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# Working Paper No. 2

## Civic Engagement for Effective Service Delivery in Ethiopia:
Tools, Opportunities and Challenges

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## 1. Introduction

For quite some time now, there has been increased focus on transparency, accountability and integrity as key elements in achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and promoting human development. The renewed focus on accountability underlies the importanc of state-civil society relations, in the context of efforts to support building a capable, effective and inclusive state[1]. Increasingly, most governments are accepting civil society actors not only as essential programme partners but also as policy interlocutors, and see civic participation as critical to building constituencies and consensus, and to promoting inclusion and representation of the poor and marginalized.

Ethiopia has been promoting civic engagement in the context of decentralization of authority to lower levels as an important policy instrument for addressing local needs effectively and situating the power for public service delivery closer to the people. Decentralization was primarily designed to ensure that development plans are responsive to local realities and to enhance efficient delivery of public services (Ministry of Information, 2004). The Government in its successive mid-term development plans has emphasized the role that citizens and their associations, especially membership-based organizations, have in ensuring accountability of service providers. To facilitate responsiveness, the government has designed and implemented public sector reforms, which, among other things, were aimed at building the capacity of service providers since mid-1990s.

Given their potential proximity to communities and their ability to engage grassroots energies, civ society organizations, in particular community and mass based organizations, are seen as important actors in ensuring accountability for service delivery. With this has come the need for service providers to be more responsive to the people they serve and ensure transparency and accountability for services they provide. Citizen involvement in public service delivery planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation is seen as a powerful tool for ensuring accountability from policy makers and service providers, and ensuring services that reflect the priorities of the citizens are delivered. This is because citizens have very good knowledge of challenges related to service delivery and how it affects their lives (Ibid).

Experience shows that enhanced civic engagement[3] offers important potential benefits for governments including increased effectiveness, legitimacy, popularity, efficient allocation of

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[1] UNDP 2010

[2] Civil Society Organizations include a broad range of organizations (formal as well as informal) from CBOs to International NGOs. This makes it operationally less meaningful. When seen from the view point of rights based approaches, for example, some Charities and Societies are rights-holders (such as CBOs), while others such as international NGOs are not, as they are more of organizations that capacitate duty-bearers. They provide funding, just like bilateral and multilateral donors, to local NGOs and in some cases to local governments, which necessitates differential treatment when the subject of civic engagement is discussed.

[3] Defined as "actions freely undertaken by citizens on an individual or collective basis to identify and address matters of public concern. These actions can take many forms – directly addressing an issue, working with others in a community to solve problems, or interacting with the institutions of representative democracy…It focuses on creating inclusive and responsive democratic institutions and increasing opportunities for citizen voice" (UNDP, 2009). Effective civic engagement is understood as voluntary and democratic involvement of people in decision making with regards to: setting goals, formulating policies, planning, implementing and evaluating economic and social development programmes; contributing to development efforts; and, sharing the benefits there from. (Mansuri & Rao, 2013)

# Introduction

resources and political stability. Effectiveness of civic engagement, among other things requires an enabling environment that (a) promotes awareness of the rights, responsibilities and entitlement of citizens for  better quality public services delivery; (b) empowers citizens to participate in, negotiate with and hold accountable service providers and public policy makers;  (c) promotes participation of citizens and communities in the planning, budgeting, implementation and monitoring of the quality and quantity of services delivered to them; and (d) ensures policy makers and public services providers are capacitated in order to respond to community and citizens need and preferences[4].. A  law guiding  the registration and operation of  charities and societies was put in place  "to aid and facilitate the role of Charities and Societies in the overall development of Ethiopian peoples" and "… to ensure the realization of citizens' right to association enshrined in the constitution" (FDRE, 2009)

Given the need for effective service delivery, how can citizens and their associations engage in service delivery? What does the current engagement looks like? To what extent have such engagements contributed to improvement in service delivery? What enablers were put in place to promote civic engagement?  Are  factors  in  the  environment promoting or hindering civic engagement? What are some of the critical challenges to the participation of citizens in service delivery? How can civic engagement in service delivery be enhanced to ensure  accountability of service providers and ensure that  the  services  delivered  reflect  the priorities of the citizens?

This paper attempts to answer these questions by looking at the available evidence from literature in terms  of  how  citizens  interact  with  service providers and relate it to Ethiopian context. In so doing,   this paper aims to shed light on civic engagement and how citizens (individually and/or collectively) could be involved in service delivery that they are entitled to, the added value of such engagement, factors contributing to the effective civic  engagement, challenges  for  civic engagement, and measures that can potentially address  those  challenges  and  promote  civic engagement[5].

This paper is structured as follows:  First the paper briefly looks at the public service delivery system and the context for civic engagement in Ethiopia. This would be followed by setting the analytical framework for civic engagement in service delivery, which would then be followed by the experience in the use of tools for civic engagement in the country. In the process of doing so, the paper identifies the challenges for engagement of citizens in public service delivery in Ethiopia. The paper concludes with suggestions for promoting civic engagement for effective public service delivery.

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4  Jenssen, 1992; Samuel Taddesse, et al, 2010

5 Civic engagement is emphasized because it brings out the role of citizens and their associations (such as the membership-based organizations—organization that were formed to promote and protect the interest of their members) in effectively engaging in delivery of public services, (as this is what the concept of 'civic engagement' entails) as opposed to the broader treatment of Charities and Societies.

## 2  Public Service Delivery In Ethiopia

In Ethiopia, the authority to deliver services is heavily decentralized to regional and sub-regional tiers of government. While the federal institutions have largely policy making functions, regional levels have both policy making and service delivery functions. Since 2001, regions have significantly devolved their service delivery functions to woreda (district) level. At the root of the drive for decentralization is the need for ensuring effective and responsive public service delivery, with the aim of encouraging government responsiveness, citizen participation and greater accountability. One of the major objectives of decentralization was promoting the participation of citizens in issues affecting their life. It is to primarily ensure that development plans are adapted and responsive to local realities and to enhance efficient delivery of public services (Ministry of Information, 2004).

Building an effective local civic sphere is thought to be the fundamental goal of local participatory development (Mansuri & Rao, 2013). The fundamental assumption here is that decentralization brings government closer to the people and makes it easier to stimulate community participation (Ackerman, 2005). It is, however, important to note that decentralization is not a guarantee for increased participation of civil society or an improvement in the accountability of government (Ibid). Service providers need to have capacity to deliver quality and timely services and to respond to customers' complaints, while it is expected the users of service need to have the capacity to demand adequate and quality services, and hold service providers to account.

Noting the significance of strengthening capacity for effective service delivery, Ethiopia has designed and implemented large public sector capacity building programmes, which among other things, are aimed at improving public service delivery. The Public Sector Capacity Building Program Support[6] Project (PSCAP), introduced in 2004, is one of the largest public sector capacity building programmes that was designed and implemented. The aim of the programme was to improve the scale, efficiency, and responsiveness of public service delivery at the federal, regional, and local level; to empower citizens to participate more effectively in shaping their own development; and to promote good governance and accountability (World Bank, 2004). This objective was to be achieved by scaling up Ethiopia's ongoing capacity building and institutional transformation efforts in six priority areas under PSCAP-(i) Civil Service Reform; (ii) District-Level Decentralization; (iii) Urban Management Capacity Building; (iv) Tax Systems Reform; (v) Justice System Reform; and (vi) Information and Communications Technology. The civil service reform, among other things, involved putting in place grievance redress mechanisms which can serve as formal accountability mechanisms for citizens to give feedback on government services when problems arise; included under this are Freedom of Information Act and Ethics education, both of which are essential for enhancing the participation of citizens in service delivery.

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[6] Some elements of the programme (sub-programmes) started as early as 1994.

# The Context For Civic  Engagement

As part of the Civil Service Reform Programme implementation, several initiatives aimed at promoting accountability in the service delivery were piloted and scaled up. Notable among them are the introduction of business process re- engineering, balanced score card, and recently the development of citizens charters.

The citizens charters outline the services delivered by a  public agency (the service provider), what users need to fulfill to get the services, the expected quality of services delivered ,and the complaint handling mechanisms in case service users are dissatisfied by services they get. Participation of citizens in the development planning and budgeting process in Ethiopia is a fairly recent phenomenon. The public service delivery system encourages direct and indirect civic engagement. Citizens and their associations can directly engage in service delivery through participation in planning for the services as well as by providing feedback during the implementation/delivery of the services. They can also engage indirectly through their representatives (for example, federal and regional parliaments) in terms of setting policies and strategies.

## 3  The Context For Civic  Engagement

### 3.1  Enabling environment

Enabling environment is seen as a 'set of conditions…that impact on the capacity of citizens and civil society organizations to engage in development processes in a sustained and effective manner, whether at the policy, program or project levels. They include legal, regulatory and policy frameworks, and political, socio-cultural and economic factors'.[7] Quality of institutions, rules, regulations and incentive arrangements are critical success factors for effectiveness of civic engagement. Unless the environment is conducive for the free expression of idea, civic engagement will not yield a desirable result.

Enabling environment for civic engagement  is therefore not about CSO [8] law alone. The following section highlights some of the frameworks that are essential for effective civic engagement, with reference to the Ethiopian context.

The Constitution: The constitution extensively provides for the essential conditions that promote civic engagement (direct as well as indirect). Some of these include: the realization of human and democratic rights (art 10), rights of thought, opinion and expression (art 29), and conduct and accountability of Government (art 12). Article 31 of the constitution also states that "every person has the right to freedom of association for any cause or purpose…"

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[7] http://go.worldbank.org/Q3Y0AXDH10

[8] Pertaining to discussions referring to pre-proclamation, "CSOs" is used. For discussions referring to post-proclamation, 'CSOs' and 'Charities and Societies' are used interchangeably.

Article 89: (6) states that "Government shall at all times promote the participation of the People in the formulation of national development policies and programmes; it shall also have the duty to support the initiatives of the People in their development endeavors". Under Article 12, the constitutional also states that "The conduct of affairs of government shall be transparent", "Any public official or an elected representative is accountable for any failure in official duties", and "In case of loss of confidence, the people may recall an elected representative" Article 43 (2) also states that "Nationals have the right to participate in national development and, in particular, to be consulted with respect to policies and projects affecting their community".

Article 8 (3) of the constitution also states that the sovereignty of the people, "shall be expressed through  their  representatives  elected  in accordance with this Constitution and through their direct democratic participation".

As this article shows and as elaborated by the Ministry of Information (2004), there are two major avenues for participation of the citizen in the development process. The first one is indirect participation, where by citizens participate in the development process through their representatives (like regional, woreda and federal parliament) while the other one direct participation, which involves involvement by the citizens themselves without representation. These two avenues need to be exploited  to  ensure effective  representation. The extent to which both of them can go together depends on the level of engagement (Ministry of Information, 2004). At local level (kebele level, for example), direct participation is favored while at other levels, direct participation is not a feasible option. However, the two can complement. In case where issues (such as policies) are to be debated at regional and national levels, the views of the citizens can be heard through their representatives, complemented by community level discussion and consultation with their representatives.

Apart from the formal enabling environment, there also exist  informal  mechanisms  that  can potentially facilitate  civic  engagement.  Citizens  associations (such as mass-based organizations/ societies, and community based traditional organizations) provide opportunities for complementing formal mechanisms. The challenges in this regard is that the traditional CBOs/MBOs rarely have 'political mandates' as such but they are established for specific purposes which serve  the  interest  of their  members  and  not necessarily for the interest of the society at large. Access  to  information is one important condition for  effective engagement, but the issue is the extent or the  degree  of access[9].  Article  29  (3b)  of  the constitution specifically states that freedom of the press  shall specifically  include,  among  other things, "access to information of public interest"[10].

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[9]  Ackerman, 2004, pp. 19-20

[10] ICT is being increasingly recognized as an essential tool for promoting civic engagement. In fact, the future of effective civic engagement highly dependent on the extent to which such tools is put to use. ICT has the potential for strengthening service delivery accountability. Many examples of how ICT is used for effective service delivery are available. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, mobile tools have allowed citizens to participate in budgeting, by voting on how to spend local budgets. In Kenya, platforms for collecting and mapping inputs from citizens to collect eye-witness account of post-election violence and human rights abuses (UNDP, 201210).

# The Context For Civic Engagement

Ethiopian government has also enacted Freedom of the Mass Media and Access to Information Proclamation 590/2008. It touches upon the essential ingredient of civic engagement, i.e. access to information. The Proclamation among other things aim to "promote and consolidate the values of transparency and accountability in the conduct of public affairs…and to impose a legal obligation on public officials to facilitate access to individuals and the mass media to information so that matters of public interest may be disclosed and discussed publicly" and to create a "…viable freedom of information system that facilitates the free flow of information and ideas among citizens by enabling them to exercise their right to seek, receive and impart information and opinions freely" and it affirms the "…the right of individuals to access information held by public bodies".

Existence of Independent Public Agencies: Democratic institutions—traditionally called supply side of accountability—complement what is called demand-side of accountability (bottom-up accountability) through which citizens exercise client power. They also facilitate the opportunity for grievance redress mechanisms in cases where rights of citizens are violated.

The development planning and policy framework: The Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP provides an opportunity for citizens to participate in the planning and delivery of services.

The advent of PRSPs in late 1990s and early 2000s has created an environment that is conducive for the participation of CSOs in general in the development planning process. In Ethiopia, CSOs (particularly NGOs) established a taskforce for engagement in PRSP formulation for Ethiopia. The ad hoc taskforce latter evolved into a network of NGOs, which is now called Poverty Action Network of CSOs in Ethiopia (PANE).

Charities and Societies Proclamation: The number and category of CSOs particularly that of NGOs has considerably increased in Ethiopia since 1991. Despite the increase in number and diversity of civil society organizations in the country, there has not been any coherent legal framework guiding their registration and operation. Instead, different clauses and articles from different proclamations and regulations were used to administer the sector [11]. There was unanimity among the players in the Civil Society sector and government concerning the need for a new law, though there was no unanimity in terms of the content of such framework (Clark, 2000). The first comprehensive law governing registration and operation of charities and societies became operational in February 2009. The Proclamation, in its preamble, states that the whole essence of putting in place such a law is to "…ensure the realization of citizens' right to association enshrined in the Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia" and "…to aid and facilitate the role of Charities and Societies in the overall development of Ethiopian peoples".

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[11] See EU (2008) and Bekalu Tilahun (2011) for details

# The Context For Civic Engagement

## 3.2 State—Civil Society relations

The nature of state and civil society relations can be seen as being situated between two extremes. On the one hand is the lack of trust between the two and on the other is perceived co-optation of CSOs by Government. The contentions around the Charities and Society Proclamation are largely reflections of the mistrust that existed between Government and CSOs prior to the issuance of the Proclamation. It is also not something which is unique to Ethiopia. The relationship between Government and Civil Society Organizations, especially NGOs is filled with distrust[12]. (UNDP, 2005; EU, 2008; Awet Tekie Bahta, 2011) Government's distrust of NGOs stems in part from a perceived under-performance by NGOs as service-providers, from a reluctance to recognize a legitimate role for NGOs in advocacy, and from the activities of a number of 'briefcase NGOs' which lack any real base in the communities that they claim to serve. A lack of trust by CSOs of government lies in a legacy of control under the Derg regime and a perceived reluctance by the present government to widen the space for civil society actors.

The perceived unfavorable attitudes of Government emanates from factors/weaknesses that are also internal to the civil society sector such as weak accountability and transparency of CSOs to their constituencies and the public (UNDP, 2005). Weak or no self-regulation system, weak institutional and system development, absence of internal democratic administration, fund-driven (and not principle-driven) programs and projects and lack of focus and commitment to organizational objectives, and, poor networking and collaboration culture are cited as contributing to the unfavorable attitude (Ibid).

In 2006, the Christian Relief and Development Association (CRDA)[13] had commissioned a research to assess the "Operating Environment for CSO/NGOs in Ethiopia". This assessment came up with the following findings in terms Government perception regarding the work of NGOs in the country (which are largely the reflections of the prevailing state—CSO relations);

- Empowerment aspects of CSO work is seen as threatening or not appreciated, including by some international actors.
- "Rights watchdogs" and human rights organizations are perpetually targeted and being considered as funnels for civil and political discontent. Advocacy NGOs seen as "exposing" government and focused on fault-finding. Some newer NGOs (working on rights, social justice issues) seen as "awakening sleepy old NGOs and NGO leaders.

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[12] According to some experts in the field, distrust is not a bad thing as such. They see it as the 'most powerful motivating force', because 'although some level of trust is necessary, too much trust may weaken citizen oversight and control capacities of what rulers do, and increases the chances of opportunistic actions'. (Smulovitz, 2003; quoted in Ackermann, 2005, page 22)

[13] Now Consortium of CRDA (CCRDA, after the re-registration according to Charities and Societies Proclamation.

# The Context For Civic  Engagement

- Government's accusation of NGOs for "allying" with the opposition, sense of vindictiveness towards NGO leaders who are seen as "angry elites" with high overheads.
- An already ambiguous attitude of government gone sour and a clearer anti-CSO/NGO stand, post-election 2005
- CSOs seen as humble gap fillers with primary mandate and role in relief and humanitarian work

Along with enhanced inclusion of  non-governmental actors in processes of public dialogue and negotiation comes the risk of real or perceived co-optation. Civil society actors which become too closely associated with government processes can suffer weakened links with their constituencies and a loss of legitimacy. In the Ethiopian case, the mass-based societies such as the youth and women associations are often seen as dependent on government structures. In fact, successive administrations have tried to use such associations as a means for mobilizing public support and used them to promote their political agenda, thus jeopardizing the independence of such associations.  This perception has in a way affected the engagement with mass-based societies. Same applies to region-based and party initiated development organizations (which are third-party organizations and usually have higher government officials sitting on their boards) which are not seen as independent organizations.

Such perception however is detrimental to effectiveness of civic engagement,  by casting doubt on the independence of such societies. Among the different categories of charities and societies, mass-based societies are well placed for civic engagement because of their extended structure from the lowest level (even below  kebele) to the regional and federal levels. Their role, however, is constrained by limited capacity and, as indicated previously, the prevalent perceptions of lack of independence, as they are 'generally organized with  the  support  and facilitation of the Government, which can lead to Government viewing them as their executive arms rather  than  independent entities[14]. According to the study by Atos Consulting [15], Mass Based Societies (MBS) in Ethiopia lack capacity in terms of trained staff with expertise in project management, resource mobilization, and financial management. This limits effectiveness of their engagement with service providers.

## 3.3    Organizational forms of charities and societies in Ethiopia

The degree of engagement in service  delivery depends on the form of charities and societies. According to the Charities and Societies Proclamation, there are two types of registered, not-for-profit organizations in  Ethiopia: Charities and Societies. Charities in turn are grouped under four categories, namely, charitable endowments, charitable institutions, charitable trusts, and charitable societies. A charitable endowment is an organization by which a certain  property  is  perpetually

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[14]  ATOS, 2012
[15]  TECS, 2012

and irrevocably destined by donation or will or the order of the Agency for a purpose that is solely charitable. (Article 16) A charitable institution is a charity formed by at least three persons exclusively for charitable purposes. (Article 27 (1)) A charitable trust is an organization by virtue of which specific property is constituted solely for a charitable purpose to be administered by persons, the trustees, in accordance with the instructions given by the instrument constituting the charitable trust. (Article 30). A charitable society is a society which is established for charitable purposes. (Article 46 of the CSP).

"Society" means an association of persons organized on a non-profit making and voluntary basis for the promotion of the rights and interests of its members, to undertake other similar lawful purposes, as well as to coordinate with institutions of similar objectives (Article 55).

Charities and Societies are given one of three legal designations, Ethiopian Charities of Societies, Ethiopian Resident Charities or Societies, or Foreign Charities, based on where the organization was established, its source of income, composition of membership, and membership residential status.

Ethiopian Charities or Societies - shall mean those Charities or Societies that are formed under the laws of Ethiopia, all of whose members are Ethiopians, generate income from Ethiopia and wholly controlled by Ethiopians. In addition, even though they are not controlled solely by Ethiopians, they may be deemed as Ethiopian Charities or Ethiopian Societies if funds received from foreign sources does not exceed ten percent of their total funds. (Article 2(2)). One group of societies that is particularly essential for civic engagement is categorized as Mass Based Societies. This includes professional associations, women's associations, youth associations and other similar Ethiopian societies (article 2(5)). MBS are believed to play important roles in social accountability areas and in anti-corruption activities and they have potentially greater role in exposing corruption and maladministration[16].

Ethiopian Resident Charities or Societies – shall mean those Charities or Societies that are formed under the laws of Ethiopia and which consist of members who reside in Ethiopia and who receive more than 10% of their funds from foreign sources (Article 2 (3)).

Foreign Charities - shall mean those Charities that are formed under the laws of foreign countries or which consist of members who are foreign nationals or are controlled by foreign nationals or receive funds from foreign sources (Article 2 (4)).

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[16] TECS, 2012

## 3.4  Trends in the development of the civil society sector

Despite the fears of the negative impacts that the proclamation was thought to have on the existence of CSOs/NGOs, the number of newly registered charities and societies have increased considerably. Since the operationalization of the Proclamation, a total of 1,056 new charities and societies were registered and received certificates, out of which 150 were registered in 2009/10, 495 in 2010/11 and 411 during 2011/12 (up to July 2012). The following figure shows trends in re-registration and new registration of Charities and Societies by category following the new proclamation.   Figure 1 shows that the Ethiopian resident charities constitute  the  majority  of  charities.  This  is  obvious given the fact that most of the Charities and Societies obtain more than 10% funding from foreign sources and thus cannot be registered as Ethiopian charities.

**FIGURE 1: Number of charities and societies registered from September 2009 up to September 2011**
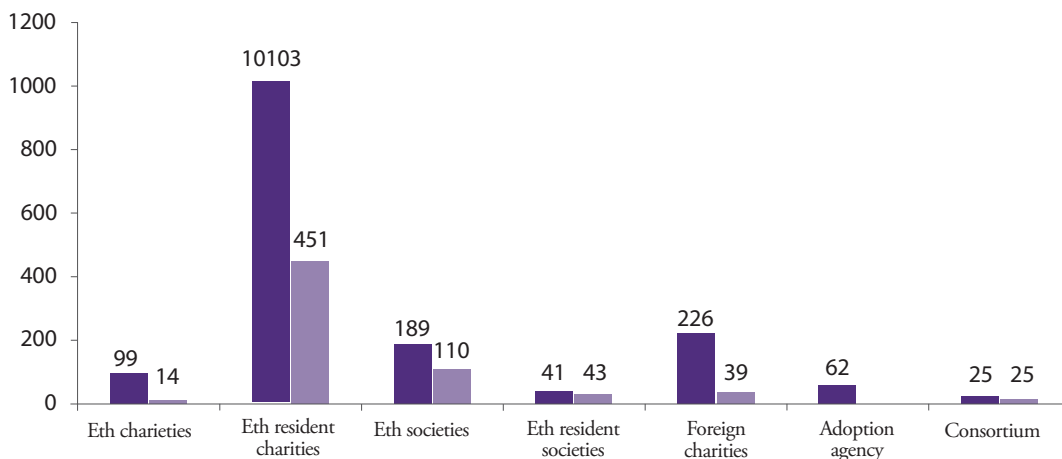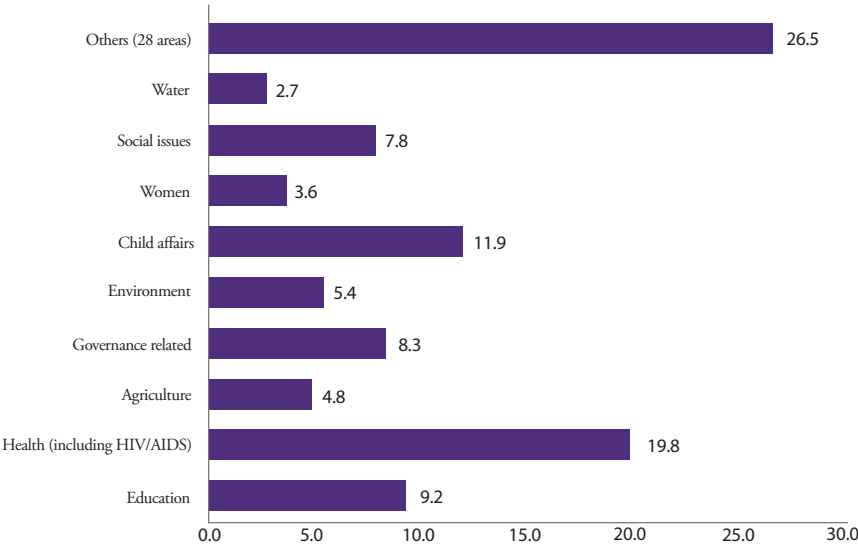


*Source:* Based on data from Charities and Societies Agency (2012)

The figure also tells another story. Only 1655 of the 3000 NGOs which were thought to be operating in Ethiopia before the adoption of the Charities and Societies Proclamation (local as well as foreign) were re-registered  between  September  2009  and  March 2011. With the issue of difficulty in re-registration of the already operating NGOs during the first year of operation not coming out as a serious concern during   the re-registration grace period, the low level of re- registration  (about 55%  of  the  already  operating  NGOS) seems to suggest that some of the NGOs were in deed not performing what they were established for or they may not have been operational in the first place. The fact that the extent of new registration has increased considerably during the first two years might also be one of the early indications that some of the criticisms against the   proclamation   such   as barriers to entry might not be the case.
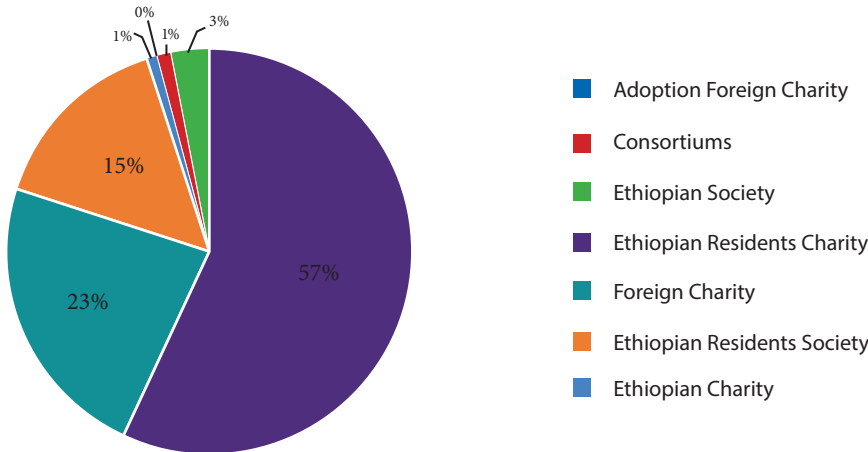
# The Context For Civic Engagement

Based on the data from the Charities and Societies Agency, the Charities and Societies are engaged in various social, economic and governance related projects. Overall, as of February 2012, the Charities and societies registered at Federal level were implementing over[17] 1139 projects.

**Figure 2: Number of projects implemented by different category of charities and societies**



*Source:* Based on data from Charities and Societies Agency (2012)

**Figure 3: 'Sectoral' distribution of interventions**



*Source:* Based on data from Charities and Societies Agency (2012)

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[17] Charities and societies operating in one region only are not required to register by Charities and Societies Agency. Therefore, the total number of projects implemented by charities and societies in the country could be significantly larger than this figure

# The Context For Civic Engagement

The data in figure 4 shows over 57% of the total projects is implemented by Ethiopian Resident Charities, followed by foreign charities (23%) and Ethiopian Resident Societies at 15%.

In terms of the kind of initiatives that the charities and societies are engaged in the data shows health and health related interventions account for over 19.8% of interventions[18], followed by child affairs (11.9%), education (9.2%), governance [19] 8.3%) and other social issues at 7.8%.

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An important issue at this stage is the extent to which the passing of the Charities and Societies Proclamation has affected the sectoral engagement of Charities and Societies. When the above figure (fig 3) is compared with figure 4, it shows that there has not been significant changes in sectoral engagement (see figure 4).

This might indicate that there might have been some flexibility in the interpretation of some of the provisions of the proclamation. For example, one would expect decline in number of projects that fall under 'governance and related' areas, given the projects are implemented by Foreign and Ethiopian Resident Charities and Societies and that such organizations are not allowed to work on governance and related areas such as human rights.

Since the enactment of the Proclamation, eight directives were issued to operationalize the proclamation. This includes: Consortium directive, 70/30 directive, charitable committee directive, endowment directive, local fund raising directive, charities property guideline, income generating activities directive, and audit report directive.

As the operationalization of the guidelines has started only recently, it is premature to talk about impacts (whether it is positive or negative).

The 70/30 directive (the directive issued to determine the operational versus the administrative costs of Charities & Societies), approved in July 2011, seems to be the most contentious of all the eight directives issued by the charities and societies agency so far. The effect of the directive seems to vary by categories of charities and societies involved. For example,intermediary international NGOs are not able to function in their current role[21]. M and E is their major function, which means their expenditure is largely categorized as administrative and they would not be able to comply with the

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[18] One important element to note is one intervention is not necessarily one project. It is often the cases that there are more than one initiative or intervention under one project.

[19] Democracy and good governance, Peace and security, human rights, justice, and capacity building.

[20] They play no role in either service delivery or in actual control and disbursement of funds.

[21] They play no role in either service delivery or in actual control and disbursement of funds.

70/30 requirement. They have to either close or engage in direct implementation of programmes. The Ethiopian resident charities, on the other hand, have the least difficulty in complying with the guideline, but early observations show that only 30% of them could comply with the requirement of the directive.

According to the issue paper, the societies had particular difficulties in complying, while none of the consortia (the  networks  established  by different charities and societies) were able to comply.

Moving forward, what is important for the development of transparent and accountable civil society sector in Ethiopia is how the charities and societies adapt to the Charities and Societies Proclamation and directives, and the implication that the challenges caused by the regulatory  environment  and the  adaptation  process might have on the dialogue between the Government and the civil society sector. Dialogue on the proclamation, regulations and directives between the Charities and Societies, and Government can mutually respond to the challenges implied in the Proclamation and related regulation and directives, with the scope for negotiating reforms that meet  both sides  in the middle.

While making the exceptions are welcome, it is likely to cause problems in the long-term as it opens the way for impartial treatment. Noteworthy, the government has lately agreed in principle that rural transport costs and rural capacity building costs could be classified as operational expenditures.

**Figure 4: Distribution of NGOs by Sector (before 2008)**
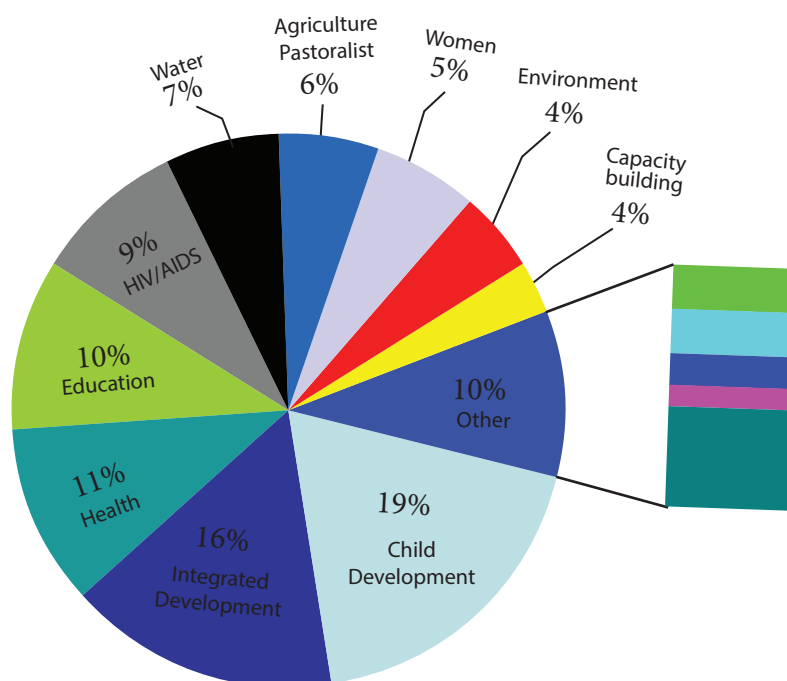


*Source:* EU, 2008

There are encouraging developments taking place already in terms of the 70/30 guideline. In some cases, Government has granted exceptions to some organizations (such as charities engaged in taking care of the elderly) to categorize some of their expenditures that are otherwise categorized as administrative to be considered as operational.

# 4 Towards Effective Civic Engagement In Service Delivery In Ethiopia

## 4.1 A Conceptual framework

The emphasis on the role of citizens in effective service delivery became popular after the 2004 World Development Report of the World Bank. The Report, produced under the theme of Making Services Work for the Poor, elaborated the model for analyzing civic engagement. According to the report, accountability can be implemented through either a "long route," whereby citizens influence policy makers who in turn influence service delivery through providers, or a "short route," through which citizens individually and collectively—can directly influence, participate in, and supervise service delivery by providers. The figure below shows a simplified representation of the model.

**Figure 5: The routes to accountability**
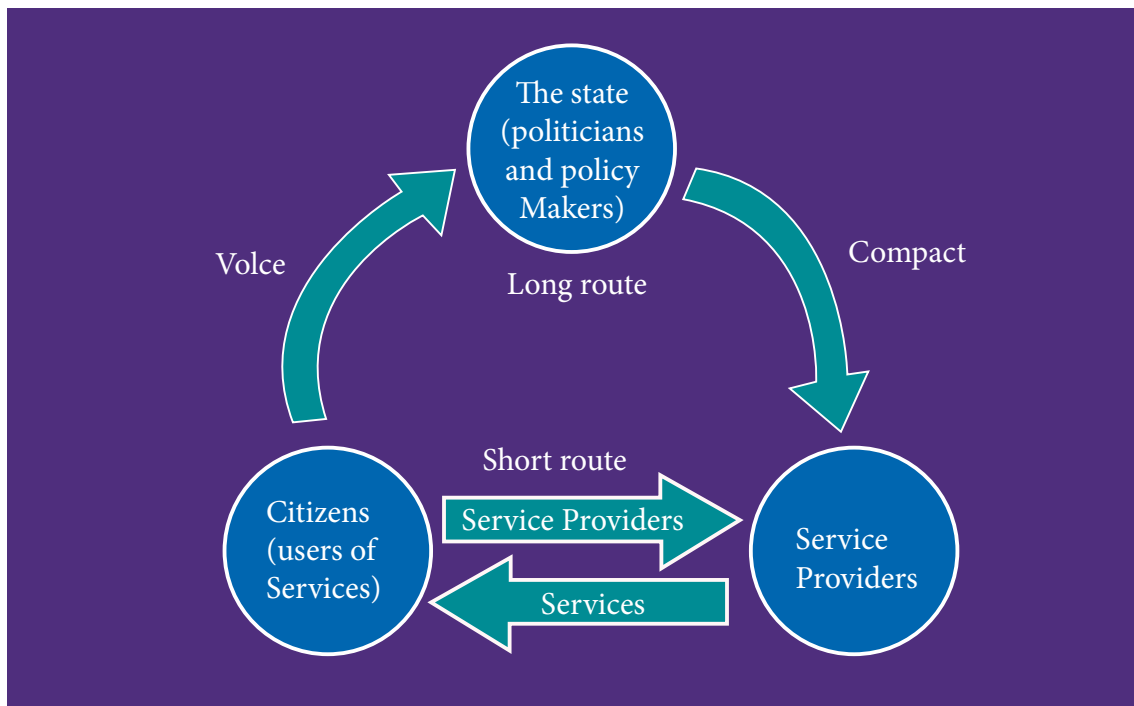


*Source:* World Bank (2003)

Through the 'long-route' to accountability, citizens exercise voice vis-à-vis politicians by using elections, lobbying, information campaigns and other forms of social accountability mechanisms to monitor and sanction elected leaders. In the case of the 'short-route', citizens exercise what is called 'client power' to directly hold service providers accountable. In this case, providers are held to account for their actions by their clients—the users of services (individuals and communities to whom they provide services) [22].

Given civic engagement is a continuous process, it is logical that the short route approach be emphasized to analyze civic engagement in public service delivery, as this route ensures rapid response to local needs and priorities as compared to the long route, which typically involves long period to respond to people's needs. The other reason for focusing on the short-route is primarily because of the fact that this is an area where neither the donors nor the UN agencies have effectively worked on. The little that has been done in this regard focused on providing support to NGOs, which are not as such membership- based organizations, but which are termed 'third-party' organizations. Accordingly, this approach calls for decomposing the CSO concept by its constituent part, as they have different roles to play. It is however important to note that they have complementary roles and strengthen one another. Equally important is the need to realize the fact that they are different and have different roles to play in enhancing public service delivery and differentiated treatment is important for sound and well-informed engagement with Charities and Societies, and for promoting the role of Charities and Societies in the country's development endeavor. It is however important to note that for the short route to accountability to be effective, the mechanism for ensuring long-route to accountability should be strong and an incentive structure (reward and sanctions) should be put in place for the providers of services to pay attention to the needs of citizens. While citizens can provide feedback on the quality of services provided to them, they can't directly sanction the service providers.

### 4.2 Social accountability as a mechanisms for effective civic engagement

There are several ways through which citizens exercise their power—whether it is 'voice' or 'client power'. According to World Bank (2003), citizens can directly influence service providers through (a) choice[23]; (b) social accountability mechanisms; (c) participation in service delivery (such as participation in service delivery mechanism of the provider, e.g., parent-teacher association, and (d) by influencing the decision of policy makers through 'voice' mechanisms—'the long route'. The applicability of the tools however could vary depending on a specific context of a country.

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[22] World Bank, 2003

[23] But this is affected by many other things such as wealth standing, social status, etc

Taking the Ethiopian reality into consideration, the mechanisms for civic engagement in public service delivery are best understood within the framework of what is called social accountability[24]. Social accountability is defined as 'the processes and approaches through which ordinary citizens, who are the users of public services, (a) voice their needs, preferences and demands for improved and effective service delivery and policies; and, (b) hold policy makers and service providers accountable for weak or non-performance'[25]. Others[26] see it as a 'term for bottom-up accountability… [a] set of tools that citizens can use to influence the quality of service delivery by holding providers accountable'.

There are two sides to accountability—the demand side and the supply side. The demand side, also called social accountability, 'requires that citizens understand and put to practice, their rights and responsibilities with respect to access and use of public services', while the supply side 'requires that government officials and services providers develop and establish mechanisms and procedures to listen to citizens' voices and demands, and to respond with appropriate policies and solutions to service deficiency timely'[27].

The focus of this note, as indicated already, is on the demand side of social accountability, although reference is made to how both sides can interact for better and effective service delivery. Social accountability mechanisms build citizen voice and create spaces for more pro-active engagement of citizens/civil society with the state. However, those geared towards public expenditure management processes—mechanisms that seek to directly involve ordinary citizens in processes of allocating, disbursing, monitoring and evaluating the use of public resources - have proved very effective since it is this resource flow that puts policy into action.

### 4.3 Entry points: Tools for CivicEngagement

A range of tools and methods[28] are available to enhance effective civic engagement in service delivery. Some are relevant at the planning stage, while others are relevant at a later stage during implementation, monitoring and evaluation phases. The experience with the use of some of these tools would be discussed latter. The planning and budgeting cycle provides insight on how some tools and methods are used to improve public sector governance (see figure 6). For each phase of the cycle, certain tools and methods provide citizens with an ability to voice their needs and concerns, influence decision making, and monitor execution and outcomes. Some tools, such as participatory budgeting, can be used throughout the cycle due to their specific nature.

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[24] For discussion about the others, see Ringold, et al (2007)
[25] Samuel Taddesse, et al, 2010
[26] Ringold, et al, 2007
[27] Samuel Taddesse, et al, 2010
[28] Such as participatory budgeting, independent budget analysis, participatory expenditure tracking, and participatory monitoring and evaluation

As the figure below shows, effective citizen engagement starts right at the beginning of planning for service delivery and extends all the way to access to and use of the services being delivered.

The challenge would then be looking at how citizens can engage at all levels of the service delivery planning cycle.

### 4.4 Experience in the Use of Social Accountability Tools

Governments and development partners (donors and CSOs) have been experimenting with various social accountability tools that aimed to inform citizens and communities about their rights, the quality and quantity of service delivery that the service providers should provide and the actual performance of service providers. In 2004, a local network of civil society organizations, called Poverty Action Network of Civil Society Organizations in Ethiopia piloted the use of the Citizen Report Card to assess access to, use of, and satisfaction from, delivery of key services in Oromia, Tigray, Southern Nations, Nationalities and Regional States, Dire Dawa and Afar.

In 2005, following the freezing of direct budget support to Ethiopia in the aftermath of the May 2005 election, donor agencies in Ethiopia designed a project called Protection of Basic Services. As part of the project, a social accountability component was incorporated. This component was designed to enhance the transparency of the budget process, and to strengthen the capacity of citizens and Charities and Societies to engage in these processes. It also aimed to support the piloting of selected tools and approaches to strengthen voice and accountability in the context of decentralized service delivery (World Bank, 2006) [29].

Despite the relatively short experience with the application of social accountability tools, the experience so far shows that it has had beneficial impacts on improving the effectiveness of public service delivery.

### 4.5  Have the tools delivered the  promises?

The Citizens Report Card (CRC) exercise piloted by PANE, for example, informed the formulation of the Plan for Accelerated and Sustained Development to End Poverty (2005/6—2009/10)— the five year development plan of Ethiopia. However, there is no clear indication in terms of whether or not this has engendered changes in the behavior of service providers. The problem with the use of the tools is that they were rarely associated with reward and sanction mechanisms which are essential for success of social accountability.

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[29] See www.esap2.org  for the tools used and some of the findings and related documentation

The CRC in Ethiopia, for example, has not been associated with the supply side accountability structures, nor was it linked with sanctions and reward mechanisms.

As Jenkins &Goetz [30] argued, such measures (i.e. CRC) should be complemented by tougher measures which directly question and sanction public servants and agencies that do not perform up to standard. Such cases require strong relationship between democratic institutions and civil society, and the independence of such institutions. The added value of civic engagement is its contribution to empowerment of citizens and enhanced participation of citizens in the planning, implementation and delivery of public services. When there is effective civic engagement, citizens are aware of their rights, responsibilities and entitlements for better quality public service delivery. But there are ample evidences from other countries that effective civic engagement indeed contributes to improvement in quantity and quality of service delivery.

**Figure 6: Tools vis-à-vis the budget cycle**
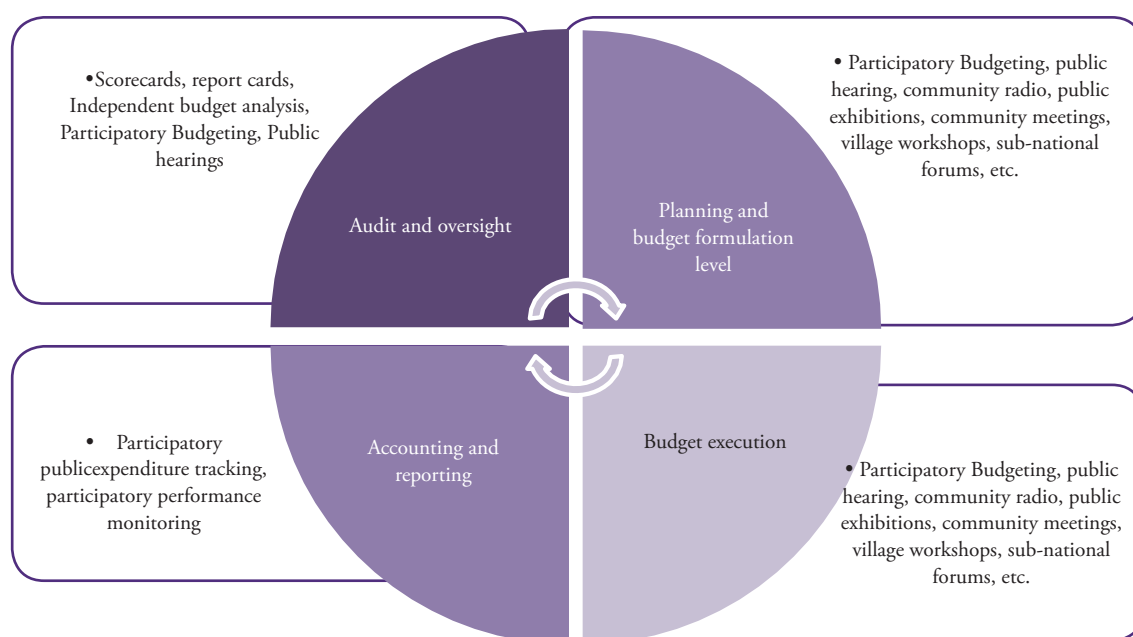


*Source:* Developed based on (a) World Bank Social Accountability Sourcebook; and, (b), Jenssen (1992

Despite the dearth of in depth findings, this section provides some of the early observations from initiatives that have piloted the use of tools for civic engagement in service delivery.

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[30] Ackermann, 2005

## Towards Effective Civic Engagement In Service Delivery In Ethiopia

As previously noted, the application of social accountability tools in Ethiopia is a recent phenomenon, and therefore it might not be easy to find an extensive documentation of the extent to which civic engagement has been effective in improving the quality of service delivery in a sustainable manner.

The PBS Social Accountability evaluation[31] shows that the application of the piloted tools of social accountability has resulted in better interaction between citizens and service providers (Samuel Tadesse, et al 2010). The evaluation also highlighted improvements both on the sides of the users and providers of services. According to the report, the tools have, amongst others:

• Increased awareness by citizens of their rights, responsibilities and entitlements with respect to basic services, access procedures and usage. According to the findings, citizens were better able to engage in the provision of services from a planning and resource generation perspective.

This process was facilitated by implementing Charities and Societies some which are Ethiopian resident charities which, according to the Charities and Societies Proclamation, are not allowed in this sort of engagement as it involves advocacy [32].

• Created considerable sense of empowerment and self-confidence of service users, as evidenced by increased feedback on the quality of services provided. The report particularly noted the complementarity between such kind of bottom-up accountability and the formal complaint handling mechanism put in place as part of the implementation of civil service reform through business process re-engineering. By comparing the findings between intervention and non-intervention areas, the report indicated that the latter case lacks objective tools for measuring adequacy of service delivery and service delivery performance rating. The feedback mechanism in non-intervention areas lacked seriousness in complaints handling (reviewing and responding to complaints), and not often adequately used.

• Allowed direct participation that is more useful (effective and efficient) than those that are done through surveys or indirect means. Such tools have allowed adequate representation of different groups of the society or the community. They have allowed the citizens to discuss problems related to basic service delivery and have built confidence and enabled citizens to rate performances in service delivery objectively. Mass gatherings provide opportunity for citizens to share views on the quality of basic service delivery and to demand improvements. This highlights the importance of adapting SA tools to the context within which they are applied.

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[31] http://esap2.org.et/wpcontent/uploads/2012/06/Evaluation-report-social accountability-pilot.pdf (accessed 06.02.2013)
[32] Some of the mechanisms through which the project is implemented such as social accountability sensitization workshops are categorized as administrative according to the 30/70 guideline

- The capacity of all participating actors (the intermediary Charities and Societies, government officials at all levels, service providers and citizens) has improved. Together with the government reforms and capacity building programmes, social accountability mechanisms have not only served as mechanisms for increased efficiency in providing services, but they have also helped them to build their capacity in prioritizing gaps and problems in services provision and their own self-evaluation of performance has increased.

- Improved coverage and quality of basic services as evidenced by responses to demands of users.

An interesting observation from the PBS—Social Accountability evaluation is that locally established and registered Charities and Societies were more effective than others because of their local knowledge, trust that they have built with local government officials and with local communities.

The findings from the PBS social accountability has also demonstrated that for effectiveness social accountability mechanisms, access to information about the service being delivered (unless citizens are aware of services provided, logically they cannot engage); and capacities and opportunities to use information and transform the information to action are essential for success of civic engagement. Access to information is important because citizens may not be willing or able to challenge service providers if they lack information, time, or if they don't feel empowered. The same is true if the consequence of providing feedback is potentially damaging and have repercussions on the providers of feedback and if they don't expect robust response.

Linked to the issue of access to information is ICT. The effectiveness of civic engagement registered so far in terms of improved service delivery can be further enhanced through the use of ICT. There are some examples of the use of ICT in service delivery in Ethiopia, particularly the health sector, where UNICEF used mobile health applications in supplies management (World Bank, 2012). In many countries, mobile phones (devices) now serve as vehicles for improved service delivery and greater transparency and accountability. Governments are beginning to embrace mobile phones as effective tools for bringing public services closer to citizens, create interactive services, and promote accountable and transparent governance (Ibid).

Overall, while there is promising trends in terms of the results achieved through the implementation of the tools, the extent to which this would improve the quality of service delivery in a sustainable manner, even after the project has withdrawn support, is yet to be seen and it is a subject for further investigation. What is important is effective civic engagement should ultimately result in better and quality service delivery and lead to cost-effectiveness and better value for money for those who

provide the services. The findings have also shown that the effectiveness of social accountability mechanism would yield better results when accompanied by complementary measures from the supply side.

## 4.6  Challenges for civic engagement

The relationship between civic engagement and responsiveness of providers (as reflected by improvements in quality of service delivery) is not a straight forward linear relationship. Other factors influencing the nature of relationship include: social, political, historical and cultural context within which the service delivery is situated.

The following are some of these issues that affect the extent to which citizen engagement is translated to improved service delivery:

- The Charities and Societies legislation : The implementation of the charities and ocieties continue to be a challenge. By its very nature, civic engagement through social accountability falls under the scope of governance. This means, only Ethiopian charities and societies have the right to engage in it and other categories are not allowed. This means the restriction on what kind of Charities and Societies are involved in this as stipulated in the relevant proclamation may apply, thus putting a break on the range of players that could potentially be included.  By restricting engagement based on source of funding, the proclamation may limit the growth in capacity of Ethiopian charities and societies.

- Ineffectiveness of complaints handling mechanisms: As noted elsewhere in this paper, client-power is strong in situations where complaint handling mechanism[33] (which is usually the role of Government) works effectively. In situation where corruption is present—whether grand or petty—where incentive structures are not aligned to encourage a robust response, complaint handling mechanisms are usually ineffective, which means citizen feedback is not as such fruitful. If there is corrupt behavior between complaint handlers and the one who is the cause of complaint, client power is ineffective. The complaint handling mechanism can be internal (within the same organization or service provider) or external (out of the organization providing the services).

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[33] In Ethiopia such mechanism was introduced as part of Civil Service Reform Programme, on the agenda of government reform agenda since 1994. The extents to which such mechanism has improved service delivery and accountability of service provider is however not very clear. The 2007 review CSRP, done as part of the overall review of PSCAP, was also not very informative in this regard. Improving transparency and accountability of Civil Service is also one element of the CSRP.

In Ethiopia, Institute of Ombudsman is an external complaint handling mechanism but the problem is the enforceability of the findings of its investigation is questionable. The predominant complaint handling mechanism which is put in place as part of the Civil Service Reform in Ethiopia is internal to the service provider. No comprehensive study of effectiveness of complaints handling mechanism is available but experience has shown that there is little faith in the usefulness of the system.

- Corruption, weak accountability systems and a lack of responsiveness on the part of government are often cited as the basis of growing disillusionment of citizens with their governments. On the other hand, citizens' trust in government grows when they feel they have a say in the government's activities, and when government listens and responds to their concerns. The problem is corruption weakens the power of voice and client-power. Corruption is generally thought to be not rampant in Ethiopia but there are indications that it is on the rise.

  The major manifestations of corruption in Ethiopia are abuse of power, breach of trust, trickery, forgery and bribery (FEACC, 2010). Other sources indicate that there is a high perception of corruption in Ethiopia.

  For example, according to Transparency International , the corruption index for Ethiopia was 33/100 in 2012 (100 being clean/no corruption). The indices before that for the years 2008-2011 stood at 2.7 (zero means highly corrupt while 10 means that the country is perceived as clean).[34]

- Weak culture of public action: Culture of assertiveness is important. Civil society works effectively when it has high capacity for collective action (Mansui & Rao, 2013). As other researchers have pointed out (see, e.g., Clark, 2000), civic associations are part of Ethiopia's culture but their primary purpose is to provide self-reliance for their members— individuals, households, and the larger community—and not for engagements that are political in nature. They rarely engage in promoting the interest of their groups nor do they engage with policy making process.

- Potential reprisals: These are the potential risks that such approaches pose to those individuals or organizations that speak out. Depending on the country context, citizens who dare criticize government actions or question the conduct of authorities do so at considerable personal risk. Some attribute the restrictions on some of the NGOs after the 2005 election to the fact that some of the organizations were critical of the manner in which the election was conducted.

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[34] Transparency International has changed its methodology for measuring corruption perception from a 0-10 scale to 0-100 scale in 2012 accordingly CPI scores before 2012 are not comparable over time. However, roughly on value terms it shows the changes in trend over the period.

- Weak capacity:  Public policy advocacy is a challenge even under ideal conditions, even for the well-established Charities and Societies because of capacity issues and the perception that  such actions are seen as highly political and partisan (Clark, 2000). Even before the current regulatory environment, the number of advocacy NGOs was only about 4% of the total NGOs registered in the country (EU, 2008).

- Absence of self-regulation by the NGO sector: The civil  society  sector  in general  has  not been successful in demonstrating capacity to regulate itself. Although an NGO code of conduct was prepared in 1999, it has not been implemented and failing to 'walk the talk' in terms of transparency  and  accountability  remains  a  big  challenge  in terms of effective civic engagement and demonstrating the capacity to do so.

# 5  WAY FORWARD AND RECOMMENDATIONS: HOW CAN CIVIC ENGAGEMENT BE STRENGTHENED?

Given the challenges discussed above, how can engagement of the citizens in the delivery of services be strengthened? What can development partners (government,  donors and civil  society)  do  to strengthen such mechanisms?

Building and sustaining an environment which is conducive for civic engagement: Government creates an enabling environment by issuing vital legislation and providing leadership to initiate and sustain development in all sectors of the economy[35]. Given that civic engagement is not bottom-up alone and it has to be met by top-down initiatives, government plays a crucial role in facilitating meaningful civic engagement. While citizen or civil society-led initiatives are increasingly seen as critical for accountability and transparency, it is equally important to focus on 'both sides of the citizen-state equation' to facilitate accountability – i.e., also developing the capacity of governments to respond to citizen demand (as experience has shown). The success of democratic governance depends on the existence of both a robust state and  a  healthy  and  active  civil  society (UNDP, 2009). The analysis has shown that there are lots of factors in the enabling environment that affects civic engagement. Notable among them is the Proclamation and associated regulations. While clear impacts of the proclamation will take some time to be seen, it is important that addressing the challenges faced in the implementation of the proclamation and its perceived challenges through the process of dialogue between the civil society sector and government is critical. Development partners have the responsibility of supporting and encouraging dialogue between Government and civil society—promoting dialogue in an impartial manner, in a way that has a sole purpose of enhancing efficiency of services provided to the people.

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[35] For example, some give credit to the Government of Ethiopia during early 1990s for the shift by NGOs from relief orientation to development orientation (Clark, 2000)

## Towards Effective Civic Engagement In Service Delivery In Ethiopia

**Institutionalization of civic engagement:** A little that has been practiced in strengthening social accountability has been through ad hoc initiatives, with no guarantee that the benefits accruing from the initiatives undertaken so far become sustainable. Institutionalization of participation in the planning of public service delivery and strengthening the democratic institutions is essential. Gains from the implementation of its capacity building programmes, specially the civil service reform and internal and external complaints handling mechanisms to complement social accountability initiatives need to be consolidated.

**Involvement of service providers in social accountability exercise:** As observed during the PBS Social Accountability evaluation, when public officials at all tiers of government are involved in the process that facilitates civic engagement, the results are successful. Integration of social accountability tools within the overall planning process of the service providers will enhance quick adoption and application of social accountability tools thus enhancing effective engagement of citizens in planning for service delivery. The effectiveness of the application of tools for effective citizen engagement would be compounded in cases where they are designed taking into consideration supply side accountability mechanisms. Linking demand side accountability mechanisms with those in the supply side facilitate the effectiveness of both supply and demand side accountability. Continuous and intensive capacity building for better understanding and internalization of social accountability practices by Charities and Societies, local government officials and local communities is also important and is critical for effective citizen engagement.

**Promoting access to information:** By increasing transparency and providing access to information, the government can enhance client power described above. An important question, however, is when citizens use information do providers respond and bring about improvements in quantity and quality of service delivery? In their 2011 report, Devarajan, Shantayanan; Khemani, Stuti & Walton, Michael indicated that when higher-level political leadership provides sufficient or appropriate powers for citizen participation in holding within-state agencies or frontline providers accountable, there is frequently positive impact on outcomes.

To engage effectively, citizens need information on their rights, the services and benefits they are entitled to receive, the performance standard they should expect, the grievance redress channels they can use when things go wrong[36]. Access to information can be facilitated among other things through practicing/piloting various social accountability tools, informing people about public services, including what services they are entitled to receive, how to access them, and about their performance and quality through the application of different social accountability tools[37] in those areas that aim

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[36] Ringold, et.al., 2007
[37] As the evaluation enhance social accountability project in Ethiopia has shown, citizens became more aware of what their rights are through application of CRC and community score card (Samuel, et.al, 2010)

to encourage accountability and promoting participation. This can be done by Government as well as Charities and Societies— especially charities as they have the capacity for doing do—themselves. This however is strongly dependent on the kind of charities and societies, as provided in the Charities and Societies Proclamation. Depending on the kind of civic engagement that is being promoted, some of the organizations, especially those which are called 'third-party organizations' are constrained in advocating for a particular cause (if they received more than 10% of their funding from foreign sources). Such actions are also important mechanisms to stimulate demand for services or to change behavior.

**Organization of Citizens for effective participation:** Participation is define as 'voluntary and democratic involvement of people in decision-making'[38]. Citizen participation involves expressing view and by expressing their views ('exercising voice'), citizens not only have the potential to influence government priorities but also demand transparency and accountability from their governments. Effective participation requires better organization of the communities for better participation in service delivery. Representative mechanisms and procedures have to be established to ensure an effective involvement of people's interests throughout the planning process. In order to provide the necessary linkages for participation between service providers and the people, voluntary and community-based organizations which are controlled by the members have to be established [39].

**Making resources available:** Often there is lack of adequate resources for interacting with and mobilizing the community for participatory practices. Participation for example is often overlooked under the pretext of lack of funding and that it requires time (which is often absent). The lack of resources within the context of Ethiopia is the restrictions in terms of engagement that comes with source of funding. The fact that Charities and Societies which receive more than 10% of their total budget from foreign sources are not allowed to engage in some of the critical areas, especially governance related, which is typical of engagement in service delivery limits the availability of resources for Charities and Societies to promote direct engagement of citizens in public service delivery.

**Self- regulation of the civil society sector:** For effective civic engagement, Charities and Societies (especially charities) should become transparent and accountable in and for their activities. In this regard, having the necessary capacity for self-regulation would be essential. Their transparency and accountability rest on their ability to maintain their internal operation in a professional manner according to widely accepted business operations standards, and to make their financial records publicly available. Such initiatives are confidence building measures and strongly contribute to the development of fruitful dialogue between government and charities and societies.

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[38] Jenssen, 1992
[39] Ibid

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