

Decentralization of Power and Local Good Governance in Ethiopian Federal System: A Look at Two Decades Experiment

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Abstract: The main purpose of this study is to undertake an academic assessment on the practice of prevailing decentralization in ensuring good governance at local government in Ethiopia. Although politics is the driving force behind devolution in most countries, fortunately, decentralization may be one of those instances where good politics and economics may serve the same end. In Ethiopia, soon after the end of the cold war, a revolution group called Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) controlled state power in 1991. Despite different commitment to achieve local autonomy and good governance, the country's governance suffers from a number of limitations in the last two decades. In this respect, the research question revolves around to what extent the existing devolution of power ensuring good governance and democratization process. The finding of the study shows that in one hand, since decentralized power and resource, different institutions, and associations are established. While a decentralized system of governance has formally been introduced in Ethiopia, this paper argues that local authorities still remain instruments of political control by the central government. This and other related factors contributed to lack of local autonomy and good governance that generate a wide public protest for the past many years. In so doing, it highlights the factors that continue the trend of central control of local government despite extensive formal decentralization and institutional arrangement. Practically the process of ensuring good governance under a decentralized political system is far from desirable that is undermined by existing political culture, lack of financial and human resources, existence of one dominant ruling political party, low implementation capacity and lack of adequate autonomy. Therefore, unless measures are taken the challenge of good governance would continue being the worst which will facilitate the existing public protest further.

Keywords: Ethiopia, Good Governance, Decentralization of Power

1. Introduction

Over the last two decades, democratic decentralization became a central pillar of development discourses and practices in Africa as well as in other developing countries. The idea of good governance was initially introduced into international policy debates in the late 1980s. However, the meaning and scope of good governance is diverse.

The good governance agenda has promoted a recent inversion on theory and practice from centralized to decentralized state building to sustain the process of modernization in the long run and to achieve development (Craig and Porter, 2006: 521). Good Governance is a

continuing process through which conflicting or diverse interests may be accommodated and cooperative actions may be taken. It includes formal institutions and regimes empowered to enforce compliance, as well as informal arrangements where people and institutions either have agreed to or perceive to be in their interest (Hyden, G 2000: 123). In addition to this, it is about having a functional democracy and legal safeguard (Dobriansky 2003: 23). Free and fair elections should be open and transparent to all people without discrimination and government should be accountable to its citizens. In addition, voters should be able to participate in the

political process directly or through civic organizations. Further, at local level, it includes the existence of responsive and accountable leadership which fulfills the will of the people, independent judiciary and rule of law, freedom of speech and press.

On the other hand, the implicit objective of decentralization is to ensure good governance, service delivery and poverty alleviation which helps to improve sustainable development. Decentralization is a concept that is used for devolving political, economic and administrative power to the sub-national and local government to achieve certain political, economic and social objectives. Such objectives are improvement of government responsiveness towards the need and preferences of the local community, reducing the overload of administration, promoting effectiveness and efficiencies of an economic development and enhancing mass mobilization of the local community and self-determination.

Over all, decentralization and good governance are not new concept, and indeed, both terms have been driven as a policy tools in many developing countries for decades. In Ethiopia, where social diversity is striking, decentralization is aimed at giving political representation to different ethnic groups in order to help the state meet the needs and aspirations of a heterogeneous population (Jean-Paul 2014: 23)

Accordingly, in Ethiopia, decentralization has the aim to make harmony, peaceful co-existence among peoples and grant local self-rule (Tegegne 2007: 76). Decentralization in Ethiopia has two phases; mid-level term (1991-2001) and post 2001.

However, in many cases, the relevant issues is not the formal existence of decentralized power structure but rather the extent to what decentralization and local autonomy has been made an effective policy or to what point decentralization develop a tool for democratization process and ensuring good governance at local government. This study is undertaken when extreme public protest is ongoing at this Woreda order of government that brought loss of lives and property. Therefore, this study focuses on practice of its implementation and challenges to ensure democratization process and good governance at local order of government in Ethiopia.

2. Problem

Ethiopia, since 1991, has embarked on a serious of decentralization process devolving considerable power, resource and responsibilities to the regional states and lower orders of governments in an attempt to ensuring good governance, democratization process and development. According to UNDP (2002: 9), the motive behind decentralization in Ethiopia is to ensure good governance, even if, other several sources argue on that its motive is political by which it maintain one economic

unit. Nevertheless, decentralization did not achieve enough in establishing locally responsive, transparent, accountable, efficient and participatory local government; which has the capability of addressing the problem that the country has been continuously humiliated by the lack of good governance (Tegegne and Kassahun, 2004: 21).

On the other hand, the federal constitution of Ethiopia empowers regional states to use their constitutions to design systems of local government appropriate to their unique circumstances (Tegegne 2007: 74). This is a critical necessity for regional states because their differences in ethnic composition and socioeconomic circumstances cannot be managed through a one-size-fits-all approach of local government structure. However, practice shows that the regional states play a diminished role in the establishment of local government units due to the fact that federal and regional governments alike are controlled by the ruling political party, EPRDF through its centralized decision-making system that results the establishment of local government to be pushed from the center and used for implementing federal policies. It is obvious that if there are strong institutions of political competition that promote accountability to the local electorate, there will be a strong accountability of the local government to the local community which in turn helps to improve democratization process or good governance (Khemani, 2004a).

It is clear that in federal system, there must be a balance of shared rule and self-rule (Elazar, 1985: 5). However, due to the dominant position of the federal government and its institutions by different methods, the states or local government autonomy may possibly eroded and ultimately fall under the auspices of the federal government and its institution. The constitutional grant of autonomy and power to the local government can either be reduced or the federal through its institution and power may make them non-existent or invisible to describe. Thus, complexity is inherent and persistent features of decentralization of power and accomplishments of local autonomy depend on the successful management of these complexities.

Without democratization at the local and regional states order of government, formal decentralization would produce decentralized despotism (ibid). The absence of competitive political parties at local level and the dominance of one ruling political party contributed for lack of local autonomy which in turn created/ing public protest, repeatedly at this area of study.

Basically, one may be convince to suppose that each regional states found in Ethiopia has used its power effectively in adopting a sub-national constitution that delineates a system of local government suitable for managing the ethnic diversity of its people and ensuring efficient service delivery for local communities. While such a conclusion is not entirely unwarranted, it ignores the fact that the establishment of local government was driven by the central state and hence was not a regional response to regional challenges (Anthony, 2004: 562). The

EPRDF, federal ruling political party drove the agenda for establishing local government to manage ethnic diversity through regional and local structures and to increase the efficiency of service delivery. The dominance of the ruling party in council and cabinet membership reduces the political space for non-state actors to participate in economic and political issues affecting the locality. This has a negative implication for participatory governance and downward accountability of wereda governments (Meheret, 2004: 23). It is evident that there are different categories of local government in Ethiopia, each of which exists for a specific purpose. The local government units exercise powers and functions that it seems that fit the purposes for which they are established. Depending on whether they are rural woreda or cities, the regular local government units take different forms and structures and should exercise appropriate powers and functions, at least theoretically. If there are strong institutions of political competition that promote accountability to the local electorate, there will be a strong accountability of the local government to the local community (Khemani, 2004: 123).

As academic evidences and survey of the existing literatures reveal the studies conducted on the impact of decentralization in facilitating good governance are still largely sketchy or not adequately conducted. Even, the existing studies on the subject matter are either too general or one dimensional. For instance, only fiscal aspect or the impact of decentralization on development is considered (Tegegne 2007: _). Coming to the study area, There was/is an extreme protest towards the ruling political party due to its failure to provide genuine and democratic federal system that helps to improve good governance and democratization process. This protest continued for the past two decades that brought loss of human lives and destruction of property. Thus, it requires an independent study such as of this to assess the source of extreme public protest that is enduring for the past many years at the selected study area. In one hand, decentralization of power to Woreda government is put into practice to ensure self-rule at local level and improve good governance. But practically, absence of good governance at this study Woreda is contributed/ing its own for the stated problem, on the other hand. Thus, efforts have been made to assess the nexus between decentralization of power and good governance with ongoing public protest.

Thus, with the existence of such concrete problem, it is difficult to conclude that decentralization is ensuring democratization process and good governance in the lower order of government in Ethiopia. So, by taking into consideration all the above point, this study firmly believe the need to conduct an assessment. Therefore, based on the above stated problem, the study provides the following research questions to be answered: To what extent the local leaders are accountable and responsible to their local community in the study area? Does the prevailing

decentralization helps to ensure good governance at local government with particular reference to the study area? What mechanisms and institutional settings are established for effective decentralization at the study Woreda? To what extent the study Woreda community empowered through planning, decision-making, implementations and evaluations in their own local affairs? What are the opportunities and challenges of decentralization in ensuring good governance at the study *Woreda*?

3. Methodology

Based on the questions to be answered, qualitative research method is appropriate since it seeks to understand a given research problem or topic from the perspectives of the local population it involves. To make accurate information, both primary and secondary sources are assessed.

This study used both unstructured (in-depth) interviews and semi-structured interviews with people who know what is going on in the community. The purpose of interview was to collect information from a wide range of people; including community leaders, professionals, and residents who have firsthand knowledge about the ongoing public protest happening repeatedly that comes due to lack of good governance at this study area. Those informants with their particular knowledge and understanding can provide insight on the nature of problems and give recommendations for solutions. The method an academic scholar use to analyze the collected data is dependent on whether the individual who undertake the study have chosen to conduct qualitative or quantitative research, and this choice is influenced by personal and methodological preference and educational background (Dawson; 2002: 213). Thus, for this study data collected is analyzed qualitatively.

The research method employed to this study is qualitative method and a descriptive case study research design. The time of 1980s was a turning point, particularly in the developing countries that decentralization and good governance became an agenda through policy and academic arena. In Ethiopia, as a policy making, to link decentralization with (good) governance is a very recent phenomenon. Subsequently, since 2001/2, the second wave of decentralization that is DLDP has been implementing.

Conceptual understanding of the linkages between good governance and decentralization of power

Beyond being multi-dimensional and elusive concepts, both decentralization and good governance encompasses their own linkage. From a good governance perspective, decentralization refers to the restructuring or reorganization of authority so that there is a system of co-responsibility between and among institutions of governance at both central and local government (Hyden 2000: 123). Decentralization could also be expected to contribute to key elements of good governance, such as

increasing people's opportunities for participation in economic, social and political decisions; assisting in developing people's capacities; and enhancing government responsiveness, transparency and accountability (Gregory 2003: 96). On the other hand, decentralization is an integral part of the logic of democratization the power of a people to determine their own form of government, representation, policies and services. In designing decentralization strategies, it is important to ensure that adequate processes of accountability, transparency and responsiveness by all societal actors.

Decentralization is the logical application of the core characteristics of good governance at the sub-national and local levels. These characteristics include accountability, transparency, rule of law and responsiveness. This statement infers that without decentralization, good governance seems to be unsuccessfully implemented (Andrew 2008: 85). When effective decentralization and democratic local governance advance in tandem, local governments and the communities they govern gain the authority, resources, and skills to make responsive choices and to act effectively and accountable manner.

Yet theories from political science, anticipate that public good will emerge from restructuring government through decentralization-greater efficiency and fiscal responsibility, democratic accountability and opportunities for participation and better quality service that responded to local needs (Gregory 2003: 96). In addition to this, other scholars argue that empirical result have not always been as robust as theory would predict, drawing in to questions theoretical linkages that lead from decentralization to good governance (Grindile, 2007: 167). On the other hand, a democratic local government that is accountable to the people and that enhances public participation in governance is a *sine qua non* for effective decentralization (Meheret, 2002, 131)

The UNDP also shortly summarize the bone of contention among scholars in the following way:

'... Although experience suggests that decentralization in itself is no guarantee of good governance, many believe that decentralizing governance, from the center to regions, districts, local governments/authorities and local communities is more conducive to good governance. If this is the case, decentralizing governance could be an effective means of achieving critical objectives of the sustainable human development vision -' (UNDP, 1997: 4).

However, merely decentralizing the public sector is nothing to be effective, if there is no support to capacitate the local government through involving public, private and civil sectors. It also underlines that decentralization is a means to ensure good governance by bringing responsibilities and capacities to the lower level of government (Litvack, 2008: 412). Accordingly, the term decentralized governance is the systematic and harmonious interrelationship resulting from the balancing of power and responsibilities between central governments and other levels of government and non-governmental

actors, and the capacity of local bodies to carry out their decentralized responsibilities using participatory mechanisms.

The mere fact of opting for decentralization shall not by itself ensure that the population effectively participates in its development which is the ultimate goal of a good policy of decentralization and good governance (Kauzya, 2001: 20). Advocators of decentralization argue that, it guarantees greater competition to local government positions that will produce more responsive government, higher quality service provision and greater accountability of local officials for the activities they carry out. Because of decentralization local voters (citizens) have more information on how local governments perform their duties and responsibilities than national or regional government, competitive elections give them rewards or punish those now directly responsible to administration and public service (Grindile, 2007: 145).

Many also hearten by decentralization in that, as voters have more choices, they will increasingly be able to align their preferences with parties responsive to their interests. As a result by fear of their loose or to winning elections they turn their face and inclined to consult to the demand of local preferences (Meheret, 2004: 215). There by, as the voters became to more aware that their vote matter, they will increase their participation to create influence in policy making, programmatic preference and assessment of performance incumbents. The outcome of all these things create more concern to citizens and make better governance (ibid: 63-64). There are some scholars who summarize this optimistic view and the consequence of greater electoral pluralism in the context of decentralization (Debeb 2012: 125). Decentralization is definitely positive for local governments. There is more computation among parties" (ibid). Good governance is a condition when government reacts to the needs and wishes of society on one hand, and decentralisation give substance to this concept, for example by bringing the responsibility for the provision of public services closer to their consumers on the other. A government must take responsibility and be accountable. The administrative apparatus must be accountable to the elected representatives who, in turn, are accountable to the electorate. In the context of decentralisation, this means that the central government enables local authorities to fulfil this obligation. A government should be efficient, effective and predictable. The public must know where they stand.

The proponents of democratic decentralization argue that merely transfer of decision-making power and resources to local level government does not guarantee for effective or actual definition of decentralization, instead, it should include the accountabilities of local authorities to their electorates and create opportunities of public participation in the local political process (Paulos, 2007: 151). The proponents of democratic decentralization argue that merely transfer of decision-making power and

resources to local level government does not guarantee for effective or actual definition of decentralization, instead, it should include the accountabilities of local authorities to their electorates and create opportunities of public participation in the local political process (Paulos, 2007: 153).

If there are strong institutions of political competition that promote accountability to the local electorate, there will be a strong accountability of the local government to the local community (Khemani, 2004a). Ethiopia's level of achieving good governance has been one of the lowest even by African's context. In light of serious problems of good governance in Ethiopia, this article tries to assess the fault lines that have hindered the emergence of system of good governance in the country with particular reference to the study area.

4. Result and Discussion

In Ethiopia, when new governments come into power they all come with great enthusiasm and new policies, strategies and programs to bring about rapid change and lift the country out of deep rooted underdevelopment through ensuring democratization process at Woreda order of government. However, practically on top of poor planning and inefficient flow, human and financial resources have always been inadequate and at insufficient levels which has undesirable implications for the capacity of local governments to perform their assigned functions.

The weaknesses of the local government to implement is always said to be evident, to the extent that they are not even aware of their powers. During the transitional period, local government is established as the basic unit of regular local administration within ethnically organized regional states and nationality zones. The 1995 regional constitutions created at regional level what some scholars call 'a unitary structure' within which Woreda, were merely deconcentrated units of the regional states and nationality zones, not autonomous local government units (Debeb 2012: 174). This was maintained for several years even after the promulgation of the federal Constitution. Cities remained as sub-units of Woreda administrations, not autonomous units in their own right (Asfaw 2001; 79)

The second phase of decentralization sought to give local government degree of autonomy and was initiated at federal level when the Ethiopian government launched the District Level Decentralization Programme (DLDP). At this stage, the bureaucrat position was empowering local government to become imperative in democratization process and encouraging local self-rule (Hyden 2000: 63). There were other, arguments for this second phase of decentralization. The first, as mentioned, was to empower ethnic-based local units and discourage the demand for secession by ethnic entrepreneurs. The second has to do with the internal power struggle in the EPRDF, more specifically within the TPLF, the most influential member of the EPRDF coalition.

4.1. Community Participation: Concept and Its Role

Existing literature shows that community participation is increasingly used through development agenda. It is a main parameter to measure decentralization of power, good governance and democratization process in a given state. It ranges from simple information sharing to empowerment (Lockwood 2009: 431)

Due to community participation, the people can understand the local context and define their own priority needs. In addition to this, it enables the people to make effective plans and programs to meet their needs that help to develop a sense of ownership of socio-politico as well as economic resources and authority. Unless all community members become participant through the day to day socio-economic and political affairs of decision-making activities, the community development process or good governance could not be effective (Miranda, 2007: 215). Thus, participation of the community is a pivotal reflection to show good governance and democratization process. It is expressed through taking part in decision-making.

Apart from this, community can participate in development activities through financial contribution, problem identification, decision-making, implementing and evaluation of developmental program (John-Mary 2001; 223).

Theoretically, community participation is reflected through different institutional associations/organizations like Female Development Association, Youth Development Association, and Elders Development Association, One-to- Five Association, and Member of Kebele Education Board at this study area. However, this does not reflect the existence of active and inclusive participation. It is not based on legitimacy than coercion that comes from government side. Majority of the people in the study Woreda are not committed to participate since communities are not trusted on the ruling government. This institutional association are mere symbolic. Besides, members of those associations should be members of the ruling party (this is the main criteria to become an association's member) that results the community to become voiceless and inactive to actively participate in decision-making, planning, implementing and evaluation process. It is impossible to think that good governance would exist in the absence of community participation. It seems a saying of I know well for you than yourself. Different obstacles still exist like backward community attitude, lack of political commitment from leaders, lack of finance and absence of commitment from experts. Academically speaking, there is no inclusive and active community participation at this study area because of majority of the community lost trust on the government and curtailed with party members as criteria.

The communities at this Woreda level are not fully participating in the development of their own locality. They are not fully informed of what the Woreda

administration is planning or doing rather in some places they watch all the development endeavors. Administrators often notify the communities the plans developed in offices without consulting them during the planning process. They call upon the people to ask them to contribute in terms of labor, local materials or cash to implement the Woreda plan. Due to this situation, even if the government calls meetings they are not ready to participate in discussions (Debeb 2012: 345). In addition, sometimes people might not attend the meetings because of the biased idea that the government will not consider their opinions. They prefer to keep quiet particularly for issues related to politics and governance. Some of the reasons for not participating fully could be the non-responsiveness of the representatives for most pressing issues like construction of feeder roads, digging water wells, construction of schools and closer to their villages etc.

4.2. Government Accountability: A Look at Its Practice

Promoting accountability is an important part of good governance and it advances the public interest. This may include faithful compliance/ adherence to legal requirements and administrative policies, existence of sanction, performance standards and disclosure laws and codes of conduct for professional associations (Young 1998: 56). According to this view, accountability is responsibility for performance or the process of holding someone answerable for performance (Thomas 1998: 351). It calls on the actors (a government, ministry, project managers or stakeholders) to bear responsibility for their actions. It is the opposite of arbitrariness and demand openness and the assumption of responsibility towards the community. In Ethiopia, one of the most important challenges at the local government is creating ways to engage the public in shaping their future and accountability of local leaders.

The accountability of local authorities to their citizens is a fundamental tenet of good governance. Similar, there should be no place for corruption in cities. Corruption can undermine local government credibility and can deepen urban poverty. Transparency and accountability are essential to stakeholder understanding of local government and to who is benefiting from decisions and actions (Meheret, 2004: 123). Access to information is fundamental to this understanding and to good governance. Laws and public policies should be applied in a transparent and predictable manner. Elected and appointed officials and other civil servant leaders need to set an example of high standards of professional and personal integrity. Citizen Participation is a key element in promoting transparency and accountability (UNCHS 2014; -----).

In the case of Ambo Woreda, people have faced/facing various favoritism, patronage and corruption when it comes to the distribution of scarce government resources. The lack of proper supervision of the local government

authority is criticized, leading to a situation where taxes are not properly collected or misused by local leaders.

Another strong criticism is that there is no transparency at local level, as there is always political interference from higher levels. Most of the time, policies and strategies are directly implemented without considering the cultures and societal values or socio-cultural as well as geographical situation which often undermines already agreed projects for the community. Regarding the first issue, favoritism, patronage and corruption, a general criticism is that there is no equal distribution of services and funds to all areas.

There is also a great problem on responsiveness and accountability of executive offices (cabinets) to Woreda council (legislative branch). The Woreda cabinets practically dominate or overriding the council activities. Since all cabinets are members of Woreda council, they potentially affect the whole activities of the council. While the Woreda council wants to hold meeting, the cabinet consent is needed because the whole cabinet members are members of the council. The cabinets have no positive attitude for the Woreda council and its office. For them (cabinets), the council has not that much significance; due to this reason, the office has not enough personnel and financial allocation. More than all, councils would not hold its meeting without the consent of Woreda cabinets.

4.2.1. Service Delivery Government Responsiveness

A democratic government is a responsive government. At minimum, public officials are required to acknowledge people's needs for basic services (Thomas 1998: 335). Ideally, when popular demands are met, citizens come to the government at their own. Thus, there is responding readily and sympathetically to some request and recognizing stakeholders need and addressing it by providing appropriate services and programs.

One advantages of constitutional existence of local government over that of a decentralized unitary government is that its geographical proximity to the governed people and access to information on local needs (Watts 1999: 451). It enables local governments to be more responsive to the needs of citizens and to deliver quality services. However, it can be arguable that the Ambo woreda governance approach has not been responsive to the needs and problems of the residents. The inability of the woreda administration to respond to the community demands and needs is largely related to lack of commitment from leaders, financial constraints, lack of leadership skills, and often, lack of resources utilization. A part from this, the system is weak at developing and managing capability of local governments and there is no systematic approach to setting priority and achieving outcome goals.

It is clear that citizens demand their voices be heard as active citizenry are increasingly prepared to take to the streets to protest. Government officials must maintain a dialogue with citizens in order to improve their quality and efficiency of governance (Steiner 2005: 116). This

dialogue gives the tools they need to develop their services so as to create the greatest possible benefit. However, at this study area, the government is much passive to give a response, while the community faces a problem. Public officials of the Woreda are less responsive, less effective, less trust worthy and even more corrupt.

4.2.2. Complaint Management System

Operating an effective and accessible complain management system helps organizations to empower citizens and give priority to put things right quickly and effectively (Steiner 2005: 101). Therefore, public officials actively seek complains, comments, suggestions and opinions as a means for the public to help them to improve their services. Here, a complaint is any level of dissatisfaction which includes unsatisfactory public service, equipment problems, and incorrect records. Each local government units has responsibility for complaints handling within their own area (Grindile 2007: 46), but they may choose to allocate an investigation to a particular office.

At this study area, public officials of the Woreda administration does not listen to and take account of their views and that they does not provide proper and adequate information about the actions taken in the decisions making process. Additionally, there is no simple procedures and appropriate time frame for action given to ensure fair and swift action on complaints, suggestions and grievances by the public in a sustainable manner. Moreover, all such complaints do not deal and treated equally.

4.3. Transparency and Enhancing Free Flow of Information

One of the cardinal pre-requisites for promoting good governance is having an effective feedback loop that maintains governance dynamism. Those who control and manage power on behalf of citizens need information about citizen needs and values; conversely, the governed need information from those who govern them about governmental outputs and citizens obligations. Gregory (2001; 213) defines transparency as greater openness and specificity of governmental activity, transactions, and information. Communication is a necessary condition for effective outcomes if the system is to work as a healthy system instead of one engaged in a series of battles among its component parts.

Coming to the case of this study, in principle, there is an open communication system among the public, institutions and other developmental partners. Different institutions like community policing, justice reform program and government communication office are some formal institutions established so far by which different actors obtain information about government activities.

Practically however, most of the time there is blame on the fairness and openness of those established institution.

Beyond their openness and fairness, the information they obtain has a problem of accessibility and quality. A common response shows insufficient and inadequate access to information exists.

The mass media is often referred to as the fourth branch of government because of the power they held in terms of oversight function they exercise. Access to information is essential at least for two reasons: First, it ensures that citizens make responsible, informed choices rather than acting out of ignorance or misinformation and secondly, information serves a "checking function" by ensuring that elected representatives uphold their oaths of office and carry out the wishes of those who elected them (Grindile 2007: 46). In the Ethiopian context, when EPRDF came to power in 1991, it adopted a national charter that recognized freedom of speech and a law was issued to regulate the press. Soon after the issuance of the law, different newspapers, magazines and books hit the market. The trend was very welcoming since the action taken to open up the sector to independent media was a historical moment for this was unthinkable during the past regimes. But the distribution of the private press was very limited to center and other major cities. Many of those established are allegedly pro-government or shy away from issues they feel are unpleasant to the government. Thus, it is incredible to think the existence of transparency in the absence of free media that would contribute its own for absence of good governance and democratization process in Ethiopia.

4.4. Fairness and Equity at Local Order of Government

Existence of good laws and constitutions does not mean it is fairly, efficiently and effectively enforced. Indeed, legislation is meaningless without an efficient and effective judicial system to enforce (Shabbir 2005: 231) Even if, the local governments has progressed in conducting reforms, most citizens feel isolated by their government, lacking meaningful access to justice system or to governmental decision making process.

In case of this study Woreda, the government is highly unfair and there are unequal treatments of citizens. The problem/unfairness is reflected through discrimination of individuals in land provision, employment opportunities, political appointments, discrimination of the adult to be elected through different institutional leaders.

4.5. Professional Leadership

The contribution of leadership skills and ability of local leaders (either politicians or public servants) to improve democratization process is fundamental (Gregory, 2003: 321) This study shows there is lack of skilled and qualified political leaders which need to set higher standards to select candidates for local government positions, as well as to provide more training for local government representatives.

There is lack of educated and qualified local political

leaders and administrative staff. At this area of study, most of the sector office leader are not qualified and skill full leader. If we see their educational level, most of them are certificate and diploma holders and even in some sectors grade 10 and 12 merely completed. They simply come to power because of being ruling party member, one of the most criteria. Some other leaders come in to chair due to they do have blood linkage or favoritism with the largest kebele community that does not consider their leadership ability their origin is from there.

Another issue related to the attitudes of local leaders is that some of them are selfish and arrogant, as they care only about their own status symbols and do not see themselves as service providers for the people.

Further, the major reason for the lack of professional leadership and qualification among local leaders is lack of training and their coming to power means which is based on ruling politically party attachment. Even tough, training to newly elected local government representatives have been provided by the regional and Woreda institution still; the training for local leaders is insufficient and has not that much change on trainers.

Another reason that can mention is the lack of motivation among local leaders and administrative staff. There is no, if not limited incentive system, which would encourage officers to work in a more dedicated manner. Even, some skilled administrative staff and employees are not committed to their work.

Among public servants, lack of motivation is the result of inadequate promotion and incentive system. Administrators who are motivated and innovative are not sufficiently encouraged, but are hampered by superiors and the hierarchical structures within the government departments.

Generally, the significance of good governance in achieving social and economic prosperity has recently attracted different literatures on development studies. It has been widely asserted that without good governance structures, poor and developing nations cannot reduce poverty as well as address their multi-faceted social and economic problems. Therefore, it requires a suspicious consideration to improve good governance.

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Operating an effective and accessible complain management system helps organizations to empower citizens and give priority to put things right quickly and effectively. Therefore, public officials actively seek complains, comments, suggestions and opinions as a means for the public to help them to improve their services. Here, a complaint is any level of dissatisfaction which includes unsatisfactory public service, equipment problems, and incorrect records. Each local government units has responsibility for complaints handling within their own area but they may choose to allocate an investigation to a particular office.

At this study area, public officials of the Woreda administration does not listen to and take account of their views and that they does not provide proper and adequate information about the actions taken in decisions making process. Additionally, there is no simple procedures and appropriate time frame for action given to ensure fair and swift action on complaints, suggestions and grievances by the public in a sustainable manner. Moreover, all such complaints do not deal and treated equally.

4.6. Transparency and Enhancing Free Flow of Information

One of the cardinal pre-requisites for promoting good governance is having an effective feedback loop that maintains governance dynamism. Those who control and manage power on behalf of citizens need information about citizen needs and values; conversely, the governed need information from those who govern them about governmental outputs and citizens obligations. Gregory (2001; 213) defines transparency as greater openness and specificity of governmental activity, transactions, and information. Communication is a necessary condition for effective outcomes if the system is to work as a healthy system instead of one engaged in a series of battles among

its component parts.

Coming to the case of this study, in principle, there is an open communication system among the public, institutions and other developmental partners. Different institutions like community policing, justice reform program and government communication office are some formal institutions established so far by which different actors obtain information about government activities.

Practically however, most of the time there is blame on the fairness and openness of those established institution. Beyond their openness and fairness, the information they obtain has a problem of accessibility and quality. A common response shows insufficient and inadequate access to information exists.

The mass media is often referred to as the fourth branch of government because of the power they held in terms of oversight function they exercise. Access to information is essential at least for two reasons: First, it ensures that citizens make responsible, informed choices rather than acting out of ignorance or misinformation and secondly, information serves a "checking function" by ensuring that elected representatives uphold their oaths of office and carry out the wishes of those who elected them. In the Ethiopian context, when EPRDF came to power in 1991, it adopted a national charter that recognized freedom of speech and a law was issued to regulate the press. Soon after the issuance of the law, different newspapers, magazines and books hit the market. The trend was very welcoming since the action taken to open up the sector to independent media was a historical moment for this was unthinkable during the past regimes. But the distribution of the private press was very limited to center and other major cities. Many of those established are allegedly pro-government or shy away from issues they feel are unpleasant to the government. Thus, it is incredible to think the existence of transparency in the absence of free media that would contribute its own for absence of good governance and democratization process in Ethiopia.

4.7. Fairness and Equity at Local Order of Government

Existence of good laws and constitutions does not mean it is fairly, efficiently and effectively enforced. Indeed, legislation is meaningless without an efficient and effective judicial system to enforce (Shabbir 2005: 231) Even if, the local governments has progressed in conducting reforms, most citizens feel isolated by their government, lacking meaningful access to justice system or to governmental decision making process.

In case of this study Woreda, the government is highly unfair and there are unequal treatments of citizens. The problem/unfairness is reflected through discrimination of individuals in land provision, employment opportunities, political appointments, discrimination of the adult to be elected through different institutional leaders.

4.8. Professional Leadership

The contribution of leadership skills and ability of local

leaders (either politicians or public servants) to improve democratization process is fundamental (Gregory, 2003: 321) This study shows there is lack of skilled and qualified political leaders which need to set higher standards to select candidates for local government positions, as well as to provide more training for local government representatives.

There is lack of educated and qualified local political leaders and administrative staff. At this area of study, most of the sector office leader are not qualified and skill full leaders. If we see their educational level, most of them are certificate and diploma holders and even in some sectors grade 10 and 12 merely completed. They simply come to power because of being ruling party member, one of the most criteria. Some other leaders come in to chair due to they do have blood linkage or favoritism with the largest kebele community that does not consider their leadership ability their origin is from there.

Another issue related to the attitudes of local leaders is that some of them are selfish and arrogant, as they care only about their own status symbols and do not see themselves as service providers for the people.

Further, the major reason for the lack of professional leadership and qualification among local leaders is lack of training and their coming to power means which is based on ruling politically party attachment. Even tough, training to newly elected local government representatives have been provided by the regional and Woreda institution still; the training for local leaders is insufficient and has not that much change on trainers.

Another reason that can mention is the lack of motivation among local leaders and administrative staff. There is no, if not limited incentive system, which would encourage officers to work in a more dedicated manner. Even, some skilled administrative staff and employees are not committed to their work.

Among public servants, lack of motivation is the result of inadequate promotion and incentive system. Administrators who are motivated and innovative are not sufficiently encouraged, but are hampered by superiors and the hierarchical structures within the government departments.

Generally, the significance of good governance in achieving social and economic prosperity has recently attracted different literatures on development studies. It has been widely asserted that without good governance structures, poor and developing nations cannot reduce poverty as well as address their multi-faceted social and economic problems. Therefore, it requires a suspicious consideration to improve good governance.

The Practice of Good Governance at local government in Ethiopia: Experience from this study

As has been suggested at various stage throughout this paper, despite power and resources devolved and institutions established, tremendous challenges still facing this area of study to ensure good governance and genuine federal system in practice. Existing experience identifies

that, there is a lack of community participation through socio-politico as well as economic affairs (Debeb 2012: 586). This section attempts to sort out the major challenges that have prevented the realization of good governance in Ethiopia during the reign of EPRDF in the last two decades with particular reference to the study area. The most important challenge that has been witnessed in the last two decades is particularly related to the gap between the formal commitment and the practical democratic transformation in the country (Tegegn 2007: 122). Though there have been a number of political reforms made in terms of improving the democratic transition of the country, there is a gap in transformation to good governance and genuine democratization process.

There is a great barrier on community problem identification and its effectiveness for resolution (Mehret 2002: 123). The problem is that, for the most part, poor implementation of citizen-driven initiatives across the whole administration office and experts. It is widely acknowledged that decision-making has made centrally and that policies, strategies or programs directly delivered on departmental lines that result often fail to respond the needs, priorities and expectations of the Woreda' communities. This by itself result lack of accountability of public servants to the community rather they are practically accountable to the upper officials.

The study reveals that, there is high non-equitable treatment among Woreda communities. Even if, the woreda civil service reform is good by its legal provision, there is no practically implementation in its human resource development. The policy reform comes to crack while implementing. When the reform tried to implement, there is a high extent of corruption in the sense of favoritism to fill the civil servant vacant position.

There is also weak civil society organization in the study Woreda. The only NGO in the study woreda that involved actively is save the children Ethiopia. There are also other civil society organizations, but, they are very weak. They do not have a clear practical mission and there is a great problem on their personnel assign in the office place. This also shows that, there is a problem on Woreda administration on attracting, coordinating or regulating this weak civil society through different means. Scholars argue that the local government lack to establish strong, viable, and assertive, independent and politically active civil society organizations (Kassahun and Tegegn 2004: 25). Weak leadership capabilities of the Woreda administration to mobilize attract development partners and other civil society is evident.

With respect to leadership skill and attitudinal change in relation to the change witnessed in working habit, developing better working behavior, community respecting, and developing workable plan and strategies, there is a great problem in the study Woreda. Woreda leaders reflect sense of dictatorship behavior, non-cooperative behavior and trying to monopolize every decision-making process is at momentum.

There is also a problem on responsiveness and accountability of executive offices (cabinets) to Woreda council (legislative branch). The Woreda cabinets practically dominate or overriding the council activities. Since all cabinets are members of Woreda council, they potentially affect the whole activities of the council (Young J 1998: 321). Every council meeting is held, while the cabinets have consent. The cabinets have no positive attitude for the Woreda council and its office. For them(cabinets), the council has no significance government branch; due to this reason, the office have no enough personnel, financial allocation, councils does not held its meeting without the consent of Woreda cabinets.

Effective achievement of power decentralization objectives requires local authorities to review the effectiveness of mechanisms for determining needs and priorities. If not however, centrally determined initiatives may prove difficult to reconcile with area and local community needs (Litvack, 2008: 123). Coming to the area of this study, the woreda administration fail to follow people centered initiatives as well as need and priority. Accordingly, even though, the community attempt to voice its priority and needs in different time and places when occasions like public meeting were happened, the government does not hear what the community needs and to be fulfilled. Rather, the administrations simply apply or implement policies and strategies which come from the federal or regional government without considering the local context. This study argues that this happened due to absence of common understanding or knowledge base between leaders and local community, lack of positive interaction with people and lack of coordinated planning process and capacity to focus on overarching priorities. Therefore, this suggests us that the government has to practice need identification of the community by forming institutional set up and engaging different informal meeting with the community. To meet this objective; media development research, survey research and various public meeting are some of the mechanisms to know and hear the voice and priorities of local community.

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This study tries to take instance in which lack of good governance is mostly visible that is decentralized urban land management. Thus, readers are required to know that decentralized urban land management is part of good

governance. Land management and land delivery process is generally decentralized from the federal government to the respective regional state and from the regional state to the local government or city administration. However, land delivery process is centralized in a single office which cannot reach very high number of demanders on the right time. To overcome these problems, norms of good governance have to be incorporated in urban land management.

In addition to the absence of system of accountability and transparency in executive organs, they remain to be ineffective and the civil service is not free from political influence. It is true that regime manipulate the civil service to advance its own political agenda rather than committing the civil service to professional integrity and quality of service. Nowadays, it has become an open secret that civil servants are recruited in light of their political loyalty rather than their competence. In the last few years, the trend of compromising quality for loyalty has been in the increase in the various government departments especially at lower levels that led to the degeneration of the competence of the civil service. The other important institution essential to ensure rule of law is existence of independent and strong judicial organ. In light of this, the FDRE constitution provides for the independence of the judiciary. Despite this, there are problems of political interference, inefficiency and corruption. Former judges and members of the legal community indicated that there have been instances of delicate political cases being assigned to perceived pro-government benches and political interference in civil and criminal trials. In addition to this, the limited budget allocated to the judiciary and lower incentives to the judges has also resulted in high turnout of judges that further weakened the judiciary.

5. Conclusion

The concept of good governance has gained significant attention in developing countries and Ethiopia is no exception. It is widely recognized that as a precondition/prerequisite for sustainable development particularly for developing countries like Ethiopia.

As noted somewhere the major objective of this study is to assess the source of extreme public protest that is enduring for the past many years at the selected study area. In one hand, decentralization of power to Woreda government is put in to practice to ensure self-rule at local level and improve good governance. But practically, absence of good governance at this study Woreda is contributed/ing its own for the stated problem, on the other hand. Thus, efforts have been made to assess the nexus between decentralization of power and good governance with ongoing public protest.

As the finding of the study shows, despite its encouraging result in its positive achievement, currently, devolved power and resources has shown a governance

process that has curtailed with many problems. Thus, the problem is not to devolve decentralized policy and program rather the way to create or establish effective institutional arrangements that improve good governance.

The basic foundation for ensuring a system of good governance is existence of effective separation of power and checks and balances between the organs of state. When there is effective system of checks and balances in the system, authorities shall be scrutinized and their activities shall be transparent. In light of such core principle, the absence of effective check and balances in Ethiopia is the other formidable challenge to improve good governance in the country.

As mentioned earlier, in Ambo Woreda, there is no transparency or open discussion on issues affecting the communities. It is stated that there are no information flows between different communities due to fear and suspicion. As it is also indicated somewhere, the communities are not participating in identification of problems, prioritizing and planning. Lack of transparency therefore, prohibits the people from demanding their rights and working on activities that they are accountable for. This blocks the society from making the representatives responsible for their deeds and actions as well. This also has a negative implication on monitoring and evaluation of the society's resources which might give way for corruption and misappropriation of scarce resources. Thus, problems is distinguished in the study Woreda that blocked fertile ground in relation to accountability, efficiency and effectiveness, public participation through problem and demand identification and free and fair access to information.

The finding indicates a need for more focused and planned approaches for the success of the decentralization of power and resource. Institutionalizing the local government and the lowest tiers has not yet been achieved. While no inconsistency was observed in models used to transfer resources and authority, shortages and lack of dynamic capability of local implementers to properly utilize the power and resources transferred is evident. Perception and participation of stakeholders is an area that needs a paradigm shift. Achievements on the ground have not yet justified the efforts made or the program goals. Besides, introduction of appropriate planning, enhancing the capability of local bodies to match the ever changing local and global conditions, rethinking on certain policy and program changes and meaningful participation of stakeholders, efficient use of available resources, etc. were among issues identified for consideration. Therefore, there should be more and deeper inquiry related to the transparency, and responsiveness of local government actions and decisions.

Finally, it should be noted that arriving at good governance at any level of government is unattainable unless there is interaction between all stakeholders to successfully implement the development agenda of any area be it government, Civil Society Organizations or the private sector projects or programs.

6. Possible Solutions for Distinguished Impeding Problems

Based on the finding of the study, the following recommendations are provided as positive solutions to create effective decentralized institutional setting that helps the current decentralization of power in ensuring good governance which in turn helps to at least minimize the existing public protest.

- (1) Good governance or other development agendas could not be realized without the active participation of the Woreda community. If a segment of society is out of participation, good governance still could not be realized. More effort needs to be geared towards designing and implementing governance programs on inclusive participatory approach. Inclusion in the political decision-making process should be addressed in a number of ways; this could include citizen participation in local affairs.
- (2) To realize active and effective community participation through the Woreda, the need to greater effort and joint actions on to enhance community awareness about governance and development. Woreda administrators, experts, professionals or stakeholders should create open dialogue, mutual respect, trust, joint actions and mobilizing the community.
- (3) The Woreda administration should hear the community demand, voice or priorities. Identifying the communities' priority should be the outcome of a participatory consultative approach with local communities.
- (4) It needs by itself to create a lot of public meeting to discuss over the day to day affairs of the communities and it should be effective in its implementation.
- (5) The policies and strategies which come from higher government level should be put into effect by considering the Woreda socio-cultural context. We may call it *woredazation*. It enables to identify the priorities of communities and raise public confident on the government. Thus this people-centered approach result downward accountabilities and peoples will have a sense of ownership in their local affairs.

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