Assessment of Decentralized Local Governance Performance for Service Delivery in Ethiopia: The Case Study of Angacha District (Woreda)

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Abstract:

This research is paper concerned with the assessment of decentralized local governance performance for service delivery with particular emphasis to Angecha District (woreda.) It describes the performances and constraints of public service delivery in Angecha Woreda of Kembata Tembaro zone in SNNPR State of Ethiopia. It assesses the performance in education, health, agriculture and rural development, water supply, and rural roads sectors of the woreda, and compares the performances of these sectors after woreda decentralization. The study argues that properly institutionalized and functioning institution is decisive for efficient and responsive decentralized public service delivery. The findings of the study indicated the existence of better performance in education and agriculture and rural development sectors under the decentralization scheme. Minor changes have been observed in the health, road and water sectors. Overall performance was found to be low, which makes it difficult to conclude that there is significant change contrary to the expectations hoped to be realized after decentralization. This is because of constraints in financial and human resources and weaknesses in coordination and participation characterizing different actors in the

woreda. Low revenue generating capacity increased dependence on regional and zonal block grants thereby limiting financial resources available for public service delivery in the study woreda.

Key words: *Woreda,* Decentralization, Service Delivery, Local Governance, *Woreda* and *Kebele,* Planning and Community Participation

1. Introduction

Decentralized governance, as a development strategy, is considered to be a critical solution to fight major social ills of rural areas: inaccessibility of basic services, impoverished quality of facilities, inequalities, poverty, corruption and environmental degradation, among others. During the past decades a number of developing countries have undergone decentralization within the existing organizational structure with the expectations of increased local participation in decisions and improved system efficiency (Conyers, 2006; McGinn & Street, 1986; Saito, 2008). This is embedded in the principle that claims the central governments should not undertake those activities, which are at the reach and capacity of individual, private or local government called the "principle of subsidiary" (Saito, 2008). At the heart of this approach to government was the notion that it had to be decentralized in order to achieve all of the other goals; that is, it would be most effective working through participation and teamwork among government agencies at different levels and with groups outside of government.

Decentralized system of governance is related to capacity building and other sector activities at local level. Capacity building, taken to mean the development of skills, organizations, and institutions, is critical to the achievement of sustained economic and social development. It facilitates sound

governance, bureaucratic transparency, and empowerment of citizens at local levels (MCB, 2002). In a way, it ensures that government policy is financially, economically, and politically sustainable, and improves the equality of the service delivery system of the government to the community (Worku, 2005). As the concept of governance expanded, so did thinking about the rationale, objectives, and forms of decentralization. Decentralization now encompasses not only the transfer of power, authority, and responsibility within government but also the sharing of authority and resources for shaping public policy within society. In this expanding concept of governance decentralization practices can be categorized into at least four forms: administrative, political, fiscal, and economic. The rationales and outcomes of decentralization are attractive and conflicting (Saito, 2008; USAID, 2005).

Adarkwa, K. (2005) observed that development is better managed under decentralized system of administration than other forms of governance. This is because a decentralized system of governance instils in the local people commitment and increases their knowledge of development process, which makes them contribute to its success.

The decentralized form of government structure in Ethiopia put its foot when the current government comes in to power in 1991 and proclaimed constitution that made the country to follow a federal form of government. The Ethiopian decentralization drive over the years can be classified in to two distinct phases. The first phase of decentralization covers the period of (1991-2001). This period is characterized by decentralization of powers from the central government to autonomous regions which was done at ones and was centered on creating and empowering national/regional government and hence was termed as mid-level decentralization. During this period, national/regional state governments were established with changes in the local and central government system. The second wave of decentralization came in to exercise as of 2001,

with major changes taken by the central government to devolve powers. The second period of decentralization is characterized by the transfer of powers from regions to *woredas*. In the Ethiopian Sustainable Development and Poverty Reduction Program (MoFED, 2002 :), decentralization has been defined as one of the pillars of the Ethiopian poverty reduction strategy. It is stressed that the system of decentralization offers a framework for action and improved service delivery. In charging the regions with the responsibility of providing social services and carrying out poverty reduction programs, it is believed that decentralization brings about higher efficiency and better accountability in service delivery. It is also viewed as an effective way of bringing the decision-making process closer to the people, which enable the people to directly participate in their own development.

District (Woredas) in Ethiopia are important places for playing significant socio-economic, administrative and political roles. The *woredas* are empowered to deliver basic services such as agricultural extension, education, health, water supply, rural roads etc…within their respective jurisdictions. In accordance with this provision, different offices responsible for providing a range of services, including administrative and infrastructure services, were also deployed at local levels. The *Woreda* planning and budgeting manual, issued by the Ministry of Capacity Building (MCB) in 2007, highlights participation at local level states that the strategy for decentralization is expected to provide a basis for meaningful participation by the people in local development programs especially primary education, primary health care, rural water supply, rural roads and agricultural extension etc. This study is conducted in SNNPR; Angecha *woreda*. It assesses the performance of *woreda* governance service delivery.

However, Districts (*woredas*) in Ethiopia have the limited experience and capacity to carry out their increased responsibilities and to respond to citizen expectations and

demands. The immediate challenge facing these institutions is the development of relevant tools and strategies to analyze local governance effectiveness, with the aim of identifying ways to develop the capacity of local government actors to promote and sustain service delivery and democratic processes. The degree to which decentralization has met the objectives of autonomy and accountability is vaguer, while capacity seems to be a factor that seriously constrains implementation. In Ethiopia the recent *Woreda* decentralization is to enable local governments provide quality and efficient services with increasing good governance organizational effectiveness and improving human power.

In line with this study has assessed the performance of public service delivery and the major constraints inhibiting delivery of basic services in relation to local preferences and priorities in the study *woreda*. Also prior to this research, no research has undertaken on the performance of public service delivery and the changes have brought by decentralization in the study area. Therefore, the intention of this research will fill this gap. Moreover, the study will give hint about the question "Is *woreda/kebele* capable to provide decentralized public service deliveries and required resources to its population at *woreda* level?"

2. Review of Literature

Tegegne and Kassahun (2004) also defined decentralization as the transfer of legal and political authority from a central government and its associates to sub- national units of government in the process of making decisions and managing public functions. It is a process through which authority and responsibility for public functions is transferred from central government to local government.

Functionally, decentralization is divided into different dimensions, which are often included in the discussions on decentralization (Turner & Hulme, 1997). These include: administrative, political, fiscal and market decentralization. Political decentralization refers to the decentralization of political power and authority to sub-national or local levels where elected and empowered sub-national government units exist (Martinussen, 1997).

According to Cheema and Rondinelli (1983) the degree of implementation and the degree of accomplishment of intended goals of decentralization policy depends on a range of political, social, behavioral, economical and organizational factors. These all put together will lead to performance and achievement of policy goals, local capacity improvement, productivity, participation and better service delivery. Since these factors are interrelated, it implies that, if some of these conditions are missing which in turn implies that, the program is limping and may not produce desired outcomes. A decentralization programs to be successful highly depends on an effective and efficient design before it is implemented showing the sequence and steps of implementation, what is required at every step, the legal framework governing the process at every step, the institutional framework and continuous fine tuning during its implementation. In designing decentralization program, the fiscal (functional assignment, revenue assignment, transfers system, etc) design is a key condition for successful decentralization program (Vergara, 1999).

Decentralization is a complex multi-dimensional process that involves fiscal, administrative and political aspects. Moreover, each of these dimensions is multi-faced by itself as it involves several features that need to be taken into account. According to Rondinelli, (1989), Administrative decentralization has three major forms (deconcentration, delegation, and devolution) each with different characteristics.

World Development Report (2004) argued that political decentralization brings accountability to the system and may improve service delivery. This may occur because citizens have a channel to provide input on local decision-making processes and hold local decision-makers accountable for their actions (Khemani, 2006). McGreevy (2000) argues that political decentralization, in the context of a decentralized provision of health services, is essential to ensure accountability and improvements in efficiency. He argues that the realization of the benefits of decentralization requires not only devolving financial resources and administrative functions to lower tiers of government but also instituting electoral accountability. Thus, in improving local accountability in service delivery through the political process, local elections may be a powerful tool for citizens. Recently, the concept of governance included a new set of institutional arrangements and new sets of practices challenging the traditional understanding of government. It includes social, political and economic dimensions operating at the level of grass root, municipality, nation, region or the world at large (Miller, 2000).

Decentralized Governance in Ethiopia

A devolved form of governance is a recent phenomenon, which is significantly a departure from the history of the country in general. Despite the existence of *woredas* as the lower tiers of government since the 1940s, the role of *woredas* in providing public services at the local level remained highly limited. Attempts at decentralization under the Imperial government and military rule popularly known as the Derg, remained insignificant owning to strict control of public services in a centralized manner.

The main purpose of *woreda* administration at the time was enforcement of law and order and collection of taxes and only few agencies like police, finance and justice were fielded at *woreda* level. These services were centrally budgeted and

controlled (Imperial Government, Negarit Gazeta No 6.1942 article 1 part 31). All locally generated revenue was remitted to the central treasury. Under the military rule also this limited role was maintained, until *woredas* were dissolved in 1987. Some additional role were also assigned to *woredas* as a result of the Land Reform and Urban Land Proclamation, which established Peasant and Urban Dwellers Association following the Ethiopian Revolution of 1974.With these changes, *woredas* were given responsibility for implementing decisions related to the land reform, transmitting and enforcing rules and directives flowing from higher levels of administration, arbitrating minor court cases among community members and undertaking matters related to local development and service delivery (Tegegne and Kassahun, 2004). During the Derg head of administration and some of the ranks and files were assigned by the central government, the regions concerned were rather reduced to the strict control and supervision of the center. On matters of socio-economic development also central planning has been a guiding principle in which local services were decided centrally.

The current federal constitution of Ethiopia provides for a four-tier decentralization framework consisting of regions (or states), Zones, Districts(*Woredas)* and Villages (*Kebeles).* Ethiopia has nine regions, which are: Oromia, Amhara, Southern Nations Nationalities and Peoples (SNNP), Tigray, Somalia, Afar, Benishangul-Gumuz, Gambella, and Harari, plus the two municipalities (urban administrations) of Addis Ababa and Dire Diwa. The first five regions account for over 88% of the country's population and 82% of its surface area. In practice, the two city municipalities of Addis Ababa and Dire Diwa are considered as regions. Generally, Zones (except for SNNP and part of Amhara) do not constitute administrative structures. There exist political representational bodies at sub-national tiers. These comprise the regional, woreda and kebele councils (African development bank, 2009).

Ethiopia has installed a decentralized system which recognized regions, *woredas* and municipalities. These local governments have authority and autonomy to undertake social and economic development. This is ascertained by constitutional provisions. Ethiopia's decentralizations thus have created opportunities for local governments to determine their future. The *woreda* governments have power and authority that emanate from each of the respective Regional Constitutions; provisions vary modestly across regional states, but in each the *woredas* are the key autonomous self-governing units to which power and resources are devolved. A *woreda* is empowered to prepare and decide on economic and social service plans for its territorial area. *Woredas*' fiscal authority is defined by regional governments. *Woredas* are assigned certain tax bases though many of them suffer from vertical imbalance forcing them to rely on regional government to cover the bulk of their expenditure requirements. *Woredas* have a wide range of expenditure responsibilities including local police, local roads, utilities, water etc. (Tegegne, 2011).
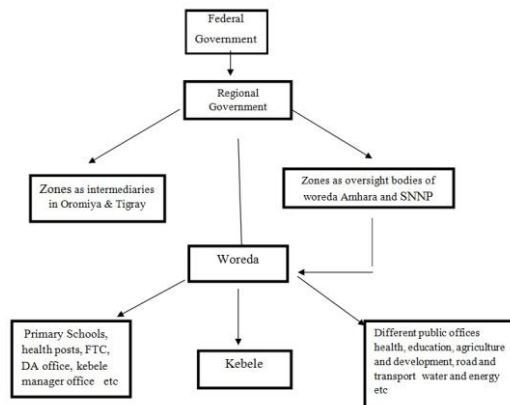

Fig -1   Ethiopia   Governance Structure

Source: modified by researcher from Serdar yilmaz and Varsha venugopal (2008) Local Government Discretion and Accountability in Ethiopia

Table no.1 Breakdown of Arban and Rural Woredas in all Regions

Region	Rural Woreda	Urban Woreda	Total Woredas
Amhara	128	22	150
Oromiya	259	39	298
SNNPR	134	22	156
Tigray	34	12	46
Benshangul	20	1	21
Afar	29	0	29
Somale	52	0	52
Gambela	12	1	13
Hareri	3	1	4
Total	671	98	769

Source: Ethiopia World Bank office, 2008

The major trend in intra-regional planning in Ethiopia is embarking on a regional and *woreda* planning system. This system follows closely the local government system. Planning units are established at regional and *Woreda* levels. Sector units also take part in sector planning units prepare their own plans and submit the same to horizontal planning units at each government level. There are elements of top-down and bottom up approaches in planning. Guidelines initiated at regional level are passed all the way to the *Woreda* and proposal initiated by sector offices and complied by planning bureaus pass the way to the regional executive committee and later to the regional council for approval (Tegegne, 2009).According to Tegegne (2011) under such decentralized system regional and *Woredas* have prepared five year development plan annual budgets and strategic plans to serve as guide for development activities. GTP is growth oriented program that aims at attaining MDG goals by 2015 and reducing poverty. The *woreda* has the objectives of stimulating local economies and reducing poverty. It seeks to create effective and functioning local economies and raising their resilience, attractiveness and competitiveness. Adequate planning capacity at each level is a matter of specific consideration.

Decentralization and Service Delivery in Ethiopia

Since the early 1990s, the GOE has pursued sound macroeconomic policies and has shown a remarkable commitment to improve the delivery of basic services and infrastructure in pursuit of its growth and poverty reduction objectives. Significant progress has been achieved in several key areas of development action, including the expansion of access to services. Decentralization, hence, holds promise for improving the delivery of public services, as participation and oversight tend to enhance the responsiveness of public policies, especially in the social arena. Responsibility for service provision should be allocated on the basis of the principle of subsidiary, that is, at the closest appropriate level consistent with efficient and cost effective delivery of services (Tegegne and Kassahun, 2007).

Decentralized Governance in SNNPR

In Ethiopia context, the Federal constitution clearly stipulates nine regional governments and two administrative councils with clear statutory power and boundaries. However, the constitution leaves for the Regional Governments to devolve power and resources to lower tier of government: the *woreda* level (Ethiopian Constitution, in Assefa, 2006).The Federal Constitution gives much more emphasize on the ethnic and collective identity and regional states rather fraction part of the Regional States, the grass-root level structure at the *woreda* and *kebele*. SNNP Region being one of the federating regions falls in the southern part of the country. South Nation, Nationalities and people Regional State (SNNPRS) being one of the regional states of the federal government, has unique diversity and inhabited by multi-ethnic groups.

Decentralization and Service Delivery in SNNPR

In 1995, the first wave of local decentralization in the region, that bring limited change on the service delivery in the *woredas*

(SNNPR, 2002). However, this era of local decentralization was more administrative and political decentralization but there was limited fiscal decentralization. And this has created no significant changes in the basic social services at grass-root level. The major public services were delivered through the zonal departments. *Woredas* were mainly responsible routine and administrative activities. This has created favorable conditions for the region, to decentralize more power, particularly fiscal authorities to the *woredas*. In 2002, the regional government under took a comprehensive intra-regional decentralization. Local councils were given some level of fiscal autonomy on expenditure assignment and revenue generating authorities. This enabled the local government to exercise their political and fiscal autonomy in socio-economic sphere in their territories (Ibid: 21).

The second-phase of local decentralization in SNNPR was aimed to improve the service delivery at the local level by devolving decision making authorities to the elected local councils. Another aim was to improve local accountability by allowing local people to elect their local representative and be held accountable for their public duties. The third purpose was to enhance the local participation in the process of delivering effective and responsive service delivery (SNNPR, 2005). However, the second phase of local decentralization in SNNPR focused on transferring power from the zones to the *woredas.* In the process of preparation for decentralization, the regional government conducted extensive local capacity assessment and had designed local decentralization strategy. In addition, local capacity building supports were given to the *woredas.* Public service delivering responsibilities such as education, health, agricultural extension, water supply and rural road construction services were clearly demarcated among the regional, zonal and *woreda* level. *Woredas* started to deliver the newly transferred responsibilities and the regional government has started to transfer a significant amount of budget to the

woreda (SNNPR Finance and Economic development Bureau, 2007).

3. Research Objectives and Methodology

Objectives of study

- To assess the major capacity constraints affecting the performance of local governance;
- To examine the current basic service delivery performance in terms of its responsiveness to local needs and priorities;

Significance of the Study

There is a growing concern of governments towards the public service sectors. Government offices in Ethiopia are implementing the new reform in their working system to increase efficiency and effectiveness in public service delivery. Findings may also be very useful to government and other concerned bodies working to realize local governance improvements.

Research Design and Description of the Study

Research methodology generally relies on qualitative and quantitative research. This study was utilizing a comparative approach to examine the basic service delivery performance capacity of Angecha *Woreda* in SNNP Regional State, Ethiopia. There are 20 *Kebeles* in the *Wereda* of which 2 are urban *Kebeles*. The topography of the *woreda* is mainly high land with the zone's famous maintain called Ambarcho. The *Woreda's* population in 2004E.C from the SNNPR BOFED is about 108,062. Issues relating to service delivery performance and financial capacities, availability of an enabling environment, and community participation are assessed in the study.
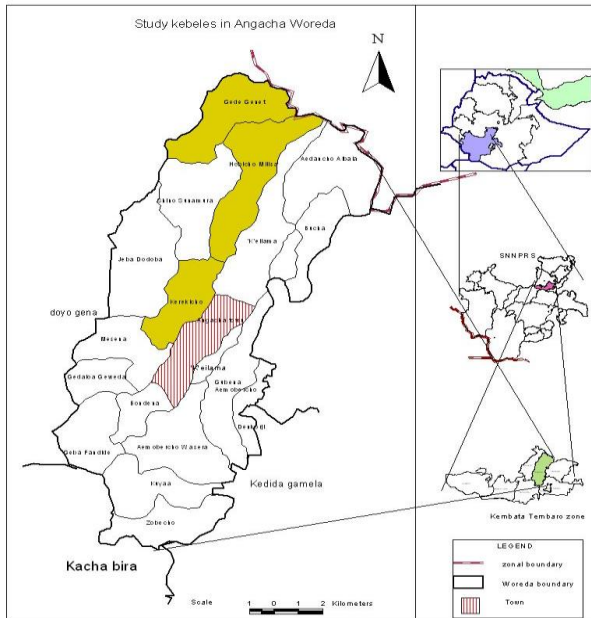
Fig-3.2.1 Map of Study Area

Populations and Sampling Techniques

The study of decentralization is both a policy and development issue, which in one way or the other affects the whole sections of the *woreda* population. However, given the large broad category of population that the study comprises, it is ideal to find a complete list or sample frame in one and it is also impractical and time-consuming to compile an exhaustive list of elements including the target population.

Therefore, the sample size of population has been determined using the formula developed by Yamane (1967).

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{1433}{1 + 1433(0.07^{2})} = 166$$

Where n is the sample size and N is the population size and e is the level of precision 0.07 (7%). By Appling the above formula

the sample size becomes 166. Three groups of respondents were civil servants, cabinet members or councilors and *kebele* different committee members of the *woreda* were involved in this study. Sample size of 166 from each group was stratified according to sex to ensure proportionate representation. There are a total of 892 civil servants and 176 cabinet members or administrators a total of *Woreda* and *Kebele* level and 365 *Kebele* different committee members (PTAs, KETBs, Health committee members, WASH committee members, *kebele* development committee members and others). For the purpose of this study, 104 of the civil servants, 20 of the cabinet members of the *woreda* and 42 different *Kebele* level representatives were selected by proportionate sample size. In addition focus group discussions were held in a three *Kebeles* with the community members from different backgrounds of status, age and sex to get sufficient information on basic services delivery such as access to primary education and health services, potable water, road construction, quality of services, agricultural extension and the level of community participation in planning and budgeting. Each focus group had 8 members or participants.

4. Results and Analysis of Findings

Data Presentation and Findings
This section represents the data and the results obtained in the study along with discussion and interpretations of issues.

Powers and Functions of the District (Woreda)
Legal framework for decentralized governance is constitution. Article 50 (4) of federal constitution is the important legal base for decentralized governance system and for empowering the lowest level of government (i.e *Woredas* and *Kebeles*). It is presented as state governments shall establish other administrative level that is found to be necessary. Adequate

powers shall be granted to the lowest unit of government to enable the people to participate directly to the administration of such unit. Article (52) of the federal constitution also laid legal provision that ensure devolution of power to the regional government and granted power to establish lower administrative level under their jurisdiction. For decentralized governance to be effective having local capacity in terms of human, financial, and material, resource is mandatory. As shown in table 4 .2, regarding human resource capacity, Woreda administration has person who has a qualification of: 13 (1.5%) 2nd degree, 378(42.4%) 1rst degree, 404 (45%) diploma, 76(8.5%) certificate and 21(2.3%) 10 (12) complete respectively.

Table 2. Qualification of Human Resources

No	Qualification	No	%	Male	female	remarks
1	2nd degree	13	1.5	12	1	
2	Degree	378	42.4	316	62	
3	Diploma	404	45.3	232	172	
4	Certificate	76	8.5	29	47	
5	10 or12 complete	21	2.3	8	13	
Total		892	100	597	295	

Source: Angecha Woreda civil service office (2014)

This shows that the highest proportion of human resource have a qualification of diploma and degree, of which again, a large number are primary school and high school teachers and health officials. According to the 65% of interviewed *woreda* officials and 72% of survey results of civil servants, there are many problems to execute the powers and functions which the constitution provided to the revealed that there exists typically a lack of skill and financial capacity to carry out their roles. In addition, there are often resource problems which are more pronounced in remote *kebeles* that have little capacity to raise revenues but are expected to carry out an increased range of functions of *woreda* and *kebeles*. The focus group discussion justified the same thing.

Do the *Woreda* officials 'have clear rules, directives and guidelines for employees of all levels', to access their services in resource mobilization for public service delivery in the *Woreda*. With regards to the item 92.2% out of 104 respondents say yes, 3.5% out of 104 respondents say no and 4.3% out of 104 respondents undecided. This may show us that employees in the offices have some knowledge of rules and guidelines. For the item 'the financial management system of the *woreda* is weak', 60.5% strongly agree, 35.5% agree, and the rest 4% agree to some extent. We can infer from these data that in the *woreda* the financial management system is weak. For the item 'key positions were adequately filled or not' in the *Woreda* to deliver public services' majority of respondents 65% out of 104 respondents say yes, and 22.8% out of 104 respondents say no, and 12.2% out of 104 respondents undecided, while this shows that there are no adequate man power in the sectors which are also supported by focus group discussion and secondary data obtained from the offices.

Therefore, *woreda* administration has the mandate to hire. Financial, material and equipments are far from adequate and acute problem of *woreda* administration according to the interview. This causes a problem of undertaking day to day activities of *woreda* administration. For example, a problem of motor cycles and vehicles hinders to undertake filed work to remote *kebeles*. This indicates that local governance capacity is not an end by itself, rather it is a means to an end and it is a tool that contributes its share for public service delivery and good governance and hence, to the extent that these resources are lacking, drives the effort to promote good governance and public service backward. Shortages of human and material resources are affecting the development of the areas. Unless this is taken seriously by the government, the turnover problem in government offices will continue.

Duties and Responsibilities of the Woreda in Public Service Delivery

Article 79-89 of the federal constitution defined the power, duties and responsibilities of *woreda* administrations and empowered them to approve *woreda* social service delivery, economic development, and administrative plans and programs. The SNNP Regional State Constitution established *woreda* administrations with necessary legal, institutional and financial powers. This was aimed at making them effective and efficient institutions of local government for democratic governance and economic development. The constitution also provides for direct election of *woreda* and *kebeles* administrations by local people and also recognizes *woreda* and *kebeles* institutions as institutions closer to the people.

The *Woreda* government has also both legislative and executive organs. Its council is elected from the *Kebeles* and issues directives and polices to the *Woreda* executive committee. The executive committee members are accountable to the *Woreda* council. The *Woreda* administration also has judicial organs. *Woreda* government in study area has the responsibility upward to regional and zonal council and down ward to electorate which crate confusion in authority responsibilities relationship.

When asked a question that "Does decentralization improve public service delivery?" 86% out of 104 respondents asserted positive change of decentralization in the public service delivery. The major reasons that were perceived the role of decentralization positively were: improve quality access to public service (48%), develop common understanding on decision making process (25.2%), makes the public service delivery activities transparent or open (20.5%) and empower personnel (6.3%). Contrary to this 14% out of 104 respondents refuted that positive role of decentralization in public service delivery. 16% of respondents reasoning out the following: interference from higher government body (34.4%), the public

service delivery management follows top down approach (22%) and the *kebele* has no power to make decision on budget allocation (43.6%). This may show that the *woreda* have weak capacity to implement, follow up and evaluate different developmental activities.

Interviewed *kebele* officials and community representatives were pointed out that there is no budget allocated to the *kebeles* nor they have revenue sources; *kebeles* collect revenues but submitted all to the *woredas. Kebeles* were highly engaged in mobilizing the community to participate in different development activities. Hence, the field data revealed that power is deconcentrated not devolved fully on main issues like revenue generating, manpower recruitment, implementing capital projects. The *kebele* cabinets lack the resources for running their respective *kebeles* effectively. kebeles in the Angecha woreda suffer from capacity problems in all dimensions ranging resources (human, financial, material), administrative and technical aspects.

Table no.3   List of priorities and needs by respondents for selected public services

Selected public services	NO of respondents (20+104)	Priorities	%
Education	26	1st	21.5
	28	2nd	22.5
	31	**3rd**	**25**
	18	4th	14.5
	21	5th	16.5
	Total number of respondents 124	-	100
Health	28	1st	22.5
	17	2nd	13.5
	24	3rd	19.5
	32	**4th**	**26.0**
	23	5th	18.5
	Total number of respondents 124		100
Agricultural extension	17	1st	13.5
	28	2nd	22.5
	17	3rd	13.5
	29	4th	23.5

	33	5th	27.0
	Total number of respondents	-	100
Rural road	38	1st	31
	34	2nd	27.5
	28	3rd	22.5
	13	4th	10.5
	11	5th	8.5
	Total number of respondents	-	100
Water supply	35	1st	28.5
	37	2nd	30
	34	3rd	27.5
	11	4th	8.5
	7	5th	5.5
Total	Total number of respondents 124	-	100

Source: From data collected by researcher September (2014)

As indicated in the above mentioned table, for 38(31%) of the respondents rural road, for 37(30%) of the respondents water supply, for 31(25%) of the respondents education, for 32 (26%) of the respondents health, and for 33(27%) of them agriculture is first, second, third fourth, and fifth priority majority consideration. Most of the respondents claimed that particularly their demand for rural road and water supply is not addressed despite their repeated requests. According to majority of the respondents, there is a problem in addressing the priorities and needs of the community. While, the interviewed respondents and survey data stated rural road, water supply, education, health and agriculture as their first, second, third, fourth and fifth priorities. Hence, *woredas* budget allocation lacks equity in terms of fairness. There are great variations in the allocation of budget for different economic and social sectors of the economy. In general, it is possible to comment that the allocation of budget in the *woreda* recognizes the poverty reduction sectors, but enough consideration should be given for the road and water sectors in order to increase the road access and clean water coverage of the *woreda*.

We conclude that popular participation in the *woreda* is limited and participation is confined to labor and financial

contribution. Each office prepares its annual plan without assessment of required activities in consultation with the target groups. Plans are submitted for approval to the *woreda* administration. Participation of the community in problem identification and prioritization is rarely observed and the role of the community is limited to provision of labor and materials during implementation.

Major problems identified in Selected Public service delivery

Theoretically, as mentioned in literature reviews, decentralization improves the provision of basic services by creating effective and efficient mechanisms for the involvement of community and other stakeholders in the planning, implementing, monitoring and decision making process. And the involvement of community in the local government decision making process is believed to develop governance values: accountability and transparency among others. However in reality, as decentralization is not a solution for all poor service delivery, various constraints occurred in service delivery. Thus under the study, decentralization practice of five selected *woreda* sectors studied to determine its effect on service delivery. The research has identified some major problems of these institutions that hinder effective service delivery. From the document examination, focus group discussion and interviews result of five selected *woreda* public offices the following problems are identified and presented here under.

Financial Constraints

Availability of financial resources is important factor for better performance of local governments in particular and for local development in general. Financial autonomy is important to ensure local development. Statistical data obtained from the *woreda* coupled with data obtained from interviews with the *woreda* officials' show that *woreda* has weak revenue base and

heavily depend on the regional government for their budgets. According to focus group discussion and interviews result, the financial capacity of the *woreda* is inadequate. Therefore *woreda* is highly dependent on regional transfers for its annual budget. The block grants that *woreda* received from regional governments and allocated among various budget items is inadequate to meet the increasing service demands and needs of the local community. Although the *woreda* has structured itself since decentralization in a way that it could provide public services, there is a great mismatch between its expenditure obligation and the financial resources it actually receives in the form of block grant and use of own revenue. *Woreda* own revenue and regional block grant is still lagging behind the *woreda* expenditure requirement for provision of public services. Therefore, the income generating capacity is weak in the study *woreda*. Disproportionate share of salaries and other administrative expenditures is a big challenge to the *woreda*. Salaries and other operating costs constituted more than 96% of the total budget in almost all the service sectors. Therefore the study show that service providing agencies have limited financial and human resource capacities to meet the growing demands of the community.

Weak Coordination and Participation of community in Planning and Budgeting

One objective of this study is to assess the level of community participation through assessing the capacity and the ability of the community to contribute, to share in and benefit from diverse social, economic, political or other processes of the society. The contributions of a community include, among others, planning and designing, prioritizing, financing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating of their development programs. In realizing these community contributions, the commitments of both government and local society are inevitable. The government should design community-based

national policy and open its door to community to involve in their own issues starting from planning to final evaluation. *Woreda* recognizes the important role that communities and non-state actors can play in the development process, and in holding public service providers accountable. However, community participation in planning and budgetary processes is still limited.

The *woreda* has a weak coordination and participation of community in the provision of public services. The role of the community is limited to contribution of labor and money for *woreda* development efforts. The community participation was low due the inadequate capacity of the *woreda* and *kebeles* administrations and professionals to mobilize and coordinate the resources of the community in different public services. Measures to improve the involvement of community members in planning and budgeting development activities are low. In general, there was no well-established network system and clear guidelines to enhance the community participation in the *woreda*.

The *woreda* level decentralization has given rise to increased demands for more social and economic services, such as education, health, clean water, rural road, etc. The public sector of the *woreda* is low in basic economic and social service delivery, for communities to access these services at grass-root level, as well as weak in creating sense of ownership through the participation of community.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The study is assumed to be useful for understanding of the implication of decentralized local governance performance for service delivery. Today, countries around the world have shown a tendency towards decentralization and local governance for different reasons and in different time periods. In addition to the tendency towards decentralized form of governance, the

program is also subject to debate. Decentralization in Ethiopia (transfer of political, fiscal and administrative power) from the central government to Regional, Zonal and *Woreda* governments in the form of devolution or political reform has been the main agenda since 1991 to realize the objective of democratic governance, to give response to ethnic pressure, to ensure the needs of democratic self-governance, to give self-rule to ethnic groups regarding their cultural and linguistic autonomy of nations and nationalities that may allow them to administer their own affairs.

This study shows that *woreda* governments are facing a rising task in implementing decentralization programs, Therefore, successful decentralization will depend on the local governments institutional, technical and managerial capacities to perform their various tasks of raising revenues and providing public services.The shortage of finance, scarcity of skilled human resource, absence of good governance and poor management, limited need based training programs, shortage of service facilities and resources, and poor coordination and communication are some of the major challenges *woreda* face. The budget in the study *Woreda* is mainly absorbed by wages and salaries reserving minimal or almost nothing to capital budget. It appears impossible to address basic service problems with the current budget allocation.

There are some improvements observed in the local governance level after policies and strategies have been put in place. The *Woreda* administration still needs to be capacitated at almost all levels in order to execute their responsibilities effectively and efficiently. In addition to the capacity problem, it seems that there is lack of commitment to facilitate the implementation of basic services. To overcome this, trust between government and communities should be there.

Generally, it can be concluded that decentralization evidently shown improvement in service delivery particularly in education, health, water, road and agricultural activities. To

mention some of these positive outcomes: it enabled the local service providers to perform their duties with autonomy, to provide quality and efficient service (i.e. in terms of access and coverage) to their people.

Recommendations

1. Effective decentralization requires adequate financial resources. But the study *woreda* is financially constrained due to its low revenue generating and low administrative capacities. As such the *woreda* cannot generate sufficient revenues from its own sources. Therefore, measures to increase the revenue base should be seriously emphasized by the *woreda* government.

2. Identification of critical human resources needs of the *woreda* governments and designing appropriate human resource development programs and plans avoids shortage of human resources in the sectors.

3. Poor coordination and communication systems are also the problems identified in the local governments. To avoid this, the practice of involving the community in identifying problems and prioritizing their needs, planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluation of local development activities is crucial for true empowerment and accomplishment of desirable changes that satisfy the public and justify the program.

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*Local Terms used Woreda =District. Kebele= Village