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Researchers Network**



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EUNET WORKSHOP REPORT

EUNET WRITES: WRITING WORKSHOP SESSION I

15 AUGUST 2025

The Ethiopian Women Researchers Network (EUNET) inaugural writing workshop series aims to not only provide women researchers with uninterrupted time for their scholarly projects, but also build a supportive academic community. The first session, entitled ‘EUNET Writes: Writing Workshop Session I’, was held on 15 August 2025 at Aurora Working Space. Opened by EUNET principal Dr Netsanet Gebremichael, supported by deputy principal Dalaya Ashenafi, and chaired by Dr Meron Zeleke and Dr Mercy Fekadu, the workshop proceeded from a thematic conversation on setting writing goals to a structured writing session. Participants worked on journal articles, book chapters and research papers, using the dedicated time to overcome such barriers as lack of time, motivation or conducive conditions. Following a collective review, the participants ended the session by agreeing a peer review cycle should be initiated at the following workshop, laying the foundations for sustained accountability and collaboration.

Opening remarks

The formal opening of the event was delivered by Dr Netsanet Gebremichael, principal of EUNET. Having welcomed the participants, she underscored the importance of spaces where women researchers can focus on their scholarship alongside supportive peers, free from burdensome professional and personal realities.

Dr Netsanet emphasized that beyond individual productivity, writing retreats are about cultivating a collective practice of intellectual companionship. Here, she spoke of recording and mapping each other’s work, noting that documentation and archiving are vital for continuity, institutional memory and mutual growth.

To illustrate the point, Dr Netsanet highlighted her recent project involving a ten-year archive produced by a group of nurses, which she described as an extraordinary record of intellectual rigour and solidarity. Every step of the nurses’ work, including the interviews conducted among themselves, had been carefully documented. This, Dr Netsanet suggested, offers an inspiring model for EUNET members in terms of treating their own work and that of their peers with similar care.

In closing, Dr Netsanet delivered the biographies of the two facilitators, setting the stage for their conversation on writing goals and planning:

- Dr Meron Zeleke, associate professor at the Center for Human Rights, Addis Ababa University, has extensive international teaching and research experience across Africa, North America, Europe and Asia, with deep expertise in gender, migration and social inequality.

- Dr Mercy Fekadu, associate professor at the Institute for Peace and Security Studies, Addis Ababa University, holds a PhD in Global and Area Studies, and has published widely on peace and security, statehood, development and digital democracy.

The choice of facilitators reflected EWNET's ongoing commitment to fostering mentorship by leading Ethiopian scholars capable of bridging theory and practice. In particular, Dr Zeleke's and Dr Fekadu's considerable experience of academic writing and interdisciplinary research puts them in an ideal position to offer guidance on navigating publication processes, shaping research arguments and sustaining scholarly productivity.

Having introduced the two distinguished scholars, Dr Netsanet formally invited them to take over as hosts and guide the participants into the afternoon's core sessions.

Conversation

The first session involved a discussion between Dr Meron Zeleke and Dr Mercy Fekadu on: 1) goal-setting; 2) time management; and 3) personal writing styles and experiences. The exchange was candid, practical and instructive, offering not only theoretical strategies but lived examples of how seasoned scholars sustain their academic productivity.

Goal-setting and publication strategies

Dr Meron opened the discussion by reflecting on how she sets writing goals, highlighting two principal pathways. The first arises from broader research frameworks and projects. Whether large or small, such projects inevitably require written outputs, which, when carefully shaped, evolve into publications. Here, Dr Meron noted that many of her scholarly works have developed from such deliverables.

The second pathway relates to academic forums and conferences, which Dr Meron explained should be approached with a forward-looking, rather than passive, mindset. Thus, when drafting an abstract, she shapes her submission with a view to eventual publication, ensuring her participation generates enduring academic value. She also emphasized that even at a project's consultation stage it is important to negotiate ownership and publication rights.

Finally, Dr Meron elaborated on two distinct outputs she typically pursues: journal articles, which are grounded in dense, thematically focused data that demands scholarly engagement; and policy briefs, which are more fluid, spotlighting emerging or underrepresented findings.

In response, Dr Mercy explained her own approach to publication, which tends to rely on identifying an original idea during the course of her work—particularly when she observes a gap in the literature. In such cases, she develops the research into a journal article as a means of contributing substantively to the field. When the data are extensive but the findings more descriptive than analytical, however, she often chooses to write a book chapter, situating the work within broader scholarly dialogues.



Figure 1. Dr Mercy Fekadu and Dr Meron Zeleke sharing their experiences.

Managing time and writing habits

Next, discussion turned to the challenges of time management, especially pertinent given both speakers have busy roles as academics and mothers.

Dr Mercy candidly acknowledged that for her this is an area of ongoing growth. She reflected on a tendency towards deadline-induced high-intensity work, which often fuels rapid output within compressed timeframes. While this pattern is potentially effective in the short term, Dr Mercy reflected critically on its longer-term sustainability and personal impact, noting she would like to develop a steadier, more scheduled daily writing habit. She also related how she sometimes seeks uninterrupted writing sessions by retreating from home, underscoring the importance of spaces that provide separation from familial responsibilities.

Dr Meron, meanwhile, described solutions born of necessity. Each morning, having arrived at her workplace two hours before her official duties begin, Dr Meron switches off her phone and avoids email to immerse herself in concentrated writing. This quiet, undisturbed time has become the most productive part of her day. Additionally, she makes use of 'blocked writing time' during late-night hours when her household is silent.

Writing styles and data challenges

When asked about writing routines and styles, Dr Mercy advised participants to start off reading, then immediately follow up by writing on a blank page. This practice, she explained, allows ideas to flow more naturally, enhancing originality and creativity. Dr Meron, on the other hand, encouraged writers to shape their style around the intended publication outlet, tailoring tone and approach to the expectations of specific journals or thematic areas.

The persistent challenge of data scarcity was raised in a further question. Both scholars said that researchers should not be discouraged by limited data, urging participants to exhaust all available means and sources. In particular, they stressed that shortfalls in data should be viewed as opportunities for innovation, and that filling such gaps with one's own analysis represents a valuable scholarly contribution.

On the sensitive issue of ownership in collaborative research, both speakers emphasized the importance of early, transparent communication, as well as adherence to codes of conduct. Such clarity not only safeguards the integrity of the work, but ensures mutual respect.

Pair, share, dare

The conversation, rich with insights and grounded in experience, set an energizing tone for the retreat's practical component. This began with a five-minute 'pair, share, dare' exercise designed to motivate participants and help them hold each other accountable throughout the afternoon. Having paired up, participants shared their writing focuses and objectives, before daring each other to meet those objectives by the end of the session. More specifically, participants were asked to discuss three key points with their partners:

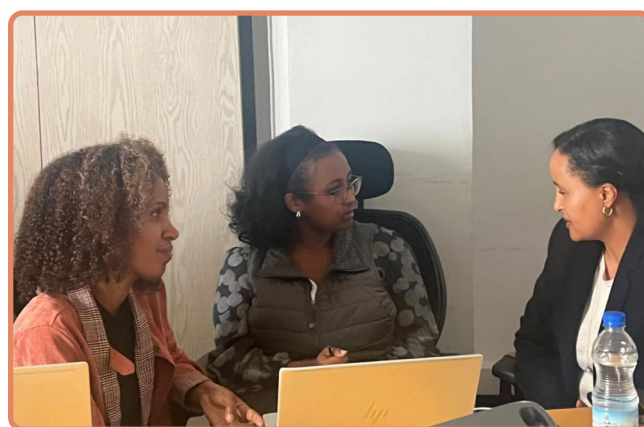


Figure 2. Participants engaging in discussion





Figure 3. Participants discussing in pairs.



Figure 4. Participants discussing in pairs.

1. What they had brought to the workshop to work on.
2. What they hoped to accomplish during the session.
3. Their specific goals for the afternoon.

In doing so, participants could clarify their focus, share any perceived challenges and elaborate on their underlying motivations. The pairing also fostered immediate connections, encouraging researchers to think of their work in dialogue with another person.

EWNET deputy principal, Ms Dalaya Ashenafi, joined the workshop virtually via Zoom, pairing with other online members and contributing to discussions.



Figure 5. Participants discussing in pairs.

Focused writing session

Next, participants transitioned to a 40-minute focused writing session. The room settled into a quiet concentration as participants turned fully to their manuscripts, some refining arguments, others structuring chapters, and still others developing abstracts or polishing data analysis. Each workstation became a site of purposeful engagement, reflecting both a project's individuality and the retreat's collective discipline. Online participants mirrored this focus, joining their peers in cultivating a shared atmosphere of productivity.

The combination of peer accountability and protected writing time proved fruitful. Numerous participants reported increased clarity and motivation due to the pairing exercise, while the ensuing silence created an ambience of joint purpose. At the participants' request, the focused writing session was extended, ultimately lasting 90 minutes. This extension was indicative of the depth of engagement, as well as the momentum generated by the retreat, demonstrating how collaborative structures can enable individual progress.

Reflections and collective mapping

Having formally concluded the focused writing session, Dr Netsanet Gebremichael facilitated the transition to the day's final segment: a collective reflection and reporting exercise.

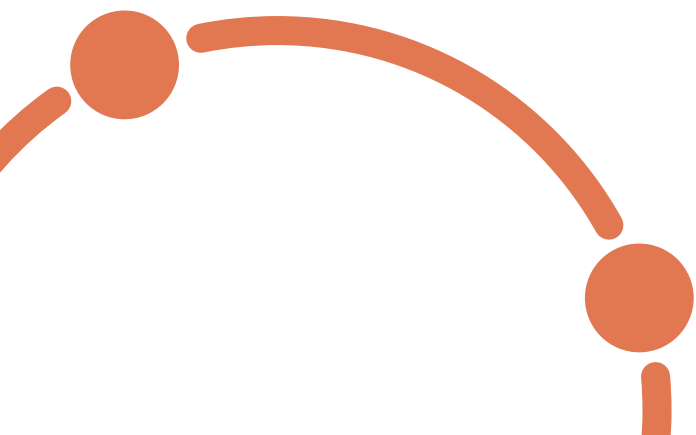
Dr Netsanet began by encouraging participants to see the retreat not only as a personal exercise in productivity, but a shared platform for visibility and continuity. To this end, she invited everyone to record their academic engagements over the past three months (including summer schools, publications and conferences) either on a board at the venue or via EWNET's WhatsApp group. These contributions would, she explained, be used in an upcoming newsletter, helping showcase the network's breadth of work and ensuring members remain connected to each other's achievements.

By way of encouragement, Dr Netsanet cited two recent essays by EWNET deputy principal Dalaya Ashenafi—'Will the FFD4 in Seville Break from the Past or Perpetuate a Cycle of Neocolonial Extraction?' and 'Sovereignty or Surrender: Confronting Africa's Comprador Class', published via Amani Africa and Tricontinental respectively—as demonstrating bold, rigorous scholarship. Dr Netsanet noted that these essays exemplify the impactful scholarship EWNET members should be sharing among themselves and others. Through mapping each other's work, members can not only track their personal progress but build a collective archive of women's contributions to Ethiopian and African research.

Following this introduction, the floor was opened for participants to share their reflections. Each member shared what they had worked on during the retreat, the progress they had made, and the challenges they had encountered. These ruminations were testament to the diversity and vitality of the group's research endeavours, with mentioned activities including:

- Integrating adviser comments into a research proposal.
- Drafting a methodology section for a postdoctoral fellowship concept note.
- Refining the introduction and methodology of an upcoming article, paying close attention to citations.
- Developing a new vision for a draft policy brief, informed by insights from the pair discussions.
- Addressing reviewer comments on a previously submitted journal article.
- Outlining a forthcoming conference paper and drafting its introduction.
- Revising a dissertation chapter for future pitching opportunities.
- Building the structure of a master's essay.

As well as providing evidence of concrete progress, the exercise revealed the range of scholarly pathways within EWNET, ranging from early-stage postgraduate work to advanced publications and policy interventions. Participants spoke openly about obstacles such as data scarcity, time constraints, and the pressures of balancing research with professional and personal responsibilities. Yet the overarching sentiment was one of achievement and solidarity, with many noting that the retreat had provided the clarity, motivation and structure needed to push their work forward.



Dr Netsanet closed out the afternoon by thanking the participants for their dedication and extending an invitation to the next EWNET Writes session, details of which were to follow. The session concluded amid an atmosphere of collegial warmth, intellectual energy and anticipation that the momentum generated at the inaugural workshop would be maintained.



Figure 6. Networking and tea break session.



Figure 7. Networking and tea break session.

ABOUT EUNET

This report was produced by the Ethiopian Women Researchers Network (EUNET) within the Peace Research Facility (PRF).

EUNET is dedicated to creating a vibrant and supportive network for Ethiopian women researchers in the social sciences and humanities. EUNET uses platforms such as podcasts and seminar series to disseminate and amplify the voices, work and research journeys of Ethiopian women researchers.

EUNET is an initiative of Rift Valley Institute's Peace Research Facility. The PRF is an independent facility combining timely analysis on peace and conflict from Ethiopian experts with support for conflict-sensitive programming in the country. It is managed by the Rift Valley Institute and funded by the UK government.

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