

# Ethiopia

## Country Overview

### Politics

Ethiopia is a federal parliamentary republic located in East Africa.<sup>1</sup> The appointment of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed in 2018, who came to power after Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn resigned in the face of mass protests, set off a transitional period in Ethiopia.<sup>2</sup> Abiy pledged to reform Ethiopia's authoritarian state, has held elections, and implemented some liberalization policies. However, as of 2023 Ethiopia remains beset by civil war and intercommunal violence, as abuses by security forces and violations of due process are still common, and many restrictive laws remain in force.<sup>3</sup> The outbreak of conflict in the Tigray region in November 2020 has resulted in numerous human rights and laws-of-war violations, with conflict between the Federal Government and Tigray Defense Force exacerbating.<sup>4</sup>

Since June 2021, Ethiopian authorities have been present in Tigray, maintaining a shutdown of basic services, including food, medical supplies, and fuel. Outside of Tigray, Ethiopian authorities have forcibly disappeared scores of ethnic Tigrayans, while Tigrayan forces have also committed killings, rape, and other grave abuse against Eritrean refugees in Tigray.<sup>5</sup> In July 2021, the conflict spilled over into the Amhara and Afar regions.<sup>6</sup> In November 2022, the federal government and Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF) signed a Permanent Cessation of Hostilities Agreement, which was done via peace talks mediated by the African Union.<sup>7</sup> The conflict in Tigray has resulted in the deaths of an estimated 600,000 people over the course of two years, with other grave human rights violations also being reported.<sup>8</sup> There remains a high risk of further mass atrocities and other unrest.

### Economy

According to the World Bank, Ethiopia's economy is expected to reach lower-middle-income status by 2025.<sup>9</sup> With about 123 million people as of 2022, Ethiopia is the second most populous nation in Africa, as well as one of the fastest-growing economies in the region.<sup>10</sup> However, the country remains one of the poorest in the world, with a per capita gross national income of USD 1,020.<sup>11</sup> Ethiopia's strong growth rate builds on a longer-term record of growth over the past 15 years where the country's economy grew at an average of nearly 10 percent per year, one of the highest rates in the world.<sup>12</sup> Among other factors, growth was led by



capital accumulation, in particular through public infrastructure investments. Ethiopia's real gross domestic product (GDP) growth has slowed down to 6.1 percent in 2023.<sup>13</sup> While over 70 percent of Ethiopia's populace is engaged in the agricultural sector, the services sector has now taken precedence as the primary driver of GDP.<sup>14</sup>

However, despite strides in combatting extreme poverty, and anticipated economic growth, Ethiopia continues to grapple with its status as one of the world's poorest nations.<sup>15</sup>

## Social/Human Development

The Ethiopian population is growing rapidly, with more than 40 percent of the population under the age of 15.<sup>16</sup> Eighty percent of the population lives in rural areas and are reliant on agriculture for survival. According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), over 88 percent of Ethiopians are living in multidimensional poverty and the country ranks 175 out of 191 on the Human Development Index (HDI).<sup>17</sup> In 2015, droughts and floods led to the displacement of approximately 585,540 people and humanitarian aid was required.<sup>18</sup>

The humanitarian situation, delivery of key services, and human development indicators in Ethiopia have all been significantly affected by various shocks, particularly the conflict in Northern Ethiopia. According to the most recent Global UNDP Human Development Report, Ethiopia's Human Development Index for 2021 stood at 0.498, classifying the country within the low human development category.<sup>19</sup>

Notably, unlike approximately 90 percent of countries worldwide, both developing and developed, which witnessed a decline in their HDI at least once since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, Ethiopia has managed to avoid such regression. Ethiopia is home to over 80 different ethnic groups. The Oromo and Amhara groups comprise the greatest share, at 35.8 percent and 24.1 percent of the population, respectively.<sup>20</sup>

## U.S. Department of State TIP Report Summary (2023)

U.S. Department of State TIP Ranking: Tier 2

Trafficking was reported in potentially export-oriented supply chains including agriculture, gold mining, weaving, and apparel manufacturing.

The government of Ethiopia predominantly prioritized combating transnational trafficking crimes, neglecting to address internal trafficking issues such as domestic servitude and child sex trafficking. Despite recurring reports of fraudulent labor recruiters exploiting Ethiopians seeking jobs overseas, the government did not take visible steps to prosecute these recruiters for their criminal activities.



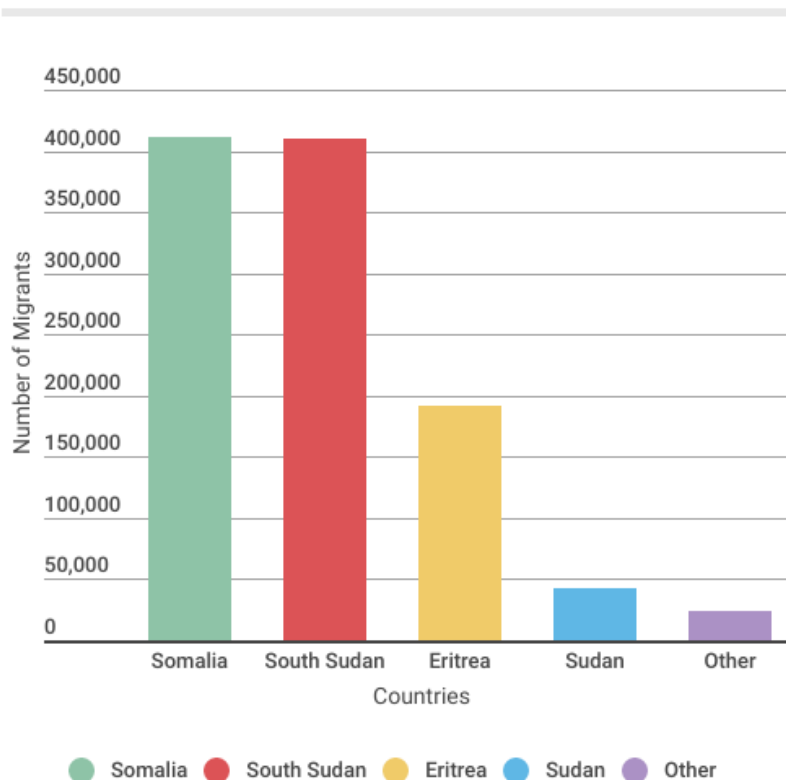
Read the full TIP Report at: <https://www.state.gov/reports/2023-trafficking-in-persons-report/ethiopia/>

## Migrant and Other Vulnerable Populations

Poverty, prolonged periods of drought, political oppression, and government-led forced resettlement initiatives have been the key factors propelling both internal and international migration from Ethiopia since the 1960s.<sup>21</sup> Ethiopia experiences net negative migration at a rate of -0.19 migrant(s) per 1,000 people, with one percent of the country’s total population being migrants.<sup>22</sup> The largest countries of origin for migrants in Ethiopia are Somalia and South Sudan.<sup>23</sup>

Ethiopia is the largest host of refugees in Africa and hosts one of the largest refugee populations in the world.<sup>24</sup> Refugees arrive in Ethiopia from countries including Eritrea, Somalia, and South Sudan.<sup>25</sup>

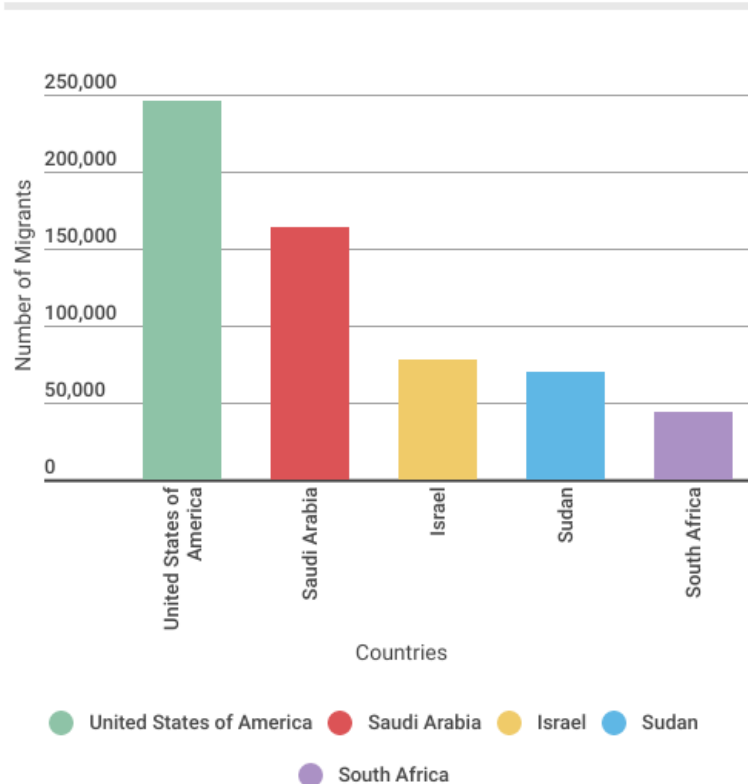
**Migrants to Ethiopia (2020)**



Top destination countries for migrants from Ethiopia were the United States, Saudi Arabia, Israel, Sudan, and South Africa.<sup>26</sup>

In March 2022, after joint requests from various organizations, Ethiopia and Saudi Arabia agreed to repatriate over 100,000 Ethiopians residing irregularly in Saudi Arabia, most in detention centers.<sup>27</sup> By April 2023, about 131,000 Ethiopian nationals were repatriated through the engagement of international organizations, including the IOM.<sup>28</sup> Despite these efforts, repatriation has not proven effective in deterring illegal migration, as many individuals returned to Saudi Arabia shortly after the campaigns. In May 2023, a month after the repatriation was declared complete, the number of Ethiopians detained in Saudi prisons increased significantly.<sup>29</sup>

**Migrants From Ethiopia (2020)**



## Exports and Trade

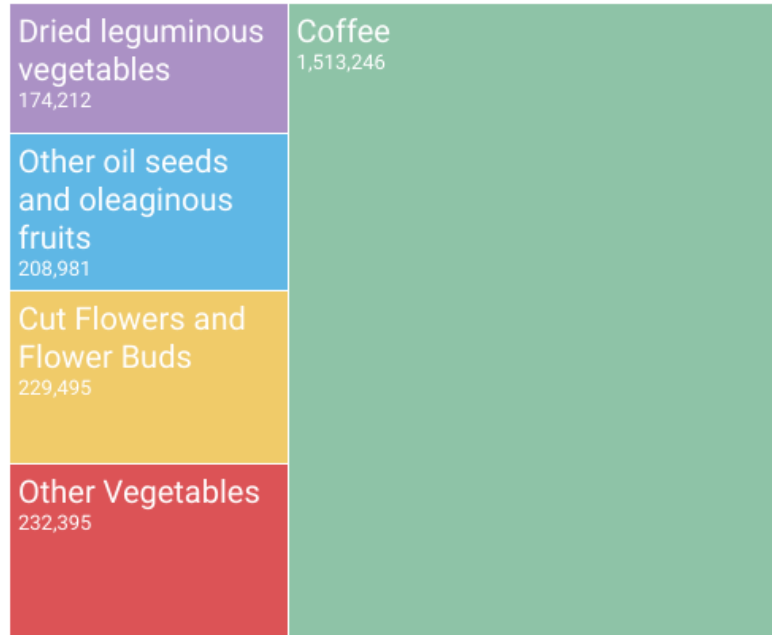
Ethiopia's top exported goods in 2022 were coffee, other vegetables, cut flowers and flower buds, other oil seeds and oleaginous fruits, and dried leguminous vegetables.<sup>30</sup>



**Top Commodity Exports (USD/Thousands)**

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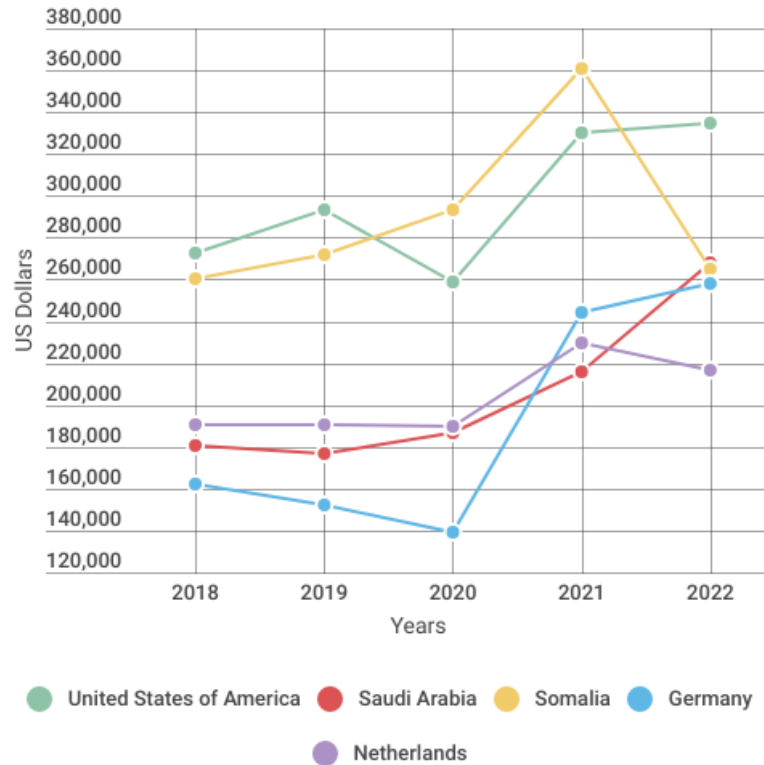
2022



The top importers of goods from Ethiopia according to mirror data were the United States, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Germany, and the Netherlands.<sup>31</sup>



## Ethiopia Export Partners (USD)



## Trafficking in Persons Risk Factors Analysis

### Policy/Legal Risk Factors

#### Level of Legal Protection for Civil Liberties and Workers' Rights

##### Freedom of Association

Although the law provides for workers' rights to form and organize unions, conduct legal strikes, and bargain collectively, the U.S. Department of State noted that this right is significantly limited by government-enforced restrictions made on the grounds of state of emergency regulations in effect since October 2016.<sup>32</sup> The government reserves the right to deny registration of a union if requirements are not met, and was alleged to use anti-terrorism grounds to interfere with peaceful organization and assembly, despite anti-union discrimination.

The law prohibits freedom of association rights for managerial employees, teachers, health-care workers, judges, prosecutors, security-service workers, domestic workers, and seasonal



agricultural workers, and does not protect informal workers who make up the majority of the Ethiopian urban workforce. The International Trade Union Conference reports that collective bargaining is authorized by ministry approval upon major economic change and can be initiated by employer or employees.<sup>33</sup>

## **Working Conditions**

Ethiopia has no national minimum wage. The law limits the work week to 48 hours with a 24-hour rest period, but it was reported that many foreign, migrant, and informal sector workers worked hours that exceeded this limit in practice.<sup>34</sup> The U.S. Department of State reports that workers excluded from freedom of association laws were unable to benefit from health and safety regulations.<sup>35</sup> Migrant and informal sector workers worked over 48 hours per week which is the legal limit under labor laws. The Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs' inspection department was reportedly unsuccessful in standards enforcement.<sup>36</sup> The World Bank and the National Employment Policy and Strategy of Ethiopia reported that the informal sector included more than 70 percent of urban workers, and most of these informal workers have no employment contracts.<sup>37</sup> Approximately 73 percent of the population was employed in agriculture, which typically is not covered by labor laws.<sup>38</sup>

## **Discrimination**

According to the U.S. Department of State, the law prohibits discrimination based on race, ethnicity, national origin, nationality, gender, marital status, religion, political affiliation, political outlook, pregnancy, socioeconomic status, disability, or "any other conditions."<sup>39</sup> The law does not explicitly prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity, and HIV-positive status and there were widespread allegations of government security forces targeting individuals for arrest and detention based on ethnicity in response to the conflict in the north of the country.<sup>40</sup> The U.S. Department of State reported that national law contained regulations that discriminated against women, such as regulations on marriage and divorce. Women also reported discrimination in traditional judicial systems used in rural areas.<sup>41</sup>

## **Forced Labor**

Any form of forced or compulsory labor is prohibited by law, but courts are permitted to use forced labor as a disciplinary means.<sup>42</sup> Some businesses allegedly exploit boys in forced labor in traditional weaving, construction, agriculture, and street vending, and the government often deploys prisoners to work outside the prisons for private businesses, a practice the ILO stated could constitute forced labor.<sup>43</sup>

See full Trafficking in Persons report: <https://www.state.gov/reports/2023-trafficking-in-persons-report/ethiopia/>



### Child Labor

The legal minimum age for employment is 15, and this age also applies to hazardous or night work. The law allows children from ages 15 to 16 to engage in certain forms of hazardous work, directly contradicting ILO Convention 138. Traditional weaving is omitted from the country's hazardous work list, despite the dangerous tools used.<sup>44</sup> Ethiopian law does not include free basic education or a compulsory age for education, leaving children vulnerable.<sup>45</sup>

### Civil Society Organizations

Civil society organizations and NGOs operate within Ethiopia with significant government restriction. Although the civil society organization sector continued to expand, the limited capacity of domestic human rights organizations, as well as their self-censorship due to fear of government retaliation, remained a challenge.<sup>46</sup> The U.S. Department of State reported that the state of emergency greatly affected NGOs' ability to operate.<sup>47</sup>

**Immigration Policies Limiting the Employment Options or Movement of Migrants** As a result of the conflict in the northern region of the country, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) halted all support for migrants wishing to voluntarily return to Ethiopia in November 2021.<sup>48</sup> While the IOM later initiated limited return assistance to the Amhara and Afar Regions by the end of June, some migrants from areas affected by the conflict continue to be stranded in various IOM-managed facilities, unable to return to Ethiopia.<sup>49</sup>

The Right to Work Directive provides for the right to work of refugees working on a joint project with local nationals, and for the right to work of refugees seeking wage-earning employment in a position unable to be filled by a citizen, or through self-employment.<sup>50</sup> Entry to the country is not permitted without a visa. Migrant workers reportedly face discrimination in work environments.<sup>51</sup>

### Ratification of ILO Conventions Related to Human Trafficking or Rights of Workers and Migrants

|   |                            |
|---|----------------------------|
| ILO 29 Forced Labor   | In force                   |
| ILO 87 Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organize | In force                   |
| ILO 98 Right to Organize and Collective Bargaining                    | In force                   |
| ILO 100 Equal Remuneration  | In force                   |
| ILO 105 Abolition of Forced Labor                                     | In force                   |
| ILO 111 Discrimination  | In force                   |
| ILO 138 Minimum Age   | In force                   |
| ILO 181 Private Employment Agencies                                   | In force                   |
| ILO 182 Worst Forms of Child Labor                                    | In force                   |
| ILO 97 Migration for Employment                                       | Not ratified <sup>52</sup> |

### Political Risk Factors





## Political Instability or Conflict

Ethiopia scored a 100.4 in the 2023 Fragile States Index, placing it in the “High Alert” category. It was ranked as the 12th most fragile state in the world.<sup>53</sup> The ongoing two-year armed conflict in Northern Ethiopia, which commenced in November 2020, continued to exact a devastating toll on civilian populations. Although a truce was brokered between the primary warring factions in November, state security forces and armed groups committed grave violations, particularly in other regions like Oromia.<sup>54</sup> Additionally, authorities intermittently disrupted internet and telecommunication services in areas affected by the conflict, with Tigray experiencing such disruptions since June 2021.<sup>55</sup>

## Level of Crime and Violence

Security forces and armed groups carried out unlawful killings, potentially constituting war crimes, in multiple Ethiopian regions, including Oromia, Benishangul-Gumuz, Amhara, Tigray, and Gambela over the past few years of conflict.<sup>56</sup> regarding the status or progress of these investigations and prosecutions, which further highlights how crimes are often ignored or unprosecuted.<sup>57</sup>

## State Persecution

There were widespread arbitrary detentions by the government in 2022, which primarily targeted ethnic Tigrayans in various regions such as Western Tigray, Afar, Addis Ababa, and Amhara.<sup>58</sup> Thousands of individuals were apprehended and held in both official and unofficial detention facilities, with no judicial oversight of their incarceration and no access to legal representation. As reported by the United Nations, in January, airstrikes believed to have been conducted by government forces resulted in the deaths of over 100 civilians in Dedebit.<sup>59</sup> Subsequently, upon the renewed hostilities between the federal army and Tigrayan forces in August, airstrikes on Mekelle and Adi Daero in August and September 2022 claimed the lives of hundreds of civilians, including children.<sup>60</sup>

The right to freedom of expression was weak. A 2022 report asserts that authorities arrested at least 29 journalists and media workers in Tigray, Addis Ababa, Amhara, and Oromia.<sup>61</sup>

## Level of Corruption

The Transparency International Corruption Perception Index scores Ethiopia as 38 out of 100, where 0 indicates “Highly Corrupt” and 100 indicates “Very Clean.” Ethiopia ranks 94 out of 180 on the index.<sup>62</sup> According to the U.S. Department of State, high levels of public grievances related to corruption were reported in government services related to land management and administration across the country.<sup>63</sup>



## Socio-Economic Risk Factors

### Level of National Economic Development

The United Nations Human Development Index (UN HDI) places Ethiopia in the low human development category, ranking the country 175 out of 191 countries in 2022, with an index score of 0.498, a 73.5 percent increase from 0.283 in 2000.<sup>64</sup>

### Level and Extent of Poverty

Ethiopia has a high level of poverty, with 88.2 percent of the population determined to be living in “multidimensional” poverty according to the United Nations in 2016.<sup>65</sup> When adjusted for inequality, the Human Development Index Score falls to 0.363, a loss of 27 percent. This demonstrates a higher degree of inequality within the country than noted in other sub-Saharan African countries.<sup>66</sup>

### Degree of Gender Inequality

Ethiopia was ranked as 75 out of 146 on the 2023 Global Gender Gap Index, indicating a sizeable improvement from 2016, when it was ranked as 109<sup>th</sup>.<sup>67</sup>

Because roughly 80 percent of the population resides in rural areas, traditional judicial systems, such as sharia (Islamic law) courts and councils of elders, are relied on in practice. Some women have reported lacking access to free and fair hearings under their communities’ traditional court systems and have cited strong discrimination in rural areas.<sup>68</sup>

On a federal and regional level, laws support women’s ability to lease government land and inherit property acquired through marriage. In practice, however, women who are separated or widowed are reportedly likely to lose their house and property. Under the traditional customs of most regions, land is reportedly passed on to sons.<sup>69</sup>

Women are reportedly disadvantaged in employment, in part due to attaining lower educational levels on average than men, although the law prohibits discrimination based on gender with respect to occupation and employment.<sup>70</sup> Although the constitution provides the right of women workers to equal pay for comparable work, the Central Statistical Agency reported that women earn only around 63 percent of salary earned by men in similar work.<sup>71</sup>

### Landlessness and Dispossession

The U.S. Department of State has reported that cross-border conflict, natural disaster, political or community resettlement considerations, and limited resources for the relocation of IDPs have all contributed to prolonged internal displacement. In April 2022, Human Rights Watch (HRW) documented that interim authorities in charge of Western Tigray, as well as Amhara



authorities and forces, conveyed their intention, often through verbal and occasionally written threats, to relocate Tigrayans eastward across the Tekeze River, which serves as a natural boundary with the Northwestern Zone of Tigray.<sup>72</sup>

As of October 2022, the IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix calculated that there were approximately 2.1 million IDPs.<sup>73</sup> According to the U.S. Department of State, private land ownership does not exist and the government “retains the right to expropriate land for the “common good,” which it defines to include expropriation for commercial farms, industrial zones, and infrastructure development.”<sup>74</sup>

## **Environmental Factors**

Rural areas in several regions of the country have been reported to be vulnerable to recurring droughts.<sup>75</sup> The Central Intelligence Agency has described drought as a main factor driving Ethiopia’s internal and external migration since the 1960s.<sup>76</sup> The IOM concluded that conflict remained the primary reason for displacement in 2022, followed by drought, flooding, and social tensions.<sup>77</sup> Deforestation, overgrazing, soil erosion, desertification, and poor water resource management are additional ongoing environmental concerns that may present livelihood challenges, particularly for rural populations.<sup>78</sup>

## **Documented Trafficking in Persons Risk Factors in Key Commodity Supply Chains**

### **Livestock**

#### **Livestock Overview**

Ethiopia has the largest livestock populations in all of Africa and, according to government statistics, there were roughly 65 million cattle, 40 million sheep, 51 million goats, 8 million camels, and 49 million chickens in 2020.<sup>79</sup> The U.S.-based Export.gov claims that the Ethiopian livestock industry is a “best prospect industry sector.”<sup>80</sup> Livestock accounts for a fifth of the country’s GDP, and 40 percent of agricultural GDP.<sup>81</sup> The livestock sector in Ethiopia has been growing rapidly in the past decade, and has seen a 50 percent increase in production since 2010.<sup>82</sup> Mixed crop-livestock farmers account for over 80 percent of the rural population, and are responsible for the majority of the country’s food supply.<sup>83</sup>

#### **Documented Trafficking in Persons Risk Factors in Livestock Production**

The 2022 U.S. Department of Labor *List of Goods Produced by Child Labor or Forced Labor*, notes child labor in livestock herding, specifically with respect to cattle herding, in Ethiopia.<sup>84</sup> Herding is reportedly culturally viewed as appropriate child’s work.<sup>85</sup> Livestock ownership is a



key aspect of social status in some communities. Some analysis has noted that even when families can afford school fees for children, herding may be seen as a preferable activity.<sup>86</sup>

## Gold

### Gold Overview

While the Ethiopian mining sector is currently underexploited, according to the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI), Ethiopia boasts around 200 tons of gold, and with a further 360 million tons of coal and 69 million tons of iron.<sup>87</sup> It thus has a large reserve of gold, and in recent years has begun to utilize it. According to the latest EITI report on Ethiopian mining in 2022, gold production hit 3.18 tons, generating a value of around ETB6.3bn (USD 126.3 million), and operating as the driving force behind a mining industry whose products were valued at close to USD 150 million.<sup>88</sup> However, the EITI report also pointed out that gold mining represented 93 percent of the value generated by the Ethiopian mining industry, underscoring a significantly imbalanced sector heavily dependent on a solitary commodity, with artisanal mining also being common.<sup>89</sup> Gold is mined in both open-pit and underground shafts.<sup>90</sup>

### Documented Trafficking in Persons Risk Factors in Gold Production

According to the U.S. Department of Labor as of 2022, gold is produced with child labor in Ethiopia.<sup>91</sup>

There are an estimated one million artisanal gold miners currently working in the country.<sup>92</sup> For many, it is their primary source of income.<sup>93</sup> Many miners are internal migrants from other areas in Ethiopia, with 50-70 percent migrants in some mining regions, which tend to be isolated, remote, and lacking in basic infrastructure or services.<sup>94</sup> Most small-scale miners are not licensed, and most marketing is conducted by informal traders.<sup>95</sup> The result of this informality is that most of the supply chain operates outside of government oversight. Miners working outside of safety protocols are exposed to “dust, poor ventilation, rock falls/collapse, water-borne diseases, malaria, and HIV/AIDS.”<sup>96</sup> Informal traders may act to “undermine the prices of gold by creating confusion about the quality standard of the mineral,”<sup>97</sup> thus depriving miners of a fair price. Deforestation caused by tree clearing around artisanal gold mines may contribute to ongoing environmental degradation in Ethiopia.

## Khat

### Khat Overview

Khat (*Catha edulis*) is a plant known for its psychoactive properties, containing substances like cathinone, cathine, and norephedrine, ranking as the second most widely consumed psychoactive substance after alcohol in Ethiopia. The national prevalence of khat use in Ethiopia



stands at 15.3 percent, with some regions, like the Harari region, seeing prevalence rates soar to 50 percent due to khat cultivation.<sup>98</sup> Currently, Ethiopia is the leading khat producer in Africa and worldwide, with more than twelve million smallholder farmers now growing khat. Various scholars have identified significant issues in the marketing of khat in Ethiopia, including a susceptible and tainted marketing system, the absence of effective market promotion, political divisions, extended market supply chains, persistent market information gaps, and inequitable pricing.<sup>99</sup>

## Documented Trafficking in Persons Risk Factors in Khat Production

The U.S. Department of State reported in 2022 that children are exploited in forced labor in Ethiopian khat production. A study published in 2017 uncovered that in Wondo Genet and Aweday towns, children as young as 8 and 12 years old, respectively, were engaged in the khat industry.<sup>100</sup> The involvement of these children in the trade poses significant risks since they can easily develop the habit of khat consumption while performing their duties. Furthermore, children participating in various aspects of the khat value chain often opt out of attending school, attracted by the financial incentives offered by the business.<sup>101</sup>

## Flowers

### Flowers Overview

The cut flower industry is growing rapidly in Ethiopia, thanks to government support and foreign investment. In 10 years, Ethiopia became the second largest cut-flower exporter in Africa.<sup>102</sup> Ethiopia exports horticulture for USD 186 million annually as of 2022, with flower exports making up 80 percent of that total.<sup>103</sup> In 2015, five horticulture/cut flower companies shifted their operations from Kenya to Ethiopia. Flower companies are exempted from duties on key inputs such as fertilizer, and receive a corporate tax exemption for their first five years of operation.<sup>104</sup> Varieties include roses, carnations and chrysanthemum, with roses farming being the most common for Ethiopian producers.<sup>105</sup> Most companies operating in the sector are foreign, and Europe is the market for 80 percent of Ethiopia's flowers.<sup>106</sup>

### Documented Trafficking in Person Risk Factors in Flowers

As in other countries, most workers in the cut flower supply chain are low-skilled female workers, suggesting a vulnerable workforce.<sup>107</sup> There are anecdotal reports of sexual harassment of female workers.<sup>108</sup>

Broad studies of labor and employment conditions were not available, but workers appear to be highly casualized, lacking long-term contracts and often engaged as day laborers.<sup>109</sup> A study in 2017, which included workers in the flower sector (although it did not disaggregate findings



based on sector), found that nearly 30 percent of female workers did not have an employment contract with their employer.<sup>110</sup>

There is evidence that the hazardous chemicals used in the growing of cut flowers in Kenya and Ethiopia have produced adverse health effects in some industry workers.<sup>111</sup> Specific abuses include spraying pesticides in greenhouses while workers were laboring inside, fumigation of cold storage facilities as workers labored inside working in extreme heat with little or no breaks.<sup>112</sup> One study of Ethiopian workers in the industry found a “high prevalence of respiratory and dermal symptoms” that did not exist in control testing, and noted that workers that were laboring inside of greenhouses were significantly more likely to develop symptoms than those who worked outside.<sup>113</sup>

Workers in the flower sector in Ethiopia have reported that they have been barred from any attempts at organizing or bargaining collectively.<sup>114</sup>

## **Apparel**

### **Apparel Overview**

Ethiopia’s sourcing opportunities for companies in the textiles and garments industry have been steadily growing, reaching USD 171 million in exports in 2023.<sup>115</sup>

Ethiopia has been cited as the future of African apparel manufacturing, with the manufacturing sector growing at roughly 11 percent per year between 2004 and 2014.<sup>116</sup> Ethiopia's textile export sector is witnessing significant expansion, marked by the establishment of operations by Asian manufacturers and the engagement of Western brands such as H&M, PVH, The Children's Place, JCPenney, and KiK in sourcing products from the country.<sup>117</sup>

Recent data released by the Ethiopian government reveal that over the past five years, the textile and apparel industry has maintained an average annual growth rate of 51 percent.<sup>118</sup> During this period, more than 65 foreign investment projects in the textile sector have received licensing.<sup>119</sup> This has brought Ethiopia into competition with textile manufacturing hubs in Southeast Asia, and there are currently firms from the U.S., the E.U., Turkey, and China moving into the country at a rapid clip.<sup>120</sup>

### **Documented Trafficking in Persons Risk Factors in Apparel Production**

The U.S. Department of Labor reports that hand-woven textiles are produced with child labor in Ethiopia.<sup>121</sup> Children – particularly boys – begin apprenticing as young as 12.<sup>122</sup>

Despite assurances from H&M, PVH, and other brands about human rights in their supply chains, a Workers Rights Consortium investigation of four Ethiopian garment factories found widespread labor rights abuses, including wage deductions for minor infractions, verbal abuse,



discrimination against pregnant workers, overwork-related incidents, forced overtime, and violations of labor standards set by the brands.<sup>123</sup>

Low wages have specifically been cited as drawing foreign investment in countries including Ethiopia, where workers may earn as little as USD 35.00 a month.<sup>124</sup> A study among female garment workers in Ethiopia found that most had never worked in the formal sector prior to their apparel sector employment.<sup>125</sup> Migrant workers have not been systematically documented in Ethiopia's garment production sector. However, a McKinsey survey of sourcing professionals found that, in addition to Ethiopia's low wage rates, the low cost of obtaining documentation for migrant workers was considered a benefit.<sup>126</sup>



## Endnotes

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- <sup>2</sup> Freedom House. *Ethiopia*. <https://freedomhouse.org/country/ethiopia/freedom-world/2023>
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