The Governance of Service Delivery
for the Poor and Women:
A Study of Rural Water Supply in Ethiopia

Tewodaj Mogues, Marc J. Cohen, Regina Birner, Mamusha Lemma, Josee Randriamamonjy, Fanaye Tadesse and Zelekawork Paulos

Development Strategy and Governance Division, International Food Policy Research Institute – Ethiopia Strategy Support Program 2, Ethiopia

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ABSTRACT

This study presents empirical findings on drinking water supply in Ethiopia from a set of qualitative and quantitive surveys on rural public services. Access to safe drinking water is very low: 32% of the surveyed households use safe drinking water sources, and the average time to get to safe water sources during dry season ranged from 29 minutes to 82 minutes. The households covered in the Ethiopia survey may still have better access than the national average. Households identify drinking water as their main priority concern, yet they report high satisfaction rates and hardly take any action to complain. 71% of the households were very or somewhat satisfied with the quantity and 52% with the quality of drinking water, even though access was very low. What is surprising with these findings is the fact that a considerable share of the households identified water as their number one concern among a series of services in their area. This raises questions about how best to elicit information about satisfaction with rural services.

Drinking water has undergone far-reaching decentralisation. The construction and major rehabilitation of drinking water facilities is managed by district water desks, which are backstopped by the Regional Water Bureaus. Water committees have been established, each of which usually manages one water facility. Making water committees inclusive seems challenging. Although bringing water to the household is predominantly a task undertaken by women (and their children), the study found that in all sites except for one, the water committee leaders were men The water committees also do not seem to be very effective in counteracting the top-down nature of service provision. The study found that in some cases the functioning of water facilities was compromised if the organization that constructed the facility did not take into account the community's knowledge of water sources in determining where to locate the facility.

1. PROVIDING SERVICES FOR THE RURAL POOR AND WOMEN

Nearly 85 percent of Ethiopians live in rural areas. The rural poor need a range of basic services such as drinking water, infrastructure and social services. Yet such services are difficult to provide in rural areas. Due to market failures, the private sector does not provide these services to the rural poor to an extent that is desirable from society's point of view, as not all benefits from this provision would be able to be internalised by the provider. The state, however, may also be not very effective in providing these services either, due to incentives of political actors, which may not always be aligned to maximise public goods provision. NGOs or the communities themselves are interesting alternative providers of these services, but they too can be affected by nonmarket failures.

The rural poor suffer particularly from inadequate service provision (World Bank, 2004a). Where elite capture prevails, they have less access to rural services, and where the public system fails in general, they cannot easily resort to private service providers. They have to spend more of their time to access services, which affects their productivity, and it hurts them more if they have to pay bribes to access a service. Rural women, especially those from poor households, face a particular burden. In view of the gender division of labor, they are the ones who have to invest more time to fetch water, get health care for their children, or reach markets. Girls have lower access to education, and maternal mortality is high if the specific health care needs of women are not met. Providing better services to women is not only necessary to realize their rights, it is also essential to promote development. As research has shown, when women have more education and better access to assets, their children are better nourished, healthier, and more likely to go to school (Quisumbing et al., 1995; IFPRI, 2000; IFPRI, 2005). There is an impressive amount of evidence demonstrating the positive relationship between gender equality, economic growth, and poverty reduction (see Mason & King, 2001 for a review). The global community formally recognized gender inequality as one of the major hurdles to development when it set gender equality and the empowerment of women as the third Millennium Development Goal.

As the World Development Report (WDR) 2004 on "Making Services Work for Poor People" (World Bank, 2004a) has pointed out, it is essential to understand the accountability relations between clients, service providers, and politicians to see how these governance reforms can improve service provision. The conceptual framework developed in the 2004 WDR, hereafter referred to as the "Accountability Framework" distinguishes three main actors: (1) citizens or clients; (2) politicians and policy makers; and (3) service providers (see

Figure 1).

Figure 1: World Bank Accountability Framework
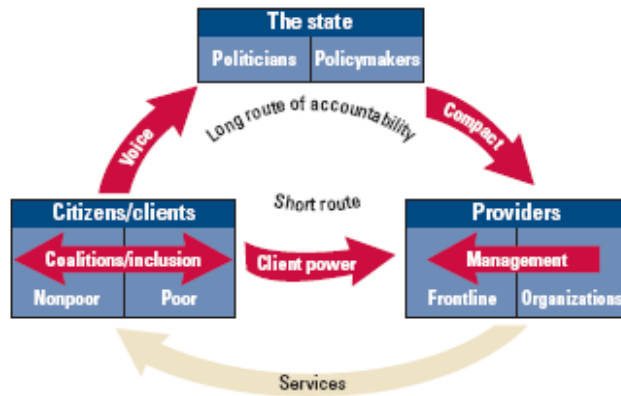
Source: World Bank (2004a).

Citizens/clients can use two "routes of accountability" to get better services, a long route and a short route. They may hold service providers directly accountable, which is referred to as client power and constitutes the short route of accountability. They may also exercise voice to induce politicians and policy makers to interact with service providers with the goal of improving service delivery, using a "compact." This is the long route of accountability.

The Accountability Framework has been widely used and greatly improved our understanding of different strategies that can be used to improve service provision. However, its application has focused on social services, especially health and education. It is less well understood which role short routes and long routes of accountability play for rural services such as rural water supply, and how clientelistic environments influence these relations, especially in decentralized settings. In fact, decentralization adds an additional layer of complexity to the Accountability Framework. Knowledge gaps also exist regarding the role of political parties, which are not an explicit element of the Accountability Framework; yet the literature suggests that the way in which political parties function, in both multiparty and one-party regimes, has important implications for the types of clientelism and elite capture that may affect rural service provision (North, Wallis, & Weingast (2009); Keefer (2005); World Bank (2004a), Oi (1991)).

Further knowledge gaps exist with regard to the gender dimension of these routes of accountability. As a recent extensive literature review has shown, there are considerable knowledge gaps regarding the reform strategies that are most suitable for different country-specific conditions (Horowitz, 2009). The review indicates that most of the literature has focused on the link between citizens and their political representatives, such as the reservation of seats in local councils. In contrast, there is rather limited evidence on strategies that target service providers, such as gender desks and equal opportunity structures in the public administration. Likewise, there is a lack of knowledge on how to best combine strategies that aim at

strengthening long routes and short routes of accountability. Limited evidence also exists with regard to the question of how macrofactors, such as the political system and role of women in society, influence the appropriateness of different reform strategies. In sum, there is rather limited knowledge regarding what works where and why in making rural services more responsive to gender-specific needs.

This study focuses on the presentation of descriptive findings from the quantitative and qualitative research conducted under IFPRI's Gender, Governance, and Rural Services research project. The overall research project is a three-country study (Ethiopia, Ghana, India), however, this paper only discusses the findings on on Ethiopia. It identifies major patterns of accountability routes in rural service provision and assesses their gender dimension, focusing on drinking water, as an example of a rural service that is of high relevance for rural residents in Ethiopia.

The study is structured as follows: Section 2 starts by describing the conceptual framework of the study, which builds upon the Accountability Framework discussed above. The framework serves to classify various strategies that can be used to make rural service provision more gender sensitive; these strategies are presented in the second part of this section. Section 3 provides background information on the system of decentralised governance and the political context which has a bearing on the modalities of service provision. It also discusses the government's strategies on gender-sensitivity in service provision, and the key institutions influencing rural water supply as the key public service of interest. Section 4 describes the data. Covering rural water supply, Sections 5 and 6 present the main empirical findings of the study. The respective information is presented separately in each of the two sections: Section 5 deals with the short route of accountability in rural service provision. Accordingly, the section focuses on three actors: households, community-based organizations (water committees), and service providers. Section 6 deals with the long route of accountability. Accordingly, it assesses the interaction of political representatives with households and other actors and discusses the factors that influence the effectiveness of local politicians in improving service provision. Section 7 offers a summarises the findings, and the final section 8 derives conclusions and policy implications, and identifies thematic areas for future research.

2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Extended accountability framework

The conceptual framework used for this study draws on the Accountability Framework of the WDR 2004, presented in Section 1. Addressing the knowledge gaps outlined above, the framework presented in

Figure 2 disaggregates and expands the WDR 2004 Accountability Framework in several aspects so as to increase its suitability for analyzing rural service provision in a decentralized setting, taking the role of the political system into account. With the exception of the "services arrow," the diagram displays only one arrow between every two different actors, even though this arrow can indicate different types of relations, as further discussed below.

Figure 2 also displays male/female signs in each of the boxes to indicate the gender dimension of all actors involved in service delivery.

The box depicting household members (HH) in

Figure 2 corresponds to the citizens/clients box in

Figure 1. The gender relations within the household, which are shaped by sociocultural norms, influence the service needs of men and women, their possibilities to access services, and the mechanisms they can use to hold service providers accountable. The framework used here

distinguishes between public sector service providers at the local level (Box PS) and the ministries at the national/federal and/or state level (Box NM) to which the local public sector service providers may belong. This disaggregation makes it possible to draw attention to the upward accountability linkage between local service providers and their respective ministries (link PS-NM), which can play an important role in service provision, especially if the reform model is "deconcentration" rather than "devolution."[1]

The framework also presents NGOs and private sector organizations that provide services (Box NG) as a separate category.[2] Since this study is concerned with rural water supply, which is subject to market failure, the private sector providers that are relevant for this study are expected to have some link with public sector agencies. For example, they may be contracted by the public sector to provide services, as in the case of contractors specialising in water pump installation. The service providers comprise "front-line professionals," who are in direct contact with the clients, as well as staff involved in management and administration, such as supervisors of front-line professionals, clerical staff, and others. As further discussed below, the gender composition of the front-line professionals can play an important role in making service provision responsive to gender needs. Likewise, management practices play an important role in this regard.

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[1] In the public administration literature, the term *deconcentration* refers to the transfer of authority to offices at lower levels of administration (e.g., the district), but these offices remain upward accountable to the headquarters of their respective ministries. In the case of devolution, these offices become accountable to locally elected governments (see Rondinelli, 1981). In the literature on natural resource management, the term *devolution* is also used for the transfer of authority from government agencies to user associations (Meinzen-Dick & Knox, 2001).
[2] Even though

Figure 1 does not disaggregate different types of service providers, the text describing the framework in the 2004 WDR acknowledges that service providers may include public sector organizations as well as different types of nonprofit and private for-profit organizations (World Bank, 2004a: 50).

Figure 2: Conceptual framework applied in the study
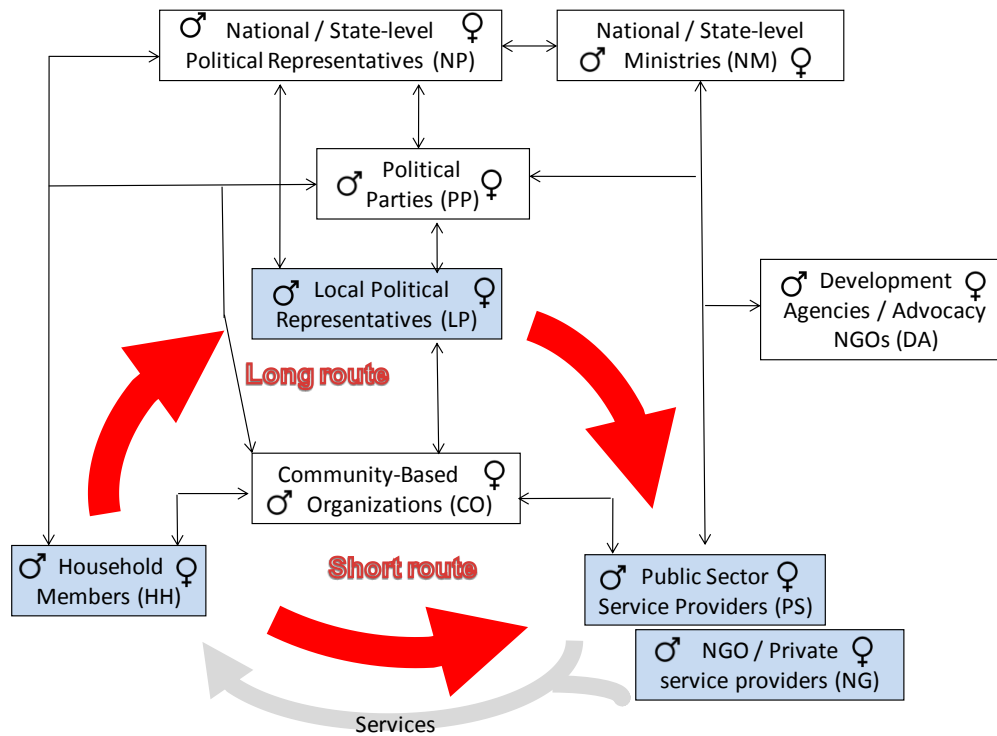
Source: Authors, adapted from World Bank (2004a).

In this study, the term political representatives is used for men and women who hold political office, such as members of councils at different levels of local government and members of parliaments at state and federal levels. The term also refers to politicians in executive political functions at different levels, such as kebele cabinet members or ministers. Political representatives may either be elected (in competitive or noncompetitive elections), or they may be politically appointed. To capture the effect of decentralization, the framework distinguishes between political representatives at the local government level (Box LP) and at national level (Box NP). To keep the diagram in

Figure 2 manageable, different tiers of local government (i.e. kebele and district levels) are represented by the same box. Likewise, political representative at the zonal, regional and federal levels are captured by Box NP, to keep the diagram simple. As further discussed below, there are different ways to improve gender equity among political representatives at different levels of government, which range from support to female candidates to mandatory quotas.

The links between households and services (links HH-PS and HH-NG) correspond to the "short route of accountability" in

Figure 1. The "long route of accountability" is indicated by the links between household members and political representatives (links HH-LP and HH-NP) who in turn interact with the different types of service providers (links LP-PS und NP-NM).

Apart from the "disaggregation" of political representatives and service providers, the framework used for this study extends the 2004 WDR Accountability Framework in several other aspects. It explicitly includes community-based associations (Box CO), which are defined here as membership organizations at the community level, including economic associations such as water committees, cooperatives, savings and credit groups (iqqubs), as well as sociocultural and identity-based organizations such as religious groups and funeral societies (iddirs). Community organizations may be formal and informal organizations, depending on whether or not they are registered and/or are governed by formal law. They may be customary in the sense that they have existed for centuries, or they may have been created by more recent government and/or development interventions.

One type of community-based organization are user groups or user associations, which are formed with the specific objective of facilitating access to services and/or taking part in service provision. Examples are water committees for drinking water supply. This study considers user associations that create links between service providers and households (links PS/NG-CO and CO-HH) to be part of the short route of accountability. Community-based organizations may also empower citizens to interact more effectively with their political representatives, thus strengthening the long route of accountability. Male and female household members may join user groups as individuals, but households may also be represented by only one member, who is then typically the household head, usually male in households where the head has a spouse. As further discussed below, user groups may have affirmative action rules, such as requirements for women in the executive body of the organization.

The framework also includes development agencies, such as multilateral and bilateral donors or national development foundations, and advocacy NGOs as a separate category (Box DA), because they often influence service provision, either through projects or though policy advice and advocacy. International development agencies typically work with ministries at the national/state level (link DA-NM), but they may also directly interact with public or nongovernmental service providers at the local level by providing funding and technical advice (links DA-PS and DA-NG). They may promote gender-sensitive service provision through the design of their projects and programs and in policy dialogues with governments. Advocacy NGOs may lobby both local and national political representatives (links DA-LP and DA-NP). NGOs that specialize in advocacy for women's rights may play an important role in improving the gender responsiveness of service provision, for example, by lobbying for changes in the legal framework and by providing support to female politicians.

Another extension of the Accountability Framework in

Figure 1 is the inclusion of political parties (Box PP). Political parties can play an important role in formulating policies and laws that influence the gender responsiveness of public service provision. They are also influential through their role in the selection of candidates for elected and appointed positions at local and national levels (links PP-LP and PP-NP). Even in cases where formal rules require that local representatives are elected on a nonpartisan basis, political parties often play an important informal role by, for example, supporting certain candidates. They can also be involved in the recruitment and promotion of staff in public sector service providers at both levels (links PP-PS and PP-NM). As further explained below, political parties may use various strategies to promote gender equity, ranging from women's wings to quotas for female candidates.

2.2 Actions and mechanisms that create accountability

Along the "chain of service delivery," there are different actions and mechanisms that can create accountability between the actors involved, as shown in

Figure 3. Each of these actions or mechanisms has its own gender dimension. An important accountability mechanism in the planning stage is the ability of clients to express their needs and demands, and the obligation or willingness and capacity of service providers to consider these in the planning process. The ability of male and female clients to express their needs and demands may differ, and the willingness and capacity of providers to respond to gender-differentiated or gender-specific needs may differ as well. The allocation of funding is a crucial stage in the service delivery chain, and access to budget information is an important mechanism to create accountability at that stage. Gender budgeting has been introduced to improve gender responsiveness for this element of the service delivery chain. Accountability in the stage of actual service delivery is enhanced if users have access to information about the delivery process, its finances, and performance. They can hold providers accountable by requesting information, providing positive and negative feedback, and launching complaints. Information about ultimate service delivery outcomes can also be used to create accountability.

Figure 3: Creating accountability along the service delivery chain
Stages in the service delivery chain/cycle

| Planning; deciding on objectives and standards | Allocation of funds | Delivery of the service; interaction of front-line professionals with male/female clients | Service provision outcomes for men & women | Planning (next cycle) |

| Expression of gender-specific needs /demands; consideration in planning process | Access to information about budget; gender-budgeting | Access to information about delivery process and performance; provision of positive and negative feedback (complaints; audits) | Access to gender-disaggregated information about service provision outcomes; Use of information in next planning/delivery cycle |

Actions and mechanisms to create accountability
Source: Authors.

These mechanisms are only effective if providers have the obligation or willingness and capacity to respond, and if there are enforceable means of corrective action (UNIFEM, 2009). As in the case of planning, male and female clients may differ in their capacity to use these mechanisms, and providers may respond differently to actions taken by male and female clients. Threat of sexual harassment or abuse from state officials may also lead to a pattern of women avoiding state agents and contact or engagement with the state.

While clients and their organizations play an essential role in holding service providers accountable, one also needs to acknowledge that there are important mechanisms to create accountability within organizations, including service provision organizations, political parties, and community-based organizations. Public, nongovernmental, and private sector organizations that provide services can use human resource management approaches to create accountability among their staff, such as merit-based promotion, reporting rules, performance reviews, monitoring and evaluation systems, and disciplinary action in case of misconduct. Financial accountability within organizations is promoted through financial management rules that increase transparency and through audits.

Political parties can create accountability through internal party democracy (voting for leadership positions, democratic means of selecting candidates), incentives (for example, in form of campaign support), and disciplinary measures such as, in the extreme case, exclusion of party members. Community-based organizations can also create accountability through means of internal democracy, such as voting for members in executive body positions and decision making in membership meetings. One needs to take into account, however, that voting is only one way to create accountability and that there are important alternative or customary mechanisms that community-based organizations can use, such as reputation and local recognition. Women may be disadvantaged in using either of these accountability mechanisms. For example, voting rights in community organizations may be restricted to one household member, and traditional accountability mechanisms do not necessarily recognize women.

The mechanisms that citizens can use to hold their political representatives accountable are often referred to as "voice." These include voting in elections, political support in form of campaign contributions, lobbying, meetings where politicians have to justify their actions, and different forms of political protest, including demonstrations. As pointed out in the paper "Who Answers to Women?" (UNIFEM, 2009: 7), the opportunities for women's voice are often limited by male and elite dominated political processes.

The framework presented in

Figure 2 can also be used to identify and classify different strategies to make rural service provision more gender sensitive. Box 1 summarizes these strategies.

Box 1: Strategies to make service provision more gender sensitive

1. ***Strategies that target household members and community organizations (Boxes HH and CO)***
- Organizing women and girls, promoting political awareness, leadership, and advocacy abilities
- Creation and strengthening of women's self-help groups
- Gender-sensitive citizen monitoring and auditing
- Gender-sensitive complaint mechanisms
- Gender quorums in community meetings
- Affirmative action in user group membership (e.g., quotas for women in user groups)
- Gender-sensitive training for members of user organizations
- Programs and projects that specifically target female household members (women and girls)
2. ***Strategies that target the public administration (Boxes PS and NM)***
- Ministries/Agencies of Gender in national and local governments ("gender machinery")
- Gender focal points in sectoral ministries and decentralized departments
- Equal opportunity structures in civil service (e.g., antidiscrimination bureaus, merit protection agencies, equal opportunity commissions)
- Affirmative action in the civil service (e.g., quotas for female staff)
3. ***Strategies that target all types of service providers (Boxes PS and NG)***
- Performance contracts with attention to gender
- Gender-sensitive design and implementation of programs and projects
- Gender-disaggregated and gender-sensitive monitoring indicators
- Female fieldworkers with discretion
4. ***Strategies that target local and national political representatives (Boxes LP and NP)***
- Affirmative action in electoral politics (e.g., reservation of seats for women in local councils and national parliaments)
- Parliamentary committees on women's affairs; responsibility for gender in subject-specific parliamentary committees
- Party-independent bodies that provide financial and moral support to female candidates
- Gender-focused training and support programs for local and national representatives (targeting male and female representatives)
5. ***Strategies that target political parties (Box PP)***
- Women's wings in political parties
- Affirmative action in political parties (e.g., quotas and reservations for female party members)
- Party manifestos for women
- Recruitment, mentoring, and leadership development in political parties
6. ***Cross-cutting strategies***
- Gender-responsive budgets
- Organizational gender structures, such as Gender Working Groups and Advisory Councils
- Women-friendly institutions (timing of meetings, type of pay, safety in travel, child support, etc.)

Source: Adapted from Horowitz (2009).

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3. AN OVERVIEW OF GOVERNANCE, GENDER, AND WATER SUPPLY IN ETHIOPIA

This section provides background information on basic economic and more-detailed information on governance and gender related data derived from international databases and the literature. The first subsection provides the broader empirical context which point to available options for using downward, upward, and horizontal accountability mechanisms (see Figure 2) in rural service delivery. This is followed by background information on strategies to promote gender equity in development interventions, and a discussion of the governance of rural drinking water services.

3.1 Political system and decentralisation

Ethiopia is a federal republic, with five administrative tiers: the federal level, regions, zones, woredas (districts), and kebeles (peasant associations). At the federal, regional, district, and kebele levels, and in some zones at the zonal level, governance institutions take a parliamentary form, with citizens electing councils that formally appoint the executive bodies and judges in the judicial branch of government. Ostensibly, there is multiparty competition to fill the legislative seats at all levels. In practice, the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) has been the prime political force in the country since taking power in 1991 following a civil war. EPRDF affiliates, including the leading affiliate, the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), which is chaired by the country's current prime minister, advocates a mixed economy, with a substantial role for the state and but also an important role for market forces (Vaughan and Tronvoll, 2003).

The current political system emerged with the constitution adopted in 1995. The administrative structure consists of nine regions and two city administrations.[3] A region may have more than one ethnic group, and may create "special zones" for minority groups that constitute an additional administrative and political tier between the regional and district levels. Following disputed elections at the federal and regional levels in 2005, and a period of suppression of dissent, the EPRDF won nearly all of the 3.6 million council seats in countrywide district and kebele council elections in 2008 after electoral officials disqualified many opposition party and independent candidates (Aalen and Tronvoll, 2008).

 Thus, despite having a multiparty system in formality and the conduct of periodic elections, and despite the fact that some opposition parties are permitted to exist, in practice, the EPRDF has had uninterrupted control over the federal government since the overthrow of the previous

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[3] Often the 9 regions-proper and the 2 city administrations are referred to together as Ethiopia's 11 regions.

military dictatorship in 1991, and through its affiliated and associated parties has similarly controlled all regional governments. Similarly, it has dominated nearly all local government councils at all times throughout this period (Pausewang et al., 2002).

Table 1 presents some selected governance indicators compiled by Kaufmann, Kraay, & Mastruzzi, 2008.[4] The Voice and Accountability indicator, which captures citizen's political rights and the quality of democracy, shows that Ethiopia ranks low, and its ranking decreased considerably during the past decade, and indices of control of corruption also saw a deterioration. With regard to government effectiveness, Ethiopia started from a low level and showed considerable improvement during the past decade. Even though all of these aggregate indicators have to be interpreted with care since they are subject to measurement and aggregation errors, they help to broadly identify the position of Ethiopia (since the measurement is in percentiles) vis-à-vis the rest of the world.

Table 1: Governance indicators (Percentile Rank 0–100)

	1998	2007
Voice and accountability	24.0	13.5
Government effectiveness	12.3	37.4
Regulatory quality	12.7	18.9
Control of corruption	34.5	27.5

Source: Kaufmann, Kraay and Mastruzzi (2008).

Structure of local government

Figure 4 displays the structure of government in Ethiopia. At the federal level, the executive branch consists of the president, who is the head of state; the prime minister, who is the head of government; and the cabinet of ministers. The ministers may or may not be members of parliament. The parliament organizes standing committees, each of which is comprised of a number of parliamentarians and concerns itself with a particular subject area (e.g., agriculture and water). This basic structure is more or less replicated at the lower tiers of government. Below the federal and regional levels, tiers that are explicitly provided for in the constitution, is

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[4] Kaufmann, Kraay and Mastruzzi provide the following disclaimer on their Web site: "The governance indicators presented here aggregate the views on the quality of governance provided by a large number of enterprise, citizen and expert survey respondents in industrial and developing countries. These data are gathered from a number of survey institutes, think tanks, non-governmental organizations, and international organizations. The aggregate indicators do not reflect the official views of the World Bank, its Executive Directors, or the countries they represent. The WGI are not used by the World Bank Group to allocate resources or for any other official purpose."

the zone as a unit of administration. With the exception of the zones in the multiethnic Southern Nations' Nationalities' and Peoples' (SNNP) region and a few "Special Zones" for ethnic minority groups in other regions, this tier generally does not have an elected council. Rather, zonal administrators are assigned by the regional government and mostly provide administrative links between the region and the lower levels of government structure or act as oversight bodies.

Figure 4: Levels of government and types of elected bodies
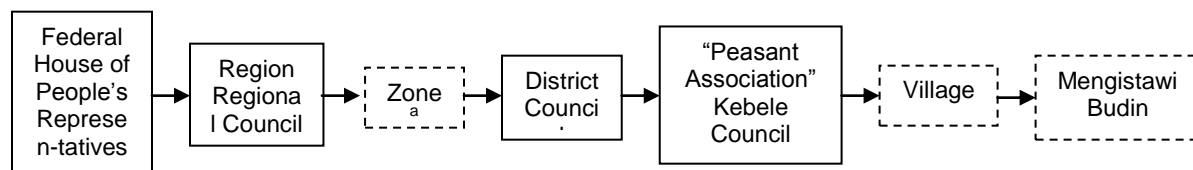
Source: Authors. *Note*: a. Some zones have elected bodies (see text).

Districts are contained in zones, and kebeles are contained in districts. Both levels of government have elected councils that appoint executive cabinets. Below kebeles are villages, which have an organic genesis rather than being administratively created units. However, villages are often a relevant unit for government initiatives and programs—including for drinking water infrastructure projects—at the local level. A yet smaller unit is the Mengistawi budin, or government team.[5] Mengistawi budin are collections of approximately 30 households, and are drawn on (through the team leaders) for the implementation of a range of government activities, including mobilizing household labor for community projects. At all levels of government structure where elected councils exist, elections are partisan, in that candidates for council seats belong to a political party. As discussed above however, the EPRDF has dominated nearly all government councils at all times since 1991.

Waves of decentralization

Since the EPRDF took power, governance and rural service provision have undergone two significant waves of decentralization. In 1992, the EPRDF-dominated transitional government issued a decree devolving significant administrative responsibilities to the regions. The federal and parallel regional constitutions firmly establish popular sovereignty, whereby leading governmental bodies at all administrative levels are subject to periodic elections. These constitutions provide citizens with access to services, the right to censure elected officials, and the right to participate in planning and budgeting decisions. Furthermore, first-round decentralization kept development of broad policy frameworks in the hands of the federal government, but made the regions responsible for implementation of policy, with broad

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[5] Recently, the mengistawi budin have been renamed *lemat budin,* which means "development team." Both terms are now interchangeably.

discretionary authority. Nevertheless, the first wave of decentralization was characterized by ongoing fiscal dependence on the federal government (Gebre-Egziabher and Berhanu, 2007). In practice, this limited the actual discretion that regional governments could exercise (World Bank, 2001).

During 2001 and 2002, Ethiopia began an ambitious second wave of decentralization, further devolving responsibility for many public goods and services to district governments in the four most populous regions (Amhara, Oromia, Tigray, and SNNP, in which 86 percent of Ethiopians live). This has entailed redeployment of civil servants from the regions to the districts, a formal empowerment of district governments to hire and fire staff, and a substantial measure of autonomy in planning and budgeting. However, the district governments remain heavily dependent on the regional and federal governments for revenues, and total district government budget allocations are fixed according to formulas established at the higher levels. Moreover, allocations are reduced by the amount of additional revenues that districts may secure, for example, directly from donors (Dom and Mussa, 2006a and 2006b).

While district governments in theory have discretion over the sectoral allocation of expenditures and the allocation of resources among their kebeles, they receive planning targets from the regional governments that in practice are much more than indicative (Gebre-Egziabher and Berhanu, 2007; Dom and Mussa, 2006a and 2006b).

One important aspect of the second wave of decentralization has been to bring governance closer to citizens and to expand voice and participation in decision making. The process has sought to make the district governments into nodes in which bottom-up and top-down modes of planning and accountability meet and are harmonized. However, the combination of budget ceilings and strong planning guidance from above tends to trump these downward accountability processes. Gebre-Egziabher and Berhanu (2007: 48) observe that "the omnipresence of the ruling party and its functionaries in all spheres and at all levels has made the organs to adhere to its organizational programs and preferences. In other words, the Ethiopian decentralization drive is centrally controlled in spite of the fact that it appears to be a form of political devolution." As a result, they add (2007: 49), power is deconcentrated, but not truly devolved, a point that is "corroborated by the fact that the ruling party that is prone to upward accountability dominates the entire realm of political governance at all levels."

An important aspect of service provision throughout the country is mobilization of community labor (and sometimes financial) contributions. In most of the country these are treated as voluntary, although in practice they are mandatory. In the Tigray region, labor contributions are explicitly treated as a compulsory tax. Labor contributions play an essential role in the construction and maintenance of conservation works, roads, and drinking water systems, as

well as in reforestation efforts. Too often, ostensibly participatory rural development programs in Ethiopia have the character of "stone-carrying participation."

3.2 Strategies to promote gender equity

Table 2 presents gender-related indicators for Ethiopia and, for comparison, for Sub-Saharan Africa. The scores indicate that Ethiopia's record is on average relatively good with regard to gender-related mortality due to sex-selective care of infants, restrictivions on movement and dress codes, and legal abolishment of polygamy (although in practice polygyny is quite prevalent in some regions). Legal provisions on violence against women, in contrast, are much weaker, and the prevalence of female genital mutilation is very high, and stands in strong contrast to the much lower extent of this practice in Sub-Saharan Africa as a whole. Women's— and in particular, married women's— access to credit is limited.

Table 2: Social Institutions and Gender Indicators (SIGI) 2009, Score 0–1

Indicator	Ethiopia	SSA
Son preference ("missing women")	0.00	0.03
Obligation to wear a veil in public	0.00	0.07
Freedom to move freely outside of the house	0.00	0.17
Acceptance or legality of polygamy within a society	0.00	0.76
% of girls 15-19 years old who are currently married, divorced or widowed	0.30	0.30
Women's access to property other than land	0.50	0.44
Women's access to land ownership	0.50	0.59
Parental Authority granted to father and mother equally	0.50	0.63
Inheritance practices in favour of male heirs	0.50	0.63
Existence of laws against (i) domestic violence, (ii) sexual assault or rape, and (iii) sexual harassment	0.75	0.66
Prevalence of Female Genital Mutilation	0.80	0.31
Women's access to bank loans	1.00	0.50

Source: OECD Social Institutions and Gender (SIGI) database. *Note*: a. Zero represents full equality or gender-sensitivity, 1 represents maximum discrimination or absence of gender sensitivity.

To address the problem of gender inequality in Ethiopian society, the government of Ethiopia has implemented a range of strategies, which are summarized in Table A-4 in the Annex 1. In 1993, the government introduced the National Policy on Women (NPW) for Ethiopia, and in the 1995 Constitution, it enshrined equality between men and women. Among the major objectives of the NPW are creating conducive conditions to ensure equality between men and women so that women can participate in the political, social, and economic decisions of their country, and

facilitating the necessary condition for rural women to have access to basic social services. The policy is also intended to create the appropriate structures within the government offices to establish and monitor the implementation of different gender-sensitive and equitable public policies. Two National Action Plans on gender issues were devised in 2000 and 2006, respectively, to achieve the objectives of the NPW (GoE, 2000; MoWA, 2006). The plans included steps to enhance rural women's access to and control over productive resources like land, extension, and credit.

Following the policy recommendation of creating an appropriate government structure, at the various tiers of government there are now ministries/bureaus/offices of women's affairs. At the federal level, the ministry for women's affairs is mainly responsible for conducting and monitoring women's affairs activities at the national level and creating the environment for the implementation of the NPW in different sectors. At the regional, zonal, district, and kebele level, there are respective offices (in the case of the kebele, a single individual in lieu of an office). As with the case of other line bureaus/offices, the women's affairs bureaus/offices are formally accountable to their respective councils, many of which have a women's affairs or social affairs committee that engages in oversight.

In addition to these agencies, in several of the sector/line ministries—for example, in agricultural and rural development, health, and education—there are departments, desks, or individual "focal points" focusing on gender issues concerning the respective sector. These exist from the federal to the district level. These are mandated to bring out issues of gender gaps and develop strategies to address inequalities in the line ministries and their subsectors respectively (AFDB, 2004).

The above-indicated structure of gender offices, as is the case in all sectors of the country, is also pertinent in the case of water. The women's affairs department of the Ministry of Water Resources (MoWR) is the gender focal point of the ministry. Similarly, in the Bureau of Water Resources (BoWR) at the regional level, gender focal persons are assigned in the respective women's affairs bureaus. The analogous holds at the district level, where WoWRs are established independently from the District offices of Agriculture and Rural Development.

The Ethiopian Water Resources Management Policy recognizes the importance of incorporating gender issues in the development of the water sector. The underlying thought emphasized is that water service provision should be equitable both to men and women. There needs to be a framework whereby women are able to have better involvement that ensures them better rights and benefits related to water services. Accordingly, the policy has a section on gender issues with the aim of "promoting the full involvement of women in planning, implementation, decision

making and training as well as empowering them to play a leading role in self-reliance initiatives"(MoWR, 2004).

Spring and Groelsema (2004) suggest that the government introduced gender budgeting at the district level as a way to hold public spending activities accountable to principles of gender equality. They say, however, that there is no information on the ground on the extent to which gender budgeting has been implemented. The ruling party has also incorporated within its statutes the participation of women through the formation of an EPRDF women's league to work for the implementation of its strategies of development and also to serve as "an agent of struggle to free Ethiopian women from all kinds of oppressions" (EPRDF, 2006). This may however be a relatively new focus, as EPRDF's five-year development plan for the period 1995–2000 did not mention women in the entire document (Vaughan and Tronvoll, 2003, citing Fekade 2000).

3.3 Governance of water supply

Access to clean drinking water is a serious problem in Ethiopia. In 2004, only 11% of the rural population had access to improved drinking water sources (WDI 2008). In the absence of such access, women must walk to the nearest river, lake, or stream to fetch water. In line with decentralization, different responsibilities for supplying drinking water are assigned to the different levels of government bodies to implement the Ethiopian water resource management policy. The federal ministry of water resources takes on national-level water management and is responsible for formulating policies for the water sector and for developing long-term policy strategies. At the regional and zonal level are the bureaus and zonal offices of water resources, respectively.

Until quite recently, water service provision was the responsibility of a "desk" within the WoARDs, i.e., a sub-cabinet agency that had to compete with other such agencies for resources, personnel, and policy attention. Now, districts have established woreda (district) offices of water resources (WoWR; in some districts these are called woreda offices of water, mines, and energy) to provide drinking water and hygiene education services, among others. These offices have the status of technical agencies within the district government, so the office head is not considered a full member of the district cabinet. In some districts, the district cabinet members are elected members of the district council, even if they also have professional training in their areas of competence and rose through the civil service ranks. The limited capital budgets of district governments constrain their ability to fund construction of new drinking water systems. This often leads to a breakdown in communities' trust in the district government as promised systems do not get built.

Drinking water technicians are posted at district capitals, and focus on training kebele residents who serve on local water committees. The committees are expected to organize users of improved and protected drinking water systems, carry out programs of health and hygiene education, establish fee schedules and collection, hire guards for the security of the water facility and other necessary personnel, and mobilize users for operation and maintenance of the system. WoWR staff is available for more difficult repairs and can help with access to spare parts, but the local committees are supposed to achieve a degree of self-reliance. WoWRs often have limited access to vehicles, do not maintain regular contact with the committees, and do not evaluate their performance.

The training of water committees is technically focused, with members expected to figure out how to mobilize the community, encourage payment of fees, and promote maintenance of systems more or less on their own. This tends to work better in Tigray than in many other regions, as Tigray has a strong tradition of political mobilization and self-reliance dating back to the anti-Derg struggle.

4. THE DATA

This study draws on quantitative household/individual-level surveys which were undertaken jointly by the Ethiopian Economic Policy Research Institute and the International Food Policy Research Institute.

Selection of districts for the household/individual-level surveys: Eight districts (or four district pairs) were selected, located in seven regions. These pairs were chosen so that in each pair would consist of two districts that are nearby each other but belong to different regions. Of the two regions associated with a district pair, one is in a "leading" region in which local-level decentralization has taken place, and the other in a "lagging," or "emerging," region which has not yet experienced local level decentralisation. There are three such district pairs; the fourth pair consists of a district in the Amhara region and one in the Tigray region. Both are considered leading regions, but local empowerment and community mobilization has a longer and distinct history in Tigray, making this an interesting and relevant comparison. For this given approach in district selection, a further criterion in this purposive method of district selection was that the districts be also part of another dataset which collects information at the district government level (e.g. public spending, local government capacity, etc) so that these two datasets can be linked and further analysis on public services and government capacity be undertaken in future research.

In the study, the eight districts will be referred to by the region in which they are located, and a "D". They are, then: Afar-D, Amhara-D2, Amhara-D3, Beneshangul Gumuz-D (or for short, BG-D), Gambella-D, Oromia-D, SNNP-D, Tigray-D. As there are three sites in Amhara region analyzed in this paper, they are distinguished as D1, D2, and D3. In Amhara-D1, only the qualitative research was conducted.

Sampling and surveys at the household/individual level: From each of the eight districts, four kebeles were randomly sampled. From each of the resulting 32 selected kebeles, 35 households were randomly drawn, resulting in a planned household sample size of 1,120. In each household, the questionnaire was administered separately to both the household head and the spouse

Quantitative kebele level surveys were also conducted in the same weredas as the households survey, with separate questionnaires for focus groups, wereda council members, kebele council members, kebele council speakers, kebele chairpersons, agricultural extension agents, heads of water committees, and heads of agricultural cooperatives. These data were not yet available at the time of this paper, and will be analyzed in subsequent studies.

The project also carried out qualitative case studies in five districts (four of which are a subset of the above mentioned eight districts). In each district, the research team conducted key informant interviews and focus group discussions in the district capital town and in one rural kebele.105 respondents were interviewed for the case studies. In the district capitals, the interviews took place with district government officials responsible for finance and budget, agricultural extension and women's affairs; the speaker of the district council; and leaders of the district women's association, the cooperative union, and the governing party of the district. At the kebele level, the research team interviewed agricultural extension agents; the kebele manager; the speaker of the kebele council; the kebele chairperson; members of the kebele cabinet responsible for agriculture and for women's affairs; leaders of the agricultural cooperative, the women's association, and the governing party; and male and female farmers. (See Mogues et al. (2009) for more detail on the data collection methodology.)

5. THE SHORT ROUTE OF ACCOUNTABILITY: HOUSEHOLDS, COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS, AND SERVICE PROVIDERS

This section uses the survey and case study data to analyze the short routes of accountability. Expressed in terms of the framework displayed in

Figure 2. This section examines the links between households and service providers (link HH-PS, and HH-NG), and community-based organizations (link HH-CO and HH-CO-PS) with regard to service provision. As explained in Section 2, community-based organizations can facilitate service provision by other organizations or act as service providers themselves.

The next subsection starts by presenting households' access to and satisfaction with services (arrow PS/NG – HH). Subsequently, the section deals with the extent to which households can hold service providers accountable (arrow HH-PS/NG), before discussing the role of community-based organizations.

Figure 5: Short route of accountability
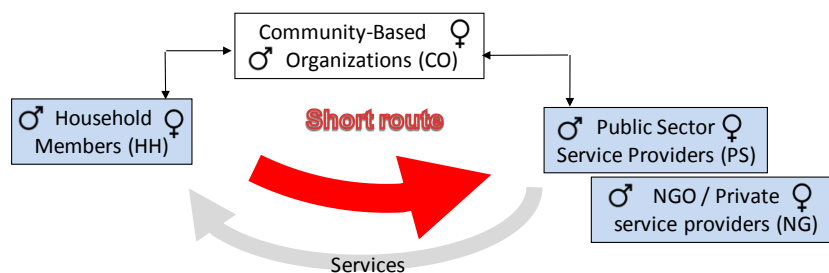
Source: Authors, based on World Bank (2004a).

5.1 Households' access to and satisfaction with drinking water supply

The large majority of households in the study areas primarily derive water for drinking from natural open sources: rivers, springs, ponds, or lakes. For 64% of households, this is the main drinking water source (

Figure 6). For improved drinking water sources, the public sector is the main provider. However, NGOs, the private sector, and donor agencies are very active in constructing water systems, and this was also the case in the study sites. Nevertheless, these actors were generally not involved in supporting operations and maintenance or the creation of user organizations, although this has occurred elsewhere in the country, and they did not attempt to engage community involvement.

Figure 6: Access to drinking water sources
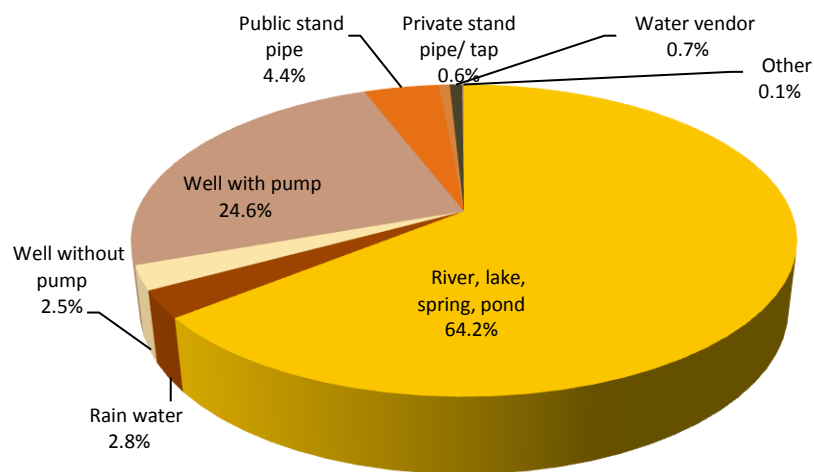
Source: EEPRI-IFPRI Survey, 2009.

Regarding the type of improved water sources, for their primary source a quarter of households use wells with pumps, and some 4% use public standpipes. Altogether, 32% of the households use water sources that are considered to be safe (wells with pumps, public or private stand pipes, taps and rainwater). While this information is for the wet season, the use of primary water sources appears to be remarkably stable across the wet and dry seasons, even though the diversification across water source types may change between wet and dry seasons.

However, what significantly changes across seasons is the time it takes to fetch water from different water facilities or sources (Table 3). For the most frequently used sources, which are unprotected sources such as rivers and ponds, it takes about an hour to fetch water during the wet season and an hour and a half during the dry season.

When asked about their satisfaction levels, the majority of respondents expressed satisfaction with the water they are able to get from their primary drinking water source (Figure 7). The satisfaction rate is somewhat higher during the wet season than during the dry season, and it is slightly higher with regard to the quantity of water, as opposed to its quality.

Figure 8 shows some gendered behavior and satisfaction with regard to water problems. Men are more likely to express their dissatisfaction to someone than women. This is the case even though in Ethiopia, as in nearly all countries, it is primarily women who are responsible for obtaining and handling the household's drinking water.

Table 3: Average time to get water from different water sources (in minutes)

Water source	Wet season	Dry Season
River, lake, spring, pond	58	91
Rainwater	6	–
Well without pump	243	84
Well with pump	71	82
Public standpipe	30	29
Household's private standpipe/ tap	3	3
Water vendor	63	80
Other	24	153

Source: EEPRI-IFPRI Survey, 2009.

Figure 7: Satisfaction with quantity and quality of drinking water supply

	Dry season		Wet season	

Dry season — Quantity of water: 9%, 20%, 27%, 44%
Dry season — Quality of water: 27%, 21%, 16%, 36%
Wet season — Quantity of water: 5%, 13%, 27%, 54%
Wet season — Quality of the water: 23%, 21%, 17%, 39%

Legend: Very Dissatisfied, Somewhat dissatisfied, Somewhat satisfied, Very satisfied
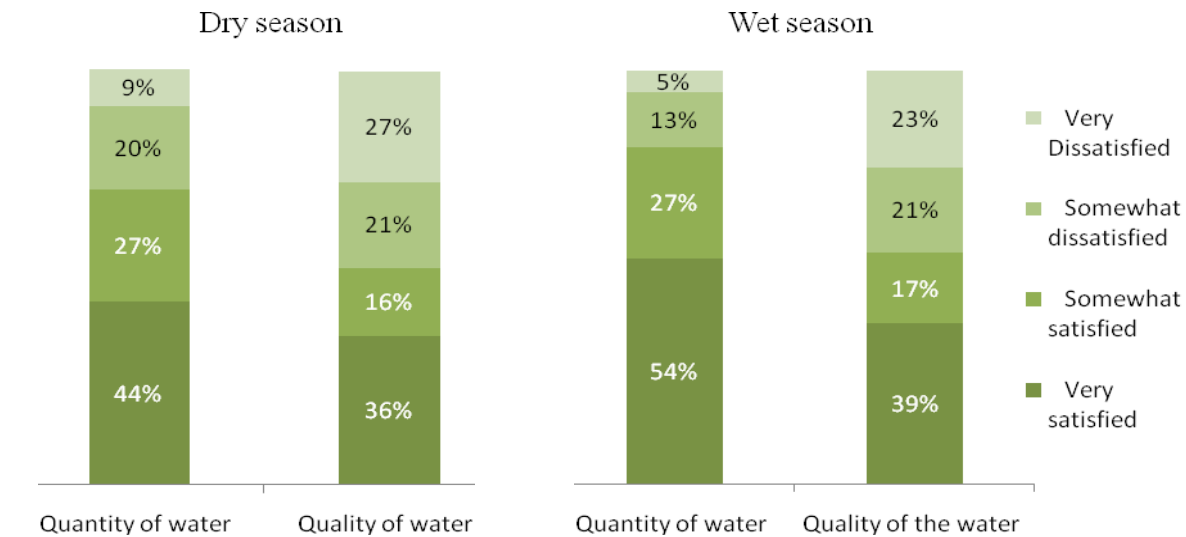
Source: EEPRI-IFPRI Survey, 2009

Table 4 analyzes the extent to which basic household characteristics and locational variables are correlated with measures of access to and satisfaction with drinking water supply, after controlling for other factors. The table shows, interestingly, that in cases where men responded to the question about which is the household's primary water source, they were less likely to identify an improved water source as the household's primary source.[6]

Figure 8: Tendency to complain whenever dissatisfied with drinking water facility

(Question: During the past 1 year, did you approach anyone when you were dissatisfied with the water quantity or quality?)

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[6] This question was only asked to the respondent if the respondent replied in an earlier question on who in the household has responsibility for fetching water that he or she has this responsibility or shares it with other household members.

Male respondents
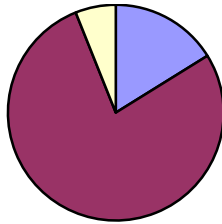
Yes □ No ■ Never been dissatisfied □

Female respondents

Yes □ No ■ Never been dissatisfied □

Source: EEPRI-IFPRI Survey, 2009.

Table 4: Factors associated with access to and satisfaction with drinking water sources

	Primary water source is improved source		Time taken to fetch water (minutes)		Dissatisfied with drinking water	
Gender	-0.287 *	-0.186	41.890	55.288	0.376	0.379
(1 = male)	(0.169)	(0.159)	(30.842)	(34.302) **	(0.606)	(0.582) *
Education	0.017	-0.038	-4.581	-13.062	0.104	0.197
(1 = literate)	(0.133)	(0.119) **	(5.93)	(6.458)	(0.117)	(0.107)
Respondent status	0.119	0.259	43.503	32.111	-0.524	-0.547
(1 = head, 0 = spouse)	(0.127) *	(0.115)	(39.095)	(43.903) ***	(0.786)	(0.751)
Wealth (No. of consumer	0.046	0.014	-1.518	-5.637	-0.020	0.015
asset types owned)	(0.024)	(0.02) **	(1.402) .	(1.444) .	(0.027) ***	(0.024) *
HH size (No. of	-0.019	-0.037	1.850	1.960	-0.049	-0.027
HH members)	(0.018)	(0.016)	(0.954)	(1.003)	(0.018) **	(0.016) **
Working age women	-0.010	0.002	-0.165	0.070	0.038	0.027
(% of HH members)	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.637)	(0.714)	(0.015) **	(0.013) *
Working age men	-0.010	0.000	0.178	0.718	0.038	0.025
(% of HH members)	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.642)	(0.719)	(0.015) **	(0.013)
Female dependents	-0.011	-0.001	0.059	0.330	0.040	0.027
(% of HH members)	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.619)	(0.694)	(0.015) ***	(0.013) **
Male dependents	-0.009	0.000	0.252	0.746	0.038	0.026
(% of HH members)	(0.009)	(0.009)	(0.613) ***	(0.687)	(0.015) ***	(0.013)
Afar-D	-0.334		176.958		1.032	
	(0.217)		(15.466)		(0.3)	
Amhara-D2	0.239		22.864		0.426	
	(0.182)		(12.075) .		(0.224) *	
Benesh. G.-D	-0.088		-5.244		0.988	
	(0.173)		(9.942)		(0.197) ***	
Gambella-D	0.437		38.115		0.602	
	(0.164) ***		(10.69) ***		(0.206) ***	
Oromia-D	-1.579		-4.090		0.837	
	(0.241) ***		(10.506)		(0.205) ***	
SNNP-D	-1.193		-8.599		1.506	
	(0.205) ***		(9.771)		(0.205) ***	
Tigray-D	0.165		20.416		-0.669	
	(0.185)		(12.877)		(0.295) **	
constant	0.595	-0.374	-5.753	-22.125	-4.411	-2.879 **
	(0.932)	(0.871)	(68.615)	(76.598)	(1.585) ***	(1.414)
No. of obs.	960		624		633	
			F-stat: 4.13 ***	13.6 ***	LR χ²:	
	LR χ²: 196.53 ***	18.86 **	Adj. R²: 0.245	0.043	114.46 ***	12.44

Source: Authors. *Note*: Standard errors in parentheses. * significant at 10%; ** significant at 5%; *** significant at 1% level. LR χ² refers to the likelihood ratio chi-square test. Excluded district = Amhara-D3.

This may suggest that the (small) proportion of men who share in the task of collecting water do so mostly in cases where the household's primary water use is from unimproved sources. In the

model that accounts for the study sites, the wealth status of the respondent's household is positively and significantly correlated with the use of improved water.

Also unsurprisingly, individuals in larger households state longer water-fetching times. As this measure captures the entire time taken for getting water, including travel and time spent to collect water at the source, this time is plausibly longer for larger households with greater water needs. Individuals residing in Afar-D, an arid lowland region, spend substantially more time getting water than individuals elsewhere in the study area. Residents of this site are also more likely to be dissatisfied with water services and infrastructure than almost any other location. Interestingly, after controlling for household size and household composition (which appear to be significantly correlated with satisfaction), the other factors that could have been intuitively hypothesized to correlate with expressions of dissatisfaction—such as gender, education, and wealth—do not emerge as significant in this analysis.

5.2 Priorities regarding service provision

What is quite notable when examining what households in the study sites stated as services of greatest concern is that men's and women's priority problems are quite in line with each other. For both, drinking water supply emerges as the most important problem, although women stated drinking water as the most significant problem for their communities with somewhat greater frequency (see

Table 5). For both men and women, health facilities and services ranked as the second-most-frequently mentioned area of most important concern. Issues with electricity access and road infrastructure are, broadly, the third-most-often cited sectors of priority concern for men and women. Notably, while education as a public service could have been expected to be relevant for many households, in light of the government's significant push to substantially increase primary-grade enrollment in rural areas and thus a likelihood that many respondents' children go to school, only a small percentage of respondents referred to education facilities and services as the top concern.

Table 5: Identification of public services of greatest concern, by gender

(Percent citing public service as being the greatest concern)

Public service/Infrastructure:	Men	Women	Diff. sign.
Drinking water	31%	34%	
Sanitation/drainage	0%	0%	
Small-scale irrigation	1%	0%	*
Health	17%	19%	
Education	5%	3%	
Electricity	16%	11%	**
Roads	14%	12%	**
Livelihood opportunities	2%	3%	**

Source: Authors. *Note*: * significant at 10%; ** significant at 5% level.

With regard to drinking water, the type and severity of specific problems faced seemed to have changed over the long term. Those who ranked water supply as the main concern were asked, both seven years ago and today, what type of water problems were encountered, and the concern appears to have shifted importantly away from water quality to water quantity, for both women and men (Figure 9). Nearly none of the respondents identified inadequate collection of user fees as a problem with water services; the few who did were mostly men. This may either reflect the efficiency and organization of fee collection, or perhaps more likely, that the respondents did not consider how this may link to the quality and quantity of the water they receive.

Figure 9: Particular concerns with drinking water supply

(gender-disaggregated, change over time)
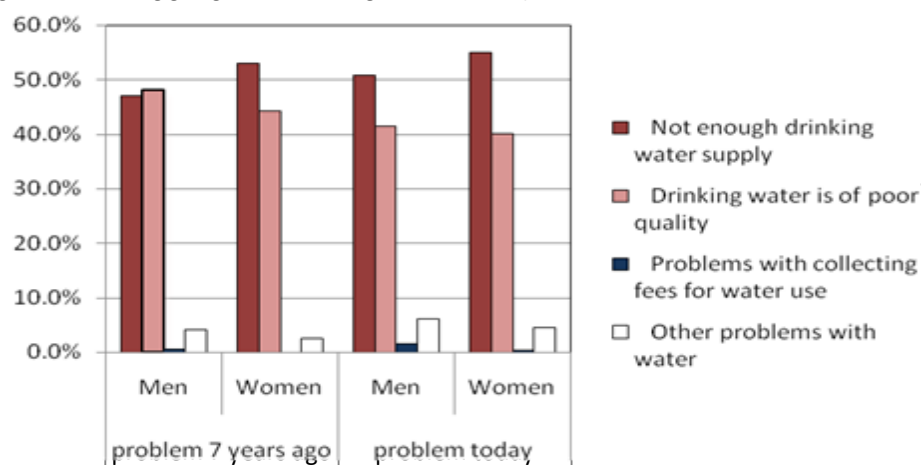
Source: EEPRI-IFPRI Survey, 2009.

Interestingly, and perhaps somewhat surprisingly in light of the geographic dispersion of the study sites, the priority concerns across these sites are not all that strongly divergent. Across most areas, access to drinking water stands out as the most often stated top problem (Table 6). Clear exceptions are the Tigray and Southern Region sites, where "hard" infrastructure such as electricity and roads are prioritized over water. This is particularly acute in the study site in Afar, an arid lowland. Health services rank second in most locations.

Table 6: Identification of public services with greatest problem, by region

(Percentage stating the public service as having greatest problem)

	Afar-D	Amhara-D2	Amhara-D3	Benesh. G-D	Gambella-D	Oromia-D	SNNP-D	Tigray-D
Drinking water	65%	29%	25%	35%	28%	36%	19%	34%
Sanitation/drainage	1%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Small irrigation	1%	3%	0%	0%	2%	0%	0%	1%
Health	21%	31%	22%	31%	8%	9%	11%	14%
Education	1%	8%	3%	3%	1%	9%	2%	5%
Electricity	0%	10%	21%	7%	6%	6%	16%	40%
Roads	0%	10%	22%	9%	6%	8%	33%	1%
Livelihood opportunities	2%	4%	4%	1%	2%	1%	6%	3%

Source: EEPRI-IFPRI Survey, 2009.

Considering the comparison of households by socioeconomic status—by literacy and by wealth—there are differences in the way that the better-off and the less-advantaged prioritize

their problems. Both the nonliterate and the poor identify drinking water as the community's greatest challenge by a wider margin than do the literate and wealthier households (Table 7). On the other hand, the share of the better-off households pointing to poor road infrastructure and insufficient access to electricity services as the greatest concern is substantially larger than the equivalent share of the more-disadvantaged. While in general few respondents point to education as being their primary problem, the better-off respondents state so at a rate double that of the less-well-off.

Table 7: Identification of public services with greatest problem, by socioeconomic status
(Percent stating public service as having greatest problem)

	Education status		Wealth status[a]	
Public service/ infrastructure:	Literate	Illiterate	Nonpoor	Poor
Drinking water	28%	34%	28%	36%
Sanitation/drainage	0%	0%	0%	0%
Small-scale irrigation	1%	1%	1%	1%
Health	17%	19%	18%	15%
Education	6%	3%	7%	3%
Electricity	14%	8%	17%	13%
Roads	16%	6%	15%	11%
Livelihood opportunities	2%	1%	3%	3%

Source: EEPRI-IFPRI Survey, 2009. *Note*: a. Wealth status is proxied by owning at least one ox.

5.3 Service providers: capacity, constraints, incentives, and accountability

5.3.1 Interaction between service providers and households

The study found that rural residents have a variety of channels for grievances—which is one way to create accountability in service provision via the 'short route'—in the Amhara and Tigray sites. Farmers in Amhara-K1 said that they usually take complaints to the kebele chairperson, who heads the executive branch of government. Certain disputes, such as those over land use, may go to the local court (composed of citizen judges), which in turn may refer issues to the traditional elders' council for advice or resolution. In addition, one farmer emphasized, "I have the right to go to the district government." Also, in Tigray-K, the speaker of the kebele council said that citizens sometimes seek redress from the council. In Tigray-D and Amhara-D3 and the corresponding kebeles, a number of interviewees pointed to grievance committees attached to the government's Productive Safety Net Program, noting that citizens who believe they are eligible but are not enrolled have successfully appealed to get into the program. In all, there do appear to be effective recourse mechanisms for certain types of complaints in Amhara and Tigray. In BG-D and Oromia-D, in contrast, grievance systems do not work well. In Oromia-D,

there are many land disputes, and citizens feel that governance structures do not help resolve these. In BG-D, people take dispute resolution into their own hands rather than relying on the legal system, as this is a "faster" way to get satisfaction.

However, in the specific case of water services, at nearly all of the study sites the interaction of water committees (as service providers) with the communities was problematic. In Amhara-K3, BG-K, and Oromia-K, the water committees tended to be dysfunctional. Water committees were unable to persuade residents to properly maintain systems or pay fees. The water systems eventually collapsed, as did the water committees. In Amhara-K3, BG-K, and Oromia-K, water users often simply vote with their feet when they have grievances over drinking water governance: they continue to fetch water from traditional sources. Of course, this puts a heavy physical and time burden on women, and frequently has negative health consequences. In these sites, the water committees also received little support from the WoWRs.

The situation was somewhat better in Tigray-K, where a number of mechanisms existed through which users could hold water committees accountable. The head of the local women's association, who is also a member of the regional council, was very active in raising questions about water service provision. As is customary in Tigray, water committees and users frequently engage in the process of criticism and self-criticism (gimgema). But even here there were many conflicts about water fees and labor and financial contributions for developing new water systems. Specifically, water users were dissatisfied with water service provision on grounds of fairness; some communities obtain free systems from the district, while others do not, and fees are regarded as unreasonable). However, the leader of the local women's association, who complained about some of these fairness issues, pointed out that the government had done a good job in improving things for women with respect to water, noting that most women had received free jerry cans that are easier to fill and carry than traditional water vessels.

5.3.2 Accountability within public sector service providers

Funding

District and kebele administrations remain heavily dependent on the regional and federal governments for revenues, so the latter exert tremendous influence over service provision. While district governments are able to exercise some discretion over the sectoral and territorial allocation of funds, they cannot affect the total. In all study districts, district finance, planning, and budget offices play a major role in aggregating sectoral plans and budgets and taking kebele priorities into account in devising overall district plans and budgets. In Amhara-D3 and Oromia-D, it was clear that local priorities too often fell through the cracks in this aggregation process. In Oromia-D, the scarcity of capital project funds put especially severe constraints on

service provision, and these resulted in great dissatisfaction with the district government in Oromia-K. In all study districts, recurrent expenses, mainly in the form of staff salaries and benefits, account for the vast bulk of expenditures. In BG-D, being in a region where decentralization to the district level has not yet occurred, the district government is explicitly an implementing agency for the regional government, without even nominal discretion over policy and expenditures.

Planning, service standards and human resource management

The federal MoARD and MoWR provide the overall policy framework governing water service provision. This may include technical standards as well as on how to engage communities in planning and management (Cohen, Rocchigiani, and Garrett 2008). Within federal policy parameters, the relevant regional bureaus offer planning guidance to the districts. In all study districts, officials said that on one hand, this is strictly indicative, but on the other hand, senior district government officials are evaluated by the regions on whether or not they meet these targets. In Oromia-D, officials complained that regional targets make no reference to kebele needs and priorities and that budgetary resources received from the region are inadequate to meet regional targets.

The new position of kebele manager, created as part of the "good governance" initiative in the wake of the 2005 elections, adds another accountability mechanism. This official is the chief civil servant of the kebele, and all other staff report to her or him. The manager is available to residents 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The manager in Tigray-K instituted a suggestion box and meets frequently with residents on any and every issue. Managers are accountable to the district Office of Capacity Building.

To ensure that gender is duly taken into account in the planning process, many districts have established a system of gender desks or focal points within sectoral offices. This provides the district office of women's affairs with a point of contact in each sectoral office and is supposed to guarantee that the office will review budgets, plans, and operations through a gender lens. In looking at the implementation of this system across the study districts, there was considerable variation in its effectiveness. There seems to be an assumption that gender is a women's concern. Gender focal points in the study districts were all women, and in some instances rather junior staff members (there were male professional staff in some district offices of women's affairs, however). In Tigray-D, the deputy head of the office of women's affairs said that gender is mainstreamed in all planning activities, so the focal point system is somewhat redundant. Her office organizes gender training for senior staff in all sectoral offices, carries out gender audits, and regularly reviews planning activities from a gender perspective. The study also identified

challenges related to human resource management. Staff costs absorb most budget resources, and in Amhara-D3, BG-D, and Oromia-D, senior officials complained that resources were inadequate to hire sufficient numbers of staff and people with adequate professional qualifications. In Amhara-D3 and BG-D, a high rate of staff turnover exacerbates these problems.

5.3.3 Interactions among service providers

In Amhara-D3, the private sector and NGOs were active in constructing water systems, but not in operating them. In BG-D, NGOs were a source of water services. In Amhara-K3, members of a water committee complained about lack of consultation on the siting and construction of water points and about the failure of those involved in construction to draw on local knowledge about water sources, often with the result that systems did not function properly. Accountability is to the district government in Amhara-D3 and to the regional government in BG-D, not to local water users.

The Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) Coalition—a multistakeholder initiative that includes several NGOs and is supported by a variety of donors, including UNICEF and USAID—has played an important role in the construction of water systems. NGOs have established water systems that include more-active user groups (for example, a congress of users that meets annually or semiannually. However, there was no such body in any of the study communities.

5.4 Community-based organizations for water supply: Water committees

Local water committees, which function as both provider and user organizations, were the main source of water services in the study kebeles, even though, as mentioned above, many households continue to rely on unimproved river, spring, or lake water. In the study area, local water committees register users based on willingness to pay fees and participate in construction, operations, and maintenance activities. In Tigray-D, there are some cooperatives that focus on providing spare parts for water systems, but this was not the norm among the study sites.

Water committees comprise users of a water facility and are from the same community as the remaining members of the user group for that facility. They thus are meant to have direct contact with the group of facility users and to ensure that the users follow the rules set out for the facility, such as rules regarding paying water user fees, labor contributions for maintenance and small repairs, and so on. However, despite these responsibilities, water committees do not

receive training in community organizing or public speaking and persuasion, and so often have difficulty persuading households as to the advantages of protected water systems and paying fees to support them. In Amhara-D3, BG-D, and Oromia-D, the water committees receive little support from district water offices.

Local water committees are chosen by the district government, sometimes with recommendations from the local community. In Amhara-K3, a district government health worker deployed to the kebele sat on one such water committee. Although the members of this committee and many other informants reported that it was the best-functioning water committee in the kebele, it was difficult to ascertain whether the presence of a civil servant on the body was decisive in this regard. Aside from its involvement in the formation of water committees, district governments were also found undertaking efforts to change cultural norms about the gender distribution of the burden of collecting water from unimproved sources or facilities. For example, in Amhara-D3, posters in district government offices exhorted men to share in the burden of procuring water for their families.

Water committee members vary in their willingness and capacity to persuade users of the value of using improved water sources instead of river, lake, and unprotected spring sources. In all study sites, the water committees had female members, but all had male leaders except in BG-D. Water committees do not generally receive training in community mobilization in addition to technical issues.

In principle, local water committees are expected to collect fees from registered users to support operations, maintenance, and staffing (mainly guards to prevent damage and use by unregistered users). Water committee members at all study sites complained that community members object to paying even very minimal fees. In Tigray-K, residents expressed concern that the fees were actually taxes that would merely go into the district government's coffers without benefiting the community. In Amhara-K3, many residents were unwilling to pay fees when they could obtain water for free from unprotected sources. In BG-D and Oromia-D, fees generally go uncollected.

As with soil and water conservation activities, communities are expected to contribute labor toward the construction of water systems. In Tigray-K, the district government also asked for financial contributions, due to the lack of adequate capital budget resources. Farmers objected to this demand as unfair, since district officials had not asked other villages within the kebele to contribute money and labor toward construction of water systems.

The case studies revealed that at most sites there were many complaints about water services. These included lack of availability and strong perceptions of unfairness. The latter revolved

around the level of fees (Amhara-K3), whether villages should contribute financially to construction when their neighbors did not have to do so for previously constructed systems (Tigray-K), and whether the fees would go to the district government rather than supporting operations and maintenance (Tigray-K). Where the water committees were able to persuade users of the value of fees and protected water sources, as in Tigray-K, there was usually substantial community buy-in, but where water committees did not engage in effective mobilization of users around "owning" the systems, these often fell into disrepair (for example, in Amhara-K3). In Amhara-K3, some users withdrew their registrations over issues of unfairness, even where water committees attempted to carry out hygiene education.

Residents in Amhara-K3 also complained that organizations that constructed water systems did not draw on local knowledge in site selection or design. This contributed to the breakdown of several local systems. One was not properly sited at "the eye of the water" (that is, the source). Construction contractors also ignored social issues. Another system was located on a farm plot. The farmer insisted that he should be appointed the water guard to compensate for the loss of some of his land.

6. THE LONG ROUTE OF ACCOUNTABILITY: POLITICAL REPRESENTATIVES AND THEIR LINKAGES

This section focuses on the long route of accountability. In terms of the expanded framework presented in Section 2, it focuses on the role of the local political representatives with the households (link HH-LP), with service providers (link LP-PS), and with political parties (link LP-PP) (see Figure 10).

Figure 10: Long route of accountability
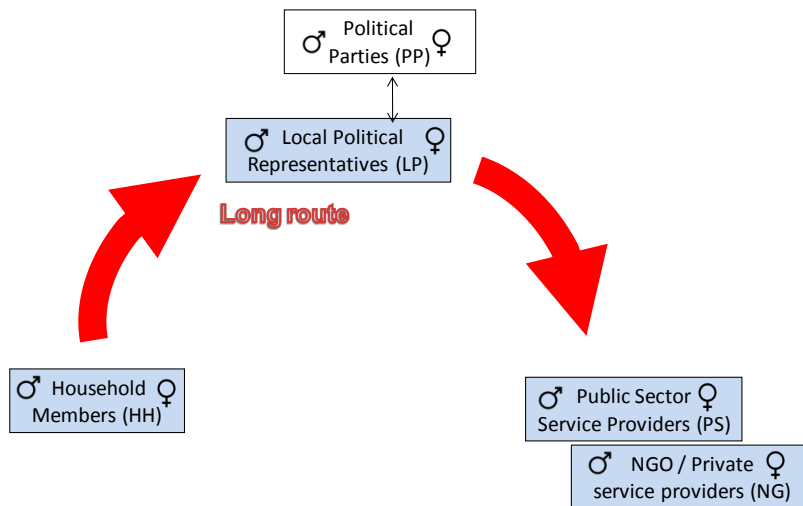
Source: World Bank (2004a), adapted by authors.

6.1 Local political representatives' relationship to households Knowledge, and access to information

An important, but insufficient, condition for rural residents' ability to hold both local governments and service providers accountable for the quality of public services in their area is the extent to which they have access to general information about local and national matters, and thus access to regular sources of information such as media and telecommunication devices. As Figure 11 shows, use of media sources and telecommunication tools, whether access to them is through one's own devices or through others', to be highly constrained, and for the more common information sources, even more constrained for women. For example, only slightly more than half and slightly more than a quarter of men and women, respectively have listened to a radio in the past 12 months. For television, these figures are 13% and 6% for men and women, respectively, and for newspapers, the figures are half these rates. The number of respondents who make use of the remaining forms of media is dwindling small.

Figure 11: Share of respondents who have used a type of media in the past year

Legend:
- Men
- Women

Categories (x-axis): Radio, News-paper, Cell-phone, Land line phone, TV, Inter-net
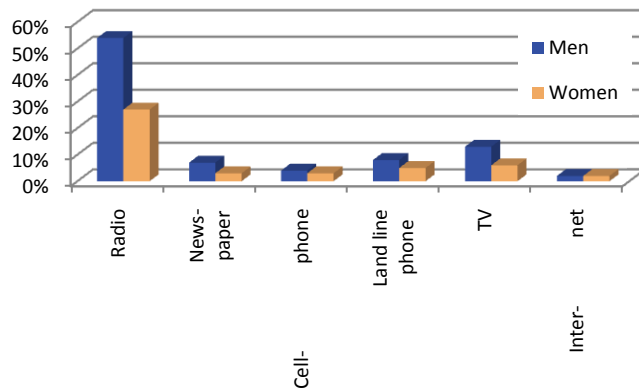
Source: EEPRI-IFPRI Survey, 2009.

Certainly, accessing these sources of information and communication require complementary assets and endowments—for example, private physical assets such as radios and mobile phones and public services and infrastructure such as landline access in the community. Human capital such as literacy is needed to read newspapers, and financial resources are required to pay for services offered by rural businesses such as phone centers. All of these assets are in short supply in the study area. Furthermore, even where farmers have access to such low-cost media as radios, most stations that reach rural areas are controlled by the government or EPRDF (U.S. State Department, 2009).

Participation in meetings

The research team was able to observe a number of meetings in kebeles with local and district officials. In Tigray-K and a neighboring kebele, the meetings were very well attended, although it appeared to the team that district government officials did most of the talking. Participation in civic affairs is well institutionalized in the Tigray region, and citizens are willing to air grievances in such meetings.

In contrast, the team attended a meeting to discuss the annual development plan in Amhara-K3. Very few residents attended, and the kebele leaders went door to door trying to round up participants. Interestingly, later that same day the team attended a worship service for the feast of St. Michael at a church in same kebele. Although the church was well off the main road (unlike the meeting area in the kebele center), and was only accessible by footpath up a steep mountainside, hundreds of people were present (including most of the local political leaders). Evidently, residents felt that the assembly (which consisted of a public reading of the district's plan) offered no benefit, whereas the church service offered a meal and perhaps spiritual sustenance in the eyes of a community of devout Orthodox Christians.

Participation has a cost; farmers' time and labor are not free, and they will not attend meetings if they do not perceive a benefit to doing so. The reading of a precooked plan offers few benefits in the middle of harvest time. Even in less busy times, farmers may prefer to do other things, such as meet with neighbors to discuss farming issues and exchange seeds or work at crafts that can generate supplemental income.

In both Amhara-D3 and Oromia-D, officials say that low rates of participation in meetings demonstrate that participation is no longer coerced, as in the past, when local governments fined citizens for failure to show up. Yet officials do not analyze why citizens do not find participation beneficial and seek to ameliorate the situation.

Voting in elections

Generally speaking, the most explicit form of holding service providers accountable through the long route (see

Figure 2) is through the most common form of political participation, namely voting in political elections, as discussed above. The bottom panel of Table 8 suggests very high political participation through voting in the study area, and while there is a substantial gender gap in voting, women too report very high rates of participation in elections, with participation being larger the more local the election. The vast majority (nine-tenths) of male respondents and three-quarters of female respondents report having voted some time in their life in elections at the lowest tier, the kebele. At the highest level, still 65% of men and more than half of women report that they ever voted in federal elections in their lifetime.

Placing these results within Ethiopia's political history (including the history preceding the current government dating back to the Derg period) points to the limitation of deriving strong conclusions about the free exercise of voice—and the effective use of the long route of accountability—from high participation in elections. In addition to the necessary but insufficient condition of relatively competitive elections for the basic narrative of the long route to hold, and for participation in elections to be a measure of the extent of citizens' exercise of voice, a further

helpful condition is that political participation through elections be voluntary. As the literature on Ethiopian electoral practice suggests, neither condition appears to hold (Lefort, 2007; Pausewang et al. 2002; Aalen and Tronvoll, 2008).

Table 8: Political participation

	Men	Women	Diff. sign
Ever voted in local, regional and national elections	% of respondents		
Kebele election	91%	76%	***
District election	89%	74%	***
Regional election	65%	51%	***
Federal election	65%	51%	**
Ever attended a meeting organized by the kebele council	24%	5%	***
Ever attended a meeting organized at the district level	12%	3%	***

Source: EEPRI-IFPRI Survey, 2009. *Note*: ** significant at 5%; *** significant at 1% level.

EPRDF-affiliated and associated parties secured virtually all of the seats at stake in the 2008 kebele and district council elections. The government disqualified many opposition party and independent candidates (Aalen and Tronvoll, 2008). In Tigray-D and Amhara-D3, party and government officials told the team that the party consulted local residents before putting candidate slates together. Given that the contest was essentially a one-party race, party officials said that it was important for individual office seekers to have community support.

The local wings of the party organized around demographic groups, in particular around women and youth, were found to be relatively active. Women leaders in both Tigray-K and Amhara-K3 viewed the local party women's league as creating space where women could meet and discuss issues and problems among themselves.

Table 9 examines the correlates of community and political participation, as in the other regressions focusing on core household and individual demographic and socioeconomic characteristics, as well as locational variables. Several of these factors are significantly related to political and community participation. The gender of the respondent emerges as a strong indicator of the likelihood of participation in elections and attendance at community meetings, even after controlling for several other factors that may drive such participation. These other factors, especially the literacy status of the respondent, the wealth status, whether the respondent is a head of household (for participation in community meetings), and even household size are strong indicators of these forms of participation, with the more educated people, wealthier individuals, and heads of households engaging more in political elections and community meetings.

The extent of such participation also varies by location, after controlling for these household/individual attributes. Afar-D is the area in which individuals participate the least by far in political and community activities, which is quite consistent with the other findings pointing to low engagement with, and access to, local services and events. (In many cases, given the institutional underdevelopment in this area, this is quite likely due to the absence of these activities, as opposed to solely due to a predisposition to not participate). Interestingly, the greatest likelihood of respondents participating in elections and their participation in community meetings, is in Amhara-D2 and in SNNP-D, respectively—and not in Tigray-D, where one could have expected vibrant local engagement of citizens, in light of Tigray's legacy of such engagement and also in light of the qualitative findings discussed above.

Table 9: Factors associated with voting in local elections and community participation

	Has ever voted in local (district and kebele) elections				Number of types of local community meetings attended			
Gender	0.614	***	0.582	***	0.263	**	0.333	***
(1 = male)	(0.13)		(0.122)		(0.121)		(0.127)	
Education	0.408	***	0.450	***	0.461		0.507	
(1 = literate)	(0.116)		(0.109)		(0.087)	***	(0.091)	***
Respondent status	0.074		-0.002		0.771	***	0.646	***
(1 = head, 0 = spouse)	(0.125)	**	(0.115)	***	(0.121)		(0.126)	
Wealth (No. of consumer	0.051		0.085		0.114	***	0.103	***
asset types owned)	(0.023)	***	(0.02)	**	(0.018)		(0.018)	
HH size	0.060		0.033		0.060		0.018	
(No. of HH members)	(0.017)		(0.015)		(0.012)	***	(0.012)	***
Working age women	-0.008		-0.004		-0.030		-0.026	
(% of HH members)	(0.01)		(0.009)		(0.007)	***	(0.008)	***
Working age men	-0.011		-0.006		-0.034		-0.030	
(% of HH members)	(0.01)		(0.009)		(0.007)	***	(0.008)	***
Female dependents	-0.013		-0.009		-0.033		-0.029	
(% of HH members)	(0.01)		(0.009)		(0.007)	***	(0.007)	***
Male dependents	-0.010		-0.008		-0.033		-0.031	
(% of HH members)	(0.009)	***	(0.009)		(0.007)	***	(0.007)	
Afar-D	-0.636				-1.296			
	(0.155)	***			(0.166)	**		
Amhara-D2	1.211				0.368			
	(0.218)				(0.146)	***		
Benesh. G.-D	0.214				-0.562			
	(0.151)				(0.139)			
Gambella-D	0.200				0.200			
	(0.144)				(0.141)	***		
Oromia-D	0.069				-0.572			
	(0.154)	***			(0.143)	***		
SNNP-D	0.920				0.755			
	(0.172)	***			(0.136)			
Tigray-D	0.474				0.220			
	(0.156)				(0.144)	***		
constant	0.870		0.778		3.593		3.471	***
	(0.945)		(0.878)		(0.699)		(0.74)	
No. of obs.	1,732				1766			
	LR χ²: 276.04	***	151.46	***	F-stat: 38.52	***	36.35	***
Adj. R²:					0.254		0.152	

Source: Authors*. Note*: Standard errors in parentheses. * significant at 10%; ** significant at 5%; *** significant at 1% level. Excluded district = Amhara-D3. LR χ² refers to the likelihood ratio chi-square test.

Direct interaction with political representatives

At the individual level, holding a position of leadership in the community—being the head of or holding some other lead position in the local funeral society (iddir), leading the women's association or the youth association, being a member in the kebele council, and so on—may allow the individual to have a strengthened voice within the community on the kinds of decisions regarding services and infrastructure in which community members may partake. It is therefore of interest to assess the extent to which women and men tend to hold such positions, and the extent to which they have relatives with such positions through whom they can exercise their voice.

In the study area, only a very small fraction of women (4%) hold or have ever held a village/community lead position (Table 10). In contrast, nearly one-third of male respondents have or had some local position. Similarly, in the case of those who reported having a relative who holds or in the past held a local lead position, 2% of such relatives were women.

Table 10: Social capital and local leadership

	Men	Women	Diff.
	% of respondents		sign
Extent of leadership role of respondents and their relatives:			
Hold or have ever held official or traditional lead position	31%	4%	***
Any living relatives (not including spouses) that hold or have ever held official or traditional lead position	27%	19%	**
Gender of the relative who has a lead position (% female)	2%		—
Respondents' connectedness with local leaders:			
Spoke personally to the following local leader within the last year			
Religious leader of this village	71%	58%	***
Extension agent	49%	30%	***
Kebele chair	69%	41%	***
Community elder	63%	49%	***
Head of iddir (funeral society)	26%	12%	***
Head of agricultural cooperative	15%	7%	***
Water committee member	12%	5%	***
District council member	15%	3%	***
Kebele council member	26%	8%	***
Local party leader	17%	7%	***

Source: EEPRI-IFPRI Survey, 2009. *Note*: ** significant at 5%; *** significant at 1% level.

While being in a position of local leadership oneself, or having a relative in such a position, may likely to lead more directly to an enhanced ability to exercise voice relative to regular residents on matters pertaining to the community's development, being well acquainted and socially connected to those in a local senior position could contribute indirectly to having relatively enhanced ability to influence private or community access to services and public resources. The extent of social or professional connectedness of men and women with different locally leading figures show that women have consistently and substantially less personal interactions with such individuals. The gender gap in interactions with religious leaders and community elders is somewhat less stark (the female-male ratio in the proportion who interacted with these local leaders is 0.82 and 0.77, respectively). However, in the case of local political representatives, notably district and kebele council members and local party leaders, the gender discrepancy in

social interaction with these local leaders is very large: the female-male ratios for these types of local agents is 0.21, 0.29, and 0.44, respectively. Interestingly, women also have much less contact with lead people in the water committee.

Regarding women's more frequent contact with religious leaders, in Amhara-K3, Orthodox priests held a number of important leadership posts outside the church. One priest was also the kebele council speaker, the water portfolio holder of the kebele cabinet, and the owner of a café in kebele center. Hence, religious leaders may be prime candidates for other leadership roles, and they tend to have the greatest contact with the women of the community.

A number of institutions exist to foster the accountability of kebele and district government to citizens. These vary in effectiveness. In Amhara-K1, farmers stated that they would look to the kebele chair to resolve grievances. The chair is an elected member of the kebele council, which appoints the chair to office. In Tigray-K, the council replaced the chair due to poor performance. Since the 2008 elections, kebele councils now have standing committees to address development issues, security questions, and gender equality, but these are too new to evaluate. Oromia-K residents complained about the lack of services received from the district government. Representatives on the district council were not able to get the district government to pay greater attention to the community's needs. District officials in Oromia-D felt that their hands were tied by priority setting and budget limitations imposed by the regional government, but kebele leaders and residents stated that they saw a breach of social contract instead. They pointed out that residents had provided labor to improve the roads between the district capital and their community but had not received the requested services.

Kebele councils in Tigray-K and Amhara-K3 meet monthly and also work with local representatives to the district council, who attend kebele council meetings. District council speakers in Tigray-D and Amhara-D3 make periodic visits to kebeles and provide support to the kebele councils. District councils frequently discuss development issues, including drinking water. The district council's standing committees do seem to exert a measure of checks and balances over the district government, but as the above case in Oromia-D illustrates, the influence of one kebele's council representatives is limited.

6.2 Local representatives' relationship with higher-tier governments, political parties, and service providers

Financial support and information flows are two important mechanisms by which regional and national governments can influence the effectiveness of local political representatives. Financial support from the national and regional level to districts is formula driven. While district governments discuss plans and allocation of budget resources with higher levels of government, guidance from above tends to trump bottom-up priorities and communications. The case study

evidence suggests that district representatives on regional councils are not able to alter total resource levels, given reliance on formulas, and no information was received about how interactions between these representatives and district or kebele representatives might influence sectoral or territorial allocations of funds within districts or plan priorities.

According to the information collected during from the case studies, kebele councils and administrations do not play any role in budgeting, and in Amhara-K3 and Oromia-K, their role in planning was not much more than symbolic. There are kebele representatives on district councils who can attempt to win additional resources for their communities. In Tigray-K, these representatives work closely with the kebele council to be able to raise local issues in the district council. However, since budget ceilings are fixed above the district level, any effort to bolster one's own allocation means engaging in a zero-sum game with neighboring kebeles. District budget officials in Tigray-D, Amhara-D3, and Oromia-D pointed out that they do try to develop spending plans that allocate resources fairly across kebeles, particularly with regard to scarce capital spending projects. In Oromia-D, officials also said that they regularly lobby the regional government for additional resources. In Tigray-D and Oromia-D, there is also a five-year strategic plan that shapes annual planning and budgeting.

As discussed from the field research in several sections, information tends to flow from the top down in Ethiopia. While many institutional arrangements exist that could help make the information flow both ways, these will not play this role effectively until policy making and implementation no longer occur via a command-and-control mode.

Party influence over political life is pervasive in all study sites, which is also consistent with the discussion in Section 3. As a party official in Amhara-D3 explained, "The party is the father of the community." In other words, the party's self-image is one of benevolent authoritarianism. In Tigray-D and Amhara-D3, senior positions such as district and kebele council leadership posts frequently go to veterans of the anti-Derg struggle and the war with Eritrea. Veterans also predominate in cooperative and party leadership positions. In Oromia-D, by contrast, former Derg soldiers occupied some key leadership jobs.

District councils have standing committees that oversee service provision. These bodies receive reports from the relevant sectoral offices, pose questions to officials, and report to the full council. Since the 2008 elections, the kebele councils have expanded in size and now have a parallel set of standing committees, including women's affairs committees in Tigray-D and Amhara-D3. Kebele councils and cabinets engage in oversight of water committees. Since the latter bodies are usually composed of citizen volunteers, however, kebeles remain dependent on district governments and donor agencies for financial resources, capacity development, and spare parts.

7. SUMMARY

7.1 Synopsis and discussion of main findings

Table 11 summarizes the main findings of the study about drinking water supply.

Access to drinking water is still very low. Access to safe drinking water was rather low: 32% of the surveyed households use safe drinking water sources, and 3% use wells without pumps (which would be classified as safe if protected). The average time to get to safe water sources during dry season ranged from 29 minutes (for public standpipes) to 82 minutes (for wells with pump). The households covered in the Ethiopia survey may still have better access than the national average.[7]

Households identify drinking water as their main priority concern, yet they report high satisfaction rates and hardly take any action to complain. Using the methodology typically applied in citizens' report card surveys, the surveys aimed to find out how satisfied citizens are with the drinking water services. 71% of the households were very or somewhat satisfied with the quantity and 52% with the quality of drinking water (dry season), even though access was very low. What is inconsistent with these findings is the fact that a considerable share of the households identified water as their main concern. 34% of the female-headed households considered drinking water to be their main problem, a larger percentage than for any other identified service or infrastructure type. However, as further discussed below, respondents expressed discontent with the governance of water systems. Likewise, the share of households who took any action, such as contacting political representatives or public officials to complain, was also low.

The inconsistency between the problem ratings on the one hand and the satisfaction ratings and the low inclination to complain on the other hand may have several reasons. First, awareness about the health advantages of using safe drinking water sources seems to be limited, which is indicated by the high satisfaction rates with the quality of unsafe drinking water sources. Secondly, respondents may feel uncomfortable giving answers that might be seen as critical to the government. Given the nature of the political system in Ethiopia, one might expect this problem to be prevalent there. Third, households may not take action because they may feel that this will have little effect and is, therefore, not worth the (opportunity) costs involved. Due to some level of nonexcludability in drinking water supply, there is also a collective action type problem in filing complaints against this service. The constituencies also perceive such infrastructure to be a personal gift, especially if they have low expectation levels. A personal gift

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[7] In 2004, the last year for which data are available from the World Development Indicators 2008 database, only 11% of the rural households in the country had safe drinking water. Information collected during the study indicates that meanwhile, the national average figure has increased to 18%.

cannot be challenged or criticized. This problem is obviously linked to a clientelistic system of service provision (Box 1). If the citizens perceive community infrastructure for safe drinking water as a basic right to which they are entitled, and which they also support with their own resources through contributions and taxes, they might be more willing to express dissatisfaction and launch complaints.

Drinking water has undergone far-reaching decentralisation. The construction and major rehabilitation of drinking water facilities is managed by district water desks, which are backstopped by the Regional Water Bureaus. Currently, water desks are under the woreda Office of Agriculture and Rural Development (WoARD). One can observe a trend to elevate them to make them independent from WoARD.

Not only the coverage of drinking water facilities, but also the functioning of existing facillities constitutes a continuing challeng. NGOs, the private sector, and donor agencies are very active in constructing water systems, and this was also the case in the study sites. Nevertheless, these actors were generally not involved in supporting operations and maintenance of the facilities. Water committees comprise users of a water facility and are from the same community as the remaining members of the user group for that facility. They thus are meant to have direct contact with the group of facility users and to ensure that the users follow the rules set out for the facility, such as rules regarding paying water user fees and labor contributions for maintenance and small repairs. However, despite these responsibilities, water committees do not receive training in community organizing or public speaking and persuasion, and so often have difficulty persuading households as to the advantages of protected water systems and paying fees to support them.

Community-based organizations have been promoted as the main strategy for improving access to drinking water. Water committees have been established, each of which is supposed to manage one water facility. There are often multiple water committees in one kebele, as well as committees that serve users across kebele lines. Committees register users, mobilize labor contributions, collect fees, and ensure maintenance. Making them inclusive seems challenging in Ethiopia. Although bringing water to the household is predominantly a task undertaken by women (and their children), the study found that in all sites except for one, the water committee leaders were men (although water committee members did include women). In the remaining site, all water committee leaders where women. The water committees also do not seem to be very effective in counteracting the top-down nature of service provision. The study found that in some cases the functioning of water facilities was compromised if the organization that constructed the facility did not take into account the community's knowledge of water sources in determining where to locate the facility. Such phenomena prevailed where the government, NGOs, and the private sector were responsible for the construction of drinking water facilities.

Table 11: Synopsis of findings on drinking water supply

Access to water according to household survey	32% of households use safe drinking water sources; average time to get to safe water sources during dry season: 29 minutes (public standpipe) to 82 minutes (well with pump).
Satisfaction with drinking water according to household survey	44% and 27% of households very and somewhat satisfied with quantity respectively; and 36% and 16% respectively with quality during dry season. However, considerable dissatisfaction with governance of water systems.
Role of different providers in areas covered by the surveys/case studies	Construction and major rehabilitation of facilities managed by district water desks/offices, which are backstopped by Regional Water Bureaus. Currently, water desks are under woreda office of Agriculture and Rural Development (WoARD); trend is to elevate them to a technical office independent from WoARD.
Role of community-based organizations as service providers	Establishment of water committees that each manage one water facility (i.e., often multiple water committees in one kebele). Committees register users, mobilize labor contributions, collect fees, ensure maintenance.
Funding	District water desk provides some funds for construction. However, since districts hardly have capital budgets, Regional Water Bureaus often also fund facility construction. Off-budget donor and NGO funding also important. Communities expected to provide labor and sometimes financial contributions.
Level of local government where front-line service providers are located	District water desk located at district level. Water committees at kebele or sub-kebele level.
Line of accountability for staff / service providers	Water committees accountable to users and district water desk (though the latter is not a formal reporting relationship as committees are not part of government).
Institutional unit in charge of women / gender; gender-specific programs	Women represented on all water committees, but generally do not lead them; in one study site, rule that all water committee chairpersons had to be women.
Female front-line staff	Water technicians overwhelmingly male; water committees include women.
Main problems identified by staff	Hard to get users to pay even minimal fees when unprotected sources available; much dissatisfaction about differential community contributions (labor and money) for each water system; no training provided to water committees in community organization or gender (only management, operations, and maintenance).

| Main approach to provide drinking water	Water committees made up of community members in charge of maintenance; construction of infrastructure organized by water desk at woreda level.
Discretion of field staff/service providers	Water committees have relatively high discretion to design system of water use, collection of user fees, etc. District water desk receives guidelines and policies from Regional Water Bureaus, which follow national policy formulated by Ministry of Water Resources.
Targeting of beneficiaries	Systems basically village based; goal to increase coverage and serve more villages; districts highly involved in decision making.
User contribution/fees	Water committees supposed to collect fees; however, actual collection difficult as users refuse to pay, especially if unprotected sources are available.
Involvement of political representatives	Kebele cabinet member takes responsibility for drinking water; kebele council also oversees service provision; District water desk is a technical agency; head not on cabinet; Economic Affairs Committee of District Council carries out oversight.
Complaints	Drinking water governance issues raised in kebele-level meetings and elsewhere. No users' congresses in study area.

Source: Surveys and case studies (see Section 4).

7.2 Routes of accountability

The framework presented in

Figure 2 outlines the relationships between different actors involved in rural service provision. The basic assumption underlying the framework is that through at least one accountability route (long or short), service providers need to be ultimately accountable to the service users and the household members (Box HH) to provide the services that rural men and women need. The Accountability Framework also suggests that the effectiveness of different routes depends on context-specific conditions. In particular, the presence and the nature of the clientelism problem

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(World Bank, 2004a) appear to be of major importance. The framework used for this study has been extended beyond the Accountability Framework to better understand the role that different actors play in creating accountability and the ways in which they can influence service provision outcomes. Strategies to improve gender equity have also been classified with regard to their entry points in different routes of accountability

Figure 12 displays the predominant routes of accountability that could be derived from the empirical findings in Ethiopia. Considering the nature of the political system described in Section 2, it is not surprising that the ruling coalition (the EPRDF) occupies a central place in the predominant routes of accountability in this country. The study findings indicate that the party has a strong influence on the political representatives at the local and national levels (links PP to LP and NP), to the public sector service providers (link PP-PS and NM), and to the community-based organizations (link PP-CO).

Figure 12: Predominant routes of accountability in Ethiopia
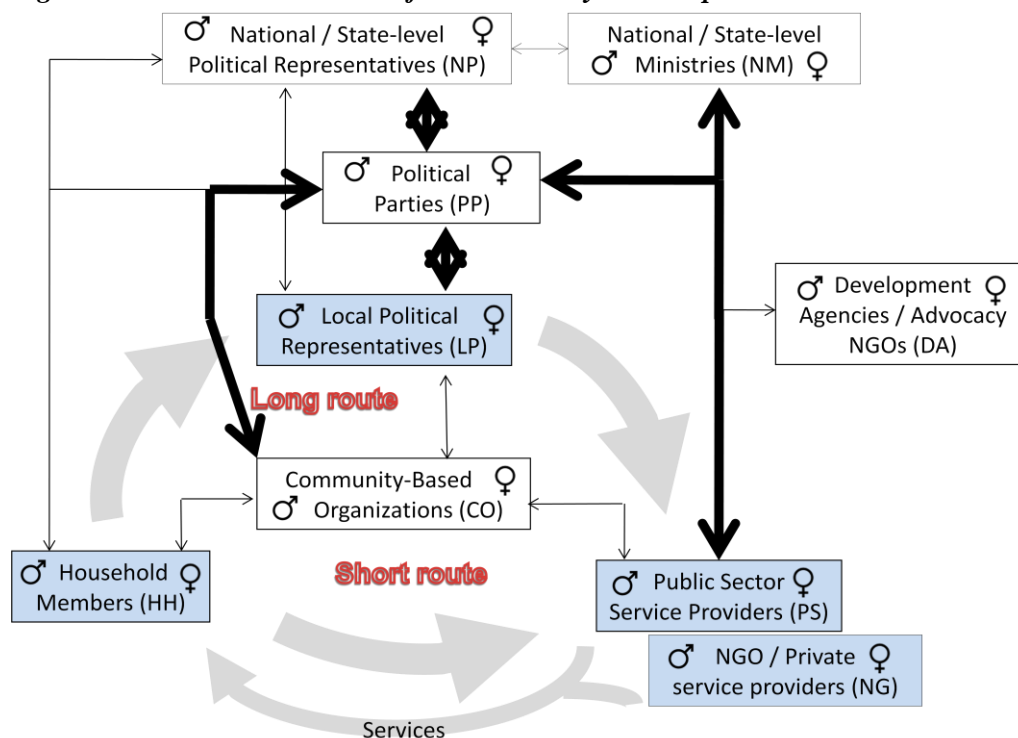
Source: Authors.

The party has a far-reaching role in the sense that it dominates all politically elected bodies. Yet it can also influence many positions that are not formally appointed through the governing party, such as leadership positions of formally nongovernmental institutions (such as local women's

associations), which are still filled by members of the party. The statement made by one local party official interviewed in this study that the party is the "father of the community" summarizes the self-image of the party as one of a benevolent authority.

Findings from the study point to some of the elements that seem to play a role in allocating scarce positions among party members. For example, in Tigray-D and Amhara-D3, senior positions at the local level—such as leadership positions within the kebele council, cooperatives, and the local party structure itself—were occupied by party members who were also veterans of the war against the previous military regime or the more recent war with Eritrea. The study also points to a self-understanding by party officials that it is the role of party members to stand out as development role models to the rest of the farmers, in terms of both their own economic performance and their willingness to implement the governments' programs.

The question then arises as to what mechanisms will ensure accountability between the political party and the households (link PP-HH), which seems to be the missing link in the accountability network of Figure 12. Of course, even in a one-party system (whether de facto or de jure), the authorities will respond to citizens' grievances when their discontent might threaten the party's hold on power. The extensive "good governance" reforms following the 2005 elections (Dom and Mussa, 2006a and 2006b) illustrate this. The establishment of reasonably effective grievance committees for the Productive Safety Net Program, efforts to expand representation in kebele councils, support given to these councils by the district council speaker's office, and the establishment of additional oversight committees at the kebele level are all efforts to enhance accountability mechanisms. But the strong lines of accountability remain those that lead upward. Top-down modes of decision making and political reliance on democratic centralism cause downward accountability to be quite weak.

As can be derived from the above discussion, neither the short route nor the long route of accountability are the relevant mechanisms in Ethiopia that ensure that residents' needs and priorities for public goods are met by the state. The important and powerful forces of upward accountability determine the nature and quality of service delivery.

With regard to drinking water, a standardized approach might work as far as the provision of infrastructure is concerned. However, a major challenge of providing drinking water is creating awareness about the advantages of safe drinking water, and encouraging communities to work collectively and invest time and resources in the maintenance of drinking water facilities. This task requires more discretion on behalf of the facilitator and is less suitable for a top-down approach. Considering the low access of the population to safe drinking water , the need of the population to have access to safe drinking water in a reasonable time is not translated into a

political priority, which may well be related to the weak accountability linkages that link the different actors in the system to the households.

8. IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND RESEARCH

8.1 General Decentralisation strategy

To ensure that decentralization support is effective, it is important to first identify which local agencies are key to the quality and quantity of a particular service, so that support can prioritize strengthening these agencies. Since the introduction of local-level decentralization in Ethiopia, local governments have become important public bodies in the implementation of government development policy in general and the provision of public services in particular. The district tier of government has especially gained salience, as it is sufficiently low to be (geographically) accessible to residents and yet constitutes a sufficiently high aggregation of communities that formal structures, offices, and agencies are put in place at this level to provide the public administration needed for policy implementation. Within the district government, the district cabinet is one of the most important bodies in influencing the quality and quantity of public services.

It could be useful to strengthen the organizations tasked with building the capacity of the relevant local agencies: The decentralization process in general, and the capacity needed to provide services at the local level in particular, have received substantial external assistance in the last several years, most prominently through the Public Sector Capacity Building Program (PSCAP) support project. The PSCAP support project works only through the federal and regional governments, but not directly through the district governments. However, regional governments operate various programs to strengthen the key public sector bodies at the local level. Among these are regional training institutes, such as the Amhara Management Institute and the Oromia Management Commission, which take on the responsibility of providing training to district cabinet members. Creation of such organizations is an important step, so that district government training can be institutionalized, and reliance on fragmented ad hoc training through consultants and far away in the capital city can eventually be scaled back.

Be it through PSCAP or other instruments, it is important to provide support to such region-level organizations that strengthen the capacity of the key players and decision makers at the local level such as the district cabinets. Currently, while the regional training institutes providing such capacity development to district government receive funding through the regional Bureaus of Capacity Building, it is not clear that the resources provided are sufficient or used in the most effective way. For example, there is currently limited attention paid to evaluation and impact of the training activities undertaken by these institutes. Also, to date the functional regional training institutes targeting district cabinet members are only in the Amhara and Oromia regions, so that

district officials from other regions must travel to one of these two institutes to receive training, rather than being trained in their own regions.

In the course of providing assistance to training institutes, paying more attention to gender dimensions in the delivery of public services may enhance the development effect of such assistance. This study highlighted the development impact of implementing policies on public service provision in a way that speaks to the productive contribution of women as well as men in rural areas. But even more, it focused on documenting and assessing the extent of attention given in agricultural extension and water supply provision to women's and men's access to these services. The findings on both of these issues may be useful in the introduction of gender dimensions in the training modules used by the regional training institutions targeting local governments.

More research and understanding is needed of the processes within the ruling party that ultimately affect the quality of public services. Research presented in this study (as well as in other work referred to in this report) suggests that processes and mechanisms within the ruling party could ultimately be important drivers of policy design and policy implementation in agricultural extension and water supply and thus are likely to be critical in the extent and manner that these services are used by women and men in rural areas. Intraparty processes are germane to the criteria and factors affecting who ultimately holds local government political office and what incentives these local political officials face vis-à-vis their engagement in public service provision. These processes are also likely to be very important factors affecting who takes on civil servant positions at the kebele and district levels, what incentives they face, and what accountability mechanisms exist between the political and the public administration realms at the local level.

Very little is known about the processes that operate within the party and that affect local political and civil service systems and the interface between the two. It needs to be acknowledged that party dynamics are not the realm in which external development assistance can directly enter. Nevertheless, further research shedding light on these processes would likely go a long way in helping understand the driving forces, incentives and accountability systems that influence how public services for men and women are delivered. This understanding will also make more clear the opportunities and constraints that exist for planned interventions seeking to improve the extension and water sectors.

The effectiveness of support for decentralized service delivery may be increased by taking the political reality into consideration when considering how to target support. In policy work on decentralization and on the gender aspects of local service delivery in Ethiopia, it is particularly important to carefully consider alternative interventions for their likely performance

and likely achievement of results. The more effective of alternative interventions can be better identified if there is a keen appreciation of the political context and reality that could affect the most appropriate targets for interventions. For example, this study found that members of the local council (who are not also members of local executive bodies) play a limited role in influencing decisions on which and how services are delivered to residents. In contrast, executive bodies are a much more influential local player. In this context, resources committed to deepening decentralization and empowering residents by focusing on training and capacity building of local councils may not achieve the desired results. It may not only not achieve the desired results, but also, by helping to further "formalize" but not strengthen weak institutions, it may help advance an image of empowered and functional institutions that may not correspond with reality. Financial support for the decentralization process ought to choose its target such that the main goal of the support has a higher chance of being met, which can be accomplished by accounting for the political realities on the ground that affect which institutions are de facto weak and which institutions are strong and can be built upon.

8.2 Drinking water supply

Increasing the currently very low coverage of safe drinking water would address citizens' priorities and may improve productivity. As discussed in this paper, access to safe drinking water is very low in Ethiopia. Questions on both men's and women's priorities have identified that problems with access to and quality of drinking water is the top concern for rural residents. External support may consider addressing the low coverage of drinking water. Different instruments of assistance—policy lending and investment instruments, for example—could be considered and weighed against each other to employ the mix of external assistance most likely to effect expanded coverage within the context of the government's drinking water policy. It would be useful for the government to also consider the level of priority it gives to this sector in light of the potentially important productivity effects of reducing women's daily time spent fetching water and of having better access to safe water sources (as health problems are a major cause of rural residents' inability to work).

Training to water committees on community relations may be expanded, as it currently concentrates on technical topics. As found in this study, one important reason for the nonfunctioning and nonuse of drinking water facilities in rural areas is the poor governance of facilities by water committees, and specifically the challenges water committees face in mobilizing community resources to maintain facilities. Water committees are, however, often only trained in handling technical issues related to the water facilities. Training for managing community relations, raising awareness for the need of users to ensure the facilities get maintained after initial construction, and similar "soft" skills is very limited. Donor assistance

could help in expanding this form of capacity building. As training of water communities is commonly undertaken (or commissioned) by district water desks, or regional water bureaus, first an assessment could be made how well these trainers are themselves versed with community relations topics relating to water user groups. Targeting the public sector agencies tasked with training water committees may also be a more efficient way to support this issue.

Sustainability could be increased when public service providers ensure that a maintenance system is in place. Related to the above, service providers responsible for the construction of water facilities—regional water bureaus, district water desks, and NGOs—could plan carefully for how the maintenance of the water facilities would be kept up after construction. The study found that service providers at times only think through the process until the completion of facility construction. This is a waste of resources if facilities fall into disrepair because of a lack of, or an inadequate, maintenance system.

Local knowledge and local considerations can be taken into account in site selection. Another reason for facilities stopping to produce sufficient or even any water has been the failure of local governments and NGOs to adequately consider information from local residents in the selection of sites for constructing the facility. Both geological expertise by service providers as well as local knowledge of the community can be drawn on to minimize mistakes in site selection. Related to that, more adequate consideration needs to be given to nontechnical community concerns, such as loss of land for some community members upon claiming an area for the facility, and compensation for such loss. Such issues can affect support of the community behind the project and thus affect subsequent willingness to contribute to maintaining the facility.

There are promising approaches to bringing attention to gender matters in accessing and managing water sources, which could be expanded. In some research sites, the local government has employed strategies to bring attention to the usually very one-sided burden of fetching water, such as displaying posters appealing pictorially to men to contribute to this task. It is not clear to what extent these strategies have been imitated elsewhere. Efforts such as these to change cultural norms resulting in gender-imbalanced burdens could be considered more widely and assessed for their ability to effect some changes in behavior. Other local policies that take a more formal nature, such as mandating that all water committee chairs be women, could also be considered for their usefulness and feasibility in scaling up, taking into consideration the likely strong variation in the cultural acceptability of such policies.

8.3 Concluding remarks: What creates political incentives in better outcomes for women?

The study has shown that the accountability linkages for rural service provision depend on a country's political system and its approach to decentralization in service provision. Understanding these linkages is, therefore, essential for identifying entry points to make rural service provision more responsive to gender needs. While the study has thrown light on various aspects of these linkages, there are essential open questions that require further research, experimentation, and learning. They center on the following key questions: Which mechanisms in the local governance system, as depicted in

Figure 2 create political incentives for producing better *outcomes* for the rural population in general and rural women in particular? Which mechanisms work within a (de facto) one-party system? Future research, including research using the data collected under this project, will have to address these questions. The political reforms of the past decade, with their emphasis on decentralization and empowerment, have opened new opportunities for improving the provision of rural services to those that have benefited least from them in the past—the rural poor and rural women. We hope that this study will help maximize interest in and action on these opportunities.

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