

# Perceptions on Impacts of Decentralization on Local Governance in Ethiopia: Insights from DLDP Implementation in Guraghe Zone and its Districts

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## Abstract

The rationale for the District level decentralization in Ethiopia has been reducing central and regional government control, increasing community and civil society participation, making government bodies more accountable, responsive and transparent to the constituents at the ground. This article explores and discusses how district level decentralization affected its potential for effective local public governance in Guraghe Zone and its Districts from local government bodies' view. The study employed concurrent mixed methods research design. The data were collected through survey questionnaires, focus group discussions, and key informant interviews, simultaneously. The Guraghe zone's districts were taken purposively. The data were integrated with analysis and interpretation of the results. The researcher employs cross tabulations, percentages, and graphs to discuss and analyze the data. The results show that that the decentralization affects accountability, responsiveness and transparency of local governments to the public positively and negatively in the study area. While, the finding also revealed that effectiveness decentralization reform on local governance effectiveness has been constrained due to misuses of transferred public resources. Furthermore, the prevailing ethnic based political patrons and kinship networks are installing and implementing government policies and projects for their own interest than the ordinary citizen. The findings also revealed that local administrators are appointed and removed from their position without constituents' knowledge. Even though both FDRE Constitution and SNNPRS Constitution clearly publicized how lower level government units are accountable to the higher government tiers, both fail state on how upper level tiers of government units are being accountable to the lower level government units. This might affect the down ward accountability of governance actors to their constituents. Obviously, this determines effectiveness of local governance.

**Keywords:** decentralization, local public governance, accountability, responsiveness, transparency

## 1 Introduction

The last three decades has publicized a flux in government power and public resources control insights and thinking. The traditional government roles, functions and structures were questioned in terms of governance insights and its centralized nature (World Bank, 2006). The emerging governance thinking ensured that government reform remains a central concern of most countries in world. Consequently, the sole dominance of government overall political and legal decision -making have been contested since 1980s (Chema and Rondilli, 2007). The central government failures remain an emerging central concern. Majority of these failures had been associated with centralized decision-making, governance of resources, empowerments of government units and community, emerging self-governance quests of local ethnic based masters, and among others. Because of overall dissatisfaction with government –citizen relations, central government inefficiency and ineffectiveness, traditional bureaucratic incompetence, unresponsive centralized public policy making and implementation at grassroots, unaccountable government bodies to the public, and other factors have inspired government reforms in both developed and developing countries (Faquet 2004, Treisman 2007, World Bank 2010, Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2011). Ethiopia is no exception to this instance.

Decentralization in Ethiopia, as a local governance and capacity building strategy, has been practiced since 1991. Ethiopian Federal Government is exceptional in identified Ethnic based decentralized government systems in the World, which is considered to being an ongoing new and open to change than any other decentralized models. The proponents of ethnic based decentralization in Ethiopia underline that decentralization

is a strategy empowering, participating and consulting ordinary citizens and communities in the process of local public decision-making. Their assumption is that ethnic based local governance is a superior means to achieve government 'accountability, responsiveness, transparency, among others good governance principles' in the process of using transferred power and resource for development, which as a result would contribute to the 'macro-economic stabilization and fair resource distribution' in the process of Ethiopia's transformation. However, opponents of the model argue that ethnic based decentralization in the long-term would weaken community development, social cohesion and unity; finally, it would lead to ethnic tension, conflict and further fragmentation. They also argue that it finally draws the country to poor governance particularly at the grass roots.

The need for decentralized governance is solving societal problems of citizen involvement in decision-making. However, effectiveness of transferring central government power and resources to local ethnic units without effective implementation of good governance principles in the implementation of development programs is dismal for ordinary citizens (Treisman, 2007). Decentralized ethnic based local governance approach to contemporary Ethiopia is a constitutional provision that aims to empower Ethnic based local government and local community for 'peace, stability and development. It also aims to improve local governance actors' accountability, responsiveness, and transparency in the use of devolved power and public resources for development in grass roots. The concern has been to use scarce economic and public resources without corruption (World Bank, 2013, PSCAP Report, 2008). This endless rhetoric of politicians in the current ruling party (EPRDF) of the country, at each tiers of the government has become a sole policy of government reforms. The new beginning of Ethiopian development and the deadlock for poverty and poor local governance in the country were some of the expected results of the reforms particularly decentralization.

However, the mismatch between population growths and public service facilities create a contest on local governance in Guraghe zone (Guraghelima, 2011). This shows that DLDP practices have been criticized for not achieving its targets of Guraghe Zone and its Districts. Different scholars claimed that major causes for ineffectiveness of decentralization are divergence between resources transferred to subnational governments and assigned functions to them (Meheret, 2007). As Gaticia (nd) argued such failures are not necessarily inherent of political systems where the human, social, economic and political rights are constitutionally protected and regular elections undertaken for locally elected officials as of Ethiopia.

The emerging contest on decentralized public governance may be a 'patron-client relations' (ibid). As Tsegaye (2006), argued the existing situation in Guraghe symbolized with the emerging ethnic based political patronage and elite's relation. However, in Guraghe Zone and its Districts, empirical studies on local public governance problems of providing public services to all of its constituents lack conclusive insights to explain the topic in governance perspective. The article aims to examine whether the expectations of DLDP in Ethiopia meet their target or not, at the study area. It explores and discusses decentralization reform impacts on local governance features of government accountability, responsiveness, transparency, Community participation, and among others in DLDP implementation of Guraghe Zone, Ethiopia

Therefore, the problem to be addressed in this article is decentralization impacts on local governance of Guraghe Zone and its Districts, Ethiopia.

In addition, the article intends to answer the following questions. First, how are patterns of decentralization reforms in Ethiopia emerging from 1990s? Second, how do these reforms affect local governance of Guraghe Zone and its Districts? Third, how might ethnic based decentralized self-governance be governed?

## **2 Literature Review on Local Governance and Decentralization**

The last three decades have publicized a flux in government power and public resources control insights and thinking. The traditional government roles, functions and structures were questioned in terms of governance insights and its centralized nature (World Bank, 2006). The emerging governance thinking ensured that government reform remains a central concern of most countries in world. Consequently, the sole dominance of government overall political and legal decision-making have been contested since 1980s (Chema and Rondilli, 2007, Callahan, 2007). The central government failures remain an emerging central concern. Majority of these failures have been associated with centralized decision-making, governance of resources, empowerments of government units and community, emerging self-governance quests of local ethnic based masters, and among others (Treisman 2007). Because of overall dissatisfaction on government –citizen relations, central government inefficiency and ineffectiveness, traditional bureaucratic incompetence, unresponsive centralized public policy making and implementation at grassroots, unaccountable government bodies to the public, and other factors have inspired government reforms in both developed and developing countries (Faquet 2004, Treisman 2007, World Bank 2010, Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2011). Ethiopia is no exception for this instance.

### **2.1.1 Local Government and local governance concepts**

Local governments in Ethiopia refer to Zonal, District, Municipality and Kebele administration. They are local units established by FDRE Constitution and Regional State Constitution to convey citizen interests, to resolve

conflicts and to implement public choices. Consequentially, they are formed to provide different government services at the local level with specifically demarcated geographic areas. In most cases, their formation is ethnic based. It aims to create ethnic based local self-government. The decentralized ethnic based local self-government in Ethiopia inspires on protecting ethnic rights for self-government, ensuring the provision of public goods and services reflect the preferences and priorities of citizens at least theoretically (Zemelak, 2011; Tsegaye, 2006).

Local governance is a broader concept than local government. It refers to a flexible model of local public decision-making based on citizens' demand, participation and consultation at different level of government (Treisman, 2007). It connotes interaction between local actors (elected and appointed officials, elected representatives, civil servants, private sectors, and other civil society organizations) in the formulation and execution of collective action at the local level (John, 2001). It emphasizes the need on proper mechanisms for citizen-citizen and citizen-state interactions. Operationally in this study, local governance is a dynamic engagement and administration of Zonal and Districts development within ethnically defined territory.

In this changing institutional context, local good governance features of accountability, responsiveness, transparency, participation, and among other governance networks have recognized in local development fields. It assumed that decentralization has impacts on local governance for development by affecting the aforementioned good governance features.

### **2.1.2 Decentralization and Empowerment concepts**

Decentralization was defined as "a process of government reform composed of a set of public policies that transfer responsibilities, resources, or authorities from higher to lower levels of government units in the context of a specific type of state" (Cheema and Rondinelli, 2007). This definition did not include the modes of self-governance such as privatization, community participation and empowerment. It also refers to a process of devolving political, fiscal, and administrative powers or responsibilities, authorities, and resources from central governments to sub national units of locally elected governments for effective local public governance and public service provision (Ahmad, et al., 2006, IEG, 2008). Decentralization is a process that intends to improve local public governance features, community participation in local issues, and accountability of public policy makers as well as implementers to citizens.

It is actually an administrative reform, which shifts central monopoly power to participatory localized units (Mullins 2004). Here, it expected to empower the local elected and appointed officials, service providers, elected representatives and citizens. In this study, empowerment means a process of shift from being powerlessness in decision-making to a position of sharing control of the collective actions in the context. This empowerment notion needs to ascertain the gap the theoretical expectations of capacity to control and the actual ability to control at the grassroots. Of course, such a reform is likely promoting accountability, responsiveness, and transparency to the public, and citizen's participation in local governance. On the other hand, it emphasizes the share between local and central government oversights and planning as the power and resources. In other words, effective decentralized public governance needs powerful upper tiers to provide an effective enabling environment (Mullins 2004, Callahan 2007).

#### **2.1.2.1 Democratic Theory of Decentralization and Citizen's Participation**

Democratic theory decentralization claims to make citizen's participation as a bridge for empowerment to improved governance (Manor, 2011). It requests citizens to actively participate in and consulted with deliberative government programs and projects affecting their life at the grassroots. It emphasizes both direct and indirect citizen participation in deliberative public decision-making "to ensure that government entities do what is right, performs/performed as expected, and act in the best interest of the public" (Callahan, 2007). Critics from the proponents of 'representative democracy and indirect participation' asserted that legitimate elect representatives are preferred to act on behalf of their constituents (ibid).

Consequentially, the conceptualizations of citizen's participation in local government decision-making come across with disagreement on whether the decision-making role of citizens as direct or indirect is applicable (Callahan, 2007). However, many scholars agree that participation is mandatory to improve government performance to the public.

A critical question is to what extent the administration of a representative government can actively and meaningfully involves citizens in public sector decision-making at lowest possible level. In addition, the proponents of direct and active participation argued that most national government and local government failures are associated with lack of active and direct citizen participation in decisions at grassroots. As Altmann, et al. (2000) argued the main rationale for decentralization is associated with the principle of subsidiary. This principle calls for making-public decisions at the grassroots: community to different tiers Kebel, District, Zonal, Regional State or National Government. This study tries to critically assess whether the principle of subsidiary has been practiced in the implementation DLDP in Guraghe Zone and its Districts, Ethiopia. Operationally, the level of citizen's participation refers to the extent to which direct community involvement in local public policy makings and implementation in general and public services provision in particular. The community may participate in the implementation of specific projects by contributing to the design, construction and/or maintenance of services

(Kimenyi and Meagher, 2004).

## 2.2 *Decentralization Reform Impacts on Local governance*

Does decentralization affect effectiveness of public governance of the grassroots? The answer to this query is complex. Decentralization of authority and responsibility is a significant variable in local governance. Institutionalizing local development centers of properly structured local government units is likely to ensure effective local governance. Panday (1998) argued that, in Nepal, problems of governance intensely hinders development than lack of public resources. Governance failures of most developing countries have hindered the development policy implementation as intended.

The pursuit of active ordinary citizens and community participation in public decision-making has insisted on central government bodies to reassign power, authority, role and public resources management to local government units. Decentralization, as part of the government reforms, has caught the reformers' imagination. The advancement of innovative information technology and globalization altered insights of government and assignments of government functions, power, and resources to different level of government units, private sectors, civil society associations and non-government organizations. Consequently, the need for interaction between government units, the private sector and civil society has been emphasized (Callahan, 2007).

The aforementioned dynamics of government reforms have witnessed a government insight shift from government to governance and it has contributed to the politics of local governance flux in the world (Osborn, 2010). The new approaches has looked for the involvement in government, private actors, civil society organization and others in local governance. Local governance influences the ability to make collective public decision-making and implementation to improve public services at the community levels. Decentralization reform shifts the use of public decision-making power and resources from central government to subnational governments (Sekhar, 2005; Pollitt, 2005; Ahmad, et al., 2006; Manor, 2011). The issue of a match between the transferred power and resources, and assigned function is specifically significant when investigating effectiveness of local public governance and public service provision. However, given the problems of collective actions (principal-agent problems) in the uses of public resources (IGR, 2008), Government bodies at different levels need to be flexible enough to transform with decentralized public governance regimes. Otherwise, decentralization reform impacts on effectiveness of decentralized public governance have been concerned at the grassroots.

Since 1980s, the linkage between governance, decentralization reform and its impacts on effectiveness of decentralized public governance have been the question on public policy, public management, economics, politics, governance, and other related fields as well. However, there is a prolonged question on 'whether decentralized governance can be an effective means of achieving the critical objectives of local development: improved and more equitable public access to services and employment, increased popular participation, empowerment and enhanced government responsiveness' (UNDP, 2000)

Recently, issues of decentralization policy effectiveness have been recognized as one of the applicable and debatable policy issues in World development (Faquet, 2004; Pollitt, 2005, Ahmad, et al., 2006:240; Manor, 2011). Despite devolving power, responsibility, accountability and resources from central to local governments, their weak executive and fiscal capacity to assume effective decentralized governance that meet the growing needs at the grass root level is the current topic issue, which calls for further research (Ekpo, 2008).

Decentralization reforms mainly motivated by the failure of centralists' vision to carry on the "command and control" process (Sekhar, 2005). The centralized planning system of the centralized governments' development plan strategies, policy actions and decisions are criticized for not being responsive to the needs of the citizens. Decentralization reforms have emerged as a solution to the problems related to centralization in many countries (Manor, 2011). However, motivations of the reforms have been different to the contexts. In general, they were to transform the political and economic situations; reinforce the transition to democracy; a response to ethnic or regional conflict; improved the delivery of basic services and enhance political (regional) autonomy, and strengthen local governance institutions (Ribot, 2002; Shah and Thompson, 2004 cited in Ahmad, et al., 2006; Chema and Rondilli, 2007). Despite the difference in the economic, administrative and political motives of decentralization efforts, decentralization has carried on insightful outcome on effectiveness of decentralized local governance and improvements in public services provision for the grass roots level (Azfar, Kahkonen and Meagher, 2001; Tsegaye, 2006).

The expected changes of decentralization were multidimensional: increasing government efficiency and effectiveness, enhancing responsiveness, transparency and accountability, more community participation as well as building local capacity. However, its effectiveness was questioned by the prevailing political, economic, social and institutional incentives of a country on local public decision-making (Chema and Rondilli, 2007).

Theoretically, in a decentralized system of government, local governments have to be responsive, efficient, effective, participatory and accountable (Manor, 2011). On the other hand, citizens are expected to demand accountability, transparency and responsiveness from both public policy makers and implementers at all

features of government (Pollitt, 2005; Kimenyi and Meagher, 2004; Manor, 2011). This discussion on decentralized government revealed that effective decentralized local public governance is more likely realized with government supply of citizens and citizens demand from government bodies.

Proponents of decentralization ascertained that decentralization has the potential to adjust intergovernmental relations, allow community participation in public issues, improve responsiveness, transparency (enhanced communication between citizens and government), and enhance local capacity for services provision and local governance (World Bank, 2010:1; Shah and Shah, 2006). Decentralization strengthens the local and regional capacity; as a result, it increases the efficiency and effectiveness of governments and contributes to effective decentralized governance as well as better public service provision (Selee, 2004; p.3). In contrast, the opponents of decentralization argued that decentralized systems arise from “coordination problems” as well as potential mismatches between finance and functions of sub-national governments (Zoescott, 2009; Dollery and Robotti, 2008). In addition, “decentralization was viewed as likely to increase political and ethnic division” (Schneider, 2002, p.4, Tsegaye, 2006).

Furthermore, empirical studies on decentralization and its impact on local governance of developing countries remarks that decentralization plans did not achieve their target due to nonresponsive and unaccountable local governments, where clientalism, corruption and elite capture have broadly recognized as main barriers to achieving development as well as improvements in public service provision targets (World Bank, 2010). Lack of accountability in public sectors results of corruption and waste of precious development resources. As a result, the quality and effectiveness of decentralized public governance to improve basic public services provision to meet basic needs affected negatively (World Bank, 2010, Manor, 2011). Moreover, it denies citizens of their inherent right to influence decisions that directly affect their lives and to hold state officials accountable for the public resources with which they have entrusted (World Bank, 2010).

Despite the government and decentralization reforms practice most developing countries including Ethiopia, as World Bank (2003), reported majority of “the rural people did not and do not have access to clean water, electricity, and other services crucial for their health and livelihood”. Local development failures have been associated with ‘poor governance: the lack of transparency and access to public information; weak accountability relationships; low level of citizen participation and lack of responsiveness’ (ibid).

On the other hand, some literatures on decentralization showed that the outcomes on change in efficiency, equity and effectiveness in local governance are both positive and negative (Meheret, 2007, Manor, 2011). In some African countries, decentralization has enhanced community participation at which local people decide on their public interest based on their preferences and priorities (Kimenyi and Meagher, 2004; Shah and Shah, 2006). Decentralization reform might strengthen the interaction between ordinary citizens and local government authorities; this interaction provides citizens of better opportunity to forward their preferences and priorities (Manor, 2011). Thus, the local government bodies would become accountable to their actions. That is, decentralization may strengthen accountability mechanisms between politicians and public managers in multi-level tier government structure (Oates, 2005; Dollery and Robotti, 2008, Manor, 2011). As a result, local authorities are likely to become more responsive to the local citizens demand (Faquet, 2004; Chema and Rondilli, 2007).

Empowered local citizens and government play an important role in undertaking that local government act and perform goals for the public welfare directly (World Bank, 2010; Chema and Rondilli, 2007; Shah and Shah, 2006). Decentralization reforms of self-governing institutions create opportunity for the citizens to directly participate in local governance of either formal institutions or informal discussion (UN, 2007, p.2). Finally, they expected to promote civil society and local communities in formulating and communicating their preferences and priorities on issues of subject to them (ibid). For example, an empirical study on decentralization impacts on participation in Uganda reveals that participatory social policymaking and implementation involves local community (UN, 2007). This participation helps to protect the right to education. In Romania, governance reforms facilitated the communication with health between the local population and public authorities. Strengthening the interaction between citizens and local public authorities through government reforms empowered the members of the local community to improve their right to health (ibid). In the aforementioned cases, success on the right to education and health services have been achieved through the provision of culturally accessible information about education and health issues (ibid). This shows that community participation in social issues could enhance responsiveness of the government institutions for local preferences and priorities. Decentralization might empower various stakeholders to develop all the details of a plan for local development and public service provision as well as their implementation (Manor, 2011). This participatory mechanism persuades local actors to use opportunities and resources to keep up public interest (Shah and Shah, 2006). However, in some cases empowering local governments to make public decision makings on behalf of the ordinary people weaken the mechanism for the separation of power as well as the ways for checks and balances, for the reason that decision makers and politicians may interfere in the executive decision making (Shah and Shah, 2006). The formal and informal local governance institutions and their

interactions can also influence improvements in governance and public service provision (Kimenyi and Meagher, 2004; World Bank, 2010:1). Whether, or why and how the decentralization practically meets the intentions or not is open for further research and analysis.

### **2.3 Decentralization Impacts on Governance in Ethiopia**

Before 1991- public policy making and implementation both at the national and local levels of governments had customarily determined by central government in Ethiopia without giving a significant attention for the needs of the public at large and the poor in particular (Tsegaye, 2006). This central decision-making power was characterized as non-participatory and democratic institutions, non-responsiveness and lack of accountability in governance in general and local public service provision in particular (Tsegaye, 2006, Meheret, 2007). Thus, centralized system of government has claimed as one of the reasons for public sector governance inefficiency and ineffectiveness in local governance and citizens' living under poverty. The reasons for this were that, given insufficient autonomy, local authority needs to seek approvals from the higher authorities, and can act less rapidly and responsively than decentralized agencies (Meheret, 2007). Moreover, citizens relied on top down measures to improve governance so they were not able to demand good governance of participating in decision-making and resource allocation. In addition, they were unable to monitor government performance, and could not ensure accountability in the use of available public resources (Tsegaye, 2006; Zemelak, 2011).

In the past regimes, Ethiopian local authorities were directly or indirectly supposed to act in command and control system of central government (Zemelak, 2011). They were acting as symbolic and did not have self-governing rights. The central unitary Government made all local public decisions affecting local public governance and services provision for development. Its agents delegated power to execute the decisions on a hierarchical management with broad central government over the local public decisions (Meheret, 2007).

The 1991 Government change in Ethiopia has shifted centralized unitary government structure of decentralized federal government structure. Responding to the political, fiscal and administrative problems over the past regimes as well as the current governance pushback, the government and Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), current ruling party of the country, has publicized decentralization reforms in two phases.

#### **2.3.1 First Phase of Decentralization in Ethiopia**

In the first phase, the government has introduced federalism and decentralization in Ethiopia. The government's rationale for decentralization has been the accommodation of ethnic pluralism and empowerment of Nations, Nationalities and peoples in the country (Assefa, 2007). At this phase of the reforms, the central government had mainly involved in the creation of ethnic based federal state structure (Meheret, 2007; Dickovick and Tegegne, 2010). Thus, the federal system of government devolves power for ethnic groups of the regional state level. The ethnic based regional states were responsible for the country's political, economic, and social objectives (Tsegaye, 2006).

Despite some success of the first phase of ethnic decentralization for public participation, the decentralized governance of Ethiopia's regions has been challenged about the low level of power transferred, limited local managerial and technical capacity, and the political, administrative and fiscal subordination of local governments to higher levels of governments (Meheret, 2007). The first phase targets for effective decentralized governance and improve public services provision missed (ibid).

#### **2.3.2 Second Phase of Decentralization in Ethiopia**

In order to address the aforementioned problems, as the second phase of decentralization, District Level Decentralization Program (DLDP) in Ethiopia was publicized to "shift decision-making closer to the people at Zonal, District and Kebel levels" (Dickovick and Tegegne, 2010). Sequences of "legal, fiscal and administrative measures were rapidly introduced in 2002 in Amhara, Oromia, SNNP, and Tigray regions to empower the Districts and Municipalities" (PSCAP Report, 2008). The government were intended to enhance accountability, transparency, responsiveness, and public participation at the grass roots level for local economic development in general and PSP in particular (PSCAP Report, 2008; Meheret, 2007, Tegegne, 2007).

Ethiopian DLDP has intended to "empower Districts and their Kebeles, make local governments responsive for and accountable to citizens, strengthen public participation in the grass roots level, and to improve local governance (Lissane and Mohammed, 2005 and CIDA, 2005 as cited in Meheret, 2007). In order to achieve these objectives, the local governments' managerial and technical capacities were enhanced by transferring staffs from higher levels. The newly established government employees have made accountable to local executives. Moreover, "financial transfers were undertaken to Districts using a formula-driven, equity block grant" (Meheret, 2007). The logic of the central government is clear. It is that Government's power and resources should be transferred to the local government units' closer to citizens that expected to be accountable and responsive to them. Similarly, it is possible to argue that to make effective public decision and implementation; local government units should use better information about local issues (problems) than their counter central units should. Consequently, the local government units that use better information could provide improved public services to their constituents.

Particularly, DLDP aims to promote public trust mainly through empowering local government units. It expects to ensure the public more participatory, accountable, transparent, responsive decentralized local governance institutions, and improved public services provision (Meheret 2007, Assefa 2007). While devolving power, resources and responsibilities is hoped to support the government to adjust poor governance: the lack of transparency and access to public information; weak accountability relationships; low level of citizen participation and lack of responsiveness (World Bank 2013). Based on this reason, the central government transferred an increasing financial resource to local governments in implementing DLDP since 2001/02. The central question being asked is whether centralized control and command system of government is completed. While some scholars, quoting the local government problem that decentralization has experienced, asserted that it is indeed rhetoric than practiced (Merara, 2007). Other scholars proclaimed that it has mixed in terms of results (Meheret, 2007). It has been contested; new types of governance mechanisms have been complemented to the continual reformation; there have been some setbacks, especially when it approaches to the local empowerment and effectiveness of local public governance (Tsegaye, 2006). However, in general the plans did not achieve their target (Meheret, 2006). Decentralization impacts on development in Ethiopia pointed out both positive and negative results (Tsegaye, 2006). As Zemelak (2011) argued, effectiveness of decentralization reform has been contested with different horizontal and vertical political, administrative, and fiscal imbalances due different institutional capacities between tiers of governments. It has clearly drawn new attention to the role of the national and sub national Governments as well as the intergovernmental relations, local governance – between the private, public and voluntary sectors. Government institutions in National, Regional State, Zonal, District and Kebele levels face significant decentralization policy challenges with the implementation of the reform to effective decentralized public governance at grassroots.

These challenges influence the effectiveness of decentralization processes of effective decentralized local public governance. The performance of Central and Regional State Governments may affect the initiatives to address the problems faced by decentralized local public governance. The performance of Central and Regional State Governments may affect the initiatives to address the problems faced by decentralized local public governance. It is also possible that decentralization policy implementation at the grass-root levels is such that it does not adheres to information symmetry from central and regional State Government actors. Whatever the case may be, it is primarily clear that the decentralized local governance of the country is not performing effectively well (Meheret, 2007, Zemelak, 2011). However, its practice calls for empirical information at the ground.

Moreover, despite the recognized importance of DLDP for effective decentralized governance to improve public services provision, empirical studies on DLDP impacts on local public governance features of government accountability, transparency and responsiveness, and community participation and empowerment, and local capacity in public decision -making and implementation in Guraghe Zone and its Districts is almost lacking (Tegegne and Kassahun, 2007, p.55). More specifically, as of my personal knowledge and experience there is no empirical study conducted to explore and discuss decentralization impacts on decentralized public governance in Guraghe Zone and its Districts, Ethiopia since 2001/02. In other words, researches on decentralization impacts on local public governance of Guraghe Zone and its Districts from local bodies view are relatively under-assessed, new directions for what is done are needed, and decentralized governance effectiveness have again received considerable attention in the study area

The target population of this study includes council members, public officials, civil servants, CSOs and community leaders. They can share the obstacles in practice and the potential success factors of decentralization. Therefore, this study is expected to contribute to the aforementioned gaps based on both primary and secondary data. Therefore, the focus on this study is not at evaluating public governance issues of central and regional governments of Ethiopia, instead it aims to assess decentralization impacts on local public governance in Guraghe Zone and its Districts, Ethiopia. For decentralized governance to succeed, the dangers of recentralization and monopoly of power by local elites must be mitigated (Kimenyi and Meagher, 2004). This problem can be reduced or aggravated with the existence or non-existence of well-established local democratic good governance. District level decentralization in Ethiopia aims to promote decentralized good governance of the grassroots. In the absence of empowered community at grassroots, local elite capture distorts the government system not only by providing rents to specific economic actors, but also by greatly altering markets and reducing the welfare of service users (World Bank, 2003). This poses local government failures. Some scholars argued that local government failures disconnect government with citizens. As Treisman (2007) argued, decentralization reform has increased direct and active citizen participation. As a result, it promotes public benefit at grassroots. Some local governments are being more accountable and responsive to constituents after implementation of decentralization reform (UN, 2007). Consequently, local public governance is intended to solve the government failures of bureaucratic, hierarchical, unresponsive and misuse of scarce resources and other centralized government disconnections with the public.

There is a large body of theoretical and empirical literature in democratic decentralization theory

supporting the argument that decentralization is necessary to achieve decentralized good governance, political stability, as well as sustainable development (Manor, 2011, World Bank, 2010). On the other hand, Olewu and Wusch (2004) argue that a local self-motivated elites that are committed to private development than public interest could produce an even worse decentralized governance than central governments. In addition, as Ahmad et al. (2005) argued, decentralization has facilitated participatory local governance plans with mixed results. Treisman (2007) also claims that decentralization reform impact on participation is undetermined. It may either intense resource use for development or it may aggravate corruption. In other words, Treisman questioned whether decentralization privileged local ordinary citizens or increases misuses of resources and power devolved to empower them (Treisman, 2007). Effectiveness of decentralization, however, relies on how it is implemented, and how local governance actors are interacted within their context and without side actors (Manor, 2007; Mullins, 2004).

#### **2.4 Decentralization and Local Government Accountability**

Accountability refers to the mechanism in which public policy makers, government officials and public service providers in a country are held to be responsible for their performance (World Bank, 2010). Accountability is an institutional mechanism that proposed to improve local governance to development (Ibid). Some scholars underline the significance of community empowerment and their capacity to strengthen governments' accountability and responsiveness.

Accountability is institutional mechanisms seek for better government regular operations, local public services to arrange charge for failures, government bodies to renovate government trust, to improve efficiency and ensure answerability(). It involves not only preventing misuse of resources, but also ensuring effective decentralized governance, responsiveness, participation, consultation and among other good governance on the part of local governance actors, who are expected to produce and provide improved public services.

In a real decentralized system where both upward accountability and downward accountability of governments exist, government policy is expected to respond the citizens' priorities and preferences at all levels (World Bank, 2010). Government functionaries remain reasonably clean from corruption and narrow interest groups do not capture the government services. Citizens shall be treated equally in every public affair. Government bodies implement the institutional arrangements for accountability, responsiveness and transparency impartially.

For effective local governance to endure; there needs to be mechanisms and structures in place that ensures accountability. These mechanisms include a system of checks and balances within the government branches. Moreover, there should be a rule of law that is equally applicable to everyone in the society, including those in power. The citizens are also needed to be aware of it.

Along with an upward accountable decentralized local government is the need for a downward accountable to the constituents. Without downward accountability to voter that necessitates as a device for consulting the public, otherwise when some elected governments panic for society, there is no mechanism to keep government functionaries honest and accountable between elections (Altmann, 2000). This downward accountability considerably prevails; it may hold down government bodies through strengthening even the upward accountability within the political system of the government. This accountability mechanism calls for enforcement of constitutional provisions at each tier of the existing government bodies (World Bank, 2010). The aforementioned institutional arrangements for accountability allow both elected representatives and citizens to follow the actions of government on a continuous basis and allow citizens to be consulted on policies and projects affecting them (Manor, 2011). If accountability mechanisms are enforced as designed well, then policy responsiveness increases. Furthermore, citizens' voices can be listened on unending action of government before, during and after elections. In other words, the government bodies shall assure policy responsiveness to the constituents. Such mechanisms are apparently assumed to be strengthening through decentralization (World Bank, 2003; Altmann, 2000). This is because decentralization brings government and citizen closer to each other. It is required to enhance effectiveness of local governance for improved public service provision. However, measuring the effect of such impacts of decentralization is complex.

#### **2.5 Decentralization, Transparency and Responsiveness**

Transparency refers to whether citizens can have access to basic information about decisions pending or already made by their elected representatives, including local government council resolutions, planning documents, budgets and investment decisions (Selee, 2006).

Decentralization is widely recognized to improve transparency in public sectors (Manor, 2011). The ordinary people can easily access decentralized public decision about local councils than centralized public decision-making. Transparency facilitates government accountability. Thus, strengthened transparency at the grass root levels often "reduces the overall amount of corruption" (ibid). Theoretically, decentralization establishes enabling environment for the ordinary people to say their preferences and priorities for their locally

elected officials (World Bank, 2010). Through this, the local authorities have better opportunity than central government bodies to know about local needs, preferences and priorities for better public services provision (Conyers, 2007). Consequently, the local government has to become responsive for local demands than the center. “Transparency in formulation and implementation of public policies empowers the public to access social services and demand protection of their rights’ (UN, 2007). Study in Ecuador on transparency in budgeting process shows that providing accessible information for citizens at the grass root level improved public spending on education, health, welfare employment and housing (ibid). Similarly, facilitating accessibility of government performance documents based on the demand strengthening accountability on public official. In transparent and accountable decentralized governance systems, local governments consult citizens in the policies, programs, projects affecting their development fairly, and equally (Seele, 2006). This enhances citizens’ capacity to participate in every aspects of country’s development intervention. It gives incentive to make measurable decision on public affairs.

Empirical studies on decentralization impacts on local governance emphasizes on local government accountability or lack of it. With the emerging rent seeking behaviors of government bodies’ accountability or lack of accountability on the local elected and appointed officials, civil servants, elected representatives, and among other local governance actors capture focus of government reform advocators. Decentralization intended to hold back the misuses of public resources and power (UN, 2007). This needs grievance and redress mechanisms for any official duty failures in the public realm.

### **3 Research Methodology**

This article is based on data collected in a social survey study undertaken in Guraghe Zone and its Districts, Ethiopia in 2013/14. Guraghe Zone is selected purposively. Eight Guraghe Zone Districts were randomly sampled. The purpose of the study was to examine decentralization impacts on local governance variables such as accountability, responsiveness and transparency. Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected from primary and secondary sources through field surveys, Key informant interviews, focus group discussions, and content analysis of relevant documents including the Constitution of the 1995 Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopian (FDRE), 2001 revised South Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples Regional State (SNNPRS) Constitution. The data was presented anonymously, in line with the ethical agreement between the researcher and survey participants. The data was integrated with the purpose of analysis and interpretation.

### **4 Analytical Framework of the Study**

To answer and explain the research question’ how does decentralization reform impact the local governance bodies accountability, responsiveness, and transparency to the public and citizen’s participation in Guraghe Zone and its Districts?

At this point, the institutional capacity for local governance is assumed as a key because one of the central goals of decentralization reform programs in Ethiopia is to ensure local good governance of addressing local public governance problems and improving service delivery. This requires the government officials, civil servants, elected representatives, and among other local governance actors’ involvement to have discretion in implementing local development programs and plan to achieve the overall goals, as determined by the national standards. Local governance, then, is about empowered decision-making within the hierarchical setting of subnational governments. The formal mechanisms for strengthening local good governance need proper institutional arrangements for local public governance actors’ accountability, responsiveness and transparency.

Firstly, the study examines decentralization impacts on local governance actors’ accountability from local governance actors’ view. At this point, the upward and downward accountability mechanisms hold on the focus of the study. The downward accountability to the constituents is significant because the rationale for district level decentralization in Ethiopia is to empower local government units and citizens to decide on the transformation of local public realm particularly in local development. Decentralization also enhances democratic accountability because voters have better information about local than about central government performance, because dividing responsibilities up among multiple levels makes it easier for voters to attribute credit or blame among them, and because voters in small groups can coordinate better on a voting strategy (Tocqueville 1969 cited Treisman, 2007).

Secondly, decentralization reform in Ethiopia aims to bring government closer to constituents to respond to their preferences and priorities at ground. Consequentially, the sub national Government units are expected to carry out activities that ensure ordinary citizens preferences and priorities in the context. In the decentralized system, local government bodies are expected to be more responsive so that they are also assumed as sole facilitator of local governance. Thus, examining how decentralization reforms impacts on local public governance responsiveness is significant. There are different factors that contribute to decentralized governance responsiveness. Consequently, different scholars and policy practitioners utilize different indicators for measuring impact of decentralization reforms on governance responsiveness. However, this study employs actors’ perceptions and opinions to explore how decentralization affects decentralized governance

responsiveness in Guraghe Zone and its Districts as significant.

## 5 Results and Discussion

In this section, decentralization impacts on local governance in Guraghe Zone and its Districts were assessed and critically discussed. The findings of the study were mainly on decentralization impacts on local government bodies' accountability, responsiveness and transparency to the constituents from the local governance actors' view.

To answer the research question 'how does decentralization reform impact the accountability, responsiveness, and transparency of local government bodies in Guraghe Zone and its Districts?' 262 survey participants were randomly sampled and responded for the survey questions. The participants were 48 government officials (18.3%), 185 professional experts (70.6%), and 29 elected representatives (11.1%). The purpose of this research question is to examine how decentralization affects local governance bodies' accountability, responsiveness and transparency at the grass roots. It assumes that the respondents' perception supports for understanding and analyzing decentralization reform impacts on local public governance.

### 5.1 Decentralization Impacts on Local Government Bodies Accountability

Accountability was assessed in terms of whether local level elected representatives, officials, civil servants, community base organization leaders, civil society organization leaders and NGO leaders are meant to be more accountable to their constituents, existence of voice and exit mechanisms (citizens can use to call their representatives to account for performance) after the implementation of decentralization in Ethiopia. In order to evaluate the perception of respondents on governance actors' accountability, they were asked in the survey instrument to rate with the extent of local governance actors' accountability to the public. The respondents gave their opinion based on a five-Likert scale ordinal alternative: strongly agree, agree undecided, disagree, and strongly disagree. The findings are presented and discussed in the following sections.

#### 5.1.1 Decentralization impacts on Local Government Officials Accountability

As can be seen from Table 1, the elected officials, experts and council members' perception and opinion on the rating of decentralization impact on local government officials' accountability for duty failures varies. However, a significant number of them (54.2%) reported that decentralization had ensured accountability of local officials for duty failures, while about 36.6% of the respondents opposed the assertion that decentralization has ensured accountability on local government officials for duty failures. When the results are disaggregated, the responses to 35.4%, 36.1% and 36.3% of government officials, experts and council members, respectively reported that decentralization has not ensured officials accountability with insignificance difference in perception between the roles of respondents(see table1 below).

Table 1: Respondents perception decentralization impacts on Local government Officials Accountability

Do you agree or disagree that decentralization has ensured accountability of LG officials'?			Responses					
Respondent's role			SA	A	U	D	SD	Total
		Count						
elected official	Count		2	22	7	10	7	48
	% within		6.9	19.5	29.2	16.9	18.9	18.3
	% of Total		0.8	8.4	2.7	3.8	2.7	18.3
	Count		22	80	16	41	26	185
	% within		75.9	70.8	66.7	69.5	70.3	70.6
	% of Total		8.4	30.5	6.1	15.6	9.9	70.6
council member	Count		5	11	1	8	4	29
	% within		17.2	9.7	4.2	13.6	10.8	11.1
	% of Total		1.9	4.2	0.4	3.1	1.5	11.1
	Count		29	113	24	59	37	262
Total	% of Total		11.1	43.1	9.2	22.5	14.1	100

Note: SD= Strongly Disagree, D= Disagree, U= Undecided, A= Agree, SA= Strongly Agree

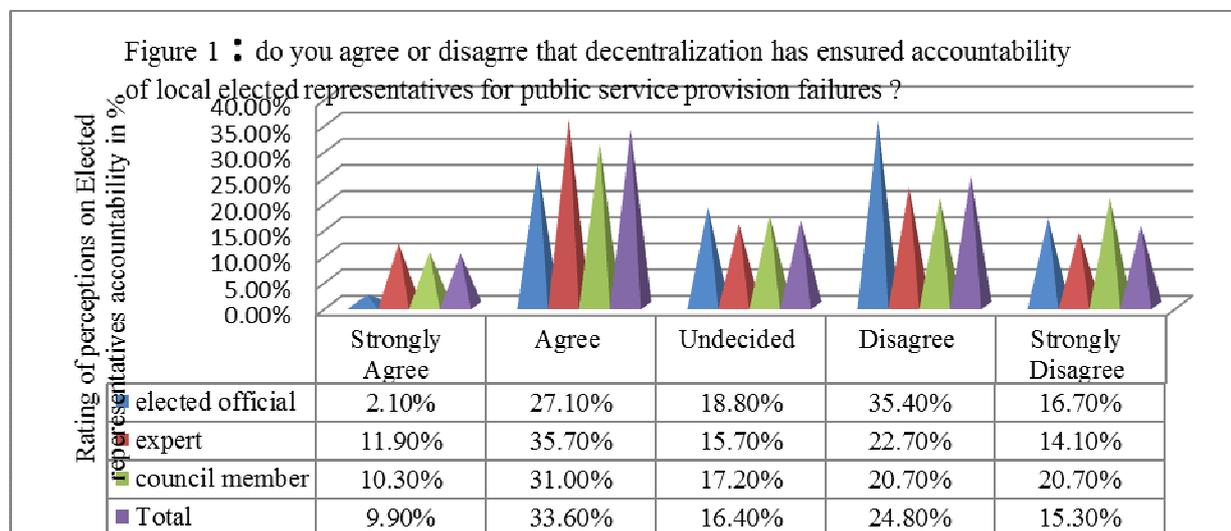
Source: Researcher's field survey 2013/14

#### 5.1.2 Decentralization Impacts on Local Elected Representatives Accountability

As can be taken in from figure below, majority of respondents (43.5%) in the survey sample strongly agree or agree that decentralization has ensured elected representatives accountability while about the same number of respondents (40.1%) disagreed or strongly disagreed that it has ensured elected representatives' accountability. In this regard, the data shows that there are democratic accountability problems of Guraghe Zone and its Districts.

Figure below illustrates us that the perceptions of respondents for the decentralization reform impacts

on local elected representatives' accountability show a disagreement. 9.9% and 33.6% of the total survey participants' confirmed the decentralization has ensured council members accountability by rating it as strongly agreed and agreed, respectively. While a significant number of participants rejected the assertion by rating the perception as disagreed (24.8%) or strongly disagreed (15.3%). The remaining 16.8% was undecided to rate on the statement (see figure below).



Source: Researcher's field survey, 2013/14

### 5.1.3 Decentralization Impacts on Local Public Service Providers' Accountability

Local elected representative accountability has ensured through decentralization. Over 53% of respondents believed that decentralization had ensured the local service providers' accountability. As table 2 below shows, 31.3% of respondents in the survey reported that they either disagree (17.6%) or strongly disagree (13.7%) with the topic. While a small percentage of respondents, (15.3%) prefer to be neutral for decentralization impacts on local public service providers' accountability. Even though there is variation in the perceptions of respondent's, more experts, elected officials and elected representatives have argued that decentralization had ensured service providers accountability(see table 2).

**Table 2: Perceptions on Impacts of Decentralization on local service providers' accountability**

Respondent's role		Count	Responses					Total
			SA	A	U	D	SD	
elected official	Count	4	21	8	8	7	48	
	% within	10.3	20.8	20.0	17.4	19.4	18.3	
	% of Total	1.5	8.0	3.1	3.1	2.7	18.3	
expert	Count	32	71	24	33	25	185	
	% within	82.1	70.3	60	71.7	69.4	70.6	
	% of Total	12.2	27.1	9.2	12.6	9.5	70.6	
council member	Count	3	9	8	5	4	29	
	% within	7.7	8.9	20.0	10.9	11.1	11.1	
	% of Total	1.1	3.4	3.1	1.9	1.5	11.1	
Total	Count	39	101	40	46	36	262	
	% of Total	14.9	38.5	15.3	17.6	13.7	100	

Note: SD= Strongly Disagree, D= Disagree, U= Undecided, A= Agree, SA= Strongly Agree

Source: Researcher's field survey 2013/14

### 5.2 Assessment of Local government Responsiveness

One of the decentralized public governance issues is whether local governments are responsive or not. The implication of non-responsive local governments is that they are less likely to provide the right public services than upper-level governments (Andrews and Shah, 2005). The assumption is that they are more responsive than their counter central government for local citizens' preferences and priorities.

### 5.2.1 Decentralization Impacts on Local Government Responsiveness

Government responsiveness is one of good governance features that needs subnational governments and their processes are designed the best interest in citizens of a reasonable timeframe. The survey participants of this study were asked questions related to the possible implication of decentralization reform on subnational governments responsiveness indicators. The questions aim to grasp the decentralized governance actors' perception and opinion regarding the impact of decentralization reform on local governance actors' responsiveness at the ground. The purpose of asking questions on this topic is to explain how decentralization impacts on local public governance responsiveness.

### 5.2.2 Local Government Procedures Responsiveness to Local Priorities and Preferences

As we can see from the table3 below, the participants' perception of government institution foundation for local priorities and preferences is in general negative. Relatively lower numbers of sample respondents (35.5%) of these (29.2%) government officials, (37.8%) experts and (31%) elected representatives think that local government institutions are responsive for local preferences and priorities. On the other hand, more than (45%) of officials, (38%) of experts, and (27%) of elected council members of the sample respondents perceive that local government institutions are not responsive to local preferences and priorities. The data shows that local government institutions are not able to adjusting citizens' priorities and preferences to realize the decentralization reform goals in Guraghe Zone and its Districts. However, the survey respondents' perceptions vary from government officials, experts and elected representatives (see table 3 below).

Table 3: *perception on Local government institution responsiveness for local priorities and preferences*

Survey question	Responses		Respondent's role			Total
			official	expert	Council member	
Are Local government institutions responsive for local preferences and priorities?	Yes	Count	14	70	9	93
		% within	29.2	37.8	31	35.5
	No	Count	22	71	8	101
		% within	45.8	38.4	27.6	38.5
	Yes, Partially	Count	12	44	12	68
		% within	25	23.8	41.4	26
	Total	Count	48	185	29	262
		% of total	18.3	70.6	11.1	100

Source: Researcher's field survey, 2013/14

### 5.2.3 Local community participation and consultation for government responsiveness

Local government in Ethiopia such as zonal, woreda and kebel administrations are institutionalized for improved community participation or consultation. However, the opponents of the decentralization reforms in Ethiopia since 1991 have argued that one of the failures of the reform is improper local community participation or consultation during formulation as well as its implementations (Merara, 2007). However, the findings of this survey show more mixed descriptions of community participation and consultation. During field data collection for this study, over (46%) of sampled respondents confirmed that they have observed local community participation and consultation about decisions on the level and types of services provision while about (34%) rejects the claim. The remaining (19.1%) respondents did not know whether local communities have been participated in or consulted about the decisions (see table 4 below). Though district level decentralization has apparently intended at local community participation or consultation, the results of this study indicate a long way to go this objective become a reality of Guraghe Zone and its Districts. The data also confirms that there is a great variation in the perceptions from government officials, professional experts and elected representatives on the topic (see table 4 below for details).

Table 4: *perceptions on Local communities participated in or consulted about decisions on level and type of services*

Survey Question	Role of respondents'		Responses			Total
			Yes	No	IDK	
Have Local communities participated in or consulted about decisions on what level and type of service is to be provided?	elected	Count	23	18	7	48
		%within	19	19.8	14	18.3
	official	% of Total	8.8	6.9	2.7	18.3
		Count	86	63	36	185
	expert	%within	71.1	69.2	72.0	70.6
		% of Total	32.8	24.0	13.7	70.6
	council member	Count	12	10	7	29
		%within	9.9	11.0	14.0	11.1
	Total	% of Total	4.6	3.8	2.7	11.1
		Count	121	91	50	262
	% of Total	46.2	34.7	19.1	100	

Note: IDK= I do not know

Source: Researcher's field survey, 2013/14

#### 5.2.4 Perception on Availability of Information for Community

Advocates of decentralization in general and district level decentralization in Ethiopia in particular asserted that the provision public services information for the community is an outreach program of the reform. As depicted in the table 5 below, more than (40%) of the total survey respondents reveal that local communities have been informed about what levels and types of services provided during the study period or before while the same number of respondents refuse to accept the statement. On the other hand, about (19%) of the respondents reported that they did not know about it.

Table 5: *Perceptions on information availability to local communities on level and type of services provision*

Survey Question	Respondents' role		Responses				Total
			NR	Yes	No	IDK	
Do you think that local communities have informed as to what level and type of services are to be provided?	elected	Count(	1	17	22	8	48
		% within	50	16.0	20.8	16.7	18.3
	official	% of Total	0.4	6.5	8.4	3.1	18.3
		Count	1	75	73	36	185
	expert	% within	50	70.8	68.9	75.	70.6
		% of Total	0.4	28.6	27.9	13.7	70.6
	council member	Count	0	14	11	4	29
		% within	0.0	13.2	10.4	8.3	11.1
	Total	% of Total	0.0	5.3	4.2	1.5	11.1
		Count	2	106	106	48	262
	% of Total	0.8	40.5	40.5	18.3	100	

Note: NR= No Response, IDK= I do not know

Source: Researcher's field survey, 2013/14

#### 5.2.5 Perception on Receiving a Standardized Level of Services

The impact on local community demand for standardized level of services on local governments' responsiveness is pertinent. The increase in the local community expectation is likely a good mechanism to measure decentralization reform implementation on local government responsiveness. As indicated in the table below, observations of respondents' about community expectation for receiving a standardized level of services vary from sampled officials, professional experts and elected representatives. The greater parts of respondents (about 58%) are either said no (41.6%) that local communities reasonably expected to receive a standardized level of service or they did not know about it(16.4%). On the other hand, the minorities of the respondents (41.6%) have observed that the local communities of Guraghe Zone districts reasonably expected to receive a standardized level of services (see table 6 below).

#### 5.2.6 Perception on Setting Service Quality Targets and Reporting Against Them

Respondents were asked whether that local agencies' are setting service quality targets and to report their performance against them. 48.1% responded negatively, 36.6% responded positively and the remaining 14.5% did not know about the issue (see table 6 below).

#### 5.2.7 Perception on the Existence of Complaint and Redress Mechanisms

Regarding their observations on complaint and redress rights for local communities, about 37.8% of the

respondents responded positively, over 46.9% of the respondents observed that local communities had no complaint and redress rights for the service provision, the remaining 15.3% of the respondents did not know about local communities' complaint and redress rights on services provision (see Table 6 below)

Table 6: *perceptions on local communities' expectation to receive a standardized level of service, quality targets, and rights to complain and redress mechanisms*

Local government responsiveness indicators		Responses				Total
		NR	Yes	No	IDK	
local communities reasonably expected to receive a standardized level of services	Count	1	109	109	43	262
	% of Total	0.4	41.6	41.6	16.4	100
setting service quality targets and reporting performance against them	Count	2	96	126	38	262
	% of Total	0.8	36.6	48.1	14.5	100
local communities have rights of complaint and redress to service failures	Count	0	99	123	40	262
	% of Total	0.0	37.8	46.9	15.3	100

Note: NR= No Response, IDK= I do not know

Source: Researcher's field survey, 2013/14

### 5.2.8 Elected Representatives' Willingness to Listen and Respond to Constituents

In general, democratic governments are witnessed for being more accountable than non-democratic governments. Some scholars argued that local elected governments are more accountable than their upper counterparts are. In a decentralized system of governance, citizens have a right to call their elected representatives for their locality and make them listen and respond. DLDP in Ethiopia has been implemented in order to deepen the democratization of the grassroots. Consequentially, the lower level elected representatives are better to listen and respond to voters. As presented in the table7 below, majority of the respondents (54%) revealed that District council members are willing to listen and respond to constituents either always or often. While, 43.9%, 42.4% and 38.9% of respondents reported that elected representatives of house of peoples representatives, regional state council and zonal council, respectively are willing to listen and respond to constituents (see table7 below for details). The result shows that elected representatives of national parliament are better to listen and respond to constituents than the regional and zonal elected representatives, which deviate from decentralization assumptions.

Table 7: *Perceptions on elected representatives' listen and respond to constituents*

How much of the time do you think elected representatives' listen and respond to constituents?		Responses					Total
		Always	Often	not sure	sometimes	Never	
<i>elected representatives' of national parliamentary</i>	Count	45	66	47	51	53	262
	% of Total	17.2	25.2	17.9	19.5	20.2	100
elected representatives Regional Council members	Count	49	66	51	57	39	262
	% of Total	18.7	25.2	19.5	21.8	14.9	100
elected representatives Zonal Council members	Count	44	58	54	72	34	262
	% of Total	16.8	22.1	20.6	27.5	13	100
elected representatives District council members	Count	49	92	53	44	23	261
	% of Total	18.8	35.2	20.3	16.9	8.8	100

Source: Researcher's field survey, 2013/14

### 5.3 Government Procedures Transparency

As presented in the table8 below, over 54% of the surveyed respondents have reported that local government procedures are transparent. The minority of respondents (38.3%) mentioned that local government procedures were not transparent. The remaining 6.9% of the respondents have reported that they did not know about local government procedures transparency. However, the responses from respondents vary from official, expert and elected representative respondents.

Table8: *Are local government procedures transparent? \* Respondent's Role; Cross tabulation*

Are local government procedures transparent?			Respondents				
Respondent's Role			NR	Yes	No	IDK	Total
	Elected official	Count	1	23	21	3	48
		% within	50	16.3	21	16.7	18.4
		% of Total	0.4	8.8	8	1.1	18.4
	expert	Count	1	98	70	15	184
		% within	50	69.5	70	83.3	70.5
		% of Total	0.4	37.5	26.8	5.7	70.5
	council member	Count	0	20	9	0	29
		% within	0.0	14.2	9.0	0.0	11.1
		% of Total	0.0	7.7	3.4	0.0	11.1
Total	Count	2	141	100	18	261	
	% of Total	0.8	54	38.3	6.9	100	

Note: NR= No Response, IDK= I do not know

Source: Researcher's field survey, 2013/14

### 5.3.1 DLDP Impact on Local Public administration Transparency

As can be seen from the table 9 below, almost the same number of participants responded positively (43.5%) and negatively (41.2%) while (14.1%) participants responded, as they did not know about DLDP impact on local public administration transparency. Insignificant number of survey participants (1.1%) did not answer the question. A careful observation of the data onto respondents show that local council members are more accepted that program impact on the local demonstration transparency (14.9%) while more number of experts (74.1%) responded no.

Table9: *Perception on local public administration transparency \* Respondent's Role*

Has the public administration system become transparent since DLDP implementation?			Responses				
Respondent's Role			NR	Yes	No	IDK	Total
	elected official	Count	0	21	21	6	48
		% within	0.0	18.4	19.4	16.2	18.3
		% of Total	0.0	8.0	8.0	2.3	18.3
	expert	Count	3	76	80	26	185
		% within	100	66.7	74.1	70.3	70.6
		% of Total	1.1	29.0	30.5	9.9	70.6
	council member	Count	0	17	7	5	29
		% within	0.0	14.9	6.5	13.5	11.1
		% of Total	0.0	6.5	2.7	1.9	11.1
Total	Count	3	114	108	37	262	
	% of Total	1.1	43.5	41.2	14.1	100	

Note: NR= No Response, IDK= I do not know

Source: Researcher's field survey, 2013/14

### 5.3.2 Does Decentralization has ensured local government transparency?

Nearly equal numbers of respondents responds positively (43.1%) and about 42.2% of responds negatively (see table below).

Table10: Do you think that decentralization has ensured transparency of local governments?

In your opinion, do you think that decentralization has ensured transparency of local governments?			Responses				Total
			NR	Yes	No	IDK	
Respondent's Role	elected official	Count	0	18	21	9	48
		% within	0.0	15.9	18.9	25	18.3
	expert	% of Total	0.0	6.9	8	3.4	18.3
		Count	2	79	81	23	185
	council member	% within	100	69.9	73	63.9	70.6
		% of Total	0.8	30.2	30.9	8.8	70.6
	Total	Count	0	16	9	4	29
		% within	0.0	14.2	8.1	11.1	11.1
	Total	% of Total	0.0	6.1	3.4	1.5	11.1
		Count	2	113	111	36	262
		% of Total	0.8	43.1	42.4	13.7	100

Note: NR=no response, IDK= I do not know

Source: Own field survey 2013/14

### 5.3.3 Perception on Decentralization Impacts on Local Governance Transparency

One of DLDP implementation is to make more information about local governments available to the citizens. The majority of respondents confirmed that government transparency has improved following DLDP implementation in Guraghe Zone and its Districts, but it failed to take into account the governments' long-standing problems on setting and practicing citizens' satisfaction standards for services quality and reporting their performances accordingly. Over 47% of the survey respondents revealed that. This puts setbacks on citizens on questioning of authorities.

Even though, respondents' perceptions of decentralization implication on local government transparency indicators are diverse. Majority of respondents are responded positively on major variables measuring decentralization impacts on government transparency (see table 10 below).

Table11: Perception on decentralization and its impacts on local government transparency

Through decentralization reform		Responses						
		NR	SA	A	U	D	SD	Tot
No. of development plans Published and made available regularly has increased	Count	3	33	115	39	52	20	262
	% of Tot	1.1		43.9	14.9	19.8	7.6	100
No. of annual budgets documents published and made available regularly has increased	Count	3	32	94	38	67	28	262
	% of Tot	1.1		35.9	14.5	25.6		100
investment expenditures' documents published and made available regularly	Count	3	21	72	57	72	37	262
	% of Tot	1.1	8.0	27.5	21.8	27.5	14.1	100
Council has made known its program of work	Count	2	37	112	38	50	23	262
	% of Tot	0.8		42.7	14.5	19.1	8.8	100
There are open council meetings periodically	Count	2	41	102	54	38	25	262
	% of Tot			38.9	20.6	14.5	9.5	100
public meetings have been announced ahead of time and their decisions are public record	Count	2	29	100	37	69	25	262
	% of Tot	0.8		38.2	14.1	26.3	9.5	100
There are mechanisms that give citizens access to local government documents on demand	Count	2	29	101	36	67	27	262
	% of Tot	0.8		38.5	13.7	25.6	10.3	100
elected officials make their performance available for public evaluation periodically	Count	2	25	106	45	49	35	262
	% of Tot	0.8	9.5	40.5	17.2	18.7	13.4	100
Existence of transparent financial systems and full reporting to citizens	Count	2	52	80	40	58	30	262
	% of Tot	0.8		30.5	15.3	22.1	11.5	100
Documented performance standards and systems of measurement	Count	2	28	92	40	68	32	262
	% of Tot	0.8		35.1	15.3	26	12.2	100
LG set and practiced citizen satisfaction standards	Count	2	14	70	51	89	36	262
	% of Tot	0.8	5.3	26.7	19.5	34	13.7	100

Note: SD= Strongly Disagree, D= Disagree, U= Undecided, A= Agree, SA= Strongly Agree

Source: Researcher's field survey 2013/14

### 5.3.4 Decentralization impact on local financial system Transparency

Regarding decentralization impact on local financial management transparency, data obtained from the survey as depicted in the table below show mixed results. While the negatively responded respondents (33.6%) is lower than the positively responded respondents (50.3%)(see table below). This result seems to contradict FGDs participants' view that they revealed for lack of transparency in financial reports on implementation of plans. The detail observation of the data indicated that local government officials responded more negatively than expert and council member respondents, this result seems to challenge decentralization reform impacts on government

bodies with the assumption that government elected and appointed officials are more trustworthy for positive decentralization reform outcome than other government bodies.

Table12: Perception on decentralization impact on local financial system transparency

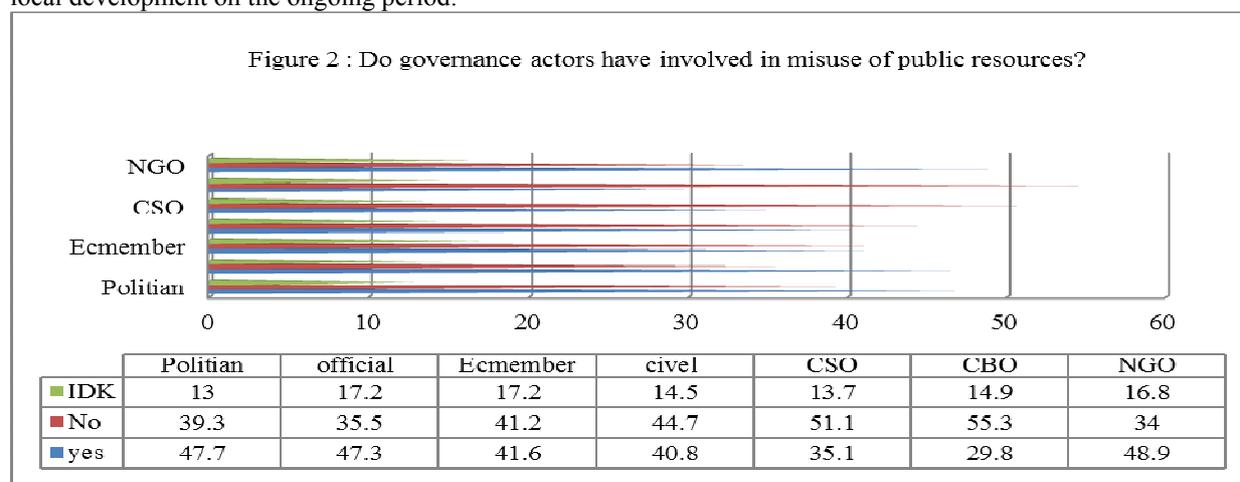
		roles of respondents				
			elected official	expert	Council member	Total
Responses	NR	Count	0	2	0	2
		% within	0	1.1	0.0	0.8
	Strongly Disagree	Count	8	42	2	52
		% within	16.7	22.7	6.9	19.8
	Agree	Count	13	56	11	80
		% within	27.1	30.3	37.9	30.5
	Undecided	Count	7	28	5	40
		% within	14.6%	15.1	17.2%	15.3
	Disagree	Count	15	35	8	58
		% within	31.2	18.9	27.6	22.1
	Strongly Disagree	Count	5	22	3	30
		% within	10.4	11.9	10.3	11.5
Total	Count	48	185	29	262	
	% of Total	18.3	70.6	11.1	100	

Source: Researcher's field survey 2013/14

#### 5.4 Misuses of Public Resources

Local governance actors can be involved in misused of transferred and local generated public resources. In this view, effectiveness and efficiency of decentralized public governance can be constrained. To identify whether local governance actors have been involved in misuse of public resources, the survey participants were asked their perception concerning actors' misuse of resources. To investigate how decentralization impact the level of accountability explain its effects on corruption, political favoritism and use of public resources, the study seeks to answer the following questions: To what extent do local governments responsive to local priorities and preferences and how?

As can be seen from the table2, respondents observed that local governance actors have engaged in misuses of local public resources. A careful observation of the data within respondents revealed that NGOs leaders(48.9%), politicians(47.7%), local elected and appointed officials(47.3%), elected representatives(41.6%), civil servants(40.8%), CSO leaders(35.1%) and CBO leaders(29.8%) had involved in the misuses of public resources in Guraghe Zone and its Districts. These elaborates that the decentralized governance actors are corrupted in the use of public resources. The makes decentralized governance more controversial issue. As can be seen from the table below, NGO leaders, politicians and government officials are the most corruptors of local public resources. What this discloses is that effectiveness of decentralized governance affected by the prevailing not-ethical behavior of local governance actors. This might reduce public trust on decentralized governance for local development on the ongoing period.



Note: IDK=I do not Know, Ecmember=elected council member, civil=civil servants, CSO=civil society leaders, CBO=community based organization leaders, NGO=non-government organization leaders

Source: Researcher's field survey, 2013/14

#### 5.4.1 Decentralization Impacts on Reducing Corruption in Public Resource Use

Participants' level of satisfaction on impacts of decentralization on reducing corruption on public resource use was examined. As the findings presented in the table 13 below showed that, the level of satisfaction of respondents on reduction of corruption was negative. Of course, most of the participants (63.5%) either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied on reduction of corruption in public resources in Guraghe Zone and its Districts, Ethiopia (see Table 13). The focus group discussion participants and key informant participants also confirmed on increases of corruption in public resources of the grassroots. They underline that the prevailing ethnic based few political patrons and kinship networks are installing and implementing government policies and projects for their own interest than the ordinary citizen. They added that local administrators are appointed and removed from their position without constituents' knowledge. Even though both FDRE Constitution and SNNPRS Constitution clearly publicized how lower level government units are accountable to the higher government tiers, both fail how upper level tiers of government units are being accountable to the lower level government units. This might affects the down ward accountability of governance actors to their constituents.

**Table13 : Respondents level of satisfaction on decentralization impacts on reducing corruption**

Respondent's role		Count	level of respondents' s satisfaction					Total
			VS	S	NSND	D	VD	
elected official	Count	6	7	8	22	5	48	
	% of Total	2.3	2.7	3.1	8.4	1.9	18.3	
expert	Count	16	22	29	88	30	185	
	% of Total	6.1	8.4	11.1	33.6	11.5	70.6	
council member	Count	2	4	1	13	9	29	
	% of Total	0.8	1.5	0.4	5.0	3.4	11.1	
Total	Count	24	33	38	123	44	262	
	% of Total	9.2	12.6	14.5	46.9	16.8	100	

*Note: VS=very satisfied, S= satisfied, NSND= neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, D=dissatisfied, VD=very dissatisfied*

*Source: Researcher's field survey 2013/1*

## 6 Conclusion

After 1991 the government of Ethiopia has been publicized Constitutions both at the Federal and Regional States of the country. These institutional developments have been composed of the provision of democratic, social, economic, cultural, and human rights of the nations, nationalities and peoples of the country. District level decentralization was designed to facilitate interaction between government and non-government actors for effective local governance and development. It aims to strengthen local governance actors' accountability to citizens and their representatives for official responsibility failures of grassroots. However, majority of participants dissatisfied with local government bodies accountability to the public. FGDs participants also reported that local governments' structures of Guraghe Zone and its Districts are biased with few political patronage and kinship networks. Accountability mechanisms are not well institutionalized in local government design and structure so that weak accountability between services provision of executives and elected representatives. Data show that local administrators' accountability to their constituents is weak. It may be that they are more accountable to the upper level chief administrators than their constituents are.

However, it is more likely that ordinary citizens do not demand accountability and responsiveness from higher-level government bodies than their counter local government bodies, since they are expected to know local situations with full information to respond to local public issues. Changing such a control and command mechanism may facilitate strengthening of local institution building. However, many scholars argued that even though the DLDP conveys significant governance outcomes in terms of changing the past regimes backlog particularly citizens' participation (Meheret, 2007; Zemelak, 2011).

Analysis of survey respondents to the decentralization impact on local governance variables of accountability, responsiveness, transparency to the public as well as citizen participate in and consulted to the projects affecting local public affairs calls for more significant government consideration than ever before.

First, according the 1995 FDRE Constitution article 43(2) " citizens have the right to participate in national development and, in particular, to be consulted with respect to policies and projects affecting their community". However, effectiveness of citizens participation of the local level is far to go. The finding show that low levels of citizen participation in and consultation to government policy, programs and projects affecting them are widely prevalent, signifying its challenges on effective local governance of Guraghe Zone and its Districts are confront with. The findings clearly indicate that the problems faced by local governance of Guraghe Zone and its Districts are very much related to the existing corruption and misuses of transferred resources by local governance actors. Although, it is not the only cause to the problem.

Most survey respondents are not very keen on centralized government systems as can be seen by large support for decentralized governance of properly structured self-governance institutional design such as accountability, responsiveness and transparency of Guraghe Zone and its Districts. In addition, to some extent, it is possible to say that the government's claim that district level decentralization program could strengthen community empowerment is true. However, it is difficult to push the claim beyond that.

In fact, the findings of this study do not support well the governments' argument that district level decentralization program could compensate the problems of local governance of Ethiopia. Looking at the impact of public resources use matters a lot. The local governance actors' involvement in misuse of public resources despite the emerging watchdog institution provides an insight that a suitable local governance policy will facilitate the operation of effective decentralized public governance to enable better allocation of the public resources. Using public resources effectively is an important aspect that needs to be encouraged and formalized. I argue here that properly strengthening of community based organization(CBO), which less involves in misuse of local public resources(see figure 2 ), and creating a network with local government units for decision making on public resources use for local development is a necessary condition for democratic and effective decentralized public governance emergence of Guraghe Zone and its Districts. Otherwise, locally captured elite based decentralized system has apparently put unnecessary panic that democratic ethnic based local governance in Ethiopia in general, and Guraghe Zone and its Districts in particular yield to populist pressures and thus will not have the discipline that is required to protect the patrons from installing and implementing government policies and projects for their own interest than the ordinary citizen.

Therefore, this study suggests that a more effective local governance system focused on involving community based organization(CBO) and that takes into account citizens participation in and consultation with local policies and projects including a mixture of private, state and NGOs interaction apparently generate significant support among the ordinary citizens rather than being hooked by government units that characterizes the current local governance in Guraghe Zone.

The government development strategies and the growth and transformation plan (2010-2015) highlight the importance of government accountability, responsiveness and transparency for the countries renaissance and sustainable development (GTP, 2010). Although the government acknowledges the implementation gaps of its development plans particularly district level decentralization program, the root causes of such failures have not been investigated particularly at local levels of Guraghe Zone and its Districts.

Moreover, ensure accountability of local governance actors is one of the central rationales of decentralization. Without enforcing proper accountability mechanisms in practice, it is not possible to protect misuses of public resources at the grass roots. In other words, transfer of power, resources, and function to local units could be effective in causing long-term local development only if it is complemented with the existence of both upward and downward accountability and among other instrumental factors.

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