

# What the People Want from the Democratic Decentralized Governance: The Quest for Accountability in Local Governments' Service Provision in Ethiopia

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## Abstract

Decentralization is a critical issue to revisit after more than a quarter of a century of governmental attempts [1]. The experimentation with decentralization never seems to come to an end as it still shows major gaps especially at the local level of governance-service delivery. The implementation of decentralized local governance in Ethiopia, which strives to change the government from above nature of the service delivery, proved a complex and difficult task for the African country with hundreds years of unitary governance and deep entrenched upward accountability structure which intern has made the public to develop strong public suspicion and mistrust towards the governance apparatus and hard to rectify these with two decades of attempts at decentralizing governance structures and service delivery. Providing incentives for the local government offices to adopt new instructions and changing their traditional service delivery practices are quite difficult. Literatures in the area have overlooked one variant of government accountability i.e. social accountability in the local governance, in that, most of the writings has been made on fiscal and political accountability of service provision. The main objective of this study is to investigate the social accountability of local government land administration service delivery in Ethiopia with a particular focus on Saharti- Samre rural woreda, Tigray regional state, as a case study area justified by the fact that the grass-root poor are found in the rural part and land administration, can serve as a showcase for both rural and urban deep service problems seems to be institutionalized. This paper has analyzed whether the study Woreda land administration office is providing for social accountability of its services in its provision. The methodology used was survey design, applied in three purposively selected areas of the Woreda and analyzed using descriptive, and trend analysis methods. Accordingly the study was cross-sectional. Findings have revealed: the FDRE constitution is the overall frame work for social accountability in the local governments and the problems emanate largely from awareness problems on both the service providers and the service users. Among the major policy implications recommended in the paper are the establishments of citizens' review, public reporting mechanisms, and social forums; as an enabling policy environment for social accountability.

**Keywords:** Administrative service delivery, Public services Local Governance, Social-accountable, land administration.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

There has been a glaring acceptance of the idea that without democratic service delivery there can be no development. Public accountability, Participation and social inclusion in the service provision, is fundamental for reducing poverty and achieving sustainable socio-economic and political developments [2]. Decentralization of the authority for administering services and redistribution programs to local communities as a viable means has become a wide spread international trend only the in recent decades [1]. Especially, since the 90s, the decentralization of authority and responsibility for public services provision to local government have become an essential part of the overall governance reform and development strategy in many countries, particularly in the developing African countries [3] 4] [5].

Decentralization in Ethiopia has become one of the fundamental features of the transition from century old theocratic and military regime to civilian rule in the year, 1991 [5]. The Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) inaugurated the 1995 constitution, which in turn have given the base for federal state and further decentralization in Ethiopia. Here it should be noted that, the provision of services at the local level

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had been the responsibility of the central government, rendering local governments powerless and inhibiting the development of local actors that could participate in local development in Ethiopia [6]. The process of Decentralization in Ethiopia, took place in three phases so far [7] [8]. The final phase Through the District Level Decentralization Program (DLDP) came with the objectives: Deepening the devolution of power to lower tiers of regional governments; institutionalizing decision-making power to enhance democratic participation; to promote good governance; and above all, improving service delivery. Woredas, in Ethiopia are third-tier local governments, below regional states as given in the constitution, [9] and second tier government in the Tigray [10]

Below Woreda is kebele very close to the people and are found in both the urban and rural areas of the country. Each Kebele has on average five hundred households [11]. As such Kebeles are strategically located for effective decentralized authority and provision of service delivery at the local grass-roots level. In addition, decision-making powers as given in [10] have been devolved to Woreda administrations to allow them to take full responsibility without reference back to Regional government and Zones.

Despite the sea changes in Ethiopia in moving government closer to the people, the most degrading challenges in insuring democratic decentralized service delivery of local governments' appears to be indirect/social accountability which needs the attention of all stakeholders in the public service provision. Moreover, number of accounts suggests that the sustainability of development endures on the people-centered nature of the developmental efforts. Accountability issues from the land administration point of view refers to; as to whether the needs and priorities are in place in the Woreda planning of land use, redistribution protection and regulation issues, and from decentralizing rationale point of view, it is as to whether the service providers can be held accountable to the people [9].

The Saharti Samre Woreda is recognized and entrusted with local governance-service provision in the TNRS (1998), and also in the revised constitution of the TNRS [10]. Hence, this paper analyzes the decentralized system of governance-service delivery in light of the question of social accountability of local land administration service provisions to the broader population. This study is a first step towards gaining this knowledge in-depth.

## 2. Conceptual Framework

Development practices and theories in the 1960's and 1970's bestow the delivery public services authority and responsibility to the national/central government following the successive the economic and financial dynamics' of crisis in the world have led various countries and international organizations to look for root causes of the global crisis. There are two view with regard to public administration and or public service provision; the traditional and contemporary view [2]. In the traditional view of public service provision: policies, people, funds, organizations are autonomous from one another. While in the contemporary view Public Administration is a dependent variable; not an autonomous and directly affected by social, economic and political environment; and the prevailing governance culture; accountability and responsiveness of service provision.

The term governance has no automatic normative connotation. However, governance is most commonly defined as the norms, traditions, and institutions by which power and authority in a country are exercised [12]. Moreover, Social accountability is, an indirect type of accountability through which citizens can directly ask and hold accountable the service providing offices, personnel's. And this method compels the officials to report and answer to the people early as they report and answer to the higher government levels [2]. Moreover, these norms, traditions, and institutions include the institutions of participation and accountability in governance, mechanisms of citizen voice and exit, and norms and networks of civic engagement; the constitutional-legal framework and the nature of accountability relationships between citizens and government; the process by which governments are selected, monitored, held accountable, and renewed or replaced; and the legitimacy, credibility, and efficacy of the institutions that govern political, economic, cultural, and social interactions among citizens and between citizens and their governments [12]. Thus, governance is the exercise of political power to manage nation's affairs for the benefit of the people. In contrast to this [5] has asserted that governance entails to the process whereby elements in society exercise power and authority, enact policies and decisions about public life, and economic and social development.

In fine, the common attributes in most of the conceptions reveal that, governance is a broader notion than government, whose principal elements include the constitution, legislature, executive and judiciary. Governance involves interaction between these formal institutions and those of private partners. However, typical criteria for assessing governance in a particular context should include the degree of legitimacy, representativeness, popular accountability and efficiency with which public affairs are conducted [12].

Governments around the world are now increasingly put under pressure to revitalize their governance system. Moreover, the setting of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in the 1990s to be achieved by 2015 "Achieving universal education and gender equality, reducing under five mortality by two-thirds and maternal mortality by three-quarters, reversing the spread of HIV/AIDS and halving the proportion of people without access to safe water" Have become a huge push to governments around the world, to reform their governance

system [13]). The recent trend of, beginning from the 90s; decentralization policies in developing countries are fueled by diverse empirical dynamics; in East (Ethiopia) and South Africa, the history of decentralization is closely linked to the end of social and political crisis. In other countries like Mali or Niger, decentralization was undertaken in response to regional claims for greater autonomy. On the other hand, given the degree of local government dependency on the central government, the process of decentralization in North Africa has been slow moving. Moreover, currently, fewer than 40 % of African State Constitutions refer to local governments as a specific level of governance [14].

Political decisions to introduce more democratic forms of management of public services at local level and to improve the efficiency in the management of resources allocated to provision of rural infrastructure; the Proportion of countries with democratic governance has risen from 14.3% in 1950 to 62.5% in the year 2000 [15][16] et al. Similarly [13] the decentralizing moves are because of: unprecedented growth in human development, mounting socio-economic divide, the spread of democracy, the expectation and requirement of Millennium Development Goals-pushing governments to focus on rural areas people.

Recently there is a growing consensus that most of the decentralizing reforms were implemented with little thinking about their accountability implications; LGs should be accountable to higher levels of government (upward accountability) as well as to local community (downward/social accountability); Community members should have the ability and opportunity to demand accountability and the LGs should have the means and incentives to respond to citizen request for accountability and improved service delivery [5]. In line with [17] and [18], the benefits of administrative decentralization may increase accountability. In contrast, other literatures and empirical evidences argued, the outcome of administrative decentralization can be mixed. In this regard [19] states, there are certain evidences that attest to the fact that, “decentralization is not necessarily an accountability mechanism.

The debates come to comply at list in principle that democratic political aspect of decentralized governance system embraces the sharing of power, authority, and responsibilities among broader governance institutions for government at spot and or local service provision. while investigating the problems of local governance public service provision with the decentralizing acts [5] noted that, problems such as; lack of institutionalized opportunities to participate in local planning, policy making and service delivery processes; lack of permanent participation and monitoring procedures; opportunities to participate are the paramount negations in local good governance.

### **3. Research Site and Methods**

#### **3.1 Research Site**

The area selected for this study is Saharti Samre rural Woreda which is found in the South- Eastern zone” TNRS-Ethiopia. The area is selected primarily for the benefits of the study. First, during the preliminary observation the some people of the Woreda have generally expressed their frustration and displeasure with the accountability of local service officials in service delivery and even some local officials have shred the frustration. Secondly, the researcher has come across different local officials prior to the preliminary observation and after, who can facilitate the conduct of the research. With regard to the selection of the sample Tabias three Tabias are selected conveniently, first and for most the Woreda is wholly rural and the population is homogeneous in public service provisions related issues which are equally shared by all constituencies of the Woreda. In addition to that areas where loud discontents on land administration, Population density, distances from the Woreda are also taken as factors to identify the Tabias. The Southern Zone consists of 10 other Woredas of which 5 woredas are found in this zone with 880,757 total population size [32]. The total area of the Saharti Samre Woreda is 171, 474 sq-km. According to the 2007 Population and Housing Census by the Central Statistical Authority, the Woreda population is estimated to be 124,340, and Agriculture is the major source of livelihood and cash income for population in the Woreda. Administratively the Woreda is divided in to 26 Tabias, most of which are rural Tabias/Kebeles. Under each Tabia there are ‘kushets’ which are the lowest units in the local administrative hierarchy.

### **4. DISCUSSIONS**

Based on the democratic principles of the decentralized service delivery frame work the survey was designed to include basic dimensions of downward accountable local governance and service provision [20] [21].

#### **4.1. Overview of Service Delivery setting and accountability practice.**

The local government exists to ensure the continued existence of vital elements of personal life; the provision of public service and administration services. In reality, these elements have been threatened in the local governments-seharti samr rural woreda. The major land administration service provision problems include: dissatisfaction and lack of accountability. Consequently, community’s way of life and property were rendered socially exclusive, less responsive and less open. The local government had been just an agency with a very

meager decision and policy implementation role.

In the survey study, the opinion of the house holds on the social accountability value whether the land administration office in the Woreda considers citizen interest in service delivery. A total of 88 (56.4%) of the respondents responded that the land administration service office do not take our priorities in to consideration on the core service delivery issues like; land conflict settlements, land registration and certification, preservation of community grazing lands e.t.c. The Outcomes of the focus group discussion in this regard show that, incorporation of the people's voice at this level is at lowest level, especially, office representative of women affair in the Woreda noted that, different needs of the women in the Samre Saharti land administration are neglected. Informants from inside the land administration office and the Woreda parliament representative of economic affairs similarly suggested that there is to be done soon. Notwithstanding with this [1][5] discussed that communities should have the ability and opportunity to demand accountability and the LGs should have the means and incentives to respond to citizen request for accountability and improved service delivery.

In addition, [2] [1] [22] discussing the need for accommodating the inters of the grass roots, suggested that, if local government can have better information about local priorities, needs and the way local systems operate and can therefore allocate resources in a more efficient way; quality of service provision can be improved since local governments are likely to be more sensitive to variations in local requirements and open to feedback from service users and many other advantages.

#### **4.2. Service provider- community relation**

Historically, the local government in Ethiopia had never had the idea of social accountability and the locality considers them as totally unaccepted. With the introduction of decentralized local government and local service-delivery significant changes in empowering of the local government and there by reaching of the grass roots have been resisted. The survey conducted to address the extent to which the promises made by the land administration officials are turned in to practice, which has a wide range of implication on the people trust and hopes on the land administration and the services provided and even on the government reflected that 47(31.4%) male and 56(37%) of female and in total of 103(66%) of respondents replied that the service delivery promises made by the land administration office are not implemented. In line with this, most of the respondents, 35(67.4%) of the respondents were from house hold heads with educational level of those who can read and write and 31(20.7%) are respondents from illiterate groups. The outcome of the in-depth interview and open ended questions in this regard shows that promises mostly failed to be practiced for various reasons; the first thing shared by all respondents' is the lack of citizens' awareness; Implementation problems; Lack of capacity emanating from both the lack of capacity and rent seeking activities.

Generally, the finding is quite congruent with various literatures, for example; [23][24] discussed that, decentralization makes governments more responsive to the demand of local people by promoting competitiveness between sub-national governments and may lead to more creative, innovative and responsive programs by allowing local experimentation and by improving competitiveness of governments. Thus, decentralization may make promises in the service delivery to be implemented as people may be more willing to pay for services if such services respond to their priorities and particularly if they have been involved in the decision-making process. Generally, it is evident that lack of promise practicability is manifestation of lack of social accountability.

### **5. The Decentralized land administration service delivery-the dimensions**

#### **5.1. The social accountability procedures and structures in the local government**

Institutional structures such as the legal frame works lay down and the system of management which does not basically hinge on grassroots major ownership has been less able to provide socially accountable service delivery [25]. Moreover, the experience different countries on such avenues as an accountability insuring mechanisms produces mixed results, in that; these approaches have high impact on accountable service provision. Household Respondents were asked to evaluate on the major dimensions of the social accountability mechanisms like: the legal frame work provided; the management system laid down to administer and fallow the practice. 21(13.5%) respondents responded that the legal frame work to implement is very good, and significant majority of the respondents suggested that the extent of performance of the existing legal frame works in insuring social accountability is moderate 51(32.7%). While the majority of respondents' 57(36%) and 11(7.1%) has evaluated the existing structures for the enforcement of the mechanisms as poor and very poor. Similarly on the management system laid down to administer and fallow the practice, the replies 58(37.2%) shows that, the management and controlling system is week. However, Tabia heads and the Woreda parliament members in this regard strongly asserted that there are good changes in the accountability.

#### **5.2. Public awareness and accessibility of local governance accountability systems.**

Institutional procedures are legal office frame works which can serve as a tool for service users to ask the office

and provide feedback. The land administration office, suggested the existence of the following institutional procedures for the house holds Service users to ask the office; Gemgema (evaluation of officers' performance), through committees consisting of local elders and idea submission ballot and also direct appeal to the office. Therefore, respondents were asked whether they do have knowledge of these procedures and their functionality. Concerning the extent of citizens awareness, about the existing available social accountability avenues, for example, Gemgema (evaluation of officers' performance), service problem solving through committees consisting of local elders and idea submission ballot and also direct appeal to the office, responses of the house holds' was summed in to two categories i.e. sum of the response rates that falls under yes and no answers. In this regard, 26 (11.7%) male respondents and 32(24.5%) female a total of 58(37.2%) of respondents replied that they have knowhow of the existence of listed avenues. In this regard, 34 (21.8%) of the total respondents has replied that the way for us to hold the office socially accountable is through Gemgema, while, 13(8.3%) replied as citizens review. This shows that, the ability of the society to directly review the decisions given, and the result of various decisions, which is the very core point of social accountability. Thus, this meager amount of the presence public review has wide ranging impact on the whole decentralized service delivery rationality. The rest relatively high no of respondents replied that, they can submit their complaints and ideas on the services through committees 54(34.4%) and others said that there is a box outside the office, suggestion box. In addition, a very meager amount of respondents' also replied that they can directly inter the office for appeal 9(5.8%).

While, 47(29.3) male and 50(33%) female total of 97(62%) of respondents responded that their understanding is weak or they don't have the knowledge of the existing social accountability ways to insure accountability. In line with this, the answer that there is no way for the people to ask and hold accountable the office counts for 55(36%) of the total respondents which is the largest amount of the total respondents'. The outcome of the in-depth interview and open ended questions in this regard is justified by:

- The lack of awareness creation by the land administration office,
- On a belief that they cannot ask the office any question.
- The existing mechanisms are highly time-taking

Similarly, various researches in the area conducted in different countries for example; [26] have found out that, in most cases, communities in rural areas do not have knowledge and awareness about the existence of avenues to ask and hold respective offices accountable for services in their localities. In addition, [27] on the study made in south Asia, noted that, lack of adequate and effective institutional procedures are among the major hindrances for social accountability.

Generally, according to, [28] the problem arise from lack effective communication about the existing legal institutional frame works for the grass roots to ask the office and give feedback.

### **5.2.1 Accessibility of the land administration service system to the public.**

Generally, [26] states, leaders claim to be responsible to their people; people try to hold them to account for their actions, accountability is thus the measure of responsibility and the essence of accountability is answerability. Respondents were asked to rate responses on the existing compliant handling mechanisms in the Woreda's land administration office. With regard to the sufficiency of the mechanisms to handle complaints, 84(53.8%) of respondents' which is the largest group of respondents' responded that they are not sufficient and about 23(14.7%) respondents also rated their response as satisfactory.

On the other hand, house hold respondents' are also made to respond on the accessibility the replay was shocking, in that, 89(57.1%) out of the whole 156 respondents' responded that their accessibility is poor. The reason presented for this is that the only way is to go to the office and insert your complaints to the idea submission box, which makes the ability of the compliant to be addressed in the near time difficult. Likewise respondents' have also given their opinions on the issues of the appropriateness of those mechanisms.

According to different literatures, for example; [30] the most appropriate ways of compliant handling mechanisms are: citizens' forum, public councils, consultation with the people and participatory compliant evaluations, and the in appropriate ways of compliant handling includes that mechanism which excludes the people from being major stake holder. In line with, respondents from different educational backgrounds, 72(46.2%) which is the largest share of respondents' responded that the existing ways to insure social accountability in the Woreda are not appropriate, in a sense that, they do not play the role intended for them. In line with, 80(51.3%) of the total respondents responded that the personnel/people enforcing the mechanism have capacity problems like professional and educational preparations and that they are not appropriate. In addition to the above realities, in terms of satisfying the needs of the people in providing accountable services; 80 (51.3%), has replied that they are not satisfied with the compliant handling system in the Woreda. According to [29] the favorable outcomes that some theorists have predicted for decentralization can only come about if certain types of behavior are present among both government officials and ordinary citizens.

### **5.3 Openness and motivation on the part of service providers.**

The document analysis also revealed that, the office infrastructure to make the land administration office open to

peoples is less adequate. Openness by and large requires competent and confident workers, (Anonymous informant, 2014). In this regard, literature suggests that there are critical problems with openness can impair the whole service delivery system. The fact that land administration office workers/service providers' inspiration affects every aspect of service is clear how ever the challenge is on how to motivate and inspire the workers for better service to the public benefit. Motivation of the workers can be analyzed from the kind and the manner of their service delivery. As a result the researcher has incorporated this variable in order crosscheck with the public response.

To examine the extent of motivation of land administration office workers, the house holds response was summed in to two categories i.e. sum of the response rates that falls under excellent, very good and good and the second category talks about the response rate that fallen under poor and very poor. While 66(42.3%) of respondents evaluated the extent land administration officers motivation as, very good and good, while, 89 (57%) of respondents evaluated the extent of workers motivation as poor and very poor.

The response all say one thing that there is need for procedural and other office refreshments for the workers to work with honest motive of serving the peoples interest. Therefore, the issue of "clients' kingship" is in question in the land administration service sector. In such situation, talking about social accountability would appear vague. Though about 40 (25.6%) of house hold respondents in Woreda responded on the fairness of officials in the service delivery to the people as Moderate, however, the lion share of respondents' from the three Tabias, 74(47.4%), 25(16%) responded that the level of fairness of officials is poor and very poor respectively.

The reasons discussed in the discussion and in the interviews can be of supporting here, most of the workers in the office own land parallel to the inhabitants, and they have many antagonistic interest with the residents. Especially, respondents from the Amde-Wayne Tabia, added that, this people (service providers) do not even know the meaning of fairness.

In retrospect, research findings in the area reviled that, the issue of fairness is also wrongly understood by the citizens in rural areas to mean that decision are made pro to them. The level of citizens' awareness is vital, after all the services are meant to serve the people and for the benefit of the people. As various literatures state most of the problems in the present day appear to be because of lack of citizens awareness and lack of any effort to make the citizenry aware of the social political and economical issues in it local areas.

Inline with this, the Woreda parliament members and land administration office heads, respective Tabia heads, representatives of women and youth associations has not denied this fact on the ground. They have unanimously said that we accept the problem and we will work on cooperatively on from now onwards. Incongruence with the above finding [31] concludes, that there is a need of recognizing the limitations of both electoral and public accountability mechanisms, and that accountability approaches require concerted civic education efforts and such new understanding encourages an expansion of instruments through which citizens can hold the state to account, beyond voting. Thus, consulting the people about the public services needs to be the concern of governments.

The above table (11) show, about 52(33%) of the total respondents, have replied that they do believe that those land administration officials who failed to discharge their duties can of asked and removed from office if they are found failing to fulfill their duties. However, the significant majority of the respondents' 97(62%) replied that, they do not think that officials can be removed from office up on appeal from the people. The major reason given for not believing that officials can be removed from office up on public appeal is, even though, there are instance in the Woreda officials being found committing crime to get unlawful advantage from the office and the people, they were not brought to justice, because of implementation gaps and human resource constraints. In line with this (Anonymous informant, 2014) said" Once they get themselves in to the offices there is no way that we can reach up to them, if we complain on them in this particular Tabia, they will immediately change to other Tabia, and continue doing what they do here."

The cause of such problems as discussed during the focus group discussions includes:

Week interaction between the grass roots and the Woreda administration; and resulting in week follow up of the cases of individuals service providers;

Even though, services are also provided by the respective Tabia representatives, major decisions are made at the Woreda land administration office located at Samre town which is distant to most of the Tabias and this also makes follow up service user week.

Lack of speedy decisions which results in financial and time wastage.

Therefore, such gaps between the policy makers, the local government and the service providers and the peoples creates problem in the perception of the people on the accountability of the land administration office and the service providers. Not with standing with this finding, [7] [16][17], independently concluded that, there is four types of relationships that govern the interactions between the actors in the public service delivery: (i) local politicians to citizens: voice and politics; (ii) institutions to the state; (iii) frontline professionals to their institutions and the providers to the citizen client, in that ultimately resulting in client power. Thus, suggesting that, Sound design of the contact lines among the actors and that implementation the accountability aspects of

decentralization is the starting point for improving local service delivery.

#### 5.4 THE CRUX OF THE CRISIS

In this respect the basic challenges discussed by the beneficiaries depicts different drawbacks to democratic and socially accountable service provision that of all, respondents 33(21.1%) of the respondents replied that it is Elite intervention, (elders and veterans in the Woreda) causing the lack of accountability in the Woreda. And 56(35.9%) of the households, which is the largest share of the respondents, responded that it is elite capture; (decisions are made to benefit few family members of the local officials). While, 40(25.6%) has identified Political intervention, as the major challenge in the social accountability of the office.

However, the greatest number of house hold respondents' 96(61%) responded that it is lack of social accountability channels', (there is no means to hold the office social accountable) and 59(37.8) of the respondent added that it is low level of citizens' consciousness in the concept accountability, how to hold the official accountable; that has created the problem rather than the problems stated above.

Different scholars for example, [12][30] independently has asserted that the major problems in the public service delivery or the civil service sector are the mix of professional workers and the political appointee. The fact the those political appointees would only be accountable to a higher body that down to the grass roots, have caused various debates in the Ethiopian social political and economic governance frame works.

Since 1991, Ethiopia followed a new socio-economic and political direction with a policy that potentially allowed for the right to self-determination of nationalities and peoples. This became a framework for instituting a decentralized approach in governance. The paper has made attempts to appreciate the progress made and cover the knowledge and research gaps that exist in the land administration. In service of this goal, house hold respondents of the rural woreda were made to respond on the changes registered, 18(11.5) percent of respondents replied it is excellent. Whereas 15(9.6%) of respondents replied that it is moderate or satisfactory. On the other hand, 52(33%) and 39(25%) of the total respondents, replied that the change in the service delivery social accountability with the decentralization and the successive moves were poor and very poor respectively. These shows that, the inhabitants of the Woreda, has lost the test of decentralized governance or service delivery system in the Woreda. In this regard, the document analysis has shown that, the number of complaints over the major decisions has risen over the past three years.

Generally, Ethiopia has undergone multi-dimensional political and economic reforms since 1991. The foundation of state governance has changed from a highly centralized apparatus to a decentralized federal structure. Regions are largely responsible for their respective social and economic development, and even more woredas are currently centers of development. In line with this, Proclamation No.4/1995 is the legal base of the Federal public administration organization, where the Regional government of tigray has also stipulated in the 2002 amended constitution. Thence, what is the current status/practice of social accountability in the Woreda? This leads us to the need to collect the ideas of the people as they are at the center of all efforts in relation to governance- service delivery.

The overall assessment of respondents' of the status of social accountability in the Woreda, shows large sum of respondents' 100(64.1%) of responded that the overall status of the service delivery in the Woreda is less satisfactory. Thus from the aforementioned facts the paper can conclude that, the status of social accountability in the woreda land administration service sector is calling for policy and research intervention from stakeholders.

#### 6. CONCLUSION

Against the backdrop of the "traditional" upward accountability model of governance-service delivery system that has operated since the formation of modern government structure in Ethiopia, local government public service provision has appeared as a "transformative model" and a key step for service providers and community to work together to solve government out rich-service provision problems. In the past two decades decentralized public service deliveries have been implemented to an encouraging standard across the nation with three phased process of decentralization.

Social accountability is a great manifestation of community participation "democracy in action". Furthermore, the practice of direct citizen's control over the service can contribute to a wider poverty reduction strategy and achievement of middle income group by rendering the sense of ownership and prowess to the public.

The paper has examined the social accountability in the Woreda, its status/what, why/problems, and how/cure problems, through policy and research. It has also attempted to shed light on social accountability in land administrations' service provision in Samre Saharti Woreda of Tigray region under decentralized service delivery framework; through examining the institution/ the office of land administration, house hold opinion, the office legal frame works that govern the interaction between service providers and beneficiaries. Hence, the examination was made on the data collected from different reliable sources: on the de jure and de facto social accountability; existing institutional mechanism of insuring social accountability; their openness, the perception

and understanding of citizens on the importance of social accountability and lastly on the overall status of social accountability of land administration service in the Woreda. Finally the research has come about with the following research conclusions:

Generally, despite of sea changes in public service delivery of the Samre Woreda local government after the decentralization schema, Weak social accountability systems underpin the failure of widespread accountable land administration service provision. In addition, the problem of local accountability that has been on the scene in the past regimes, with the centralization of government structures and functionaries has continued because of the discussed reasons. Apart from the fact that there is very thin literature in Ethiopia in the area of social accountability of public services, as to the researchers knowledge, experiences of other countries in South and East Asia, South Africa and research findings are similar with the findings. This has somehow opened the door for the researcher to draw on some practical experiences to the Ethiopian local context.

## 7. RECOMMENDATION

Based on the examination of social accountability in the land administration service delivery under the democratic decentralized governance frame work, the researcher has forwarded the following recommendations:

- **POLICY AND RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS:**

The Woreda land administration service office has witnessed wide gaps in the area of social accountability; here social accountability is an approach towards building accountability that relies on civic engagement for exacting accountability. Such mechanisms can be initiated and supported by the state, citizens or both, but very often they are demand-driven and operate from the bottom up complement and strengthen formal accountability mechanisms institutionalizing social accountability approaches. The most widely known mechanism in this regard is: citizens review through:

- Community report cards (CRC) are participatory surveys that solicit user feedback on the performance of public services. CRCs can significantly enhance social accountability.
- Community score cards (CSC): is a community based monitoring tool that is a hybrid of the techniques of social audit and citizen report cards. Like the citizen report card, the CSC process is an instrument to exact social and public accountability and responsiveness from service providers. By linking service providers to the community, citizens are empowered to provide immediate feedback to service provider [6].
- Establishing accountability and information dissemination office: consisting of all concerned stake holders in the delivery and consumption of the service, mainly of the community representatives.
- Dedicated grievance redress cell, organized mainly with Citizens' Participation, structured from the bottom up, at the house hold level,. In this regard up to tenth (10) households can organize themselves, and the office will represent at list 3(three) extension workers for 10 groups. In this way, complaints can be handled from the grass roots level.
- Enhancing Public oversight and accountability checking ;through Community hearings. e.t.c Making Woreda government accessible.
- The relationships in public services provisions are quite different than private market transaction between a buyer and a seller. This is to mean that, in the process of de jure and de facto social accountability in the sector especially in terms of accommodating the interests and implementing the promises made by the land administration office in the service delivery has discussed serious gaps.

Moreover, the data analyzed has shown both the federal and regional constitutions have given for social accountability of the sector policies. However, the problem emanates from both the lack of adequate institutional mechanisms and implementation problems. To tackle the implementation or the de facto problems, the Woreda government with the respective office should engage in capacity building of its officials via establishing a policy for training programs about social accountability. In terms of social accountability insuring mechanisms in the woredas land administration office,

The most highly utilized form of institutional social accountability is suggestion box and seldom the party culture of Gemgema, Which are very inadequate to avert this situation the local government land administration sector should increase the social power as major social accountability insuring mechanisms. Moreover, the local Gemgema can also be adapted to the citizens' review mechanism of contemporary democratic decentralized social accountability mechanism. In addition, the government should experiment with facilitating community groups' participation in logging and monitoring complaints rather than letting the office to handle cases in vain.

In terms of openness of the whole process of service delivery In the Woreda, this includes the extent of commitment, motivation, fairness, impartiality of the service providing officials, openness of the system to the public scrutiny i.e. the office openness; in its legal procedures, management system shows clear treat to the overhaul institutional service provision environment. The researcher therefore recommends the following policy



instrument to avert the problems of openness: Drawing clear line of contact between the office and the people and between the officers and the people. In terms of enhancing public awareness and understanding about social accountability of the local government, its sector service providing offices and the officials with in them has also witnessed serious problems. Moreover, though there are some forms of public gatherings and community organizations on the land administration issues, social accountability awareness creation endeavors should be commenced in the Woreda in organized and patterned manner. Moreover, Public involvement would require a confident citizenry, without fear of reprisals from the government.

Finally, as a general recommendation from the overhaul examination of social accountability of the land administration public service delivery office in the Samre Saharti Woreda; Land administration concerns persist, and opinions office services are consistently negative and getting worse so policy and research intervention is highly needed. The researcher has made some progress in the what, why and how of social accountability under the framework of democratic decentralized governance system. However, office and local government specificities still lay there for local context oriented further researches are of paramount importance in the area. This preliminary research therefore can be used as initiator to other research works in the area especially in the psychological, social justice, and social responsibility aspects of social accountability.

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