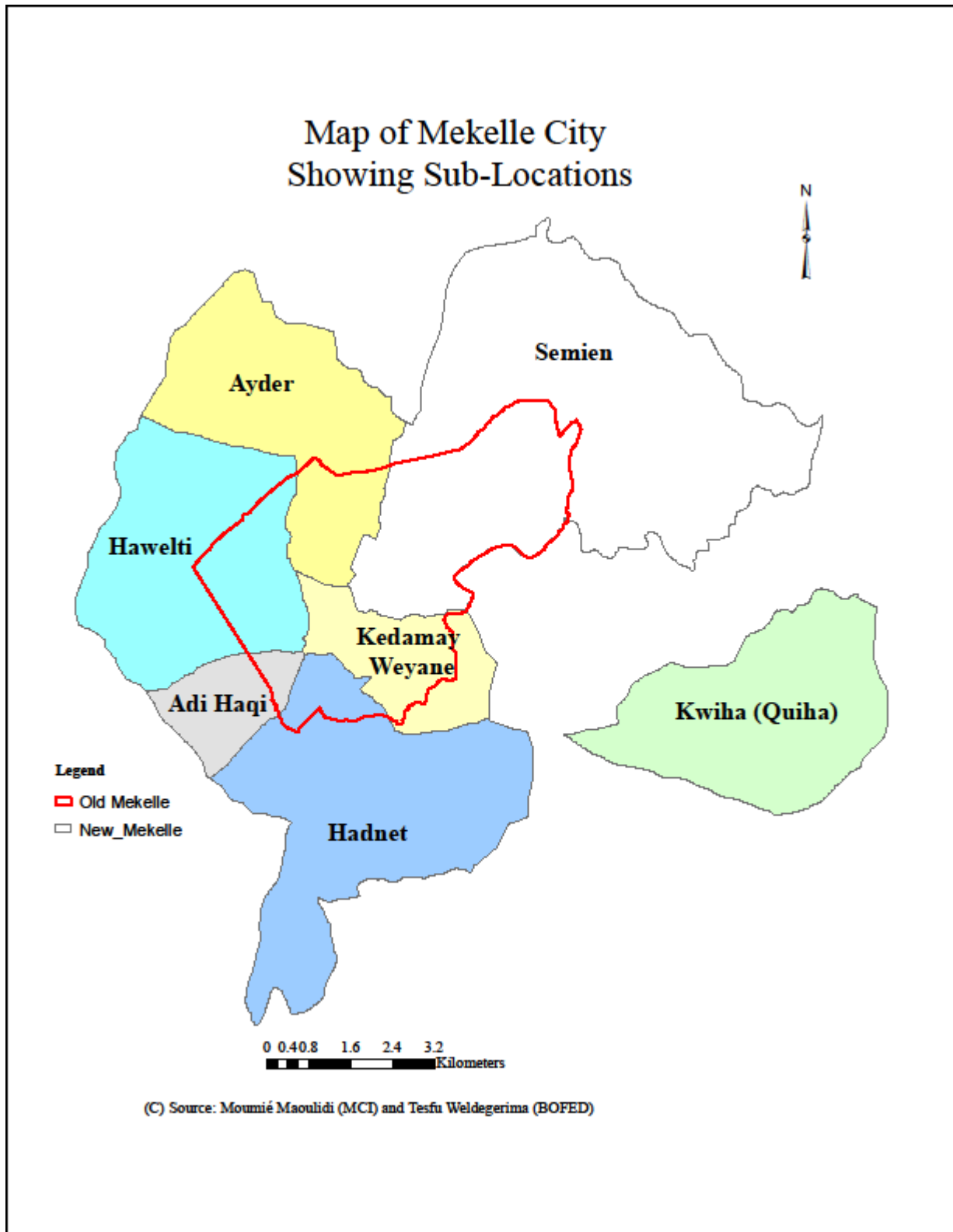
- Launching mass media and community based campaigns focused on promoting awareness of girls' education, women's sexual and reproductive health rights, women's property and inheritance rights and gender-based violence;
- Providing educational support for girls in primary schools to ensure that more girls graduate from primary school and transition to secondary school;
- Offering vocational/entrepreneurship training to reinforce women's employability skills;
- Offering mentoring sessions for women candidates for political office to encourage more women to participate in politics.

Public awareness campaigns aimed at eliminating gender-based violence will also be conducted because they have the potential to make significant differences in the lives of women.

Just as important, girls and women are legally entitled to significantly more protection in the judicial process than they currently receive. The low-level community courts, known as Social Courts, in which most cases involving women's issues are adjudicated, should be formalized and professionalized, social services need to be established for victims of violence, and law enforcement agents need more comprehensive and frequent training on gender-related issues including women's legal rights.

The findings in this report suggest that gender equality in Mekelle can be dramatically improved through an integrated package of simple interventions, provided that there is adequate community will. Through a dedicated, intentional and concerted effort in this direction by government, the private and non-profit sectors, women will begin to find employment in higher-income fields and will progress in ways that can be transformative not only for the girls and women themselves, but also for their families and, by extension and example, for the city as a whole.

Figure 1. Map of Mekelle City Showing Sub-Locations



I. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

Between 1974 and 1991, the people of Tigray endured nearly two decades of armed struggle against the provisional military government, known as the Derg. Many women joined in this struggle as “Freedom Fighters” and played important roles also as logisticians and providers of food. This experience marked the start of the women’s movement in Tigray, and until this day, the women of Tigray continue to be a strong force in advocating for and implementing women’s political, economic and social rights.

Although the lives of women in Mekelle have changed for the better since the end of the protracted conflict in 1991, many women still live in poverty, posing tremendous risks to their health. Federal and regional laws and policies have been created and are in place to protect the rights of women, but enforcement is lacking. Women are encouraged to go to school and to pursue higher education, but they are still not achieving the same levels of education as men, for many reasons.⁴ This education gap, in turn, engenders further impediments to women’s advancement: for example, since women are not able to take full advantage of the education offered, they tend to be less knowledgeable about sexual and reproductive health, maternal and child health and the various health services available to them and their families. As women bear the responsibility for child-rearing and taking care of the family, this lack of knowledge actually jeopardizes family life and community wellbeing. Employment of women is highly encouraged in all sectors of the economy, but in part because the education level of many women remains lower than that of men, women still tend to find themselves in lower paying positions, keeping women’s economic status relatively low and slow to rise. Forms of violence against women, such as rape and abuse, also persist. Unfortunately, few services currently exist to support victims of violence.

1.2. Scope of Research

Based on the premise that gender equality and women’s empowerment are important determinants of economic growth and development, this needs assessment gauges the roles, position and status of women in Mekelle and discusses factors impacting women’s lives and wellbeing. In particular, the analysis focuses on the economy (employment), health, violence, education, politics and women’s rights.

1.3. Objectives

According to a recent World Bank report, gender equality and women’s empowerment (MDG 3) are critical for the attainment of other Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) because they promote universal primary education (MDG 2), reduce child mortality (MDG 4),

⁴ To cite one example, the lack of adequate latrines at many schools discourages many girls from attending school. In addition, girls have to perform household chores, such as cooking and cleaning, that take time away from studying.

improve maternal health (MDG 5) and encourage women's greater participation in the labor force, which is instrumental for poverty reduction and economic growth (World Bank, 2007).

The objectives of this needs assessment are twofold: first, to report on the existing interventions and gaps found in Mekelle that relate directly to MDG 3; second, to propose additional recommendations based on interviews with relevant Ethiopian officials and citizens, as well as on first-hand observations by MCI researchers and staff.

1.4. Limitations

Mekelle City lacks the capacity to collect gender-specific data due to the absence of skilled personnel. In some cases, given that few organizations and offices are fully equipped with updated technology, the systems used for data collection are archaic, with much information collected and tabulated by hand. Inaccuracies also occur through translation of reports written in the local language, Tigrinya. In other instances, data were not obtainable because people were not at liberty to share the information requested, were not available to meet or were unreachable due to limited communications.

Throughout this report, the reader should also remain aware that this needs assessment may include information regarding some of Mekelle's more rural suburbs, as in many cases, the available data did not specify exact locations.⁵ Mekelle is also undergoing a significant demographic expansion, so the information gathered specifically for Mekelle could also be slightly underestimated.

1.5. Methodology

The needs assessment was conducted in close consultation with the Tigray Women's Affairs Bureau (TWAB), the Women's Association of Tigray (WAT) and several other government offices and NGOs. The following methodology was used to conduct the needs assessment:

1. A literature review was carried out before travelling to Ethiopia and to Mekelle;
2. Relevant stakeholders were identified and contacted, and appointments were arranged;
3. Stakeholders were interviewed for the purposes of obtaining data and relevant information regarding new potential sources; understanding interviewees' perspectives and recommendations regarding gender inequality and women's empowerment in Mekelle;
4. Relevant information was obtained from the Tigray Women's Affairs Bureau (TWAB) and the Women Association of Tigray (WAT)⁶;
5. Relevant stakeholders were sought out at various locations, to help fill in missing information;
6. For information deemed unavailable for Mekelle City, the same information for the Tigray region or for Ethiopia was used, extrapolated from and applied to the municipal level.

⁵ In 2006, the areas known as Quiha (also as Qwiha or Kuha) and Aynalem were incorporated within Mekelle City. As a result, present-day Mekelle City covers an area of 109.36 square kilometers. See Figure 1.

⁶ It should be noted that their activities cover the entire Tigray region and are not limited to Mekelle.

Summary of Recommended Interventions

The interventions proposed in this needs assessment are as follows:

- Mass-media awareness campaigns via radio and newspapers in support of women's empowerment and gender equality;
- Educational support for girls in grades 5-8;
- Capacity-building for women representatives, as well as for those running for election;
- Economic empowerment via vocational training and business skills development;
- Community-based campaigns on gender-based violence and property/inheritance rights;
- National advocacy for the enactment and revision of gender-related laws (e.g., regarding violence against women, equal access to land and resources).

II. DATA ANALYSIS

Since the early 1990s, Ethiopia has developed strong gender-conscience policies and has heightened awareness on gender issues. In 1993 the national Women's Affairs Office (WAO), was established, and the National Policy on Ethiopian Women (called "the Women's Policy") and the National Population Policy of Ethiopia were promulgated, with the aim of protecting women's rights and facilitating conditions conducive to gender equality. The Women's Policy promotes more female participation in politics and in the economy and attempts to ensure equal treatment and respect. The Population Policy aims to reduce mortality rates and ensures family planning and important access to health care. Along with these two policies, in 1996 the Social Welfare and Social Development Policy was developed to address welfare issues for children, youth, family, women, the elderly and the physically and mentally impaired. The Ethiopian Constitution was also revised in the mid-1990s to guarantee equality between men and women.

The Government of Ethiopia has undergone comprehensive decentralization and has since created governmental bodies at all levels. The Tigray Women's Affairs Bureau (TWAB) is the main governing organization in the region representing women. There are also Women's Affairs Offices at every sub-regional level: zonal, *woreda*, and *kebele* (closest to the community), all of which report up to the regional TWAB. Mekelle was considered a zone of its own, but now zonal administrative offices are being phased out. However, the phase-out in Tigray did not affect all offices and organizations, the TWAB being one of the remaining entities; thus there still exists a Zonal Women's Affairs desk. Indeed, Women's Affairs government bodies exist at every level of government: federal, regional, zonal, *woreda* and *kebele*. According to this structure, the regional offices provide the guidance, financial and technical support for the sub-regional offices to implement and execute their programs and activities.

The political participation of women in Ethiopia, Tigray and Mekelle has increased over time. The regional objective, to reach at least 50 percent for female political participation, has been

met. At the federal level, the proportion of females holding positions of political power is currently at 36.8 percent.

Several laws in both Ethiopia and Tigray involve the rights of women, but the Family, Criminal and Labor Laws most directly address women's basic rights. The Family Law currently provides guidelines regarding divorce, property rights and child custody. The Criminal Law includes provisions for the prosecution of rape and domestic violence, and the Labor Law speaks to employment and labor rights. In addition, an "affirmative action" policy is actively practiced in Mekelle, and the entire region of Tigray is open to more employment opportunities for women. These laws have had direct influences on the economic, social and civic wellbeing of Ethiopian women.

However, despite the laws and policies created to promote gender equality, gender disparities persist. At the household level, traditional male and female roles remain prevalent. The majority of men work, while women continue to cook, clean and take care of the children. Amongst more educated professionals, these gender roles have dissipated; however, they are still very much a part of the mainstream culture in Mekelle. Fortunately, it has been acknowledged that less educated women who have started businesses and been successful have also made progressive changes in the home, including by involving men in more central roles there.

In Mekelle, the toughest barriers to gender equality are undoubtedly the deep-rooted traditional attitudes, beliefs and practices that reinforce gender roles disadvantageous to the equal rights and development of women. These longstanding beliefs and traditions perpetuate a lack of understanding of gender issues, even those relating to women's rights and empowerment under current Ethiopian law. It is helpful for the women of Mekelle that the city contains the region's main headquarters for most of the women's associations, including the TWAB and the rest of the regional government offices, rendering the majority of gender equality and women's empowerment programs more readily accessible. This needs assessment has found that the chief limiting factors to the success of programs designed to address existing gender imbalances are the capacity and quality of current programs, as well as the human and financial capital required for such programs' long-term sustainability and acceptance in the community.

2.1. Women and the Economy: Reducing Gender Gaps in Employment and Wages

Most Mekelle women work in low-income sectors. Even in the public sector, there are large pay discrepancies between genders. As shown below in Table 1, in 2007 71 percent of all the female government employees earned less than 1,000 birr (\$112) per month, whereas more than half (56 percent) of all male employees earned more.

Table 1. Government Employees 2007, Salary by Gender

Salary Range (birr/month)	No. of Male Employees	% of Males in this income range (of all males)	No. of Female Employees	% of Females in this income range (of all females)	% of Females in this income range (of all employees)
200-999 (\$22.50-\$112.12)	2155	44.0%	2137	71.4%	49.8%
1000-1999 (\$112.35-\$224.35)	2073	42.4%	786	26.3%	27.5%
2000-2999 (\$224.46-\$336.59)	468	9.6%	44	1.5%	8.6%
≥3000 (≥\$336.70)	198	4.0%	24	0.8%	10.8%

Source: *2007 Salary of Employees Working in Government Offices*, Printouts from the Capacity Building Office in the President's Office, Mekelle, Ethiopia, March 2008.

Gender parity has been achieved at the primary school level, and the number of girls attending secondary school (grades 9-12) has been increasing (see Table 2). However, the number of girls in preparatory schools (grades 11-12) is consistently lower than the number of boys at this level. This indicates that girls' school participation rates decrease when they reach higher grades. In addition, a glance at the education level of government employees shown in Figure 1 below indicates that very few women are educated beyond secondary school.

In a 1993 study, the International Labor Organization (ILO) attributed gender disparity in the workforce to several factors: women's role as mother and caretaker impeded their productive capacity at work; the unfavorable social and cultural attitudes toward working women did not facilitate a conducive environment in which women might seek work, and low levels of female participation in formal education and vocational training resulted in fewer women being qualified or hired for technical or administrative posts. As a result, the study found that most women turned to the informal sector for employment. They participated in activities requiring little or no education or skill, such as petty trading and handicrafts production.⁷

⁷ 1st Source: Spreadsheet on 2006 graduates on post-graduation activities, Mekelle Technical & Vocational Training Center, March 2008; 2nd Source: Government Employees by Profession and Gender Spreadsheet for 2007, Capacity Building Office in the President's Office, March 2008.

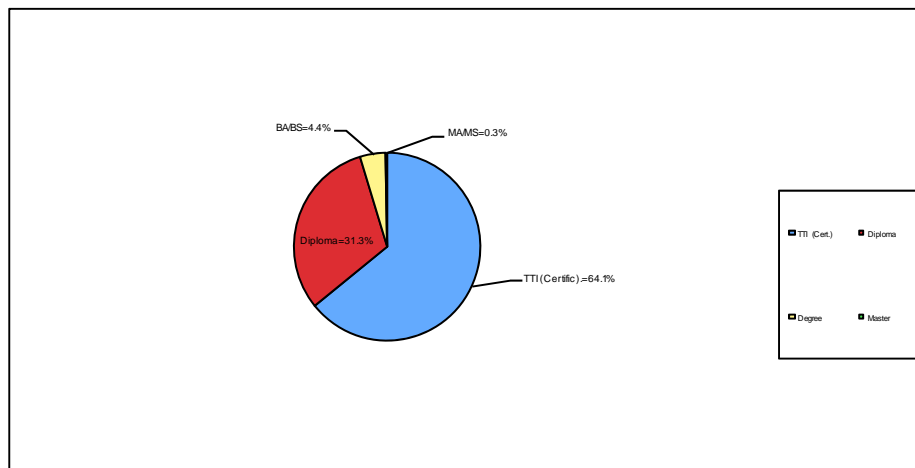
Table 2. Enrollment in Mekelle Primary and Secondary Schools 1997-2000 E.C. (2005-2008)

Education Level	1997 E.C. (2005)		1998 E.C. (2006)		1999 E.C. (2007)		2 000 E.C. (2008)	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Primary School (Grade 1-8)	20276	21969	20926	22614	25070	26380	24453	26084
Secondary School (Grade 9-12)	7349	6272	8003	6850	8274	7579	7692	7719
Preparatory School (Grade 11-12)	1913	1071	2261	1355	2296	2063	2306	2131
TVET 10+1 (Day Program)	102	521	50	76				
TVET 10+2 (Day Program)	351	297	233	248				

Note: TVET 10+1 and 10+2 are one and two year formal TVET programs. There is also a 3-year program (10+3)

Sources: TVET Commission Department of Planning and Programming and Capacity Building (August 1998 E.C); Tigray Region Education Bureau, Education Statistics Annual Abstract 1999 E.C. (2006/2007), prepared by Planning and Project Department, Mekelle, Sept. 2000 E.C. (2007/2008).

Figure 2. Female Government Employees (1998 E.C.) 2006



	Highest Level of Education Attained ⁸					
	TTI (Cert.)	Diploma	BA/BS	Master	PhD	Total
Number	469	229	32	2	0	732

Source: Woreda Women's Offices (1998 E.C.)

The gender breakdown of employment data shown below in Table 3 was obtained from the report on *The 2005 National Labor Force Survey*, conducted by the Central Statistical Agency (CSA) of Ethiopia.⁹ The year 2005 saw unemployment rates of 24.6 percent for females and 18.3 percent for males; see Table 3 for more detail.

⁸ TTI (Cert.) = Certificate from a Teacher Training Institute; BA/BS = Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Science; MA/MS = Master of Arts/Master of Science.

⁹ Although not current, this is nevertheless the most relevant recent set of unemployment data reviewed for this study. The Social Affairs Office, asked to provide MCI with current unemployment information for Mekelle, did not have full confidence in its data, largely because not everyone in Mekelle of working age and capable of working is registered.

Table 3. Employment by Age Group and Sex – Mekelle: 2005

Age Group	Economically Active			Total Unemployed Pop			Unemployment Rate		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
All Ages	70,005	33,357	36,648	15,107	6,110	8,997	21.6	18.3	24.6
10-14	2,280	1,188	1,092	281	49	232	12.3	4.1	21.3
15-19	10,781	3,818	6,963	2,915	767	2,148	27.0	20.1	30.9
20-24	12,977	5,158	7,819	5,567	2,343	3,224	42.9	45.4	41.2
25-29	12,398	5,848	6,550	3,032	1,352	1,680	24.5	23.1	25.7
30-34	7,643	3,945	3,698	1,028	471	557	13.5	11.9	15.1
35-39	7,011	3,708	3,303	533	161	372	7.6	4.3	11.3
40-44	5,328	2,947	2,381	540	176	364	10.1	6.0	15.3
45-49	3,787	1,829	1,958	451	241	210	11.9	13.2	10.7
50-54	2,229	1,324	905	49	0	49	2.2	0	5.4
55-59	1,397	857	540	265	159	106	19.0	18.6	19.6
60-64	2,033	1,290	743	179	179	0	8.8	13.9	0.0
65+	2,141	1,445	696	267	212	55	12.5	14.7	7.9

Source: CSA (2006), Table 4.2.2, p. 284.

Women clearly face higher levels of unemployment compared to their male counterparts, suggesting possible hiring inequity between males and females in the workforce. However, this gap is not necessarily due to any violation of the labor law or discrimination; indeed, affirmative action is used when hiring, to give women preference. Interestingly, the unemployment gap could involve female choice regarding employment. In analyzing data sets on sectors mostly occupied by women, it is evident that women tend to engage in lower-income occupations. According to data provided by the Mekelle Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Center, most females studied secretarial work and “information” and “purchasing” positions (see Table 4). As can be seen in Table 5, even though there were more female graduates, many more women were unemployed than males (65 versus 35 percent). This disparity in unemployment rates may be due to unfavorable cultural beliefs about women’s roles, as well as to their own lack of confidence in seeking more challenging positions.

Table 4. Data of Graduates of Mekelle TVET Day Program, Class of 2005 & 2006

No.	Department Name	2005 10+2 Graduates			2006 10+2 Graduates		
		F	M	T	F	M	T
1	Automotive	-	25	25	-	23	23
2	Electricity	7	22	29	3	25	28
3	Electronics	2	13	15	-	-	-
4	Machine Technology	2	12	14	-	21	21
5	General Mechanics	1	26	27	4	23	27
6	Drafting	7	7	14	10	12	22
7	Surveying	11	12	23	10	12	22
8	Building Construction	66	83	149	11	56	67
9	Road	-	-	-	-	-	-
10	Wood Work	1	12	13	3	12	15
11	Information	35	15	50	48	2	50
12	Accounting	13	37	50	30	14	44
13	Junior Secretary	50	1	51	91	-	91
14	Bank & Insurance	21	14	35	31	10	41
15	Salesmanship	8	1	9	15	5	20
16	Purchase	13	06	19	26	8	34
17	Cook	14	1	15	12	-	12
18	Bakery/Confectionary	-	-	-	-	-	-
19	Hotel Service	-	-	-	-	-	-
20	Tailor	-	-	-	-	-	-
21	Dress Maker	5	-	5	-	-	-
	Total	256	287	543	294	223	517

Source: Mekelle Technical & Vocational Training Center, spreadsheet on 2005 and 2006, April 2008.

Table 5. Summary of Mekelle TVET 2006 Graduates

	M	F	Total
# graduated	326	414	740
# of graduates not reported	29	45	74
# of graduates that continued further in their education	166	202	368
# graduated & searched for employment	131	167	298
# unemployed	46	108	154
% unemployed	35.11%	64.67%	51.68%

Source: Mekelle Technical & Vocational Training Center, spreadsheet on 2006 graduates, April 2008.

A number of government and non-governmental organizations are currently working to improve the economic situation for women and for Mekelle as a whole. The Tigray Women's Affairs Bureau (TWAB) and the Women's Association of Tigray (WAT), with its half-million members in Tigray, along with many other women's associations, are working together to build women's capacity by providing trade and business skills training, microcredit and education assistance. Gender equality awareness campaigns are also conducted on a regular basis, to remind people of the gender issues that may be impeding their community's economic development as a whole.

Information on education, employment and working conditions can be accessed from several sources, including the Trade and Industry Bureau, the Social Affairs Bureau, the TVET center and the Capacity Building Office. Information regarding gender-related misconduct in the workplace is harder to come by; while it would seem that interested citizens would naturally approach the Justice Bureau and/or the Police Commission for such data, regrettably, most employment complaints and harassment issues go unreported. Sexual harassment is known to exist, but there is evidently a strong resistance to formally reporting it, for fear of losing one's job or of making oneself vulnerable to possible retaliation from alleged offenders.¹⁰

2.2. Women and Health: Guaranteeing Access to Sexual and Reproductive Health

The TWAB properly emphasizes the well-known verity that prevention is the best and most cost-effective strategy for ensuring maternal and child health. In collaboration with the Health and Education Bureaus, the TWAB conducts public education sessions on sanitation, hygiene, vaccinations, family planning, HIV/AIDS, HTP, etc., which take place in classrooms and conference rooms across the city. The Voice of Tigray (DWET), the region's mass media center, helps spread awareness on sexual and reproductive health (SRH) issues through the Internet and radio, including an hour-long weekly DWET radio program devoted to women issues and health. Weekly 15-minute television programs sometimes also focus on women's issues and may include discussions of SRH, at the discretion of the Media Bureau.

In addition to government-sponsored mass media, the NG, Media Women Association, has produced a 25-minute documentary on Harmful Traditional Practices (HTP) that began airing on television once or twice a year, starting in 2008. The Media Women Association and Media Bureau will also be releasing a bi-weekly newsletter with a page devoted to HTP and other gender-based issues. Unfortunately, only about 2,000 prints will be released in Mekelle each time, and it has been observed that such publications do not reach the general public, but are distributed first to NGOs and government offices. There are no official statistics for HTP, but the most common HTP occurring in Mekelle includes substituting sugar water and butter for breast milk and, according to tradition, cutting the uvula to protect the child from illness. Most officials however, deny that Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) occurs in Mekelle.

Table 6 below shows that in 2006 and 2007, the average regional life expectancy for males was 53 years and 55 years for females. At the national level, the maternal mortality rate (MMR) was 673 per 100,000 (0.64 percent) in 2007.¹¹ According to the HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control Office (HAPCO), in 2005, the HIV prevalence in urban areas in Tigray was 13.3 percent. A possible explanation for this high rate could be the high concentration of soldiers as well as transients entering and exiting the city for purposes of trade, international work, peace-keeping, etc. If the HAPCO data are accurate, it is evident that Mekelle has a serious problem with HIV/AIDS, given a HIV prevalence rate significantly higher than the national urban average of 10.5 percent. According to HAPCO, one of

¹⁰ As an example, several Ethiopian Women Lawyers' Association officials have felt compelled to go into hiding to evade such retaliation after charging alleged violators with abusing women's rights.

¹¹ This number would represent a significant reduction from the 2005 MMR of 850/100,000 mentioned in Tigray Health Bureau 1999 E.C. (2007), *Tigray Health Bureau 1998 EFY Profile*. However, the difficulty of obtaining reliable maternal mortality data for Tigray makes all such comparisons rough approximations at best.

Mekelle’s biggest priorities is educating sex workers about HIV/AIDS and increasing awareness of the disease citywide.

Table 6. Selected Health Indicators for Tigray

Year	Life Expectancy		Maternal Mortality	HIV/AIDS
	Male	Female		
2007	53.4	55.4	673 per 100,000 (national)	
2006	52.0	54.9		13.3% (urban areas, Tigray)

Source: FMOH (2007). All data represents the Tigray region unless otherwise specified; HIV data obtained from the HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control Office (HAPCO).

Health care center capacity and finding qualified personnel are clear challenges in the provision of adequate health care to Mekelle women. The city’s hospitals and health centers serve not only the municipality, but also the entire region. Predictably then, there are too few physicians available to treat everyone. According to the Tigray Health Profile EFY 1998, Tigray counted a total of 37 physicians for the entire region, 13 of them in Mekelle. Tigray’s population is around 4.4 million, so the number of persons per physician is roughly 118,919; Mekelle’s 179,005 residents in 2005, split among 13 physicians, would imply the much better, but still impossibly high ratio of 1:13,769. Because of the shortage of qualified available doctors, many less qualified medical assistants and other health care workers end up treating patients. Thus it is appropriate to say that while treatment is available, the timeliness, appropriateness and general quality of treatment may be seriously lagging.

Medical services are not free in Mekelle, although the poor can access certain services for free if they are able to obtain a “Yellow Card.” In the past, the Social Affairs Office distributed Yellow Cards, but this duty has recently been reassigned to the Social Courts. The official requirements for obtaining a Yellow Card were never revealed to MCI; from informal observations on the ground, it is possible that the power to award Yellow Cards rests almost entirely with the distributor.

As noted above, the Social Courts are manned by volunteer “judges” and “prosecutors” who are not necessarily well-educated in the law. That the distribution of Yellow Cards is now a responsibility of unelected, dubiously qualified Social Court jurists may negatively impact women’s health. Moreover, the capriciously determined access to these Yellow Cards may not be in accordance with established regional and federal Ethiopian law.

Since 2004 all Mekelle residents have lived within two hours of some city health care facility. However, such access poses a greater problem for handicapped persons, as the buildings, roads and transport options are not amenable to the disabled, and ambulances are in dangerously short supply. No available public transport, such as the *budgets* and minibuses, is properly equipped to accommodate disabled people. Therefore, access to health care, while available in principle, is actually quite limited for the disabled. Access is also limited for those either without Yellow Cards or sufficient funds to pay for the services they receive.

2.3. Combating Violence Against Women

Rape and domestic violence, including physical and emotional abuse, are the main forms of violence against women in Ethiopia. At the national level, the Ethiopia’s Women Lawyers Association (EWLA) is currently advocating for the Criminal Law to include marital rape as part of the definition of rape, and also to include economic and other non-physical violence in the definition of domestic violence. In addressing violence against women, the local counterpart of the EWLA, the Tigray Women Lawyers Association (TWLA), provides advice, counseling, free legal aid and training for lawyers on the law, human rights and conflict management pertaining to the rights of women under Ethiopian law. The TWLA also raises awareness during these training sessions concerning those vulnerable populations most susceptible to such violence within the community.¹²

Ethiopian women and girls are not only afraid to report cases; they are also unaware of their rights. Aside from EWLA’s advocacy work, there is not much being done on a large scale to bring awareness or education to women regarding their rights as victims of rape and/or domestic violence. No services were found in the Tigray region to alleviate victims’ stress about reporting such crimes; nor are there “help lines,” drop-in centers or shelters for victims of rape or domestic violence. Limited medical services, not including psychological counseling, are available to victims, who are generally taken to the hospital for a check-up after reporting their cases. However, the medical attention given is very limited and often not comprehensive enough to provide evidence for conviction, should the case be brought to trial. Even at the hospital, until very recently, there have been no personnel prepared to address possible psychological trauma. One such social worker has now been hired in Mekelle for this purpose; however, should women respond as anticipated to the work of the TWLA, and in the event that more cases of rape and domestic violence are reported, more trained personnel will be needed to fill this role.

According to the Mekelle Justice Department, there were 32 reported rapes in 2008 and 40 in 2007. Of the 32 cases reported in 2008, 23 perpetrators have been convicted, as were seven of the suspects involved in the 40 2007 cases. See Table 7 below for more information regarding the reported cases of rape and other violent acts.

Table 7. Cases of Rape and Other Violent Acts

Year	# of Rapes and/or Violent Acts	Closed Convicted Cases	Collected Evidence, in Process	Rejected cases b/c not enough evidence	# Convicted but Not Closed	# on Appointment
2008	32	23	6	3	-	-
2007	40	7	13	5	-	-
2006	47	3	1	-	33	10
2005	40	15	5	-	14	6
2004	35	9	0	-	15	11

Source: Mekelle Justice Department.

¹² While the TWLA works in partnership with the EWLA, in Mekelle the TWLA’s primary focus is less on the possible expansion of the law, and more specifically on the enforcement of current law regarding rape and domestic violence, both to enhance protection and to increase awareness of women’s rights. Unfortunately, in light of the important function it has assumed in the local context, the TWLA has no central office and at the time of this assessment appeared somewhat splintered and disorganized.

The statistics alone suggest that not only is the general public unaware of the rights of domestic violence and rape victims as defined by Ethiopian law, but law enforcement officers themselves are also unfamiliar with the legislation and rights of victims. Cultural norms in Mekelle may create barriers to quick movement in this area, but ongoing interventions are recommended and sorely needed, to bring awareness and education to the people of Mekelle about the implications of committing acts of violence against women. In tandem, women need to have access to information so they can learn their rights, and social programs should be developed to train police and health care professionals as to the appropriate measures and protocols for gathering evidence that might lead to prosecutions. Such collaborative efforts will work to send an unequivocal message to the community that violence against women will not be tolerated.

2.4. Education: Strengthening Opportunities for Post-primary Education of Girls

Female and male participation in primary, secondary and preparatory school is about equal, as Table 8 shows. It is only the quality of education that may be impeding girls' progress. In 2006 the WAT set up tutoring classes to improve girls' primary and secondary education. However, with little funding, the tutors are, of necessity, unpaid teachers, and too few are volunteering to play this role. Also in 2006, the TWAB trained kindergarten teachers, providing both jobs for women and more educational opportunities for younger children.

Table 8. Gross Enrollment in Primary and Secondary Schools (2006/2007)

<i>Area</i>	<i>Primary Grade (1-8)</i>			<i>Lower Secondary (9-10)</i>			<i>Preparatory (11-12)</i>		
	Total	Girls	Boys	Total	Girls	Boys	Total	Girls	Boys
Mekelle	51450	26380	25070	11467	5516	5951	4359	2063	2296
Tigray	940314	463614	476700	87643	38474	49169	20019	8592	11427

Source: *Tigray Region Education Bureau, Education Statistics Annual Abstract 1999 E.C. 2006-2007*, pp. 9-11.

At the Mekelle TVET center, there is higher female than male participation, mainly because students who attend TVET programs are those who fail to pass the national examination. Interestingly, girls attending TVET programs also have a high dropout rate, a pattern also seen in the secondary schools. Abraha and Belay (2006) have identified early marriage and parents' attitudes as the main reasons for girls dropping out of school. At the college and university level, there are many more males than females; thus the TWAB provides grants to help females attend class both part- and full-time. Negotiations have also been undertaken by TWAB with local universities to lower the costs for girls. So far this year, the TWAB has been able to help 43 women attend a college or university.

Both the TWAB and WAT use awareness programs to encourage women and girls to pursue further education and to acquire useful skills. Females are also encouraged to go into higher paying industries, since most females, as noted above, still tend to go into low-income fields. Skills training is often offered in the subjects of business and petty trade, as well as in leadership and confidence-building.

2.5. Increasing Women’s Representation in Political Bodies

Significant progress has been made with regard to women’s participation in the city and region’s political life. Table 9 below shows that the Tigray Regional Parliament and the Mekelle, *woreda* and *tabia* councils all have 50 percent or more female representation. With each election year, as Table 9 reveals, female participation has increased. To continue this trend and to further strengthen capacity, TWAB and WAT at the regional and sub-regional levels have made it a priority to provide training and support for women candidates and elected officials. Among other activities, panel discussions and training sessions are conducted to raise awareness and encourage more women to become politically involved. The thinking here, according to TWAB and WAT officials, is that increased female political involvement can enable women to influence the development of policies and laws that will affect their wellbeing and expand the range of opportunities available to women.

Table 9. Women Elected to the Parliament at Different Levels of Government.¹³

Year	Federal			Tigray Region			All Woredas			Mekelle Woredas Council			All Kebele/Tabia			Mekelle Kebele/Tabia Council		
	M	F	F (%)	M	F	F (%)	M	F	F (%)	M	F	F (%)	M	F	F (%)	M	F	F (%)
2000	36	4	10.50	110	42	27.60	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2001	-	-	-	-	-	-	4446	2251	33.60	n/a	n/a	32.0 ¹	40339	17944	30.70	n/a	n/a	42.0 ¹
2005	24	14	36.80	76	76	50.00	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2008	-	-	-	-	-	-	n/a	n/a	n/a	152	177	53.8 ²	n/a	n/a	n/a	1010	1009	49.98 ²

Source: Election Board of Tigray 2000, 2005, and Representative from Election Board for Mekelle, 2008.

¹information obtained from the Zonal Women’s Affairs Office; ²information obtained from an Election Board representative.

Ethiopian judges are key players in upholding and enforcing the rights of women and girls, given their tremendous decision-making power at the local, regional and federal levels. The court system operating in Mekelle includes one Supreme Court, one High Court, three *Woreda* Courts and 21 Social Courts. In 2008, three of the Supreme Court judges were women. The High Court is the zonal court with nine judges, of which only one was a woman. The *Woreda* Courts had a total of two female judges, the Social Courts, 15. In total, there were 21 females among Mekelle’s 95 judges in 2008.

Mekelle has several women’s associations and other NGOs focused on helping women and the most vulnerable female populations in particular. These groups and their leaders are also key contributors in the promotion of women’s rights, equality, health and economic stability. Their impact is substantial, especially because they are close to the community, which enables them to implement programs and trainings.

Mainstreaming discussions about the importance of gender equality is one of TWAB’s priorities. All plans and strategies are under discussion with the Women’s Affairs Office (WAO), and the Zonal Women’s Affairs Office is located in the Mayor’s building, affording

¹³ Speakers of the House in all *woredas* of Tigray were male (87 percent) and female (13 percent); Deputy Speakers of the House in all Tigray *woredas* were male (76 percent) and female (24 percent), respectively (Election Board of Tigray, 2005).

In Table 9 above, hyphens (“-”) indicate no elections conducted during the given year, “n/a,” that information was not available.

close proximity for meetings and discussions with the municipal leadership. Thus far, the effort seems to have borne fruit: indeed, more women are now holding positions in all sectors of government.

Budgets were not available for the WAO, but from cost information gathered in 2007, budgetary allocation to the Women’s Affairs sector at the municipal level totaled 329,014 birr (\$36,865), most of which went to salaries. A breakdown of these allocations is given in Table 10. It should be noted that none of the Mekelle WAO’s costs are covered by the municipal government; instead, all expenses are paid either by the regional WAO or by donors.

Table 10. Zonal Women’s Affairs Office, 2007 Budget Estimate

	Budget Allocation
Projects	~ 4,750 birr (\$532)
Salaries	~ 324,264 birr (\$36,333)
Total	~ 329,014 birr (\$36,865)

Source: Mekelle Zone Women’s Affairs Plan for 2007.

The systematic collection of gender-disaggregated data appears to have begun only recently. This targeted data gathering is ongoing, however, and the organizations seem to be mastering how best to collect appropriate and pertinent information. As mentioned above, several local NGOs address gender issues from a variety of angles; two more organizations concerned with women’s empowerment are the micro-finance firm Dedebit Credit & Savings Institution (DECSI) and the radio station Voice of Tigray (DWET). DECSI provides micro-financing to whoever applies and qualifies for the loans and has a weekly half-hour radio program on micro-finance that occasionally focuses on gender-based financial concerns. As mentioned previously, DWET has regular radio programs and Internet sites featuring women’s issues throughout the year, making thereby a significant contribution to gender awareness. Female youth groups and self-help groups such as Bright Africa, Girls’ Clubs (in and out of school) and OSSA all work together to encourage and further youth involvement in gender issues, youth empowerment and community service among in Mekelle.

2.6. Areas of Persistent Legal, Cultural and Social Discrimination

Gender-responsive programs sponsored by the municipal government in Mekelle include: 1) implementing affirmative action; 2) encouraging women to study and train in fields with higher income yields, and 3) educating men and women alike about HTP. There are several programs and campaigns to help prevent HTP in Mekelle, a challenging endeavor that includes outreach and public information regarding practices carried out for generations and the ways in which they can be harmful and counterproductive.

Another important change at the policy level in Mekelle has been the use of affirmative action whenever female and male candidates happen to apply for the same position. The only difficulty here is that women are not yet taking advantage of this policy. Statistics show that women in Mekelle have had a hard time breaking out of the traditional secretarial or other support positions and that, indeed, they still apply mostly for lower income jobs. Although women are heartily encouraged to pursue further education as to gain economic stability and wealth, the apparent ingrained lack of self-confidence among Mekelle women, and their deep-

rooted beliefs regarding their more traditional female roles, has been observed to deter them from venturing any further than secondary school. Even if they do apply to tertiary institutions, their chosen areas of study are in general less challenging and lead to jobs in lower paying sectors.

There is no local program for the enforcement of existing law to prevent violence against women. It is important, therefore, that what is being done at the national level be applied also at the local level. The laws exist to protect women's and girl's rights; it is not certain, though, that in Mekelle, the laws are being enforced or even interpreted correctly. There is a consistent challenge, for example, in helping everyone understand the definitions of violence and rape. Given the long-standing acceptance of traditional roles for men and women, many people believe that certain acts of violence should not be considered crimes. In the traditional sense, women belong to men, and therefore men should be able to do whatever they want with their women. Non-physical violence (e.g., economic violence) is the toughest definition for people to agree on; treatment of non-physical violence as a crime is also difficult to enforce when many citizens, including many police, judges and prosecutors, simply do not agree. As mentioned earlier, the EWLA is advocating for revisions to the Criminal and Family Laws, in the former, to include marital rape and non-physical violence as crimes, and in the latter, to incorporate the apportionment of responsibility for post-divorce maintenance, so as to ensure sufficient support for the children.

Sensitization programs for judges, bureaucrats and police officers are needed to affect change in these delicate areas involving social behaviors and mores. Information obtained from judges indicates that there have been so few gender sensitivity training sessions that any information given during the training has long since been forgotten, and that even the trainings had very little impact.¹⁴

Several key findings have emerged from MCI's research and analysis, the first of which relates to the justice system: the Social Courts, the lowest level courts and the easiest to access, need to be reassessed, formalized and professionalized, to better protect the rights and welfare of women in Mekelle. Importantly, although the Social Courts are recognized by the regional government and do render legal judgments, they are technically not official courts of law, staffed by professional judges and prosecutors. Rather, they are staffed by untrained community volunteers who may not be fully apprised of the law or the basic rights of all citizens. Both the Justice Bureau and the Tigray Women's Affairs Bureau (TWAB) have debated the existence and validity of this local court "system" and its qualitatively distinct administration of justice and of the rule of law.

A second finding is that victims of violence in Mekelle need support. There are no psychological counseling services, no support groups and no shelter services available. None of the hospitals in Mekelle offered any social services until very recently, when Mekelle Hospital hired a single social worker. Although each hospital in the region should have at least one social worker, as of the writing of this report, only Mekelle Hospital obtained the funding approval to hire one. In addition to the lack services for victims of violence and rape,

¹⁴ Police officers, too, questioned about such trainings, have indicated that there are currently no such trainings and that, if there had in fact been trainings in the past, there had been very few.

there is also very little gender sensitivity or gender issues training (including updates on laws) for law enforcement (judges, police and prosecutors).

HIV/AIDS is a major health concern for the women of Mekelle, mainly because women have a higher probability of contracting the disease than men. It is, therefore, important that Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) education be introduced. In Mekelle, quality SRH education and raising awareness regarding SRH need to be made a top priority for the long-term health of its women and the community at large. In addition, the procedures for the allocation and disbursement of Yellow Cards, a safety net granting the poorest citizens free access to some health care services, need to be spelled out, made public and handled with transparency.

The quality of education in general also warrants improvement. Although female and male participation in primary and secondary school is about equal, the quality of the education remains relatively low, with few female teachers in place to serve as role models. Females are more adversely affected by these shortfalls, given that they often have less time to study, faced with the competing demands of home life and childcare.

Other findings reveal that the entire urban economy is affected by women's limited participation in the formal sector. Women tend to work in petty trade and other low-income occupations and to shy away from higher-income jobs. They are also more likely to drop out of school, and/or, if they do continue, to end up in less challenging fields. There are relatively few women engaged in politics and/or in positions of political power in Mekelle, although, as noted, the absolute number of female political leaders has grown.

2.7. Interventions

Priority Area 1: To strengthen opportunities for post-primary education for girls

Secondary level education for women is associated with better child health, increases in productivity and reduced fertility. Recognizing the importance of educating women, this needs assessment proposes three interventions: an awareness-raising campaign, tutoring sessions for girls and a yearly panel discussion on girls' education.

1. The mass media campaign (radio) will consist of a one-hour program to disseminate information about the importance of sending girls to secondary school. There will be one campaign a year, and each campaign will feature three radio spots. The total annual cost will be 144,000 birr (\$12,521).

2. Providing educational support (tutoring) for girls in primary school grades 5-8 will enable them to perform better on tests and to transition more readily to secondary school. There will be 23 tutorial classes a week, and with an average per class of 25 students, approximately 575 girls will benefit each year. Tutors will teach four 90-minute sessions per week (Mondays through Thursdays), 16 sessions per month and 160 sessions per year. They will be paid 10 birr for each tutoring session,¹⁵ for a total annual cost of approximately 36,800 birr (\$3,200).

¹⁵ Teachers will be eligible to work as tutors.

3. In addition, the Women's Affairs Bureau and the Education Bureau might organize an annual panel discussion on girls' education. If organized for 300 participants (teachers, trainers, and advocates), the total annual cost is estimated at 4,800 birr (\$417).

Priority Area 2: Guarantee sexual and reproductive health and rights

Promoting knowledge about sexual and reproductive health and rights is a critical priority. Evidence suggests that awareness about sexual and reproductive health rights is central to women's ability to take control of their destinies (UN Millennium Project, 2005). As a result, this needs assessment proposes mass media (radio, television and print) and a community-based campaign to raise awareness about sexual and reproductive health issues. Target groups will include women of reproductive age, midwives and teenage girls.

1. The mass media campaign will feature 52 radio spots every year between 2010 and 2015, as well as a total of four print ads and two television ads. The average annual cost for the mass media campaign is 290,964 birr (\$25,301) per year.

2. The community-based awareness campaign will have 160 staff members who will conduct door-to-door consultations. Organizations that already provide counseling on reproductive health and family planning, such as Mums for Mums, can assist in identifying and training campaign workers. Each staff member will be paid 12,960 birr (\$1,126) per year. The total annual cost for the community-based campaign will be 1.95 million birr (\$169,565).

Priority Area 4: Guarantee women's and girls' property and inheritance rights

To heighten awareness regarding women and girls' property and inheritance rights and gender equality, a community-based campaign (radio and newspapers) will be conducted and will involve five staff members, each of whom will be paid 12,960 birr per year (\$1,126), in addition to yearly administrative costs of 8,000 birr (\$696). The campaign objective will be to inform women of their property and inheritance rights and of the legal resources available to them. The assumption is that once women know their rights, they will demand that their property and inheritance rights be enforced. To support this, there should also be sensitization trainings to assist men and legal professionals in understanding the existing legal framework, which does acknowledge women's property and inheritance rights. MCI estimates the average annual cost of these interventions at 55,916 birr (\$4,862) per year during the 2010-2015 period.

Priority Area 5: Eliminate gender inequality in employment

The 2007 UN MDG Report underscores that more needs to be done to economically empower women. One strategy is to provide women with entrepreneurship training (i.e. small business development courses) and vocational training. The training sessions can be conducted by five trainers, with each session focused on approximately 100 young women. The goal will be to train 12 percent of the unemployed women in 2010 and 30 percent by 2015. Taking into consideration salaries, the cost of equipment for each intervention and administrative costs, the average annual cost during the 2010-2015 period will be 4.7 million birr (\$406,635) per year.

Priority Area 6: Increase women's share of seats in national parliaments and local governmental bodies

It is important to build the capacities of women representatives, as well as those running for election. Hence, training sessions for women representatives and electoral candidates are needed. MCI proposes training five percent of the 1,186 women expected to be candidates in *kebele* and *woreda* councils/parliament elections scheduled for 2012 and 2015. These trainings will involve five trainers and 50 participants per session, at a total annual cost of 63,580 birr (\$5,528).

Priority Area 7: Combat violence against girls and women.

To combat gender-based violence, training is needed for police officers as to how to handle cases of violence against women. Professors/instructors at the Law School have conducted training for women lawyers, and the Justice Department has some gender sensitization training. However, MCI was unable to obtain conclusive information on any training for police officers. Some law enforcement officers interviewed during the field research, including female police officers, were unaware that gender sensitivity trainings had ever been conducted in Mekelle. To address this, a community-based awareness campaign (emphasizing that gender-based violence is illegal) would be useful. The total annual cost (salaries for 2 staff and administrative costs) for such an intervention would be approximately 32,000 birr (\$2,793).

Systemic Issues

In addition to the interventions described above, it is also relevant to estimate resources required to address systemic issues. Specific interventions suggested by the UN Millennium Promise Gender Task Force include supporting mainstreaming in gender units within local and national government offices and sensitization programs for public officials. In this needs assessment, MCI recommends workshops on gender mainstreaming as well as capacity-building on gender-related issues for those serving in municipal government.

Panel discussions will target Mekelle City Administration officers and will focus on gender mainstreaming. During the discussions participants will share experiences and make recommendations regarding how to integrate gender concerns in sector plans/programs. The second intervention, capacity building, will consist of awareness-raising workshops for 41 women working at five women's associations (Women's Association of Tigray, Women's Entrepreneur Association, Women with Disabilities Association, Women's Lawyer Association and Women's Living Association). The workshops will focus on techniques to develop gender-sensitive projects and gender-disaggregated data gathering. The annual cost for these sessions will cost 24,000 birr (\$2,086).

Table 11. Summary of Gender Needs Assessment Costing Tool Results

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Priority Area 1: Strengthen opportunities for post-primary education for girls	185,600	185,600	185,600	185,600	185,600	41,600
Priority Area 2: Guarantee sexual and reproductive health and rights	2,243,149	2,241,930	2,270,914	2,194,627	2,207,698	1,974,867
Priority Area 4: Guarantee women's and girls' property and inheritance rights	54,748	57,166	59,754	62,501	65,408	68,480
Priority Area 5: Eliminate gender inequality in employment	2,502,774	3,484,942	4,567,609	5,758,857	7,067,356	8,502,399
Priority Area 6: Increase women's share of seats in national parliaments and local governmental bodies.			63,580	-	-	63,580
Priority Area 7: Combat violence against girls and women.	31,543	31,471	31,845	32,471	33,267	34,193
Systemic Issues:	24,000	24,000	24,000	24,000	24,000	24,000
TOTAL Birr	5,041,814	6,025,110	7,203,301	8,258,057	9,583,329	10,709,118
Per capita Birr	20.0	22.6	25.7	27.9	30.8	32.6
Per capita USD	1.7	1.9	2.1	2.3	2.6	2.7

III. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As part of its five-year poverty reduction strategy for 2006-2011, the municipal government plans to create more employment opportunities and to ensure that 50 percent of newly created jobs are filled by women. Appreciative of the importance of girls' and women's education, health, rights and economic empowerment, the government has also put in place an infrastructure improvement plan that includes and prioritizes school construction, as well as a plan to upgrade all health posts to the level of established clinics, where the quality and breadth of services provided, including health care for pregnant women, will also be improved. Nevertheless, despite these ambitious plans and the significant progress already made with regard to women and girls' status in Mekelle society, further improvements are needed. MCI estimates that for an annual cost of \$2 per capita, Mekelle has the potential to improve tremendously the access among women to a broader array of educational, economic and political opportunities and public services.

Specifically, the following interventions, well implemented, will make a distinct difference in gender equality across the city:

1. Educational support for girls in grades 5-8;
2. Economic empowerment, through vocational training in skills and business skills development;
3. Awareness media campaigns to heighten women's knowledge of their sexual and reproductive health rights as well as property and inheritance rights; and
4. Capacity-building for women representatives and aspiring women politicians.

Taking each recommendation in turn, educational support (essentially, tutoring) for girls in grades 5-8, at an annual cost of 36,800 birr (\$3,200), will help girls perform better on exams

and in transitioning to secondary school.¹⁶ The Teachers Association, Education Bureau and other well-established organizations might determine together how best to go about this; the supplemental help now provided by the TWAB is clearly not sustainable in its current form, with participating teachers not paid. Yearly panel discussions about girls' education among teachers, trainers and advocates, organized by the Women's Association and the Education Bureau, and estimated at 4,800 birr (\$417), would be helpful.¹⁷ Women who graduate from secondary school and continue in education also need to be encouraged to move beyond existing traditionally "feminine" fields of study to pursue more challenging fields and higher degrees.

Mekelle teachers deserve updated textbooks and school materials that can enrich their own knowledge. Of course increased funding from government and the donor community will be transformative. Options already exist, however, that can significantly improve the level of teaching and the range of available teaching materials: the Teachers Association has been building an Internet and computer center to enable teachers to download and print updated and practically free teaching materials from the Internet. Teachers will need initial guidance, as well as an efficient Internet connection and ongoing maintenance, which will incur recurring costs.¹⁸

To increase the absolute number of women in the workforce, sessions on starting small businesses and vocational training for about 500 females can be provided for \$406,635 (4.7 million birr) a year. Annual expenses for awareness-raising campaigns are expected to cost 1.95 million birr (\$169,565) for sexual and reproductive health rights and 55,916 birr (\$4,862) for property and inheritance rights. A community-based campaign emphasizing that gender-based violence is illegal is expected to cost 32,000 birr (\$2,793) every year. Capacity-building workshops for women representatives and aspirants to political office are expected to cost 63,580 birr (\$5,528) per year.¹⁹

In addition to the interventions listed above, all of which are closely aligned with the prescriptions put forward by the UN Millennium Project Task Force on Education and Gender Equality,²⁰ several other important interventions might be considered to improve the situation in Mekelle for women and girls. A strategy to formalize and professionalize the Social Courts needs to be developed, to ensure that laws are interpreted correctly and cases are judged fairly. From conversations with officials, a lack of funds has long been the main obstacle to hiring officially trained judges and prosecutors, leaving volunteers to determine the rights of women on a daily basis. Despite the shortage of funds, alternatives may be available to ensure

¹⁶ This estimate is based on 23 tutorial classes, with 25 students/class, at the average 2009 exchange rate of \$1 = 11.5 birr.

¹⁷ This cost is based on 300 participants attending one session each year, estimated 4,800 birr (\$417).

¹⁸ Perhaps the municipal government, which seems to have the fastest Internet connection, can help the Teachers Association's computer lab become better connected; alternatively, this by-now classic deficit, exemplifying the digital divide, presents an excellent opportunity for either a public or corporate partner or a concerned individual to help.

¹⁹ This estimate combines the anticipated costs for women running for Parliament at the *kebele* and *woreda* levels, as well as leadership trainings for already elected women representatives.

²⁰ UN Millennium Project (2005). *Taking Action: Achieving Gender Equality and Empowering Women*, Report prepared by the Task Force on Education and Gender Equality (London and Virginia: UNDP, EarthScan).

that these courts perform as they should.²¹ A good first step would be for local administrative authorities, including the Mekelle Justice Office, to make sure that judges and prosecutors know they will be held accountable for their performance and that corruption will not be tolerated.

The Mekelle Justice Office should also inform the entire community of the serious crime level and the dearth of adequately trained law enforcement, since with little real understanding of the issue, it has not been a local priority. It might be helpful if the municipal government, the zonal Women's Affairs Office, the police commission, the Mekelle Health Office and other interested parties were to collaborate with the Mekelle Justice Office regarding how to mitigate crimes against women.²² Without proper enforcement, even the most positive legal reforms will not help the women of Mekelle.

Victims' services must also be made readily available, with at least psychological counseling or support groups provided. The inter-agency group suggested above might consider forming a task force to focus on prevention, mitigation, law enforcement and treatment in relation to crimes against women.

For the entire society to benefit from gender equality, people need to be made aware of their rights, of existing law and of when relevant law and policies are changed to facilitate an environment conducive to gender equality. Particularly at these junctures, and also on a regular basis, consistent and multiple training sessions in women's rights, economic empowerment and affirmative action should be conducted in Mekelle, particularly for members of law enforcement, whose jobs should include regular trainings and workshops on the subject.

A main challenge for women, given the high prevalence of HIV/AIDS in Mekelle, is their higher probability of becoming ill, thereby compounding their vulnerability with this additional and potentially catastrophic burden.²³ Sexual and reproductive health education and sensitization should be a high priority, with the goal of promoting prevention to men and women alike. The system for determining the distribution of Yellow Cards, enabling free access to some health care services, should be made fair, transparent and accountable.

A number of organizations founded to help improve gender equality in Mekelle and the surrounding areas have been pivotal in addressing gender-related issues in the area. Funding will always be a challenge; however, many of the recommendations posed here are not costly, necessitating rather careful prioritization, some reallocation of existing resources and sustained attention. Women's organizations might also consider combining forces, either on specific issues or in general, to strengthen their voice and to share a larger pool of resources.

²¹ One suggested alternative, to shift all family cases to the *Woreda* Courts, was rejected, in the belief that nobody would attend these more distant courts, which would result in even shoddier justice than relying on the non-official Social Court volunteers to adjudicate these cases.

²² This and other ideas arose from insightful discussions with the Mekelle Justice Office regarding the levels of rape, violence and crime in general.

²³ Specific interventions targeting women's and girls' health are enumerated in the "Health Needs Assessment for Mekelle, Ethiopia," MCI Social Sector Working Paper No. 6/2009, available at http://mci.ei.columbia.edu/sitefiles/file/Mekelle_Health_Report_FINAL%5B1%5D.pdf

To prosper, a city needs all or at least most of its residents to share certain fundamental values regarding elemental human rights for all citizens. Laws in Ethiopia and the Tigray region have been drafted explicitly to protect the rights of women and girls. What is needed now is a more comprehensive understanding and implementation of existing law, as well as special attention, and creative, low-cost interventions, focused on women's and girls' education, health and economic empowerment, so that Mekelle can meet the MDG3 target by 2015.

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Annex A: Select National and Municipal Indicators

	Ethiopia	Mekelle City
Population, 2008 projection Based on 2007 census	78,019,984	227,505
Male	39,366,047	110,570
Female	38,653,797	116,935
Life Expectancy at Birth (2007)²⁴ Total	54	53.4
Male	53.4	52.0
Female	55.4	54.9
Monthly Household Income²⁵	-	41% less than 250 birr/month (\$28) 22% 250 to 600 birr/month (\$28 to \$67.34) 15% 600 or more birr/month (\$67.34) 22% unknown
Pop. Below National Poverty Line, %	44.2	41.0
Unemployment Rate²⁶ Total	5.0	21.6
Male	2.5	18.3
Female	7.8	24.6
Maternal Mortality, per 100,000	673 ²⁷	n/a ²⁸
Under-five mortality, per 1000 (2007)	123 ²⁹	7 per 1000 ³⁰

²⁴ Federal Ministry of Health [FMOH] (2007), *Health and Health Related Indicators*, Health Information Processing and Documentation Team, 2007 (1999 E.C.), Figure 4.2, *Vital Statistics*, p. 6.

²⁵ Kimble, Deborah and Embaye, Tadesse, *Deepening decentralization in Amhara Regional State and Tigray National Regional State and restructuring of nine urban local governments; Mekelle Situation Analysis Revised*, The Urban Institute, UI Project No. 07806-000, March 2006.

²⁶ Central Statistics Agency of Ethiopia, *The 2005 National Labor Force Survey*, Addis Ababa, May 2006.

²⁷ Federal Ministry of Health [FMOH] (2007), *Health and Health Related Indicators*, Health Information Processing and Documentation Team, 2007 (1999 E.C.), Figure 4.2, *Vital Statistics*, p. 6.

²⁸ “n/a” means that information was not available. The head of the Tigray Region Health Bureau has requested support to conduct a maternal mortality survey for Mekelle City and Tigray region.

²⁹ Ibid.

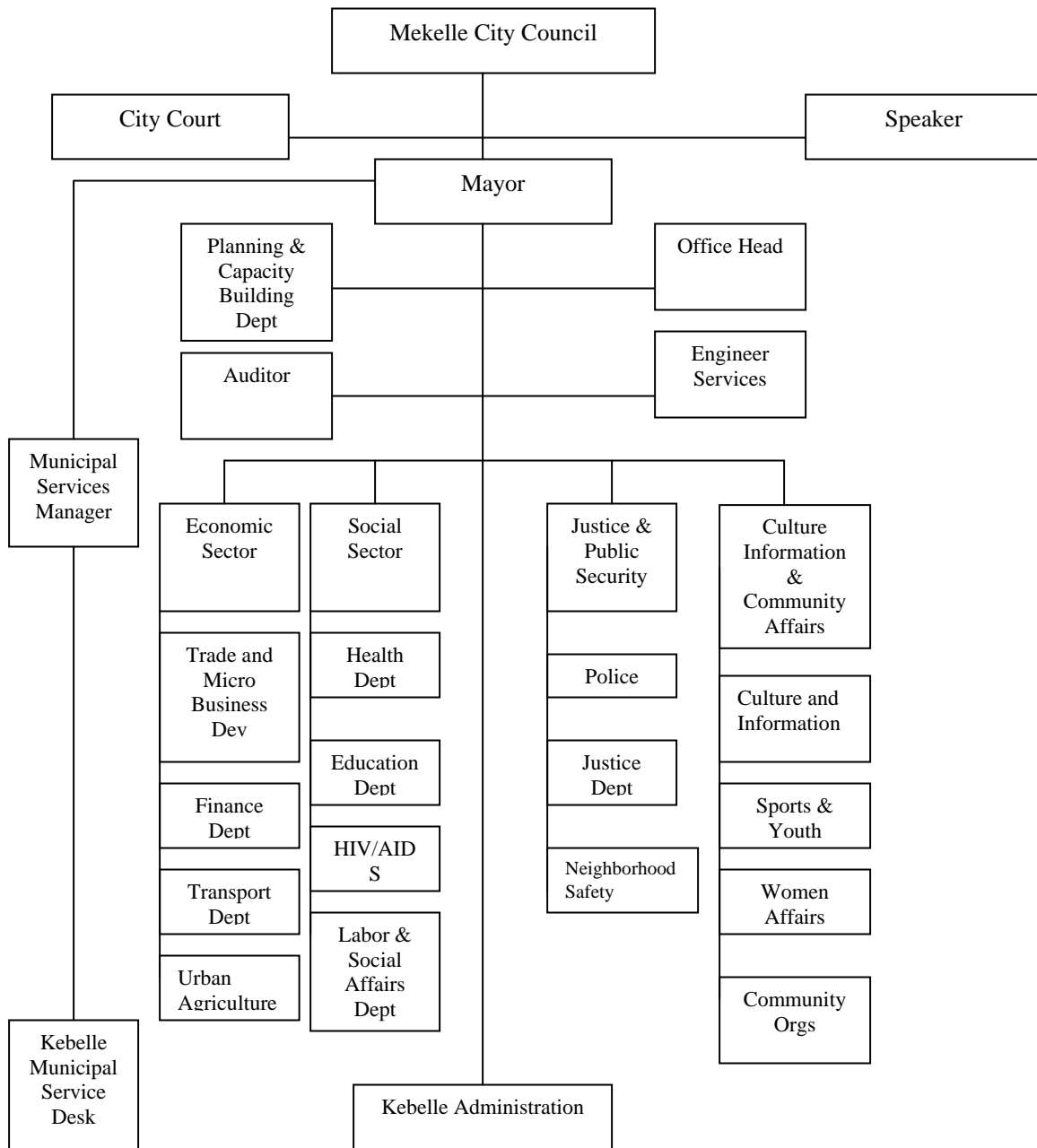
³⁰ Mekelle City Plan Preparation Project Office, *Report on Social and Demographic Issues*, Table 7: Fertility Measurements 2003, p. 17, April 2006.

Annex B: Persons Interviewed

	Government Offices	Name	Position
1	Capacity Building of Tigray	Mr. Kiros	Head
2	Election Board of Mekelle Zone	Mr. Allam	Representative for the Election Board of Mekelle Zone
3	Mayor's Office (Mekelle)	His Excellency Ato Fesseha Zerihun	Mayor
4	Mekelle City Education Office	Mr. Khasu (Head),	Head
5	Mekelle City Education Office	Mr. Melaku Tewodros	Team Leader for Educational planning, budget, & project
6	Mekelle High Court	Mr. Tikue	Judge for the High Court
7	Mekelle Zonal Justice Office	n/a	Judge
8	Ministry of Health - FP, Nutrition, MCH	Dr. Nigist (Head), Belaynes Yifru (Nutrition)	Dr. Nigist (Head of Ministry of Health), Ms. Belaynes Yifru (Head of Dept. of Nutrition)
9	Ministry of Health - Hygiene Dept.	Mr. Mulu	Head of Hygiene Dept.
10	Ministry of Women's Affairs	Ms. Atsedeguta (Guta)	Head
11	Office of Human Resources & Training		Head
12	Population Office of Tigray	Mr. Kidanemariam	Head
13	Semien Woreda Judge	Mr. Rezen	Semien Woreda Judge
14	Tigray Education Bureau	Mr. Abraha Kiros	Head
15	Tigray Health Bureau	Dr. Ghebreab Barnabas	Director/Head
16	Tigray Justice Bureau	Mr. Tolde	Research & Drafting Dept. Head
17	Tigray Region Trade, Industry & Transport Bureau	Dr. Mebrahtu Meles	Deputy Bureau Head
18	Tigray Supreme Court	Ms. Herritta	Supreme Court Judge & Vice President of the Supreme Court
19	Tigray Women's Affairs Bureau (TWAB)	Ms. Roman Gebreselassie	Director/Chairperson
20	Zonal Women's Affairs Office for Mekelle	Ms. Zamada	Head

	Government Offices	Name	Position
21	Bright Africa Youth Association	Mr. Desta	Head
22	Ethiopia Women Lawyers Association (EWLA)	Ms. Tigist	Head of Research Dept.
23	Hamlin Fistula Hospital Mekelle Branch	Physician	Director
24	Kissen Health Center	Chief, Director, and the only Health Officer at Center	Chief, Director, and the only Health Officer at center
25	Mekelle Women's Association	Ms. Alganesh	Head
26	Mums for Mums	Mrs. Teberah	Founder and Head
27	OSSA	Mr. Yirga Gebreegizabher	Site Manager of OSSA
28	Teachers Association	Mr. Allam	President of the Teachers Association
29	Tigray Women's Agriculture Association	Head of Association	Head
30	Tigray Women's Media Association	Ms. Freweni	Focal Point for media Bureau and Head of Association
31	TWLA (Tigray Women Lawyers Association)	Ms. Zufan	Coordinator
32	Women living with HIV/AIDS Association	Ms. Meselu	Founder and Head
33	Women with Disabilities Association of Tigray	Ms. Genet	Head
34	Women's Association of Tigray (WAT)	Ms. Teamrat Belay	Chairperson
35	Women's Association of Tigray (WAT)	Mr. Kinfu Agraha	Program Coordinator
36	Women's Entrepreneurs Association of Tigray	Head of Association	Head
37	Dedebit Credit & Savings Institution (DECSI) - Provides Micro-financing; small and medium loans up to 3 million birr, or \$336,704.00; organization is very centralized)	Mr. Atakilt Kiros	General Manager
38	Voice of Tigray (DWET - Mass Media Private company)	Mr. Yirga	Marketing Manager

Annex C: Mekelle City Administration Organizational Structure³¹



³¹ Deborah Kimble and Tadesse Embaye, *Deepening decentralization in Amhara Regional State and Tigray National Regional State and restructuring of nine urban local governments; Mekelle Situation Analysis Revised*, The Urban Institute, March 2006 UI Project No. 07806-000.