

### **Ethiopia's AGOA suspension and the impact on Women in the region.**

- The suspension from AGOA has threatened the welfare of millions of low-income workers who depended on the manufacturing industry for their own livelihoods.
- Between 80-90 percent of Ethiopian textile manufacturing jobs belong to women. This impressive representation in the workforce contributed significantly towards Ethiopia's mobilization around achieving gender equity in the nation's economy.
- The role of Ethiopian women has been crucial to the success of the textile industry.
- About 62 percent of Ethiopian women migrated from rural regions to work in the textile manufacturing sector because of its promising success and good paying jobs.
- The Borgen Project found that 78 percent of Ethiopian women reported that their participation in Ethiopia's growing textile industry improved their financial status, and 63 percent reported that their participation significantly improved their family's standard of living.

### **Ethiopia and closing the gender gap.**

- Because so many of these factory workers come from rural regions of Ethiopia, the nation's textile industry has provided many women their first ever paying job. Monirul Islam, the former Bangladeshi Ambassador to Ethiopia, acknowledged that the textile industry played a key role in empowering Ethiopian women to achieve economic and financial liberty.
- AGOA has contributed to lifting Ethiopians, particularly women, out of poverty. Indeed, Ethiopia's booming textile industry has contributed to the nation's efforts towards achieving gender equity.
- In November 2021, PVH Corp. (PVH), home to apparel brands like Calvin Klein and Tommy Hilfiger, announced the closure of its Ethiopian manufacturing facilities. PVH Corp., formerly known as the Phillips-Van Heusen Corporation, is an American clothing company which owns brands such as Tommy Hilfiger, Calvin Klein, Warner's, Olga and True & Co. The company also licenses brands such as Kenneth Cole New York and Michael Kors
- PVH also recognized the importance of promoting gender equity and empowerment among its female textile and garment workers. In 2020, prior to its decision to cease manufacturing operations in Ethiopia, PVH launched an Ethiopian community program called "Personal Advancement Career Enhancement," or P.A.C.E. The goal of this program was to support communities near Hawassa Industrial Park, one of the many industrial parks that Ethiopia constructed in response to its growing textile economy.
- The objective of P.A.C.E. was to provide female textile and garment workers a comprehensive learning program that would offer courses encouraging professional and personal skills. These skills included communication and problem solving, health

literacy, financial literacy, and personal hygiene. Due to PVH's decision to cease operation in Ethiopia, Ethiopian women will no longer benefit from the women's empowerment training provided to them by P.A.C.E.

- Suspending Ethiopia from AGOA disproportionately impacted vulnerable women new to the workforce rather than the parties involved in the conflict. Many young women, it notes, will lose their occupation, and be faced with the realities of poverty and possibly forced marriage.
- The decision has reversed or delayed the forecasted economic growth for the country and returned thousands of Ethiopian civilians, primarily women, to unemployment, amid a civil conflict in one region of the country.

<sup>32</sup> Moctar Barry, et al, *In Ethiopia, Guinea and Mali, Fears Rise Over Losing Duty Free Access to US Market*, AGOA.info (Jan. 20, 2022), available at <https://agoa.info/news/article/15949-in-ethiopia-guinea-and-mali-fears-rise-over-losing-duty-free-access-to-us-market.html>.

<sup>33</sup> *Achieving an Equal Future During Covid-19 Pandemic: Women in the Garment and Textile Industry*, United Nations (July 14, 2021), available at <https://ethiopia.un.org/en/135859-achieving-equal-future-during-covid-19-women-garment-and-textile-industry>.

<sup>41</sup> *Textile Investment in Empowering Women: Ambassador*, Ethiopian Textiles and Fashion Portal (Dec. 22, 2016), available at <https://ethiotextiles.com/textile-investment-vital-in-empowering-women-ambassador/#:~:text=Bangladeshis%20Ambassador%20to%20Ethiopia%20has%20pointed%20out%20the,people%2C%2090%20per%20cent%20of%20whom%20are%20women>.