

**CAPACITY BUILDING FOR DECENTRALIZED LOCAL GOVERNANCE: THE CASE OF ADAMI  
TULU JIDO WOREDA AND ZIWAY TOWN IN OROMIA REGIONAL STATE, ETHIOPIA**

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**ABSTRACT**

*This comparative study assesses the performance of capacity building activities for decentralized local governance in Adami Tulu Jido woreda (district) and Ziway town, Oromia State Region. The results reveal that even though both local governments have been given the authority to plan their activities, their implementing capacity is very weak. Human resources required to perform various local level responsibilities in both local governments are deficient in both quantity and quality. Capacity building activities designed to overcome some of these problems are inadequate, as they are not needs-based. Community participation is limited to implementation of already planned activities, rather than having communities involved in decision making at all levels of the project cycle. Inadequate budget provisions, lack of skilled manpower, and high turnover are some of the major challenges that need to be addressed by both local authorities.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

The idea of local development emanated from the need to resolve problems of inequality among localities of a given state. Two development approaches (the top-down and the bottom-up) have been used to explain this issue (Mohammed, 1999; Adams, 2001). The top-down approach emphasizes the clustering of investment in selected spatial entities for some initial advantages that will later spread outward. The decision making power is centralized at the national and sector levels. It also focuses on economic return that could be enhanced by other areas through trickle down effects. On the other hand, the bottom-up approach, concerned with inward looking as the decision making power, is devolved to local levels. It hinges on self-reliance of regions and localities as enshrined in participatory approaches. Thus, localities and regions are involved in the planning and implementation of development activities at their levels.

The bottom-up approach recognizes decentralization as a mechanism of improving the administration of development by enhancing its governance, increasing responsiveness, and flexibility. Adarkwa (2005) notes that development is better managed under decentralized system of administration than other forms of governance. This is because a decentralized system of governance instills in the local people commitment and increases their knowledge of development process, which makes them contribute to its success.

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).

The development literature has also established the fact that the move towards decentralized local governance is not without challenges (Wunsch, 2001). These include such issues as the center's unwillingness to fully devolve authority to the lower tiers, absence of key changes in regulations and legislations, poor training and payment for local personnel, and poor design of local institutions, factors which tend to impinge on the proper functioning and sustainability of the new institutions.

Ethiopia embarked on a decentralized system of administration in the early 1990s. Since then, substantial efforts have been made to devolve power to *woredas* (districts), which have been mandated to prepare and implement development plans and programs and set priorities reflecting the needs of the people. To facilitate this, a Ministry of Capacity Building (MCB) was established in 2001 to spearhead the Federal Government's capacity building program. In addition, a Public Sector Capacity Building Program (PSCAP) was launched in 2004 whose aim is to enhance the capacity of local governments. However, the program's implementation process and its effect on *woredas'* capacity building programs being implemented at local levels have not been thoroughly assessed. This is the gap that this study wishes to fill.

This study utilizes a comparative approach to examine the performance of capacity building activities of two local governments, Adami Tulu Jido *woreda* and Ziway town in Oromia Regional State, Ethiopia. Issues relating to human resource and financial capacities, availability of an enabling environment, and community participation are assessed in the study. The local level sectors (offices) were taken as unit for analysis because of their closeness to the grass roots population. *Woredas* are also considered to be the key local units of government, since they play key roles in prioritizing the provision of public services (Loop, 2002).

## **METHODOLOGY**

Both primary and secondary data sources were used. Primary data were collected using questionnaires, focus group discussions, and key informants, while the secondary data were based on local authorities' program planning, implementation, and monitoring reports and other working papers. Two groups of respondents, i.e. civil servants and cabinet members (councilors), of both local governments (the *woreda* and the town) were involved in this study. Samples from each group were stratified according to sex to ensure proportionate representation. The lists of names of all the officials and employees of both local governments were obtained from the offices of the local governments.

There were a total of 369 civil servants and 18 cabinet members in Adami Tulu Jido *woreda*, 198 civil servants, and 12 cabinet members in Ziway town. For the purpose of this study, 126 (34%) of the civil servants, nine (50%) of the cabinet members of the *woreda*, 53 (30%) of the civil servants, and seven (58%) of the cabinet members of the town were selected using simple random sampling technique. In addition, fourteen experienced civil servants and ten individuals from both localities participated in the

focus group discussions. In-depth interviews were conducted with key informants knowledgeable on capacity building and decentralized local governance issues.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

### *(a) Characteristics of sample survey respondents*

A total of 119 sample survey respondents from Adami Tulu Jido *woreda* participated in the study. Of these, 110 were civil servants and nine were cabinet members. Of the civil servants, 79% are male and 21% were female. The nine cabinet members are all male. As for Ziway town's 60 respondents, 53 are civil servants and 7 cabinet members. Of the civil servants, 69.8% of them were male and 30.2% were female. As in the *worda* case, all seven cabinet members were male (Table 1).

**Table 1: Characteristics of the Respondents**

Characteristics		Adami Tulu Jido Woreda				Ziway Town			
		Civil Servants		Cabinet members		Civil Servants		Cabinet members	
		No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Sex	Male	87	79	9	100	37	69.8	7	100
	Female	23	21	-	-	16	30.2	-	-
	Total	110	100	9	100	53	100	7	100
Age	15-20	17	15.5	-	-	3	5.7	-	-
	21-30	50	45.5	3	33.3	17	32.1	1	14.3
	31-40	25	22.7	4	44.5	23	43.4	4	57.1
	41-50	13	11.8	2	22.2	7	13.2	2	28.6
	51 and above	5	4.5	-	-	3	5.7	-	-
	Total	110	100	9	100	53	100	7	100
Level of education	Degree level and above	-	-	3	33.3	4	7.5	-	-
	Diploma	67	60.9	6	66.7	35	66.1	7	100
	Grade 12	29	26.4	-	-	12	22.6	-	-
	Below Grade 12	14	12.7	-	-	2	3.8	-	-
Total	110	100	9	100	53	100	7	100	
Work experience (years)	5 and below	12	10.9	4	44.5	8	15.1	2	28.6
	6-10	31	28.2	2	22.2	20	37.7	3	42.8
	11-15	38	34.5	2	22.2	19	35.9	2	28.6
	16-20	22	20	1	11.1	6	11.3	-	-
	21 and above	7	6.4	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	110	100	9	100	53	100	7	100	

What is evident from the above survey results is the gender gap in favor of men in both civil service staffing and cabinet member selection. Of major concern is the extreme marginalization of women in the decision making at the cabinet level. In both local authorities, there is not even a single female cabinet member. This calls for the need for affirmative action to ensure women representation at the cabinet

decision making level. This, in a way, may guarantee that women's concerns are addressed in the program.

The survey results further show that the majority of the *woreda* civil servants are relatively young, with 45.5% in the 21-30 age group, compared with 33.3% of the cabinet members in the same age category. About 81.2% of the civil servants and 71.4% of the cabinet members of Ziway town are below the age of 40 years. Thus, the executives and civil servants of both local governments are young and, hence, can serve in public institutions for longer years.

The educational level of civil servants and cabinet members in both local authorities is relatively low. Only 3.5% and 3.8% of them have first degree educational level for the *woreda* and the town, respectively. About 13.3% of the *woreda* personnel and 21.7% of the town are also diploma holders. The rest of the employees have completed secondary education, secondary education plus a one year training certificate, or below. All the cabinet members of the town are diploma and certificate holders, while the majority of those in the *woreda* (66.7%) are below diploma level. This may indicate the lack of capacity among the civil servants and cabinet members of both local authorities to shoulder the responsibilities vested in them. The problem seems more acute in the rural *woreda* than in the town. This, in a way, calls for both local governments to put more emphasis on capacitating their employees and officials through such activities as on the job training.

Concerning work experience, the majority of the civil servants and cabinet members in both local authorities have been on the job for more than five years. The survey results indicate that of the 110 civil servants of the *woreda*, 10.9% have less than six years experience, 62.7% have 6-15 years of experience, 20% have 16-20 years, and 6.4% have over 21 years. With regard to cabinet members, 44.4% have less than six years, another 44.4% have 6-15 years, while one has over 16 years. As for the town, of the 53 civil servants, 15.1% have less than six years experience, 73.5% have 6-15 years, and 11.3% have above 15 years. Of the seven cabinet members, 71.5% have 6-15 years of experience while 28.6% have 5 or less years of experience. This indicates that the cabinet members of the town are more experienced than those of the *woreda*, while experience of the civil servants is almost similar.

*(b) Human resources capacity*

Analysis of human resources capacity in both the *woreda* and the town is done through investigation of the available human capital, their educational qualifications and work experience, the kind and relevance of on-the-job trainings given to civil servants and cabinet members. Local authority statistical reports and information gathered through survey questionnaires and interviews from both the *woreda* and the town revealed a critical shortage of human resources both in quantity and quality. Out of the total establishment of 369 positions, only 68.6% of them are filled in Adami Tulu Jido *woreda*, while the rest (31.4%) are vacant. In Ziway town, out of the total establishment of 198 positions, 53.5% are filled while the rest are vacant. Thus, there is a high vacancy rate in the town administration than in the rural *woreda* administration; this tends to vary with departments.

The situation is more acute in some departments than others. For example, all positions of the capacity building office of the Ziway town are vacant, while 33.3% of those of Adami Tulu Jido *woreda* are filled. Under such circumstances, it becomes difficult to implement and coordinate the capacity building activities of the local governments. Thus, unless these local governments take measures to capacitate their human resources, the situation may impinge on the development of the areas.

The study also reveals that there is a mismatch between the employees training background and the type of work they are currently employed to do. According to focus group discussions, the majority of the present officials in both local governments were teachers and agricultural office workers whose previous training has no relevance to their current positions, hence, providing challenges to the management of decentralized urban development programs and the complex situations that are associated with urban growth.

On whether both the civil servants and the cabinet members attended any training programs since 2005, survey results indicate that all the cabinet members participated in the on-the-job training, while 57.3% of the *woreda* administration and 76% of the town administration participated in short-term training programs. Thus, it can be concluded that in both local governments, civil servants and cabinet members were exposed to on-the-job training.

Focus group discussions further revealed that senior officials attend more training workshops than their juniors. “Training is offered to top officials but work is done by employees” (a response of a disgruntled interviewee at Ziway town). While training senior staff is very much appreciated so that they can offer guidance to the juniors, the insinuation raised here is that the major reason why senior staff regularly attended these courses is for them to benefit from the per diem allowances rather than improving their managerial skills! Other training-related challenges raised during the discussions include: lack of finance to provide training to most employees, the prevalence of favoritism and nepotism in selecting those to attend training courses, and at times, there is no relationship between the job one is doing and the course to which one is selected to attend.

The respondents of both local authorities were further asked to indicate the courses they attended. Table 2 provides a summary of the responses.

**Table 2: Topics of Training Given to Civil Servants and Officials**

Adami Tulu Jido <i>woreda</i>	Ziway Town
Strategic planning	Strategic planning
Good Governance	Good governance
Civil service reform program	Leadership
Performance Management	Peace and development
Gender and development	Capacity building manual
Women in Management	Financial Records keeping
Rural development strategy	Tax assessment and administration
Change management	Democracy in Ethiopia
Cooperatives organization	Rural and urban development
Financial Management	Civil service reform program
Leadership	Records management
Community participation	Computer Skills
Human resource Management	
General management	
ICT	
Project planning and Evaluation	

The survey results indicate that both local authorities offer a wide range of training courses. Focus group discussions revealed that courses offered are generally short, ranging from 7-30 days, and that they are not regularly offered. On the other hand, cabinet members of both local authorities attended much longer courses of up to 3 months.

Regarding whether the training needs of both civil servants and cabinet members were identified before any training was undertaken and if so, whether training programs were conducted based on the identified needs. Both the survey results and focus group discussions revealed that no training needs assessment was conducted in both local authorities. Thus, the training activities carried out were not needs-based. This, in a way, shows that the training packages are not demand driven, but rather supply driven.

Focus group discussions further revealed that most sectors at the local level do not have training plans. In cases where such plans do exist, there is usually no budget for the training component. It was revealed that local authorities expect training and workshops to be given by the regional authorities. This contradicts the principle of decentralization, which assumes that plans are prepared and implemented at local level. Proper human resource development plans are, in this case, required to help minimize scarcity of human resources in some areas, while having surplus in others. This, therefore, calls for the need for continuous human resource need assessments and to change the supply-driven mode of training to a demand-based one.

### *(c) Management Capacity*

Training employees alone may not be enough to bring about the required change in work situations. Knowledge and skills gained by employees may also not necessarily lead to improvement and growth. The work environment should be conducive and the managerial capacity should be developed properly for the trained employees to act properly. In order to get information about their managers' competence, the employees of the two local governments were asked to rate their managers' competence on various aspects using the Lickert scale (very high, high, medium, low, very low). Table 3 summarizes the responses of civil servants about their perception on their managers' competence.

**Table 3: Responses of the Civil Servants about Their Managers' Competence**

Issues	Woreda employees										Town employees									
	VH		H		M		L		VL		VH		H		M		L		VL	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Building a shared vision for all employees	2	1.8	15	13.6	24	21.8	42	38.2	27	24.5	2	3.8	2	3.8	23	43.4	12	22.6	14	26.4
Evidence and data based decision-making	-	-	7	6.4	23	20.9	44	40	26	23.6	-	-	10	18.9	19	35.8	12	22.6	12	22.6
Their efforts to set standards goals and objectives of performance	3	2.7	7	6.4	11	10	42	38.2	42	38.2	4	7.5	12	22.6	10	18.9	17	32.1	8	15.1
Communication skills	1	0.9	7	6.4	22	20	45	40.9	35	31.8	-	-	2	3.8	18	34	25	47.2	8	15.1
Being reflective practitioner	4	3.6	4	3.6	14	12.7	44	40	44	40	-	-	2	3.8	14	26.4	19	35.8	18	34
Being collaborative	2	1.8	7	6.4	14	12.7	44	40	43	39.1	-	-	6	11.3	12	22.6	16	30.2	19	35.8
Delegation of authority and responsibility when appropriate	2	1.8	8	7.3	10	9.1	47	42.7	43	39.1	-	-	6	11.3	14	26.4	8	15.1	25	47.2
Participation in shared decision making	3	2.7	8	7.3	10	9.1	48	43.6	41	37.3	-	-	2	3.8	14	26.4	23	43.4	16	30.2
Their efforts to build the human capacity of the organization	2	1.8	3	2.7	12	10.9	46	41.8	47	42.7	-	-	2	3.8	8	15.1	16	30.2	27	51
Their creativity and innovativeness	1	0.9	4	3.6	9	8.2	45	40.9	51	46.4	-	-	2	3.8	4	7.5	20	37.7	27	51
Their ability to create professional climate	2	1.8	3	2.7	14	12.7	44	40	47	42.7	-	-	2	3.8	14	26.4	16	30.2	21	39.6
Their knowledge of the current trends in organizational governance	1	0.9	3	2.7	20	18.2	39	35.5	47	42.7	-	-	6	11.3	8	15.1	14	26.4	25	47.2

**Key:** VH= very high; H=high; M=medium; L=low; VL=very low

Source: Questionnaire

The survey results generally indicate that civil servants in both local authorities have a low opinion on the competence of their managers. For example, when asked whether the managers built a shared vision for the employees, 62.7% of the *woreda* civil servants and 49% of the town responded “low” and “very low” for the question. Only 15.4% and 7.6% of the *woreda* and town sample respondents, respectively, said “very high” and “high”. The rest of the respondents (21.8% of the *woreda* and 43.4% of the town) rated it as “medium” indicating a failure by the management to build a shared vision for the employees.

As for their leaders’ efforts to set standards, goals, and objectives of performance, 76.4% and 47.2% of the *woreda* and town respondents, respectively, replied “low” and “very low”. On the subject of administrators’ communication skills, 72.7% and 62.3% of the *woreda* and town, respectively, rated them as “low” and “very low”. With regards to being a reflective practitioner, 80% and 69.8% of the *woreda* and the town respondents, respectively, responded “low” and “very low”. About 79.1% of the *woreda* and 66% of the town sample respondents noted that the managers are not collaborative, while 12.7% and 22.6% of them ranked them as “medium”. Only 8.2% of the *woreda* and 11.3% of the town responded as “high” and “very high”.

Another question raised was on whether managers applied appropriate delegation of authority and responsibilities to their juniors. For this item, 81.8% of the *woreda* and 62.3% of the town respondents rated the managers as “low” and “very low”. Similarly, 80.9% of the *woreda* respondents and 73.6% of the town respondents rated “low” and “very low” participation of managers in shared decision-making. Concerning the officials’ efforts to build the human capacity of the organization, 84.5% of the *woreda* and 81.2% of the town sample respondents indicated as “low” and “very low”.

The survey results also show that 87.3% and 88.8% of the *woreda* and the town respondents, respectively, rated their managers’ creativity and innovativeness as “low” and “very low”.

In addition, 82.7% of the *woreda* employees and 69.8% of the town employees evaluated their managers’ ability to create professional climate as “low” and “very low”. In evaluating their managers’ knowledge of the current trends in organizational governance, 78.2% of the *woreda* sample respondents rated as “low” and “very low”, while 73.6% of the town sample respondents similarly evaluated them as “low” and “very low”.

Thus, it can be concluded from the above data that the majority of the employees of both the *woreda* and the town are not satisfied with their managers' competence. The problems seem more acute in the *woreda* than in the town. The focus group discussions reveal that appointment of officials is based on political commitment and loyalty at the expense of educational qualifications and experience. It was further revealed that inappropriate placement and utilization of trained staff, high staff turnover, nepotism, and favoritism were the major challenges which need immediate attention in the two local authorities.

*(d) Financial capacity*

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 two local governments coupled with data obtained from interviews with the local authority officials show that both local governments have weak revenue base and heavily depend on the regional government for their budgets.

**Table 4: Two-Year Revenue Raised and Subsidy of the Two Local Governments (2005-2006) (in Ethiopian Birr)**

The local Government	Revenue raised (in million birr)		Subsidy (in million birr)	
	2005/06	2006/07	2005/0	2006/07
			6	
Adami Tulu Jido woreda	2.44	3.03	10.44	10.91
Ziway town (town administration)	1.61	2.7	1.87	2.1
Ziway town (municipality)	2.17	3.74	-	-

Source: Revenue and Finance Economic Development Offices of the local governments

Exchange rate: 1 US Dollar = 9.85 as at 24 October, 2008

Table 4 shows that subsidy constitutes the major share of the local governments' budgets. Evident from the above data is that the budget transferred to local governments in the form of subsidy from the regional governments is increasing. This shows that there is heavy financial dependence of the local

governments on the regional government. According to the table, the *woreda* receives more subsidies from the regional government than the town. Even though the revenue raised by both local governments is increasing, the subsidy made for them is by far very large.

Interviews made with the officials also reveal that the local authorities cannot generate sufficient revenue from local resources due to inadequate administrative and human resources capacity to collect and administer taxes. It is also noted that the larger share of the budgets of the local governments is allocated for recurrent budget, such as salaries, administrative, and operational costs, rather than capital (developmental) projects. For example, out of the total 4,625,654.06 birr budget of the Ziway town administration in 2006, only 422,650.41 birr (9.1%) was allocated for capital projects (developmental activities). This adversely affects the local development of the areas.

### *(c) Enabling Environment*

The existence of enabling the environment determines the capacities of local government sectors in implementing decentralization programs. To investigate the degree of availability of these conditions, respondents of both local governments were asked to rate both the internal and external environment.

#### *(i) Internal environment*

The civil servant respondents were asked to rate, using the Lickert scale, a number of internal environment issues. Table 5 shows a summary of the responses on the internal environment of their offices. On the item 'There are appropriate structures for key functions', the survey results reveal that 34.5% of the respondents of the *woreda* strongly disagree, 30% disagree, 21.8% agree to some extent, 12.7% agree, and only one strongly agrees with the presence of appropriate structure. This shows that the organizational structure in most sectors is not conducive for work of employees.

**Table 5: Summary of Responses about Internal Environment of Their Offices**

Items	Adami Tulu Jido Woreda										Ziway Town									
	1		2		3		4		5		1		2		3		4		5	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
There are appropriate structures for key functions	38	34.5	33	30	24	21.8	14	12.7	1	0.9	27	50.9	20	37.7	2	3.8	4	7.5	-	-
The local leadership has high commitment for local development	43	39.1	30	27.3	-	-	23	20.9	6	5.5	47	88.7	-	-	-	-	2	3.8	-	-
The objectives of the office are clear for all employees	37	33.6	29	26.4	10	9.1	24	21.8	10	9.1	33	62.3	16	30.2	2	3.8	2	3.8	-	-
The leadership system is well-understood among all levels	35	31.8	28	25.5	25	22.7	16	14.5	6	5.5	31	58.5	18	34	-	-	4	7.5	-	-
Key positions are adequately filled	18	16.4	32	29.1	23	20.9	17	15.5	9	8.2	31	58.5	14	26.4	2	3.8	6	11.3	-	-
Staff meetings regularly review progress on performance improvement trends	2	1.8	28	25.5	20	18.2	30	27.3	24	21.8	22	41.5	25	47.2	-	-	2	3.8	4	7.5
Plans are properly implemented in the office	31	28.2	42	38.2	1	0.9	25	22.7	11	10	12	22.6	33	62.3	-	-	4	7.5	4	7.5
There are clear rules, directives and guidelines for employees of all levels	25	22.7	45	40.9	-	-	18	16.4	22	20	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	81	10	18.2
The financial management system of the office is weak	28	25.5	47	42.7	1	0.9	8	7.3	20	18.2	-	-	-	-	2	3.8	2	34	31	58.2
Monitoring and evaluation capacity of the office is weak	17	15.5	8	7.3	-	-	45	40.9	36	32.7	-	-	-	-	2	3.8	2	34	31	58.2

Key: 5=strongly agree; 4= agree; 3= agree to some extent; 2= disagree; 1= strongly disagree

Source: Questionnaire

Regarding the issue 'Key positions are adequately filled', 16.4% strongly disagree, 29.1% disagree, 20.9% agree to some extent, 15.5% agree, and 8.2% strongly agree. We can understand from these responses that many key positions in the offices of the local government are not adequately filled. The statistical data obtained from the offices also show many vacant positions. Some offices operate with 2 to 3 personnel where the structure requires 12 to 15 employees. This also has its own impact on the activities of the sectors in achieving their objectives.

Another issue raised for respondents to show their level of agreement was 'staff meetings regularly review progress on performance improvement trends'. For this item only 1.8% of the respondents strongly disagree, 22.5% disagree, 18.2% agree to some extent, 27.3% agree, and 21.8% of them strongly agree. This may show that staff meetings take place in many offices for reviewing and discussing of job performances.

'Plans are properly implemented in the office' was another item raised for the respondents. Accordingly, 28.2% strongly disagree, 38.2% disagree, 0.9% agrees to some extent, 22.7% agree, and 10% strongly agree. Therefore, it is possible to conclude that even though plans are prepared in many organizations, their implementation is weak and this also reflects the weak implementing capacity of the local government sectors.

Concerning 'the availability of clear rules, directives, and guidelines for employees', 22.7% strongly disagrees, 40.9% disagree, 16.4% agree, and 20% strongly agree. This implies that majority of the employees in the *woreda* have little or no knowledge of the rules and directives of work.

For the item 'the financial management system of the office is weak', 25.5% strongly disagree, 42.7% disagree, one (0.9%) agree to some extent, 7.3% agree, and 18.2% strongly agree. We can infer from these data that the financial management system of many offices in the *woreda* is perceived as weak by majority of the employees.

With regards to the item 'monitoring and evaluation capacity of the office is weak', 32.7% strongly agree, 40.9% agree, 7.3% disagree, and 11.5% strongly disagree. So, the monitoring and evaluation system of the organizations is regarded to be weak by the employees of the section. This may show that

the sectors in the *woreda* have weak capacity to properly follow up and evaluate different routine and developmental activities.

Respondents of the town were asked to explain the degree of their agreement for the item 'there is appropriate structure for key functions'. Accordingly, 50.9% strongly disagree, 37.7% disagree, and only 7.5% agree. This shows that the employees of the town are not happy with the present organizational structure. With regards to the item 'the local leadership has high commitment of for local development', 88.7% strongly disagree, 3.8% agree, and there is no response from the remaining 7.5%. So, the leadership in the town is viewed by employees as having low commitment.

Concerning the item 'the objectives of the office are clear to all employees', 62.3% strong disagree and 30.2% disagree. Only 7.5% showed agreement. We can deduce from this that objectives of the organizations may not be clear for some employees. For the item 'the leadership is well-understood among all levels', 58.5% strongly disagree, 34% disagree, and 7.5% agree. This may also indicate poor communication system in many sectors of the town.

Whether 'key positions were adequately filled or not' was also raised for respondents so that they can show their level of agreement. Accordingly, 58.5% strongly disagree, 26.4% disagreed, while 11.3% showed agreement. This shows that there are many vacant posts in the sectors which are also supported by secondary data obtained from the offices.

For the item 'staff meetings regularly review progress on performance improvement trends', 41.5% of the respondents strongly disagree, 47.2% disagree, while 11.3% agree. This indicates that the staff meetings to review the progress and improvement of performance of the activities are not satisfactory. The next issue raised for respondents to show their level of agreement was 'plans are properly implemented in the office'. For this item 22.6% strongly disagree, 62.3% disagree, while 7.5% agree, and 7.5% strongly agree. From this we can understand that many sectors prepare the plan but their implementing capacity is weak.

With regards to the item 'there are clear rules, directives and guidelines for employees of all levels', 81.1% agree and 18.9% strongly agree that they are clear. 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 office is weak’, 58.5% strongly agree, 34% agree, and the rest 3.8% agree to some extent. We can infer from these data that in most sectors of the town the financial management system is weak.

Concerning the item ‘monitoring and evaluation capacity of the office is weak’, 96.2% agree that the M&E system is weak. So this shows that urban local government of Ziway town has weak capacity to monitor and evaluate different development projects undertaken in the area.

In all, the survey results indicate that the internal environment, in both the *woreda* and the town, is not conducive to work. In addition to the survey, the focus group discussions and interviews conducted with key informants also reveal that there are problems of structure, weak capacity of monitoring and evaluation, plan implementation, shortage of personnel, and lack of budget to fill vacant positions. Discussions made with key informants of both local governments show that both *woreda* and the town have no clear and stable structures. “The structure is continuously changing”, one of the interviewees pointed out. For example, health and education offices were once under the capacity building office but now these three offices have been separated. Culture and information were once together but are now separate. Culture and tourism have now been merged together. This shows that there is continuous change of structures and reorganization of offices which the respondents feel adversely affects the stability of working environment. On the other end, rationalizations of institutional offices are necessary in any system so as to optimize output, an aspect which should be explained to the officials of the local authorities.

For the item ‘the local leadership has high commitment for local development’, 39.1% of the respondents indicated that they strongly disagree, 27.3% disagree, 20.9% agree, and 5.5% strongly agree. From this it can be inferred that civil servants of the *woreda* view the commitment of their leadership as low.

Concerning the item ‘the objectives of the office are clear for all employees’, 33.6% of them strongly disagree, 26.4% disagree, 9.1% agree to some extent, 21.8% of them agree, and 9.1% of them strongly agree. This may indicate that majority of the employees do not have adequate information about their organizations’ plans and goals. This also affects the performance of employees, in particular, and the performance of the organizations, in general.

With regards to the item 'the leadership system is well-understood among all levels', 31.8% strongly disagree, 25.5% disagree, 22.7% agree to some extent, 14.5% of agree, and 5.5% strongly agree. This also indicates weak communication system in the organizations which may also affect the effectiveness of offices.

(ii) External Environment

The civil servants of the two local authorities were also asked questions on their external working environment. The results are summarized in Table 6. When asked to indicate their level of agreement on the item 'turnover of officials and experts is high', survey results indicate that 57.3% strongly agree, 30% agree, while 13.6% agree to some extent. From this it is possible to conclude that there is very high turnover of officials and key experts. This also has a negative impact on the performance of the sectors in particular and that of the *woreda* in general.

**Table 6: Summary of Responses about External Working Environment**

Items	Adami Tulu Jido Woreda										Ziway Town									
	1 N	2 %	3 N	4 %	5 N	6 %	7 N	8 %	9 N	10 %	11 N	12 %	13 N	14 %	15 N	16 %	17 N	18 %	19 N	20 %
Turnover of officials and experts is high	-	-	-	-	15	13.6	33	30	63	57.3	-	-	-	-	5	9.4	13	24.5	35	66
Local level actors have clear vision over the objectives of decentralization	37	33.6	39	35.5	20	18.2	22	20	2	1.8	28	52.8	21	39.6	4	7.5	-	-	-	-
Capacity building efforts have enhanced the decentralization process in the locality	40	36.4	37	33.6	9	8.2	17	15.5	7	6.4	22	41.5	25	47.2	-	-	2	3.8	2	3.8
Horizontal coordination in the local government is weak	28	25.5	15	13.6	6	5.5	37	33.6	34	30.9	-	-	-	-	-	-	33	62.3	20	37.7
Sectors/offices recognize and understand their current strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats	46	41.8	38	34.5	6	5.5	15	13.6	5	4.5	33	62.3	18	34	2	3.8	-	-	-	-

Key: 1= strongly disagree; 2= disagree; 3=agree to some extent; 4= agree; 5= strongly disagree

Source: Questionnaire

For the item 'local level actors have clear vision over the objectives of decentralization', 33.6% of the sample respondents strongly disagree, 35.5% disagree, 18.2% agree to some extent, while the rest 20% agree. From this we can understand that the objectives of decentralization are not clear to the officials. Therefore, they may not be able to efficiently implement decentralization program in their locality.

Another issue raised was whether 'the capacity building efforts have enhanced decentralization process in the locality'. For this item, 36.4% of the sample respondents strongly disagreed, 33.6% disagreed, and 22.9% agreed that it has contributed a lot for the decentralization process in the area. This shows us that employees in the *woreda* are not satisfied with the capacity building efforts being carried out in the area. For the item 'horizontal coordination in the local government is weak', 64.5% of the respondents replied agree and strongly agree. This shows that the coordination and communication between the sectors in the *woreda* is also weak. The majority of the employees (76.4%) confirmed that the sectors in the local government do not recognize and understand their current strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

As for Ziway town, respondents indicate high staff turnover and absence of clear vision over the objectives of the decentralization as some of the major challenges perceived by employees of the town. Almost all of the respondents were also not satisfied with the capacity building efforts of the local government to enhance decentralization process. They also confirmed that there is weak coordination between the offices in the town, that sectors do not recognize and understand their weakness, strengths, opportunities, and threats.

Thus, from the above discussion, it can safely be concluded that both the internal and external environments are not conducive for most employees of both local governments. The enabling environment for implementing decentralization policies is lacking in both local governments. Therefore, much more remains to create the enabling environment for both local governments.

#### *(f) Community Participation*

Community participation is increasingly emphasized in the field of development. Citizen engagement is one of the fundamental principles of decentralization. The capacity of local governments can also be measured in their ability to engage local communities and institutions, such as non-governmental

organizations (NGOs) and community based organizations (CBOs), in the development process of their localities. In order to investigate the level of participation of community and local institutions in the local development of the study areas, employees of both the *woreda* and town were asked questions; the responses are summarized in Table 7.

On the item ‘community is properly participating in local governance and development’, the majority of the respondents (77.1%) note that community participation in the *woreda* is very weak. With regard to holding of meetings, about 54% of the respondents acknowledge that the local government administration makes periodic meetings with the community. However, the majority of them do not agree that the existing development activities are top priorities of the local community. On the other hand, 59.1% of them also disagree with the idea that the local government is addressing the socio-economic problems of the local community properly. This may imply that the community participation is limited in the area.

The plans of most of the offices are not clearly communicated to the stakeholders. This was confirmed by 63.7% of the respondents. About 59.1% of them also confirmed that most of the sectors of the *woreda* have no strong communication with the surrounding community. This may indicate that the local government does not properly engage the local community in the development process of the locality. The majority of the respondents (61.8%) also agreed that the local government has a strong linkage with NGOs. On the other hand, 62.8% of them do not agree with the strong linkage between the local government and CBOs. This implies NGOs participate more than the CBOs in the *woreda*.

With regard to Ziway town, 92.6% consider community participation in the town to be weak despite the local authority holding periodic meetings with the community. About 88.7% of them also said that the existing development activities are not top priorities of the local community and 96.2% believe that the local government is not properly addressing the socio-economic problems of the local community. This implies that community participation is limited in the town. The study also reveals that the plans of the sectors in the town are not clearly communicated to the stakeholders as there is no strong communication and coordination with the local community. This also indicates weak relations between the local government sectors of the town and the community.

**Table 7: Summary of Responses about Community Participation**

Items	Adami Tulu Jido Woreda										Ziway Town									
	1 N	%	2 N	%	3 N	%	4 N	%	5 N	%	1 N	%	2 N	%	3 N	%	4 N	%	5 N	%
Community is properly participating in local governance and development	46	41.8	40	36.4	6	5.5	9	8.2	7	6.4	47	88.8	2	3.8	-	-	-	-	-	-
The local government administration makes periodic meeting with community	20	18.2	20	18.2	-	-	44	40	16	14.5	2	3.8	4	7.5	2	3.8	39	73.6	2	3.8
The existing development activities are top priorities of the community	56	50.9	36	32.7	1	0.9	12	10.9	5	4.5	47	88.7	-	-	-	-	2	3.8	-	-
The local government is properly addressing the socio-economic problems of the local community	36	32.7	29	26.4	-	-	27	24.5	14	12.7	20	37.7	31	58.5	2	3.8	-	-	-	-
The plans of the offices are not clearly communicated to the stake holders	17	15.5	16	14.5	4	3.6	31	28.2	39	35.5	-	-	-	-	-	-	20	37.7	33	62.3
The office has strong coordination and communication with the surrounding community	36	32.7	29	26.4	-	-	25	22.7	16	14.5	16	30.2	31	58.5	6	11.3	-	-	-	-
The local government has a strong linkage with NGOs	5	4.5	21	19.1	12	10.9	42	38.2	26	23.6	-	-	-	-	-	-	12	22.6	41	77.4
The local government has strong linkage with CBOs	30	27.3	39	35.5	20	18.2	15	13.6	12	10.9	29	54.7	20	37.7	2	3.8	-	-	-	-

Key: 1=strongly disagree; 2=disagree; 3= agree to some extent; 4= agree; 5=strongly agree

Source: Questionnaire

Regarding the relationship between local governments and NGOs, all the respondents confirmed that there is a strong relationship between the two. However, a majority (92.4%) of them disagree with the idea that there is a strong linkage between the local government and CBOs. This implies that the participation of CBOs is much weaker than that of NGOs. In addition to these survey data, discussions held with focus group discussants and interviews held with key informants also show that the community participates mostly at implementation level in such aspects as irrigation projects and school construction through provision of cash, labor, and local materials. They also participate as committee members in some sectors, such as school committees. Their participation in planning, decision making, and prioritizing their needs is, however, very limited.

Even though the officials of both local governments claim that community participation is one of their priorities in their activities, it was observed that the communities do not participate in planning, decision-making, and prioritizing their needs. It was found out that the officials' view of community participation is limited to attendance of some meetings rather than true empowerment of them.

Officials of both local governments also acknowledged that they are working in collaboration with a number of NGOs. During interviews with officials of both local governments, it was highlighted that different NGOs are operating in both local governments in different sectors, such as education, health, and food security. For example, Selam Environmental Development Association (SEDA) is one such local NGO involved in integrated development projects in both local governments. SEDA's project manager explained that SEDA's participation in the local development in three areas. These include food security, environmental education, and community social services. The food security component includes distribution of water motor pumps for irrigation to households in groups of about 1,000 thousands per group, distribution of improved cross-bread cows for farmers, establishment of milk-center for processing milk products and marketing, and distribution of improved seeds to farmers. SEDA also operates a credit and savings' scheme. So far it has loaned 100,000 birr to 80 women from two Kebeles of the *woreda*.

SEDA's second development component is environmental education which includes training, networking and advocacy, creating environmental clubs in schools, and organizing the world environment day

celebrations. The organization also distributes seedlings (multipurpose trees, fruits, etc.) to schools and farmers in both local authority areas for forestation activities.

The third component of SEDA's development program relates to community social services, such as construction of schools, expansion of non-formal education by recruiting para-professional teachers from the community, and fulfilling school facilities. SEDA works in partnership with both the local governments by developing, funding, and implementing development projects. In implementing the projects, a committee which constitutes members from administration, agricultural and food security offices, and community has been established. The local governments identify and recommend projects for implementation and also supervise them. SEDA also gives capacity building (training) activities to the beneficiaries. It was further revealed that even though they work closely with the local governments, high staff turnover adversely affects their effort.

Respondents were also asked an open-ended question to mention the major problems related to the capacity building efforts of their areas. Accordingly, shortage of funds, shortage of skilled personnel, absence of good governance, and absence of adequate training schemes for employees were cited as critical problems by 66.4%, 50%, 42%, and 32%, respectively, of the *woreda* respondents. As for Ziway town respondents, the shortage of skilled personnel, weak management, absence of need based training, and shortage of service facilities were cited as major challenges by 77%, 56%, 52% and 52%, respectively.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This study, whose main objective was to assess the capacity building efforts for decentralized local governance at local levels areas, shows that local governments are facing an uphill task in implementing decentralization programs. The shortage of finance, paucity of skilled human resource, absence of good governance and poor management, absence of need based training programs, shortage of service facilities and resources, and poor coordination and communication are some of the major challenges they face. These problems in a way also imply weak organizational and institutional capacity of the local governments.

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are forwarded:

Weak capacity of human resources in terms of both quantity and quality is one of the critical problems identified in the study. Many positions are vacant in the local governments. Efforts should be made to fill at least some of these posts to minimize the problems. In addition to this, continuous capacity building/training activities should be undertaken to capacitate the officials.

Providing training without assessing the needs of the offices and/or sectors results in a haphazard and unplanned nature of training programs which leads to failure. Therefore, training needs analysis should be undertaken before conducting training activities. Identification of critical human resources needs of the local governments and designing appropriate HRD programs and plans avoids shortage and/or surplus of human resources in the sectors.

One of the major problems identified is absence of reward system for better performers. Local governments should introduce incentives for best performers so that the employees and officials will be initiated for work and be successful in performing their duties and responsibilities.

Poor coordination and communication systems are also the problems identified in the local governments. To avoid this, different policy documents, manuals, plans, guidelines, directives, rules, proclamations, and other review documents should be made available for employees. This may solve the problem of communication barriers among different actors in the localities by creating awareness.

Involving people only in implementing the already designed and planned projects is not adequate. Involving them in identifying problems and prioritizing their needs is crucial for true empowerment. So, the local governments should make an effort to practically involve the people from the need identification and planning stage to implementation and evaluation.

Participation of NGOs in the different local development is encouraging. The local governments should create enabling environments for different local institutions, such as NGOs and other civil society organizations, so that they can play their roles in the local development process with their full potential.

This also calls for building the capacity of local governments so that they can work in partnership with these institutions and utilize the opportunities for better development efforts.

Both the regional and local governments should create an environment in which the available human resources and institutions can be properly utilized in support of the local development. They should take measures to create stable and suitable structures and minimize the present high turnover of officials and experts, design appropriate incentive systems, and attract merit-based professional personnel without depending only on political loyalty and commitment to provide efficient public service and to improve the quality of local governance at *woreda* and town level.

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