

## **Role of Local Government for Community Development – A Study in Aleta Wondo Town Administration, Sidama Zone, SNNPR State, Ethiopia**

Tekele Tuke\*, R.Karunakaran\*\*, Roba Huka\*\*\*

\* PG Research Scholar, Department of Cooperatives, College of Business & Economics, Hawassa University, P.O.Box.No.05, Awassa, Ethiopia

\*\*Associate Professor, Department of Cooperatives, College of Business & Economics, Hawassa University, P.O.Box.No.05, Awassa, Ethiopia.

\*\*\* Lecturer, Department of Cooperatives, College of Business & Economics, Hawassa University, P.O.Box.No.05, Awassa, Ethiopia  
Corresponding Author: Tekele Tuke

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**Abstract:** The main purpose of this study was to assess the role of local government for community development in Aleta Wondo Town, Sidama Zone. Both descriptive and empirical research approaches were used. The Town was selected purposively and three Kebeles (Villages) from the town were selected based on the concentration of the population. By adopting probability proportionate the size (PPS) formula, 150 households were selected from the three Kebeles on simple random sampling technique. Structured interview schedule was prepared and administered among the sample households by three enumerators. Besides focus group discussion was held among the Kebele committee members and key informant interview was conducted with the officials of Town Administration. Both descriptive and inferential statistical tools were used of data analysis. The findings from the descriptive analysis show that the level of community participation in health related aspects, cultural ceremonies, capacity building, and conflict resolution was found to be high as compared to other components under study. The result of binary logistic regression analysis shows that independent variables such as policy of the local government, community involvement in planning and decision making and availability of funds were found positive significant influence on the role of local government. Prevalence of good governance as an independent variable was found negative significant influence. Besides, the results of key informant interview and focus group discussion reveal that absence of autonomy of local government, gap in community involvement in planning, women representation, absence of good governance, non availability of funds from donors, etc. were the prominent challenges affecting the contributions of local government. Based on the findings few recommendations were forwarded to maximize the contributions of local government for community development.

**Keywords:** Community, Local government, Community Development, Participation

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### **I. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY**

Nowadays, Ethiopia has been undergoing a process of decentralization under the rule of the Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) since 1991 especially with promulgation of the 1995 constitution. This has changed the previous unitary state structure to federal, with a federal government at the center and regional governments at local level (Alem, 2004; FDRE, 1995; Zemlak, 2011). The country has been pursuing decentralization as the tool of creating an enabling environment to foster development and good governance at the local level. In line with that both political and fiscal authorities have been decentralized up to the local levels.

There is a consensus among development practitioners, government officials and foreign donors on the proactive role being played by the local government in participatory community development. The World Development Report (2003) strongly supports devolution for making service delivery work for the poor. Recently a number of scholarly books, articles and panels at conferences have dealt with the growing importance of local government as providers of local services, valuable partners in community development arena and a successful laboratory for local democracy (Sisk et al., 2001; Forbrig 2011; Rondinelli 2006).

Community development fundamentally involves a series of actions and decisions that improves the situation of a community, not just economically, but as a strong functioning community (Cavaye, 2003). The government and local autonomous bodies have played very important roles for the effective implementation of community development programs in Ethiopia. Local Government plays an important role in the economic development of the State and in ensuring the well-being and safety of all Ethiopians. It also provides local and regional leadership and supports community recreational and cultural needs. The goals of government in the community development policy areas are to: Ensure that Local Government has input into the formulation of policies and strategies aimed at enhancing the level and scope of community, social and economic development and services; and maximize Local Government's access to funding and resources to provide appropriate community services and facilities. (Mustafa K Hussein, 2003).

Thus, the promotion of basic elements of good governance including community involvement through a decentralized local governance system has been at the centre stage since the advent of the multiparty democracy in Ethiopia. However, development study analysts, practitioners and funding partners persist pointing to the fact that, despite some achievements, the country lingers still in limitations. There are certain bottlenecks which impedes the contribution of local government for sustainable community development. With this backdrop, this paper focused on assessing the role of local government for community development.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The objective of local government in Ethiopia is to bring rapid development benefiting community at local level throughout the country. The goals of community development should be to improve people's productivity and enable them to participate in their social, political and economic life. Some problems and challenges could be encountered in the process of seeking for success in community development in the country. The local government has roles in employment creation. This would give them more confidence in managing their own affairs and help to protect their environment (Olowu, 2006). There are several obstacles and challenges combine to hinder the effectiveness of local government's contribution for community development which includes inadequate financial resources, economic and social inequality and others (Serdar Yilmaz & Varsha Venugopal, 2008).

In addition to the above factors, community participation in community planning and decision making was found to be almost non-existent. As part of their administrative autonomy, local governments need to have a minimum set of powers and capacities to initiate regulatory legislation on critical issues affecting their jurisdiction. In Ethiopia, local governments in rural Woreda (District) have the authority to determine land use- they can decide the location of facilities such as schools, wells, health post and clinic. They can also regulate cooperatives and community volunteer activities. In Municipalities, local government authorities can prepare and implement development plans and regulate markets, sanitary services, slaughter houses, fire brigades, and mortuary and burial services. They also have the discretion to issue marriage and birth certificates, approve building plans and register properties.

However, study (Serdar Yilmaz & Varsha Venugopal, 2008) result show that most of these discretionary powers are on paper only and as most decisions on laws and planning seem to be top down . Thus, there is a problem in the power structure which ultimately affects the autonomy of local government to decide and implement schemes and programs for the welfare of the community. The recognition and importance of local government in the development process is prompted by the need to tackle local socio-economic problems and to manage participatory development (Bowman & Kearney, 1996). In most developing countries, including Ethiopia, decentralization and participation could not solve the various rural problems faced by the rural populace as local governments are facing a series of challenges in implementing community development plans and programs (Bowman & Kearney, 1996). Keeping into account the challenges, an attempt was made to explore the role of local governments for community development. Further to justify that in the context of Ethiopia in general and the study area in particular according to the literature search, assessing the role of local government for community development was found to be scanty and hence this research was an attempt to fill the research and knowledge gap.

### **Objectives of the study**

The objectives of this study were:

1. To assess the level of participation of the community on the initiatives of local government; and
2. To analyze the factors influencing the role of local government for community development.

## II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

As the study is empirical and descriptive in nature; field survey method was adopted. Both qualitative and quantitative approaches were employed for data collection and analysis.

**Study population:** The population for the study includes Households of Aleta Wondo Town Administration, who are the prime beneficiaries of the local government services, all selected kebeles committee members, and local government officials.

**Sampling procedure and techniques:** A multi stage sampling procedure was employed as to selection of study area and sample households.

As a first stage, out of four Town Administrations in Sidama Zone, Aleta Wondo Town was selected purposively with the justification that the study area is beset with many challenges such as rapid growth of population which warrants facilities and infrastructures from the local government, slow degree of town development (Sidama Zone Administration Socio economic Profile, 2015) and the researcher’s familiarity with the town. As a second stage three kebeles (Villages) from the Town were purposively selected based on the concentration of the population. As a third stage, 152 households were selected on a simple random sampling basis. To determine the sample size, Yamane (1967) formula was used.

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + Ne^2} = \frac{5238}{1 + 5238(0.08)^2} = 152$$

The determined sample size was distributed by adopting probability proportionate to size (PPS) formula to each kebele. However, two interview schedules were found to be incomplete as the respondents did not want to continue the interview process. Hence the total sample size of the study was 150.

Table 1: Sample frame

Aletawondo Town Administration, Sidama Zone, SNNPRS.				
Name of Kebele	Female HHs	Male HHs	Total	Sample size
Chafee	253	1531	1784	52
Mesalemia	301	1681	1982	58
Dela	213	1259	1472	42
<b>Total</b>	<b>767</b>	<b>4471</b>	<b>5238</b>	<b>152</b>

Source: Aleta Wondo Town Administration Record, 2016

**Sources of Data:** Both primary and secondary source of data was used for data collection. Primary source of data comprised of both qualitative and quantitative data was collected from households, officials of local government and kebele committee members. The secondary sources of information was collected mainly from the documents of local government officials, from the annual reports of Aleta Wondo Town Administration besides Journals, textbooks, magazines, articles, internet and other source of materials was used according to the purpose of the study.

**Tools for Data collection:** The tools used in this research for data collection were Interview schedule, Key Informant Interview, Focus Group Discussion and few Participatory Rural Appraisal tools.

**Method of Data Analysis:** The data was presented, analyzed and discussed using SPSS version 20 software, by using charts, frequency and percentage. Primary Data collected from the sample Households was analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively. **Objective one**, the level of community participation in the local government planning was analyzed with the help of descriptive statistical tools such as frequency tables and percentages. **Objective two** was addressed through deployment of inferential statistical tool viz., binary logistic regression model.

## III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Level of community participation on the initiatives of local government

#### Community participation in social, environment and health services

Table 2: Level of community participation in social, environment and health services

Participation in	Level of Participation			Total	Mean	SD
	High	Medium	Low			
<b>Awareness camps</b>						
Health	65 (43.3)	54 (36.0)	31 (20.7)	<b>150</b> <b>(100.0)</b>	3.521	0.89
Education	72 (48.0)	54 (36.0)	24 (16.0)	<b>150</b> <b>(100.0)</b>	3.761	0.86

Sanitation	32 (21.7)	36 (24.0)	82 (54.7)	<b>150</b> <b>(100.0)</b>	2.932	0.85
Environment	63 (42.0)	39 (26.0)	48 (32.0)	<b>150</b> <b>(100.0)</b>	3.412	0.84
<b>Training (Capacity building)</b>						
Agriculture related	78 (52.0)	29 (19.3)	43 (28.7)	<b>150</b> <b>(100.0)</b>	3.532	0.86
Health related	79 (52.7)	31 (20.7)	40 (26.6)	<b>150</b> <b>(100.0)</b>	3.546	0.89
Gender related	78 (52.0)	25 (16.7)	47 (31.3)	<b>150</b> <b>(100.0)</b>	3.563	0.88
Natural resources conservation	68 (45.3)	62 (41.3)	20 (13.4)	<b>150</b> <b>(100.0)</b>	4.102	0.82
Soil conservation	72 (48.0)	63 (42.0)	15 (10.0)	<b>150</b> <b>(100.0)</b>	4.121	0.86
<b>Conflict resolution</b>						
Resource conflict	71 (47.3)	58 (38.7)	21 (14.0)	<b>150</b> <b>(100.0)</b>	3.712	0.86
Ethnic conflict	62 (41.3)	48 (32.0)	40 (26.7)	<b>150</b> <b>(100.0)</b>	3.413	0.84
Community meetings	40 (26.6)	63 (42.0)	47 (31.3)	<b>150</b> <b>(100.0)</b>	2.743	0.74

Source: Field survey, 2017

(Figures in brackets denote percentage to row data)

With regard to participation of community members on the initiatives of local government in relation to social, environment and health services, the survey result shows that the level participation of the respondents on awareness camps in the areas of health (43.3%) and education (48.0%) were found to be high while it was moderate in the case of environment (42.0%) whereas the level of participation of the community members in sanitation (54.7%) was found to be low. Moreover, the mean value of health and education was found to be high as compared to the mean value of other variables.

Similarly, the participation of community members in training (capacity building), the survey result shows that majority of the respondents exerted high degree of participation on the training related to agriculture, health, gender and conservation of natural resources and soil. Although there are perception differences among the respondents on the role of local government for community development, their participation on capacity building initiatives of local government was found to be good. Further, the respondents were found to exert greater degree of participation in conflict resolution on resources and ethnic based conflicts.

Community meetings will be held once in a month to review the progress of community development initiatives as revealed by the Kebele committee members during FGD. They further said that the participation of community members in the community meetings is declining due to their preoccupied schedule. The result of the survey also confirms that the level of participation of community members in the meetings was moderate. According to key informant, the town administration encourage the community participation in planning and decision making as it will have various advantages for town administration works: They said, community participation in planning is important to have relevant plan, improve sense of community ownership development project, also important for resource generation and utilization, because community itself is huge resource of development.

#### Community participation in economic, cultural and technology services

**Table 3:** Level of community participation in economic, cultural and technology services

Participation in	Level of Participation			Total	Mean	SD
	High	Medium	Low			
<b>Community Asset Building &amp; Infrastructure development</b>						
Small bridges	54 (36.0)	31 (20.7)	65 (43.3)	<b>150</b> <b>(100.0)</b>	2.412	0.89
Agricultural implements	82 (54.7)	32 (21.7)	36 (24.0)	<b>150</b> <b>(100.0)</b>	3.563	0.86
Public fountain (water points)	58 (38.7)	71 (47.3)	21 (14.0)	<b>150</b> <b>(100.0)</b>	3.216	0.86
Mud road construction	54	72	24	<b>150</b>	2.932	0.85

	(36.0)	(48.0)	(16.0)	<b>(100.0)</b>		
Kobul stone road	63 (42.0)	39 (26.0)	48 (32.0)	<b>150</b> <b>(100.0)</b>	3.212	0.84
<b>Cultural activities</b>						
Ethnic related festivals	128 (85.3)	20 (13.3)	02 (1.4)	<b>150</b> <b>(100.0)</b>	4.532	0.86
Religious related festivals	147 (98.0)	03 (2.0)	00 (0.0)	<b>150</b> <b>(100.0)</b>	4.746	0.89
Informal groups celebrations	115 (76.7)	25 (16.7)	10 (6.7)	<b>150</b> <b>(100.0)</b>	4.463	0.88
Death ceremony	148 (98.7)	02 (1.3)	00 (0.0)	<b>150</b> <b>(100.0)</b>	4.802	0.82
<b>Technology adoption</b>						
Improved seed	72 (48.0)	63 (42.0)	15 (10.0)	<b>150</b> <b>(100.0)</b>	3.712	0.86
Off farm technology	62 (41.3)	48 (32.0)	40 (26.7)	<b>150</b> <b>(100.0)</b>	3.413	0.84
Demonstration visits	47 (31.3)	25 (16.7)	78 (52.0)	<b>150</b> <b>(100.0)</b>	2.659	0.82

Source: Field survey, 2017

(Figures in brackets denote percentage to row data)

Perusal of table 3 reveals that a high majority of the respondents were found to have greater degree of participation in cultural activities that are being promoted by the local government which includes ethnic related festivals (Mean=4.532), religious related festivals (M=4.746), informal groups celebrations (M=4.463) and death ceremonies (M=4.802). This finding is not surprise as Ethiopia is well known for its cultural heritage and the people in the study area are also not exceptional in this regard.

FGD with kebele committee members also reveals that most our country towns is beset with full of diversity, creating cooperative environment, teaching community to appreciate and respect diversity and also formulating various legal frame work which respect and accommodate diversity on which the role of local government is highly remarkable.

As far as community asset building and infrastructure development, the participation of the community members in construction of small wooden bridges to pass by river (M=2.412), mud road construction (M=2.932), public fountain (water points) (M=3.216) and kobul stone road (M=3.212) were found to be moderate whereas the community participation was found to be high in the case of procurement and distribution of agricultural implements (M=3.563).

The results of FGD with kebele committee members show that as part of development of town, the local government has been encouraging the community to have kobul stone road in their street by sharing the construction costs. In this regard, the local government usually request the community to contribute whatever be the amount. Further, agricultural farmers group are also being encouraged to procure and maintain agricultural implements (common pool) for distribution of those implements for agricultural operations at cheaper rent. In such a way the community is mobilizing and generating community assets.

As to technology adoption, majority of the respondents exert participation in purchase of improved seeds (M=3.712) supplied by cooperatives through the advice of local government. However, their participation in demonstration visits (M=2.659) and application of off farm technology (M=3.413) was found to be moderate and low respectively. It shows that farmers are deprived off taking part in demonstration visits to observe the on farm and off farm technologies adopted by resource specific areas to replicate in their farms.

#### Stages of community participation in overall services of LG

Table 4: Community participation in overall services

Participation in	Planning		Implemen tation		Monitoring		Control		Evaluation	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Social services	28%	72%	25%	75%	00%	100%	00%	100%	00%	100%
Economic services	05%	95%	02%	98%	00%	100%	00%	100%	00%	100%
Cultural services	80%	20%	68%	32%	42%	58%	12%	88%	05%	95%
Technology services	02%	98%	00%	00%	00%	100%	00%	100%	00%	100%
Environment services	36%	64%	17%	83%	15%	85%	12%	88%	00%	100%
Health services	28%	72%	07%	93%	00%	100%	00%	100%	00%	100%

Source: Field survey, 2017

A cursory look at the table 4 reveals that as high as 80 percent of the respondents were found to be participated in planning the cultural services, in implementation (68%), monitoring (42%), control (12%) and evaluation (5%). Similarly insignificant proportions of the respondents have participated in planning and implementation of social services, economic services, environment services and health services. However, their participation in monitoring, control and evaluation was found to be absent in social services and health services except environment services. It was also observed that the Kebele committee members on behalf of the community used to take part in the above activities.

**Factors influencing the role of Local Government for Community Development**

The dependent variable role of local government for community development be categorized as “Effective=1” and “Not effective =0”. These were the two possible outcomes for the response variable and hence binary logistic regression was used. Results are displayed in Table 5.

**Table 5:** Logistic Regression Analysis - Factors influencing the role of local government

Independent Variables	B	S.E.	Wald	Df	Sig.	Exp (B)	95% C.I.for EXP(B)	
							Lower	Upper
Policy of local government (1=Yes)	1.397	.635	14.257	1	.000	4.043	3.167	38.132
Prevalence of Good governance (1= Yes)	-1.201	.456	6.950	1	.008	.301	.123	.735
Involvement of community in planning (1=Yes)	1.652	.680	5.898	1	.015	5.217	1.375	19.791
Availability of funds (1=Yes)	1.128	.569	3.927	1	.048	3.091	1.012	9.434
Autonomy of Local Government (1=Yes)	-.042	.848	.002	1	.961	.959	.182	5.051
Formation of standing committees (1=Yes)	-1.258	.820	2.357	1	.125	.284	.057	1.417
Monthly reporting (1=Yes)	-.834	.675	1.529	1	.216	.434	.116	1.629
Women representation (1=Yes)	-1.088	.893	1.484	1	.223	.337	.059	1.939
Budget allocation (1=Yes)	.633	.527	1.446	1	.229	1.884	.671	5.290
Proper use of budgeted amount (1=Yes)	-.197	.658	.089	1	.765	.821	.226	2.984
Funds from donors (1=Yes)	.009	1.011	.000	1	.993	1.009	.139	7.316
Involvement of NGOs (1=Yes)	.134	1.007	.018	1	.895	1.143	.159	8.226
Training to civil servants of LG (1=Yes)	-2.215	1.649	1.805	1	.179	.109	.004	2.764
Meetings with community (1=Yes)	3.043	1.689	3.244	1	.072	20.962	.765	574.681
Accountability			3.508	2	.173			
Accountability (1=Moderate)	.880	.495	3.158	1	.076	2.410	.913	6.359
Accountability (2=High)	-.193	.940	.042	1	.837	.824	.131	5.205
Service			4.094	2	.129			
Service (1=Moderate)	-.880	.474	3.446	1	.063	.415	.164	1.050
Service (2=High)	.684	1.599	.183	1	.669	1.982	.086	45.532
Constant	-1.744	.921	3.584	1	.058	.175		

The signs of the regression coefficients of the final model fulfill the underlying assumption and the corresponding significant test. Wald statistics or p-values less than 0.05 which implies that the predictor variables included in the multivariate model have a significant joint influence on the outcome variable.

The result of regression analysis shows that there is a positive significant relationship between policy of the local government and effectiveness of the role of local government (wald=14.257, p-value=0.00001, df=1, p<.05). The estimated odd ratio is 1.397. This explains that for the availability of sound local development policy increases the effectiveness of the local government by a factor of 4.043 (or 39.7%).

The results of binary logistic regression model show that the estimated coefficient of prevalence of good governance found to be negative and significant (wald=6.950, p-value=0.008, df=1, p<.05). The prevalence of good governance result in 1.201 unit decreases in the log odds of the local government effectiveness in local development. The estimated odds ratio (OR=0.3301). This indicates that the absence of good local governance decreases the odds of the effectiveness of local Government by a factor of 67% times

more likely, holding all other independent variables constant. The 95% confidence interval also suggests that the odds of prevalence of good governance in the town 0.123 times as low and .735 times as high as compared to those without in the town.

For every-unit increase in involvement of community in planning would result in a 1.652 unit increase in the log odds of the effectiveness of local government for community development. The estimated odds ratio (OR=5.217) indicates that the odds of involvement of community in planning increases the effectiveness of local government for community development.

The estimated coefficient of the availability of funds in the local government was found to be positive and significant effect on the effectiveness on the role of local government (wald=3.927, *p*-value=0.048, *df*=1, *p*<.005). Thus, it may be stated that availability funds increases the effectiveness of local government by 3.091 times. The rest of proposed explanatory variables failed to be significant on the effectiveness of the role of local government.

To supplement the results of regression model, it was observed through FGD and KII there are several challenges that affect the role of local government for community development. They are: absence of autonomy of local government, gap in community involvement in planning, women representation, absence of good governance, non availability of funds from donors, racism, shortage of budget allocation, false report, bureaucracy, forgery case, lack of training, and less job creation opportunity.

#### **IV. CONCLUSIONS**

Local Government is the nearest government to the people and thus, a channel through which the community feels the pulse of other higher levels of government. To this effect, the paper contends that Local Government is the hub for social, economic, technology, cultural, health and environment development for effective participation in the community development. The level of participation of community members on the development initiatives was exemplary in respect of community asset building, community infrastructure development, awareness programs and cultural aspects. Local Government also undertakes some developmental services in the community even without the financial/technical assistance of the said community. However, the study identified several challenges that affect against the roles of local government for community development which include autonomy of local government, gap on community involvement in planning, women representation, absence of good governance, non availability of funds from donors, low involvement of NGOs, meetings with community, corruption, racism, shortage of budget allocation, false report, inequality, bureaucracy, forgery case, lack of training, and less job creation opportunity.

#### **V. RECOMMENDATIONS**

In order to bring effectiveness of the role of local government for community development, the following recommendations were forwarded.

1. Bottom up approach (Participatory Approach) in planning, implementing, monitoring, controlling and evaluating the development schemes and programs is highly advocated by throwing out the unwanted top down approach. Thus, people participation in the all the stages of development programs need to be encouraged for the success.
2. Absence of good governance was found to be major impediment curtailing the local government to play its role as expected level. The town administration needs to preserve good governance by showing high degree of transparency, accountability and participation.
3. The town administration needs to do a lot in bringing technology for the faster development of the community. Technology in the areas of housing, construction, infrastructure, agriculture and allied activities need to be introduced to the local community at low cost.
4. Kebele committee members are expected to exert greater degree of cooperation, cordial relationship and to act as mediator between the local government and community. They need to represent the issues and problems faced by the community to the authority very often.
5. Autonomy of local government need to be preserved. In this regard, the federal government is expected to ascertain decentralization of the activities of local government. Adequate budget need to be allocated on annual basis by taking into account the important development programs as felt by the community.

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