

# Development Project Management: Experiences of Urban Local Governments in Oromia-Ethiopia

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## Abstract

The Urban Local Government Development Project (ULGDP) program, launched in 2008 in Ethiopia's major cities, is coming to an end, and there is considerable debate on whether or not the projected impact on local government management of development projects would be realized. The paper examines the performance of the local governments involved in managing the ULGDP and was guided by the following question: How effective are urban local governments [ULGs] in managing development projects and what managerial/organizational challenges affect their performance? Basically, data and results from an ongoing doctoral research study were relied on substantially in writing this paper. Additional collaborative information was obtained by interviewing professional staff at all tiers of government regularly concerned or involved with the execution of local projects, and focus group citizenry. Preliminary findings of that study are quite revealing in the sense that while ULGs are commended for their performance in the areas of building infrastructures and providing municipal services to the community, despite quality control issues, the picture is not good in the areas of management and administration. There is abundant evidence of poor performance in the dissemination of annual budgets, project approval procedures, expenditure tracking, audit accounting, and sharing procurement results with the general public. Moreover, the revenue mobilization capacity of municipalities and budget allocation for operation and maintenance is not satisfactory. The paper concludes that ineffective resource management, organizational structures and administrative procedures are directly responsible for the poor state of affairs and recommends reforms in accordance with the mandate of local government. Largely, it calls for the establishment of modern management systems within the local government structure. The paper is structured into five parts as follows; introduction, the literature review, the methodology, results/discussion and conclusion.

**Keywords:** Development project, Local Government, Project Management

## Introduction

### 1.1 Study Background

The development challenges facing Ethiopia relate to the eradication of poverty. The Federal Government, in collaboration with multilateral and bilateral organizations, designed policies and strategies such as the SDPRP<sup>1</sup> and the PASDEP<sup>2</sup> in the past and, currently the GTP<sup>3</sup> to tackle poverty and to achieve sustainable growth that benefits the people. Researchers have shown that the absence of basic infrastructure and poor organizational capacity are the main factors that hinder growth; in other words, growth is positively influenced by the availability of infrastructure asset. In fact, the growth challenges of Sub-Saharan Africa governments are directly related to lack of basic infrastructures, poor organizational capacity, state ineffectiveness and negligible community participation in the decision-making process (Ndulu et al., 2007). The way institutions and organizations are coordinated and establishing appropriate relationships among implementing agencies are still a struggle (Ibid).

A study conducted by the World Bank (2007) on the Ethiopian urban sector highlighted the following challenges of urban development: infrastructure is not managed efficiently and the coverage is also low; top-down planning practices are leading to inefficient outcomes; inadequate management of municipal finances; and poor urban management and governance practices are few to be mentioned.

<sup>1</sup> Sustainable Development Poverty Reduction Paper(2005/2006-2010/11)

<sup>2</sup> Plan for Accelerated and Sustained Development to End Poverty(2010/11-2014/15)

<sup>3</sup> Growth and Transformation Plan (2010/11-2014/15)

Another study conducted by the African development Bank (AfDB) (2011) found that weak institutional capacity, particularly at lower levels of government, is the challenge in Ethiopia. The quality and coverage of infrastructure is low even when compared to African peers. In the AfDB's Infrastructure Index Ethiopia is ranked 52 out of 53 countries. The resource required to meet Ethiopia's infrastructure needs is massive, estimated at US\$ 5 billion per annum.

Against this backdrop many projects have been implemented in Ethiopia's major cities to improve the life of communities on the assumption that they constitute the backbone of local development. In 2008, the five year ULGDP<sup>4</sup> with total funding of US\$ 416 million co-financed by the World Bank (72%) and Regional and selected local governments (28%) commenced. It was designed to support the Ministry's<sup>5</sup> Urban Development and Urban Good Governance Programs which were part of the PASDEP, and now the GTP. The precise development objective of the ULGDP was to improve ULGs performance capacity to plan, deliver and sustain municipal infrastructure services<sup>6</sup> that are prioritized by community (MWUD, 2012).

Every government has a vision to improve the living standards and conditions of its citizen and, generally, this is achieved through development programs. It is an accepted assumption that a development program can be broken down into well-organized development projects and that if project activities are planned and implemented effectively the overall intended objectives and purpose of program will be achieved. Rondinelli (1993) argues that projects have always been used as policy tools to achieve overall development objective: once the role of good policy came to light, the project instrument was reshaped to promote explicit reforms and fashioned to generate development knowledge. Similarly, the project operational manual prepared by MUDC<sup>7</sup> (2011) presented ULGDP as urban development policy tool and it was implemented through existing government structures as follow: Ministry of Urban Development and Construction; Ministry of Finance and Economic Development; the Bureaus of Industry and Urban Development; the Bureaus of Finance and Economic Development; and Urban Local Government and Municipalities. The ULGs had the responsibility to manage the project.

A review study by the Bureau of Industry and Urban Development (BIUD) (2013) identified the existence of poor project management capacity at local levels and, even though there were various technical and other support missions from the Government and the donors, project implementation, supervision, monitoring and evaluation at local government level still requires massive intervention. It is unfortunate that the BIUD study did not give reasons for the ineffectiveness of ULGs in managing development projects. This paper evaluates urban local government performance in development project management and draws lessons for future application on similar projects. The performance of the selected ULGs covering infrastructure, employment, revenue mobilization, operation and maintenance, community participation, transparency and accountability is assessed against project guidelines.

## 1.2 Objectives and Questions

The main objective of the paper is to evaluate the performance of local government authorities in managing development project, using ULGDP as case study. Specifically, to assess the capacity of urban local governments to manage projects and to identify managerial/organizational factors responsible for the performance of local governments.

1. How effective are ULGs in managing development project?
2. What are the managerial/organizational factors responsible for performance in development project management?

## 1.3 Structure of Article

The paper has five parts: introduction, the literature review, the methodology, results/discussion and conclusion.

## 2.0 Literature Review

### 2.1 The Development Project

The European Commission (1997) defines a development project as "a multi-dimensional intervention which is intended to develop human, physical and economical potentials of a country to bring about the change leading to the improvement of economy, environment, communities and institutions". Gittinger (1982) sees a development project as a model which aims primarily to add value through internal inputs/resources that are organized and operated by project owner. Thus, development project consists of an optimum set of investment-oriented actions based on comprehensive and coherent sector planning by means of which a defined combination of human and material resources is expected to cause a determined amount of economic and social development. The components of a project need to be precisely defined as to character, location and time. Project, in this study,

<sup>4</sup> Urban Local Government Development project lunched in 2008

<sup>5</sup> The Ministry of Works and Urban Development (now The Ministry of Urban Development and Construction)

<sup>6</sup> roads, solid waste management, urban drainage, and built facilities

<sup>7</sup> Ministry of Urban Development and Construction

refer to the development project undertaken and implemented through local government, at city level.

## **2.2 Development Project Management**

Nagarajan (2008) defines project management as the application of knowledge, skills, tools and techniques to project activities to meet project requirements and, further, describes it as an organizational approach to the management of an ongoing operation (Project Management Body of Knowledge, 2000). Koder (1988) and Amujiri (2004) define project management as the subordination of group activities to the manager who plans, organizes staffs, directs and controls to achieve an objective within constraints of time and resources. A development project, in content and coverage, is realized through several stages known as the project cycle. Baum (1978) lists the logical sequences of the project cycle as problem identification, appraisal, negotiation and approval, implementation, monitoring and control, evaluation and follow-up. Local development project management can, therefore, be understood to refer to a deliberate intervention with resources over a defined period to improve the life and circumstances of beneficiaries at the local level through the effective management of all stages of the project cycle.

Kawak (2002) classifies factors influencing the effectiveness of development project objectives into ten categories. These are managerial, physical, legal, political, technical, social, corruption, cultural, environmental and economical. Williams (2011) indicates that lack of project management capacity and poor design are factors responsible for low performance of development projects. A study by Ika (2012) classifies the influencing factors into three categories: structural/contextual, institutional/sustainability, and managerial/organizational, and in a further collaborative study (Ika & Hodgson, 2010; Ika et al., 2012; Kwak, 2002) the scholars conclude that the managerial/organizational set of factors is most to blame for development project ineffectiveness or failures.

## **2.3 Local Government in Ethiopia**

Ola and Tonwe (2005) define local government as the administration of locality, a village, or town/city, a body representing the local inhabitants, have autonomy, collect revenue, and provide services to its inhabitants. In 1994, the new Federal Constitution brought a major breakthrough in political governance by providing for the establishment and operation of urban local governments in Ethiopia. Article 50(1) of the constitution empowered state governments to establish lower administrative levels and provide them with adequate power and responsibility to enable direct people participation in the political administration of the country. Based on this, the Oromia regional state issued legislations under proclamation 65/2003 to govern the legal status, role, responsibilities and relationships of urban administrations in region. According to the Bureau of Industry and Urban development (2012) there are 482 urban centers in the region and 39 (8%) of them have councils and running fully. The CSA<sup>8</sup> survey report (2011) showed that in the Oromia Region 3.86 million people, about 13%, live in urban areas though the rate of urbanization is galloping at 4.6%.

## **2.4 The ULGDP Program**

Toward effective implementation of the Urban Local Government Development Project which begun in 2008, participating local government bodies across the Federation were charged with the following specific functions:

- appoint project coordinator and adequate staffing in all key operating departments
- allocate counterpart budget required from urban local government and manage the project
- adopt and implement public consultation with citizens and responsible stakeholders
- regularly disseminate to the public annual budgets, expenditure and physical progress reports, and information on all competitive tenders awarded for goods, services and infrastructure
- management of infrastructure assets and service delivery
- design, adopt and implement financial management and revenue enhancement programs,
- ensure that adequate operations and maintenance budgetary provisions are made and that effective operation and maintenance activities are carried out
- establish effective monitoring and evaluation system

Clearly, these functions placed a great burden of responsibility on local authorities. The ULGDP was designed to improve the administrative and managerial capacity of participating local governments to:

- implement capital investment plans
- involve the community in development processes
- disseminate budgets plans and performance measures to the public
- improve financial management and mobilize local resources
- operate and maintain infrastructure assets
- train local government administrators

The main sources funds to execute the ULGDP were:

- local government sources made up of communities contributions and internally generated revenues
- regional government source comprising of periodic allocation to local governments
- the World Bank

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<sup>8</sup> Central Statistical Authority

The agreed contributory proportions were local government (20%), regional government (20), and the World Bank (60%). The ULGDP program mandated regional states to select a number of urban centers to benefit from it and the Oromia Bureau of Industry and Urban Development (2013) selected Adama, Bishoftu, Shashemene, and Jimma on the basis of having their own councils, mayor and cabinet members. The table below gives the characteristics of the four ULGs.

Table 1. Characteristics of ULGs

Feature	Adama	Bishoftu	Jimma	Shashemene
Establishment	1915	1917	1790	1936
Area	13,600 hectares	14,000 hectares	9,106.42 hectares	12,994.61 hectares
Number of Kebele	14	9	14	8
Population in July 2012	282,974	128,408	155,434	129,084

Source: Respective city's archives.

### 3.0 Research Methodology

This paper is based on an ongoing research study conducted in 2013<sup>9</sup> involving a 400-size field survey by questionnaire of randomly selected household-heads<sup>10</sup> from the four selected beneficiaries of the ULGDP program namely Adama, Bishoftu, Jimma and Shashemene. Additionally, focused group discussions with community representatives and professionally-targeted interviews of officials at various levels in the local administrations involved in the program were undertaken. Secondary data from relevant published reports and legislations have also been relied on in preparing this paper.

### 4.0 Study Findings

With the ULGDP having come to a close at the end of December 2014, the study found that much of the projects laudable intentions have not been met and that the few positive reports were mostly on the side of capital investment plans and infrastructure delivery. Unfortunately, similar encouraging report could not be made for several of the other objectives, including capacity building. First, the paper evaluates the performance of the ULGDP program in terms of its stated objectives from the findings of the study. Secondly, it appraises the managerial and organizational capacity building achievement or otherwise following the successful completion of the program.

#### 4.1 Project Performance

The overall performance of the local government authorities [ULGs] involved in the ULGDP program in Oromia has been evaluated by analyzing the project delivery outcomes in these specific areas:

- municipal infrastructure
- revenue mobilization
- operation and maintenance
- community participation
- transparency and accountability

The results of the evaluation are presented below.

#### Municipal Infrastructure

The ULGs had selected projects to fill the existing infrastructure and service delivery gaps, such as construction of cobble stone roads, landfills, and markets. Post construction evaluation from the study, mainly from the focused group discussions, found unacceptable quality shortfalls particularly in Bishoftu and Adama. Since its launch to the mid of 2013, The ULGDP had financed the procurement of different civil work activities, consultancy services and goods worth US\$ 43.6 million and this component had significantly increased the infrastructural coverage of the cities and created a considerable job opportunity. For example, about 176.59 km of cobblestone roads had been constructed in the four ULGs which created 74,100 jobs. Clearly, it can be noted that the investments component of the program had achieved reasonable success - facilitated employment, increased mobility, controlled flooding, improved the appearance of the cities, and helped enhanced the value of properties. The experience gained in procurement has paid off in other project activities. In recent years all the participating ULGs have undertaken other projects, some larger and more complex including the construction of landfills, bridges, markets, bus parks, cultural centers, waste water treatment facilities, and street lighting. Increased confidence in project managing is spurring the development of longer term vision for the cities to ensure controlled growth and environmental protection. The study also found that while a culture of efficient delivery of infrastructure was satisfactorily being accomplished, even if quality problems still persisted, the proper exercise of ownership, control and management of municipal assets was completely lacking in all the cities and needing urgent attention. It is noteworthy that an appreciable 41.5 percent of survey respondents in the

<sup>9</sup> By the author August to December, 2013

<sup>10</sup> Fathers or, in their absence, mothers or representatives

study recognized improvements in the way ULGs were handling their work following the ULGDP intervention.

### Revenue Mobilization

Mobilization of municipal revenues in the participating cities visited continued to fall below targets as shown in the table below.

Table 2. Revenue Mobilization Performance of ULGDP cities (2012/13)

ULGs	Municipal plan (2011/12)	Municipal			State		
		Plan	Actual	%	Plan	Actual	%
Adama	110,000,000	108,000,000	87,925,250.20	81	114,260,713.60	151,620,165.50	132
Bishoftu	49,844,374	58,734,728	59,338,426	101	45,574,410	55,380,343.20	121
Jimma	47,000,000	40,000,000	31,392,637.90	92.40	43,703,000	46,010,992.30	105
Shashemene	45,638,593	57,279,363	31,120,197.60	54	29,970,022	50,716,753.60	169

Source: Respective town's archives

As indicated on table 4.1, all ULGs had performed well related to revenue mobilization in general. But it was also equally important to consider achievement in terms of municipality and state independently. In this way, unlike the other three cities, Shashemene has failed to meet the target; I.e. the city is able to collect/achieve only 54% of its plan.

On the other hand, even though the municipal revenue performance of Jimma and Adama cities seems well, the revenue target set for the fiscal year was not satisfying in terms of the principle of planning as well as the revenue requirement of the ULGs (cities are expected to increase their revenue target and /performance at least by more than 20% every year as part of doubling target of own revenue at the end of the Growth and Transformation Plan). I.e. The municipal revenue target for 2012/13 was by far less than the target set for 2011/12 provided that there was no considerable internal /external factor observed or reported by the ULG administration.

It was discovered during the focused group discussions of the study that not even the lifting of the moratorium on leasing land, intended to boost revenues, had succeeded in increasing municipal revenues. Indeed, the growth in municipal revenues since the start of the ULGDP program in 2008/2009 had been much lower and insufficient to meet the budgeted needs for investment in infrastructure, services, and operations and maintenance. In general, ULGs have a very limited/narrow tax base and rely on leasing land for a large part of their revenues. Though ULG officials recognize that fees for services such as solid waste evacuation/disposal and market stall rentals are too low they was much reluctance to raise fees to meet objectives. Strangely, officials in some ULGs admitted lack of knowledge of the costs of providing services and, thus, could calculate the appropriate fees required to recover costs. For example, in Bishoftu the cost of operating the new landfill was unknown and resident beneficiaries were not paying any fees to cover it. Mobilization of municipal revenue remains a serious challenge and raises concern that cities will not be able to operate and maintain the assets they have acquired under the ULGDP.

### Operation and Maintenance (O & M)

The study found that while ULGs regularly updated their asset management inventories and asset management plans, they were not using them as a management and planning tools. Operations and maintenance budgets presented in the capital investment plans had little relationship to the budgets recommended in the asset management plans. Instead, ULGs were using their traditional ways of assessing their needs for O&M driven largely by funds they received from the roads maintenance fund. Yet, global experience showed that properly maintaining infrastructure assets ensures they deliver services for years and at much lower cost than creating new infrastructure. ULGs had still not internalized the importance of using asset management plans to forecast O&M budgets and to maximize revenues from properly pricing asset services. Moreover, the study found that ULGs had not allocated enough provisions to operation and maintenance in all the cities and that the allocations were not fully and efficiently utilized (See table 4.2). As a rule of thumb O&M budgets should equal one percent of the value of assets.

Table 3. Annual Operations & Maintenance Budget and Expenditure (2012/13)

ULGs	Allocated (in dollars)	Executed (in dollars)	%
Adama	702,452.63	375,876.49	53.51
Bishoftu	147,151.32	128,314.07	87.20
Jimma	184,842.00	170,447.46	92.21
Shashemene	271,157.89	200,000.00	73.76

As an indicator of efficient local government performance, operations and maintenance remains far below expectation.

### Community Participation

An important finding of the study was that local people were, in fact, involved pre-project planning stages to

enable them play their constitutional role in the ranking and selection of projects. As high as 79.8 percent of those surveyed acknowledged invitations to consultative meetings on the future development of their city, and of the ULGDP in particular during project identification meetings. Unfortunately, more than half of the number acknowledging invitation to early meetings reported that the invitations ceased once the project identification phase was complete. Community participation, from this time onward, declined sharply to a low 26.5 percent by the time projects were at the completion evaluation stage.

One of the reasons put forward as explanation for the decline happens to be a general lack of interest on the part of citizens in participating in government-related projects. Indeed, the popular though erroneous belief is that project planning and related decision-making was the exclusive responsibility of council members, ward committees, and local government project management staff. As a result, community members tended not to seek direct or active involvement citing, in support, the able representation by elected colleagues in the councils. In other words, they were satisfied with what could be described as 'representational participation'.

#### **Transparency and Accountability**

Indeed, transparency and accountability are considered indicators of good governance. However, the study revealed that the communities in the study areas were not kept informed of project progress as required by law; results of development projects were not discussed with them; the responsible local government offices had not been dissemination of information on project implementation/performance was not done as required; yearly budget and performance reporting to the general public was poor. Most of the respondents in the study indicated that they had no knowledge about the sources of revenue and appropriation respecting several projects, though it did seem to be the case that there was a greater awareness of the World Bank and its numerous financial interventions in their communities. Focused group discussions brought out serious transparency and accountability infractions by local government officials who are never called to account for their stewardship; a situation that has encouraged elected representatives to also gain undue personal benefit.

#### **4.2 Managerial and Organizational Capacity**

The successful execution of the development agenda of local government depends largely on the quality of management and organization. The study results present all four local government authorities as inefficient and incapable of handling their statutory duties accordingly.

##### **Human resource management**

ULGs are suffering from inadequate staffing to a worrying high staff turn-over; only 13.5 percent of the ULGDP program team members were found to have been working in the organizations for more than four years. The study found that there was a high turnover and reshuffling of top management and the professional cadre which was a factor significantly responsible for the absence of any form of project management and for the poor quality of infrastructure project delivery system. Similarly, respondents identified the frequent change of chief executives as very negative referring, in particular, to Adama which has seen six mayors since 2009. Project implementation delays, increased cost overruns, and unutilized financial allocations were cited as some of the negatives.

The study also identified lack of proper and adequate staff compensation package as a persisting problem. There was a clear and noticeable correlation observed in the field between reward and performance/quality of project results.

##### **Financial resource management**

Arguably, the ULGDP did well in improving the financial management capacity of the participating local governments. Nevertheless, direct control of resources remained outside with the Regional Government and the World Bank which contributed to delays in fund releases resulting in increased cost overruns. Indeed, counterpart fund of the cities were also very often late in release delaying the start of projects. Ineffective procurement systems were found to cause delays that seriously affected implementation. Generally, financial probity in all the cities was fairly good. What was found most lacking was the absence of the kinds of information that managers use to plan and coordinate organizational activities.

##### **Administration**

The effectiveness of a management system depends on leadership. The study found that the Shashemene local government, obviously under more stable leadership, consistently scored highest in implementation of development projects. Because project budget allocation is based on local government's capacity to implement the city obtained additional funds for being a good performer. On the other hand ineffective and/or virtually nonexistent administration undermines project implementation. For example, a land fill construction project in Bishoftu originally planned to finish in 2011 was actually completed in 2013 and, as a result, the local government was exposed to massive additional cost. The poor contract management cases have their genesis in the poor administrative practices of the cities concerned.

##### **Organizational Structure**

The major organizational issues confronting ULGs were found to be rather fundamental, such as to do with proper definition of the relationship with higher authorities and the absence of self-sustain organizational

structures. Accordingly, development project working systems were frequently not easily assimilated into the existing local government organizational structure. Empowering ULGs sufficiently as capable institutions with sustainable organizational structures happen to be one of the main objectives of the ULGDP intervention but it will be sometime before the result can be measured.

## 5.0 Conclusion

The participating ULGs in Oromia have achieved much in the past five years – mostly the asset levels have improved and so has the financial management system [when compared to previous years]. Not so with some of the development objectives – poor to low performance still bedevil aspects of transparency and accountability, community participation, quality of construction, and operation and maintenance. The root causes of the low performance is directly related to ineffective organization, insufficient coordination among local stakeholders, inefficient administration, poor and ill-motivated staffing, absence of monitoring, and poor financial budgeting.

Local governments and local Community Based Organizations (CBOs) which work closely with the community should conduct awareness building campaigns. The openly advertised project problem identification, implementation and evaluation system should be activated to bring transparency and to ensure accountability from elected representatives. Enactment of participation-friendly guidelines can also promote and encourage participation.

Generally, to manage development projects, ULGs are expected to utilize modern management systems such as management by objectives, plan, budget, and performance system. Management by objectives aims at improving the performance of an organization by motivating, assessing and training employees through integrating their personal goals with organizational objectives. This very important component of organization's operations is yet to be fully integrated and embraced in project management at the local government level.

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