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## **Linking ‘big D’ and ‘little d’ in development**

**The Case of ActionAid Ethiopia in West Azernet Berbere District,  
Southern Nations Nationalities and Peoples’ Regional State,  
Ethiopia.**

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## **Abstract**

The critics about poor performance of NGOs over the last two decades focuses on their inclination towards ‘big D’ development – project based intentional activity in health, education and water which has little intention to challenge existing power relation and social structures - and underlined the loss of transformative edge of participation. Critics further urged NGOs to realign their orientation towards ‘little d’ development - process of enabling and empowering local people to claim, defend, influence and advocate for their own rights and interests. However, recently several African governments introduced restrictive laws and proclamations that limit the engagement of NGOs in ‘little d’ development, of which Ethiopia is one. Hence, this study examines how ActionAid Ethiopia links ‘big D’ and ‘little d’ development by using participatory development approaches in a limited legal environment.

The study is based on a qualitative case study conducted in West Azernet Berbere district, SNNPR, Ethiopia by the author in March, 2013. A total of 34 semi structured and three group interviews were conducted. The findings of the study reveal that participation in service delivery projects, on the one hand, enhances cost effectiveness, sustainability and ownership of projects and on the other hand, it allows communities to come together, discuss and reflect on their own experience, develop skills and knowledge, get practical experience in management and administration and take actions to claim, defend and advocate for their own rights and interests. In this process, illiteracy, lack of experienced and motivated government staffs, frequent meetings, staff turnover and lack of proper understanding of participatory development were identified as major challenges. Likewise, tradition of working together, presence of good policy frameworks and courage and commitment of the community were identified as major opportunities. The study concludes that ensuring participation in service delivery projects and enhancing the capacity of the community for organization and collective action using the aforementioned strategies earmarked a shift away from the conventional approach of advocacy by NGOs to communities themselves.

Key words: Participation, Empowerment, NGOs, Instrumental, Transformative, ‘Big D’, ‘Little d’, Development

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## **List of Acronyms**

AAE	ActionAid Ethiopia
ALPS	Accountability Learning and Planning System
BSBC	Berkefet Skill Based Cooperative
CAT	Center for Alternative Technologies
CBOs	Community Based Organizations
CBAP	Community Based AIDS Program
CSA	Central Statistical Authority
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CSP	Country Strategic Plan
DA	Development Area
DWWDA	Dalocha Women Water Development Association
ETB	Ethiopian Birr
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HTPs	Harmful Traditional Practices
IMF	International Monetary Fund
ICSP	Interim Country Strategic Plan
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
PRRP	Participatory Review Reflection Process
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategic Programs
RBA	Rights Based Approach
REFLECT	Regenerated Fererian Literacy and Empowerment through Community Techniques
SAPs	Strategic Adjustment Programs
SNNPR	Southern nation nationalities regional state
SPA	Support for Social Progress
UN	United Nations

USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VLWWDA	Vicky's Lera Women Water Development Association
WABW	West Azernet Berbere Woreda
WABWFEDO	West Azernet Berbere Woreda Finance and Economic Development Office
WB	World Bank
WRWSCC	Wektie Rahmet Women Saving and Credit Cooperative

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## **1. Introduction**

Development is one of the most elusive and contested concept in the social sciences. What it is and how we go about it is under heated debate both in the academic circle and in the world of practice (Sumner and Tribe, 2008; Potter *et al.*, 2008). In their historicized account of development Cowen and Shenton (1996) have distinguished between two meanings of development that have been constantly confused: Development as an immanent and unintentional process and development as an imminent and intentional activity which was later slightly amended by Hart (2001) as ‘little d’ and ‘big D’ development respectively. While ‘little d’ refers to a geographically uneven, profoundly contradictory set of processes underlying capitalist development, ‘big D’ refers to a post-second world war project of intervention in the ‘third world’ (Hart, 2001:650).

According to Bebbington *et al.*, (2008), the role of NGOs in development can be thought in relation to the aforementioned two broad distinctions. They argued that the role of NGOs in relation to ‘big D’ development can be seen as alternative way of arranging and providing basic social services in health, water, education and microfinance while the ‘little d’ role can be conceived in relation to alternative ways of organizing the economy, politics and social relationships through advocacy and empowerment.

Similar distinctions are also found in the works of Amartya Sen. In his book, *Development as Freedom*, he defined development as a process of expanding real freedoms. He further explains expansion of freedom as *the primary end* and *principal means* of development which can be understood as constitutive and instrumental roles of freedom respectively (Sen, 1999). The constitutive role of freedom relates to the importance of substantive freedom which among others includes provision of basic services. The instrumental role of freedom concerns with different kinds of rights, opportunities and entitlements that contribute to the expansion of human freedom in general (*ibid*). Likewise, Cornwall and Musemba (2004) also noted a distinction between development as political and non-political work. Much of what is deemed to fit with the rights based logic is considered political and tackling the structural causes of poverty while the rest is considered as an old style service delivery development that addresses symptoms of poverty.

Even though the service delivery – advocacy and empowerment divide is important to understand the notion of development, Bebbington *et al.*, (2008) underlined that, the distinction between them should not led us to lose sight of the clear relationship between the

two dimensions of development. Sen (1999) also emphasized the empirical linkage that ties the distinct types of freedom together which strengthen their joint importance.

Following the wide acceptance of participatory development approaches since the 1980s, it was widely claimed that participatory and people centered development approaches will enhance efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery and bring empowerment and social economic and political transformation (Binswanger-Mkhize *et al.*, 2010) and hence, achieving ‘big D’ and ‘little d’ development .

Substantial amount of research has been done to assess the effectiveness of participatory approaches and the role of NGOs in development. Many of these studies, explicitly view NGOs as service providers and discussed participation in terms of cost effectiveness, enhancing efficiency and sustainability of, ‘big D’, service delivery projects. Some studies, however, view them as empowerment and advocacy agents and emphasized on how participation in development projects contribute to democratization, good governance, inclusion, empowerment, lobby, advocacy and achievement of ‘little d’ development. Yet, the findings of these studies are wide, divergent and inconclusive<sup>1</sup>.

In general, however, the critics about inadequate performance of NGOs over the last two decades stress on their inclination towards ‘big D’ development centered around project specific and target oriented programs and urged them to realign their engagements with grassroots as part of broader struggle to redefine power relations in society, (Bebbington *et al.*, 2007; Lewis and Kanji, 2009; Banks and Hulme, 2013) therefore, ‘little d’ development. However, articulating alternatives for how NGOs can make this happen is less a common place (Banks and Hulme, 2013). Although Bebbington *et al.*, (2007), Gujit (2008) and Chhotray (2008) have drawn attention to the links that NGOs can forge between ‘big D’ and ‘little d’, limited research has been done in the area. On top of this, more recently, several African governments have introduced laws that restricts NGOs engagement in empowerment, policy advocacy, promotion of human and democratic right and issues that deem to be politically sensitive (USAID, 2010). Among others, the Ethiopian government has introduced charities and societies proclamation – 621/2009, which is described by USAID’s 2009 NGOs

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<sup>1</sup> For a review of these works look at;

Mansuri, G. and Rao, V. (2004), community based and community driven development: A critical review, the World Bank research observer 19(1) 1.1-39

Gaventa. J. and Barrett, G. (2010), So what difference does it make? Mapping the outcome of citizen engagement. IDS working paper 347, Sussex, UK.

sustainability index as the worst in Sub-Saharan Africa. This condition is further pushing NGOs to primarily focus on ‘big D’ development. And hence, the focus of this research is to explore how NGOs can link ‘big D’ and ‘little d’ development using participatory development approaches in a limited legal environment by taking the case of ActionAid Ethiopia’s projects in West Azernet Berbere district of Southern Nations, Nationalities and peoples’ Regional State (SNNPR) in Ethiopia.

### **1.1. Aim and Research Question**

The overall aim of the study is to explore how ActionAid Ethiopia (AAE) uses participatory development approach to link ‘big d’ and ‘little d’ in its grass root development projects. It aims to understand the process, explore the mechanisms and key contextual factors, challenges and opportunities in operationalizing participatory development and linking ‘big D’ and ‘little d’ development. More precisely, this study will answer the following questions;

- ✓ How does AAE participate the community and other stakeholders in development projects?
- ✓ How and in what ways does AAE link ‘big D’ and ‘little d’ development?
- ✓ What are the challenges and opportunities in participating the community and other stakeholders in development projects and linking ‘big D’ and ‘little d’ development?

### **1.2. Scope and limitation of the Study**

The study focus on three projects that were purposively selected by the researcher based on review of AAE Azernet Berbere development program’s previous successive three year annual reports and in close consultation with AAE staff based in the district. The findings of this study are not generalizable either for the whole family of AAE or other projects in the district. However, the findings of this study can be theoretically generalizable and applicable in other contexts. In addition, the study mainly takes a grass root community level perspective in understanding issues of power, participation and empowerment.

### **1.3. Significance of the Study**

The relevance of this study can be seen from two vantage points. First, as indicated in the introduction section research on how NGOs can link ‘big D’ and ‘little d’ development is one of the under researched topics in the field. Hence, this study will contribute to the academic knowledge in the area. Second, different actors will practically benefit from the results of this

study. For instance, the nature of AAE's praxis may offer a way forward to numerous NGOs and donors that seek to forge links between 'big D' and 'little d' development. Moreover, the findings of this study will help NGOs operating in Ethiopia to appropriately use the limited legal space and maximize the leverage of 'big D' interventions to 'little d' development. Besides, the study will also help AAE to see its engagement through academic lens thereby reflect and learn from the findings and direct its future engagement.

#### **1.4. Researcher's Subjective Statement**

My interest in participatory development and NGOs is influenced by my work experience in AAE and contemporary debates about participation, aid, development and the role of NGOs in the process. I have worked in AAE for about four and half years before I joined the master's program in Development studies at Lund University. During that time, I have worked on different participatory development projects that aimed to achieve 'big D' and 'little d' development which drew my attention to reflect back and explore the experience in a systematic way. However, I do not include those projects in the study to avoid possible biases.

#### **1.5. Outline**

The paper is organized into six major parts. The first part is the introduction. It presents the context, the research questions, significance, scope and limitation of the study, researcher's subjective statement as well as this outline section. The second part provides background information to the study area. Theoretical perspective and related literatures are reviewed in the third section. It starts by defining development and thoroughly discusses concepts like participation, empowerment and the role of NGOs in development. Then follows, the fourth part which discusses the methodology followed by discussion and analysis of the major findings in the fifth part. Finally, the last section summarizes and concludes the study.

## **2. Background**

Ethiopia, with a projected population of 84,320,987 (41,763,988 females) in 2012, is the second populous country in Africa. Agriculture comprises 41% of its GDP and offers an employment for 80 % of the population (CSA, 2012). Although official reports from the government, International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank (WB) indicated that the country's economy has continued to grow across the last eight years, critiques argued that the growth was not sufficient to guarantee meaningful reduction in poverty and addressing issues of inequality. Among others, gender inequality, discrimination against certain section of the society, lack of access to basic social services and poor governance are widely mentioned as the major problems of the country (AAE, 2012).

Over the years, different actors including NGOs are involved to address these and other development problems of the country. The history of NGOs in Ethiopia goes back to the last ages of the imperial regime (1931-1974). During the imperial and the Derg<sup>2</sup> regime (1974-1987), NGOs were small in number and their engagement was confined to humanitarian aid and relief operation. Following the fall of the Derg, the number of NGOs steadily increased and their engagement became diversified in many respects. For example the number of legally registered NGOs increased from 70 (46 international and 24 local) in 1994 to 368 (122 international and 246 local) in 2000 and further projected to 1,976 (234 international and 1,742 local) in 2007 (Rahmato, *et al.*, 2008:12) and 3,800 in 2009 (USAID, 2010). However, for over four decades, the operation of NGOs in the country was governed by the 1960 civil code, association's registration and regulation of 1966 and other directives and guidelines which contradicted with the national constitution and international treaties that the country has ratified (USAID, 2010:56).

Owing to the abovementioned facts, the need for updated law and comprehensive regulatory framework was one of the critical concerns of the government and NGOs alike since 2000 (*ibid*). As a result of these and other political factors, the government of Ethiopia passed a new proclamation - Charities and Societies Proclamation No-621 - that governs the registration and operation of NGOs in 2009. Besides its positive rationale and importance, the proclamation has been criticized for putting restrictions on Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and NGOs work on promotion of human and democratic rights, equality, justice and policy advocacy issues (USAID, 2010; Nega and Milofsky, 2011; Amnesty, 2012). As a result, a

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<sup>2</sup> Derg literally means committee is the popular name for the socialist military junta that ruled Ethiopia after overthrowing emperor in 1974.

number of organizations, including AAE, have gone through successive change process to fit into and adapt themselves to the new legal environment.

## **2.1. An Account of ActionAid Ethiopia**

AAE is a member of ActionAid international federation which works in 45 countries. ActionAid has been operating in Ethiopia since 1989. Its vision is “*To see a poverty free Ethiopia where every person lives in dignity and prosperity*” (AAE, 2012:11). It understood poverty as a state of disadvantage, powerlessness and inability to lead a dignified life caused by incapability of ‘people living in poverty to critically assess and analyze their situation and take collective actions that could bring sustained change in their condition and position’ (AAE, 2012: 10-11).

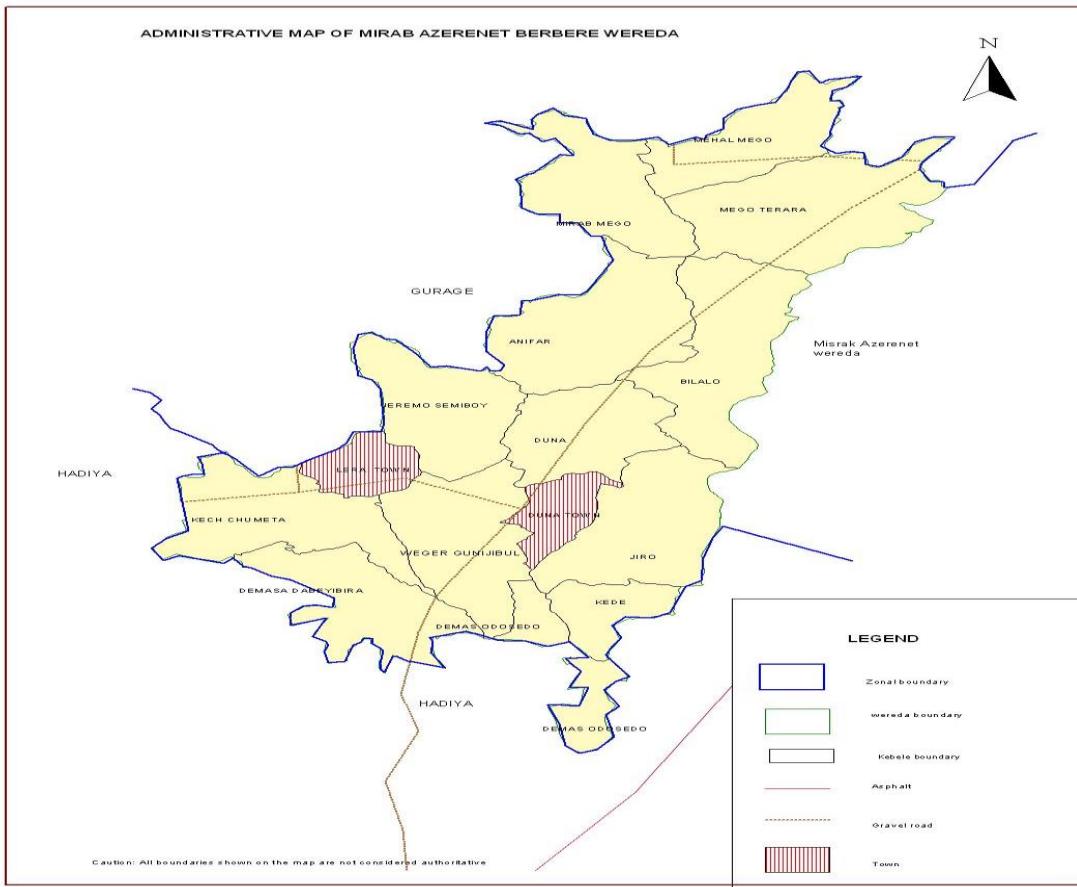
Before the enforcement of the new proclamation, AAE used to directly work on promoting rights, undertake policy analysis and advocacy, and engage in governance related issues at local, regional and national levels. However, the organizations direct engagement in these areas is limited now. Currently, AAE has 15 long term development Areas (DAs). Ten of these are managed by AAE, of which Azernet Berbere is one, while the remaining five are managed by partner organizations. Child sponsorship from individual supporters in United Kingdom, Italy, Spain, and Greece is the main source of income for the organizations development work in Ethiopia.

## **2.2. ActionAid Ethiopia in Azernet Berebere**

According to the information form the district finance and economic development office, Azernet Berebere was established as one of the seven district of Silte Zone in 2001. Latter in 2006, the district was divided into East and West Azernet Berbere districts based on the claims of the local community to get closer administrative support and access to government services. Although the organization operates in both districts, the samples of this study were exclusively taken from West Azernet Berbere.

AAE’s office is found in Lera town, the capital of West Azernet Berbere. Lera is located 260 Kilometers South West of Addis Ababa, 190 Kilometers from Awassa, the regional capital and 86 Kilometers from the zonal capital, Werabe. It has an area of 20,000 hectares with an altitude ranging from 2,500 to 3,277 meters above sea level. It has an average annual temperature of 16 to 19 degree Celsius and gets average annual rainfall that ranges between and 1350 mm to 1500 mm (WABWFEDO, 2012).

Figure 1: Administrative map of West Azernet Berebere district



Source: West Azernet Berbere Woreda Finance and Economic Development Office (WABWFEDO), 2012.

Based on the projection made from the 2006 census, it has a population of 74,158 (52.2 % female) growing at 2.9% per annum. Of this population, 89 % live in rural areas. Administratively, the district is divided in to 17 rural kebeles (the lowest administrative unit) and two urban kebeles. Religiously, Islam is the main religion (*ibid*).

Subsistence mixed farming comprising crop production and livestock raring is the major source of livelihood for more than 90 % of the population. Some households are also engaged in nonfarm activities such as petty trade, pottery, blacksmith, hide and skin, and carpentry to supplement their income from agriculture. Remittance from families living in major cities and Arab countries is another source of income for Azernet people (WABWFEDO, 2012).

AAE has been operating in Azernet Berebere, both East and West, since September 2003. The program was initiated as one of ActionAid's long term direct operational area to eradicate absolute poverty so that poor and marginalized sections of the society would have the

opportunity to actively lead and control their own social and economic affairs (Gelila, 22/03/2012). Since then, the program has passed through nine months entry phase (September 2003 to June 2004), a three and half year and three year full-fledged program phases from July 2004 to December 2007 and January 2008 to December 2010 respectively. Then after the DA implements a one year phases in 2011 and 2012 to maintain its alignment with AAE's new Country Strategic Plan (CSP) and acquaint itself with the new legal environment in the country (*ibid*).

### **3. Theoretical Perspectives and Literature Review**

#### **3.1. Defining Development**

Development has been defined, re defined and understood by different scholars, institutions and actors differently. As Chambers has clearly indicated development has been taken to mean different things at different times, in different places, and by different people in different professions and organizations (Chambers, 2004:2). For instance, for some development is *catching up and imitating the west*, while for some others it is *liberation of people and structural transformation*, still for some others it is *achieving a set of specific goals like poverty reduction and meetings millennium development goals (MDGs)*, for some it is a process of expanding *freedoms and choices* and so on (Potter *et al.*, 2008; Sumner and Tribe, 2008; Jönsson *et al.*, 2012). Views that are prevalent in one part of the development community are not necessarily shared by other parts of the community or society in general (Sumner and Tribe, 2008; Jönsson *et al.*, 2012). As a result, the definition of development is wide, divergent, controversial, complex, and unstable over time (*ibid*).

As indicated in the first chapter, Cowen and Shanton (1996; 1998) distinguished between two meanings of development: development as *imminent process* and as *intentional practice*. They contend that, development as an imminent process is similar to the development of capitalism itself whereas development as intentional activity refers to a deliberate attempt at progress by outsiders. Hart (2001), amends this distinction when he talks about the ‘big D’ and ‘little d’ development. He defined ‘little d’ development as a geographically uneven, profoundly contradictory set of processes underlying capitalist development and ‘big D’ as a post-second world war project of intervention in the ‘third world’ that emerged in the context of decolonization and the cold war (Hart, 2001:650).

While these frameworks slightly differ in their details, each of them insist on distinguishing between the notion of intervention and the process of economic, political, and structural change without losing the sense on joint importance and clear relationship between these two notions of development (Bebbington *et al.*, 2007:1701). Hence, the understanding of development in this study is informed by this general assertion and the role of NGOs in the process. In this sense, NGOs can be identified as project implementers in health, education and other social services and/or advocacy and empowerment agents.

### **3.2. Ideologies and Theories in Development Studies: Overview**

The dominant discourse about development was established after the end of the Second World War. Much of the immediate post war thinking was strongly rooted in western economic history and influenced by liberal ideology. During that time there was a tendency to equate development with modernization, westernization and achieving what the west had achieved through copying and planning by experts in the office. Later on, in the late 1960s and 1970s another strand of theories influenced by Marxist ideology such as dependency, world system theory and structuralism come to the scene. By emphasizing on concepts like exploitation and unequal relationship between the global north and the global south they assert that lack of economic development and widespread poverty in the global south is caused by the exploitative influence of the industrialized, advanced nations of the North (*Ibid*). The ideological and theoretical contrasts between the two theories make development a hotly debated field since the beginning (Binns, 2008; Potter *et al.*, 2008; Jönsson *et al.*, 2012).

Latter in the 1980s, some academicians and reflective practitioners felt that both modernization and dependency theory had lost their explanatory power of development and under development (Schuurman, 2008:13). Among others, Booth (1985) described the situation as a ‘theoretical impasse’ and pointed out that, development projects has not succeeded and delivered results either through a successful growth strategy or through increased understanding of global difference and inequalities. Hence, he argued that new paths were needed to move out of poverty.

Along with this, the rise of the postmodern critique of the social sciences undermined the grand narratives of both modernization and dependency theories (Jönsson *et al.*, 2012:64). It drew attention to the importance of unequal power relationship, social and cultural diversity and the primacy of localized experiences (Schuurman, 2008; Lewis and Kanji, 2009; Jönsson *et al.*, 2012) which led to the rise of a bundle of theoretical approaches which might loosely be termed alternative development (*ibid*).

### **3.3. Alternative Development Paradigm**

By bringing concepts such as actor, power and diversity that early development and social science theories did not handle well (Jönsson, *et al.*, 2012:65), alternative development, made a set of claims about the approaches needed to address poverty and inequality which have perpetuated it (Lewis and Kanji, 2009:72). Central to such thinking was the concept of participation: ‘the need to build a central role in decision-making processes for ordinary

people, instead of their being ‘acted upon’ by outsiders in the name of progress or development’ (*ibid*). Since then, different alternative approaches which are generally referred as participatory development approaches have continued to evolve to the present day.

### **3.3.1. Participation and Participatory Development**

The aim of participatory development is to make people central to the development process by encouraging their involvement in issues that affect their lives and over which they previously had less control or influence (Cooke and Kothari, 2001:5). It emphasized the idea that people themselves are experts on their problems and should be actively involved in working out strategies and solutions. The key figure associated with this thinking is the British scholar Chambers. In his books (Chambers, 1997; 2005; 2008), he argued that development research and practice should address issues related to power, participation, diversity and ethical matters. His thoughts emanated from his practical experience in rural development programs in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia where he witnessed the practical limitation of top-down, technocratic development programs which rarely involve local people in their planning and execution.

In his influential book ‘*whose reality counts? Putting the first last*’ Chambers (1997) argued that poor people should have the opportunity to make their voices heard and set the agenda in development research and practice. According to him, this can happen by increasing participation. For Chambers and other ardent proponents of participatory development, the key idea is to reverse the conventional power relationship that exists between communities and academicians, government officials and development professionals. According to him this can happen by creating conditions for people to design and enact on their problems based on their own knowledge, experience and understanding. In his view, the latter have to hand over the stick to the first and give them a chance to outline their own problems and solutions. In this process, he argued, new solutions that are effective, sustainable and appropriate to the needs of the local people will emerge.

This fundamental thought challenged and shifted the dominant top-down thinking with a bottom-up approach (Cooke and Kothari, 2001; Potter *et al.*, 2008; Lewis and Kanji, 2009). This transition coincided with the new attention given to NGOs in the 1990s, many of which had for many years experimented participation and empowerment in their endeavor and were keen to see these ideas widely mainstreamed into development practice (Lewis and Kanji, 2009:57).

From the 1990 onwards, participation and participatory development become widely accepted and virtually moved from the margins to the mainstream of development process (Hickey and Mohan, 2004). Participation became an indispensable part of many development programs and projects encouraged by national governments, the WB, United Nation (UN), NGOs and other development agencies alike. Despite the differing perspective, all agree that participation is crucial for development and should be encouraged at any level (Nelson and Wright, 1995). Chambers (1995) pointed the following reasons for the popularity of participatory development approaches:

Recognition that many development failures originate in an attempt to impose standard top down program and projects on diverse local realities where they do not fit or meet needs; concerns for cost effectiveness, recognizing that the more the local people do the less capital costs are likely to be; preoccupation with sustainability, and the insight that if local people themselves design and construct they are more likely to meet running costs and undertake maintenance; and ideologically for some development professionals, the belief that it is right that the poor people should be empowered and should have more command over their lives (Chambers, 1995:30-32).

Chambers assertion in the above quote reveals the different interest and meaning of participation given by different actors in different contexts. Cornwell (2004) and a plentiful of other scholars have also examined historically accumulated interpretation and understanding of participation by various actors which shows the fundamental heterogeneity of meanings associated with the concept. Owing to this fact, White (1996) identified four forms of participation based on interest of actors and the role it played as indicated in the table below. I choose to use this typology a framework of this study because of its comprehensive nature and unique richness in capturing various interests and meanings of participation.

Table1: forms of participation,

<b>Form</b>	<b>Top-dawn</b>	<b>Bottom-up</b>	<b>Function</b>
<b>Nominal</b>	Legitimation	Inclusion	Display
<b>Instrumental</b>	Efficiency	Cost	Means
<b>Representative</b>	Sustainability	Leverage	Voice
<b>Transformative</b>	Empowerment	Empowerment	Means/end

Source: White, S. (1996): depoliticizing development: the use and abuse of participation, development in practice 6(1) pp.7.

## **Forms of participation**

**Nominal Participation:** In this form of participation the interest of the NGO is to legitimize their engagements and the interest of the community is inclusion. It is a tokenistic display characterized by providing information in public meetings. The community rarely takes active part in the process. Their purpose is to keep their names in the list so that they do not miss any fortunes or benefits (White, 1996).

**Instrumental Participation:** here the interest of NGOs is to enhance project efficiency and cost effectiveness, whereas the interest of the community is to secure service. The involvement of the community can be in the form of free contribution of labor, provision of local materials or cash. Participation in this case can be understood as a means to cost-effectiveness on the one side and secure service or facility on the other side than being valued by itself (white, 1996).

**Representative participation:** It functions to incorporate the voices and interests of project beneficiaries so that the project is appropriately planned as well as ownership and sustainability is ensured. For the communities, the purpose of taking active part in the meetings and their contact with NGOs is to influence and shape the project (White, 1996).

**Transformative participation:** In this form of participation the community is empowered to make choices and decisions as well as take collective action to fight inequality and injustice which is in itself transformative. The NGO acts like a facilitator and the community actively takes part in the process, determines goals and priorities and takes the ownership of the project (White, 1996). She argued, in this form, participation is at one and the same time a means to empowerment and an end in itself (*ibid*) which leads us to discuss the concept of empowerment in the following section.

### **3.3.2. Empowerment**

Empowerment is used in many ways and different contexts, yet the term lacks clear and precise definition in the field (Rowlands, 1997; Hennik *et al.*, 2012). Jo Rowlands asserts

The word [empowerment] tends to be used in a way that presupposes the reader or listener know what it meant, and the question of how empowerment comes about can either be assumed or ignored. The term may be used merely to communicate good intention and to imply some unspecified recognition of the need to change the distribution of power (Rowlands, 1997:7).

To come closer to understand empowerment, Rowlands (1997; 1995) argued that it is important to look at the root concept – power – which is itself disputed and so is understood and experienced in different ways by different actors. In her analysis, she identifies four different forms of power as follows;

- **Power over:** controlling power which might be responded with compliance, resistance, or manipulation.
- **Power to:** generative or productive power which creates new possibilities and actions without domination.
- **Power with:** a sense of the whole being greater than the sum of individuals, especially when a group tackles problems together' increased power from collective action
- **Power within:** the spiritual strength and uniqueness that resides in each one of us and makes us truly human. Its basis is self-acceptance and self-respect which extends, in turn, to respect for and acceptance of others as equals (Rowlands, 1997:13).

Hence, Rowlands argued empowerment could be defined in deferent ways based on the form of power that actors are dealing with. Therefore, empowerment from a ‘power over’ perspective is taken as bringing people who are outside the decision making process into existing social, economic and political structures. This puts a particular emphasis on participation in decision making process in political structure, economic and social spheres (Luttrell and Quiroz, 2009; Rowlands, 1997). However, Kabeer (1999) cautioned that this type of empowerment should not reproduce social inequality or restrict the rights of others. The ‘power to’ and ‘power with’ interpretation of empowerment focuses on the process by which people become aware of their own situation or interest and know how these relates to the interest of others in order to work together and influence decisions that affect their lives (Rowlands, 1997). Finally, the ‘power within’ understanding of empowerment rests around building self-esteem, confidence and inner worthiness (Luttrell and Quiroz, 2009; Rowlands, 1995).

To sum up, as White have clearly argued participation is a dynamic concept that changes over time. Any development project involves a mix of varied interests, purposes and exhibits different forms of participation that change over time (White, 1996:8). Advocates of participatory development view participation as a mechanism for enhancing sustainability, improving efficiency and effectiveness, making development more inclusive and empowering to the poor there by enhancing their ability to take over and manage their own development

activities (see Dongier *et al.*, 2001; Binswanger-Mkhize *et al.*, 2010; Gaventa and Barrett, 2010; Museri and Rao, 2013). Concurrently, as Nelson and Wright (1995) argued different types of participation imply different type of power relation and level of empowerment. In general, the idea of participation as empowerment emanates from the fact that the practical experience of being informed, making choices and decision as well as taking collective action to fight injustice and inequality is in itself transformative (White, 1996).

### **3.4. The Role of NGOs in Development**

Since the 1980s, termed by Bratton (1989) as the ‘NGO decade’, NGOs have come to be recognized as important actors in development at local, national and international level. The rise of NGOs is attributed to a host of general global trends and to a set of more specific issues within development theory and practice. Among others, following the theoretical impasse, in 1987, a special issue of the journal of World Development set a spotlight on NGOs as potential sources of ‘development alternatives’ because of their grassroots orientation and experience in participation and empowerment that had begun to challenge top-down technocratic development thinking (Lewis and Kanji, 2009). As development debates began to focus on the importance of participation, empowerment and issues such as gender and environment, NGOs moved closer to the aid system and the global discourse about development. In explaining the hype about NGOs during the 1990s, Edwards and Hulme (1995) described NGOs as ‘the magic bullet’ in development theory and practice. Yet, it is difficult to get precise definition of NGOs.

Quite often, NGOs are defined simply by what they are not as independent, nongovernmental and nonprofit organizations. This is mainly because NGOs are an extremely diverse group of organizations, which make meaningful generalization very difficult (Korten, 1997; Lewis and Kanji, 2009; Jönsson *et al.*, 2012). They take various forms, and have different funding sources, values and motivations within and across different country contexts. NGOs also play different roles ranging from emergency response, rehabilitation and reconstruction works, providing basic social services, to international campaigns for aid, trade, debut relief, environment and still some others take specific roles as watchdogs in matters related to human rights, election, labor conditions (*ibid*). According to Korten (1987) NGOs rarely have a single function and the emphasis among their roles change over time and space due to internal and external factors, opportunities and challenges.

Although NGOs differ widely and play various roles, they tend to be best known for undertaking one and/or other of these two types of roles: delivery of basic services to people in need - ‘big D’ and empowering communities and organizing policy advocacy campaigns for change - ‘little d’ (Bebbington *et al.*, 2008). The following section discusses these two roles in light of the definition of development presented in the first part of this chapter.

### **3.4.1. ‘Big D’ Role of NGOs**

The ‘big D’ role of NGOs is concerned with the mobilization of resources to provide goods and services in health, education, microfinance, water and so on. This function of NGOs is important simply because basic social services are unavailable or are in poor quality in many developing countries (Carroll, 1992). Of course, the motivation for NGOs to provide basic social services varies, but the increasing role of NGOs in service delivery during the 1980s is attributed to the rolling back of the state in service provision due to structural adjustment policies and NGOs preconceived comparative advantage in terms of cost effectiveness, flexibility and commitment (Lewis and Kanji, 2009:93). Yet in practice, such generalizations are difficult to sustain. While some NGOs are found to be effective, others perform poorly (*ibid*). A closely related factor for the increasing involvement of NGOs in service delivery has been the hegemony of poverty reduction and MDGs agenda within international development (Bebbington, *et al.*, 2007; 1709). While it is hard to contest the worthiness of such goals, donors and international community’s emphasis on a set of pre-determined goals in health, education, water and so forth direct the focus of NGOs to a set of measurable and quantifiable outputs of delivering services than innovative and radical works (*ibid*)

Overall, the role of NGOs in service delivery can be considered as ‘big D’ development as a project based, target oriented intentional activity with a focus on material poverty in which project outcome and results have little intention to challenge existing societal arrangement. However, Carroll (1992) argued that the role of NGOs in service delivery should be evaluated on the basis of its instrumental value for catalyzing other changes. Hence, a key strategic question for NGOs is whether their service delivery role is ‘a means’ to achieve bigger goals, empower and capacitate the community to challenge existing social structures and power relations or ‘an end in itself’ in which NGOs deliver services as their main objective and long term policy option (*ibid*).

For those who see service delivery as a means, the contribution of service delivery to achieve ‘little d’ development can be thought in two ways. First and foremost, by enhancing citizen’s

genuine engagement and participation in planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of service delivery projects, NGOs can establish community driven planning and management structures where people can take new role and responsibilities as active citizens (Gujit, 2008). These structures can create the bedrock for building local civil society responsive to the rights, interests, values and aspirations of their constituencies. Furthermore, through these structures communities can claim and defend their rights, advocate for their interests, challenge existing structures and strive to bring systemic change in their society. These structures can be nurtured with values of trust, dignity, equality, democracy to manifest itself as critically self-reflective, democratically functioning and accountable CSO in the long run (*ibid*).

Secondly, in implementing service delivery projects NGOs develop working relationship with different actors; government, donors, community groups, trade unions, social movements and others. By working with these actors at different levels NGOs can influence the interventions of others through positive engagement and providing alternative modes of interventions. The works of Center for Alternative Technologies (CAT) on participatory municipal development plans (Florisbelo and Guijt, 2001), Support for Social Progress (SPA) in transforming common property right, exploitative wage relations and outdated land registration in Madhya Pradesh India (Chhotray, 2008) illustrate examples of NGOs working with and influencing different actors. However, the relatively scarcity of such examples, according to Bebbington *et al.*, (2007:1714), casts doubt about NGOs ability to innovate as well as on many states' willingness to pursue significant reforms in the policy process.

Bebbington *et al.*, (2007) also noted that the best advocacy work done by NGOs often draws on their operational experience (*ibid*). Similarly, Rose (2011) also argued that cooperative relationships with government in service delivery promote adoption of NGOs program, strategies, approaches and alternatives by governments at different levels. Such strategy is called persuasive advocacy. One example of this approach is Oxfam GB's education work in Tanzania where effectiveness of the NGO's advocacy role is achieved by gently nourished service delivery activities (*ibid*).

### **3.4.2. ‘Little d’ Role of NGOs**

The role and contribution of NGOs in advocacy, as noted by Banks and Hulme (2013), is difficult to define but can be seen in a continuum. According to them, at one end are those that engaged in and support radical social movements as in the early decade of NGOs in Latin America. On the other end are those that seek empowerment as an indirect outcome of their service delivery activities by using participatory approaches. Still others pursue advocacy by stealth, by working with governments they demonstrate and influence government policies (*ibid*). Lewis and Kanji (2009) further listed out innovation, lobby, advocacy, undertaking and disseminating research and policy entrepreneurship as important roles of NGOs in ‘little d’ development. In addition, Bebbington *et al.*, (2008) identified the production of counter hegemonic knowledge and contestation over public places and influencing societal opinion through research, consultation and education as a key to achieve ‘little d’

In general, according to Edwards (2008), NGOs must move their approach from development as delivery to development as leverage to achieve ‘little d’ development. This shift, among others, requires a shift away from conventional approaches of advocacy – in which NGOs generate campaigns on behalf of the poor – to more effective advocacy work that strengthens the bargaining power of the people themselves to defend their rights and enhance their capacity for organization and collective action (Ibrahim and Hulme, 2011 in Banks and Hulme, 2013). This approach entails a new strategic direction for NGOs to step back and allow communities to do what they can do by their own and limit their roles to facilitation and building the capacities of communities to mobilize and strengthen their own collective assets and capabilities (Edwards, 2008; Banks and Hulme, 2013).

However, White (1996) noted that although empowerment is usually considered as an agenda from below it may also be identified as interests from above when out siders are working in solidarity with the poor. She argued:

From Marx’s analysis of alienation, to Freire’s work on conscientisation, to the ‘alternative visions’ of [...], it is in fact not usually those who are poor or disadvantaged themselves who identify empowerment as the key issue. The latter generally have far more immediate and tangible interests and goals (White 1996:9).

From the above discussion, it is possible to observe the relationship and joint importance of both ‘big D’ and ‘little d’ development. Although there are NGOs that are explicitly engaged either in service delivery or advocacy and empowerment, some work on both sides of the

spectrum (Lewis and Kanji, 2009). Yet, admittedly engaging with and trying to forge relationship between service delivery and advocacy and empowerment is not an easy task (Chhorty, 2008).

### **3.5. Participatory Development and NGOs; Previous Research and Theoretical Debates: A snapshot**

Since the 1980s NGOs identity was built on their grass root orientation and ability to offer alternative development by designing innovative and experimental programs centered on participation and empowerment of disadvantaged groups (Bebbington *et al.*, 2008). They were widely accepted as more effective, reflect local needs and realities, foster ownership and sustainability and efficient for addressing poverty and challenging unequal relationships (Korten, 1987; Bebbington *et al.*, 2008; Lewis and Kanji, 2009). As a result, NGOs were largely viewed as heroic organizations (Lewis and Kanji, 2009) and vehicles for popular participation, grass root mobilization, empowerment and effective service providers (Bebbington *et al.*, 2008).

However, this rose-tinted view of NGOs does not stay for long. In the mid-1990s, critics raise questions about comparative advantage of NGOs and their effectiveness as sources of alternative development. This critique grew wide as NGOs become increasingly professionalized and service-oriented, following the ideological ascendancy of neo liberal agenda and Structural Adjustment Policy (SAP) which undermined their proclaimed strengths in terms of flexibility, grass root orientation and ability to innovate (Bebbington *et al.*, 2007; 2008; Lewis and Kanji, 2009; Banks and Hulme, 2013). Within the SAPs, critiques underlined that participation loses its transformatory potential and become a non-political action (*ibid*) which focuses on greater productivity, cost effectiveness, and reduction of recurrent and maintenance costs (Mosse, 2001). Bebbington *et al.*, (2008) noted that the replacement of broader goals of development by measurable outputs as in the SAP, PRSP and MDGs depoliticizes strategies open to NGOs for promoting ‘little-d’ development and lead them towards narrow and specific targeted ‘big D’ development interventions.

Edwards and Hulme (1996) also expressed their concern on the high dependence and close proximity of NGOs to donors than poor and marginalized communities they are working with. In pursuit of funds, organizational survival and growth, NGOs redefine and align their objective and priorities with donor agendas (Edwards and Hulme 1996; Bebbington *et al.*,

2008). While donors promote participatory development and recognize the role of NGOs in development, in reality, donors turn NGOs into implementers or contractors of their policy, rather than representatives of grass root communities (Banks and Hulme, 2013). Hence in due course, participation will have what Chambers (2004) called a cosmic value and participants will only have a ghostly presence – visible heard even, but ultimately only there because their involvement lends credibility and legitimacy to decision that have already been made (Hildyard *et al.*, 2001:59). Therefore, participation hardly ever gives a chance for local people to take over the decision making process rather it operates as a mechanism for approval of already determined goals (Hildyard *et al.*, 2001:60). For Kothari (2001) participation is a tool of inclusionary control and inducement of conformity (Kothari, 2001:143). She argued that in the name of participation those people who have the greatest reason to challenge and confront power relation and structures are brought, or even bought, through the promise of development assistance into the development process in ways that disempower them to challenge the prevailing hierarchies and inequalities (*ibid*).

Hildyard *et al.*'s (2001) description of ghostly presence in the above paragraph somehow resonates what Mosse (2001) called planning knowledge where villagers acquire new knowledge based on agency objective analysis and perceptions of short term project deliverables by learning how to manipulate it, rather than professionals who acquire local perspectives in participatory learning (Mosse, 2001:21). Over time through negotiation project staff and villagers collude in translating idiosyncratic local interests into legitimate demands. Staff who try to be too participatory, spend too much time investigating 'real needs' rather than delivering schemes are seen as underperforming by both project and the community (*ibid*, 22).

A number of other critics also highlight concerns on problems of scaling up, issues of representativeness, and limitations to effectiveness, sustainability and empowerment of participatory approaches and NGOs role in the process<sup>3</sup>. However, more or less, critiques about participatory development and the role of NGOs focuses on external determination of local agenda and project oriented approaches that erode the ideals of participation and empowerment.

On the contrary, other scholars and practitioners advocate for the positive role of NGOs and transformative potential of participatory development approaches. For instance, Williams

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<sup>3</sup> For details look at; Cooke, B. and Kothari, U. (eds) (2001) participation the new tyranny, London, Zed books.

(2004) argued that existing participatory practices, given its short comings, provides a range of opportunities to examine issues of power and social transformation (Williams, 2004:103). With this understanding of the transformative potential of participatory development approaches, among others, Mitlin (2004) reveals the success of federated Community Based Organizations (CBOs) in securing poor people's right to land and housing which shows deeper forms of power transformation between citizens and local state (Mitlin, 2004). Other also asserted that transformation does not necessarily mean reversal of power but also strengthening of the bargaining power of marginalized communities (Williams, 2003). Gaventa and Brattee (2010), based on a review of 100 studies in 20 countries over the last 10 years, concluded that participation produces positive effects on responsiveness of the state, development of inclusive and cohesive societies and creation of informed and empowered citizens<sup>4</sup>. All in all, from the above discussions, it is clear that the debate about the participation, participatory development and NGOs is wide, divergent and difficult to conclude.

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<sup>4</sup> For details look at; Hicky, S. and Mohan,G. (eds) (2004) participation: from tyranny to transformation? Exploring new approaches to participation in development, London, Zed Books.

## **4. Methodology**

### **4.1. Research Design**

According to Mikkelson behind any study or scientific inquiry are ontological and epistemological questions that define the basic belief system and world view of the investigator (Mikkelson, 2005:135). Ontologically, this study is constructionist which assumes social phenomena and their meanings are continually created by social actors (Bryman, 2012:33). Epistemologically, it is interpretative which requires the social scientist to grasp the subjective meaning of social action (Bryman, 2012:30). Hence, in this study I, as a social researcher, seek to explore and understand different forms of participation, empowerment and the role of AAE in development from actor's perspective. By actors I mean, the community, government and AAE staffs that are involved in the implementation of participatory development projects.

Based on my ontological and epistemological stances as well as my research question and objective, I opted to use qualitative case study design. The combination between a case study design and a qualitative method is perfect for this study because case study's emphasis on detailed exploration and intensive examination of a setting (Creswell, 2007; Bryman, 2012) enables me to grasp the complex nature and process of development. At the same time, the qualitative approach has a comparative advantage to generate complex and detailed understanding of an issue (*ibid*) than quantitative method. This combination, I believe, will provide what Geertz called thick description – an account that explains not only the behavior and action but also the context (Geertz, 2008).

As a case study, the findings of this study are not generalizable beyond the cases. But the crucial question in case study design is how well the researcher generates theory out of the findings (Bryman, 2012:71). This view of generalization is called 'analytical generalization' by Yin and 'theoretical generalization' by J.C. Mitchell (*ibid*). Such a view put this study in the inductive tradition where empirical material influence theory rather than the opposite. Following such an inductive approach, the study begins with empirical details and then use these facts to work towards more abstract ideas and general principles (Mikkelson, 2005; Creswell, 2007).

As such, thorough detailed examination of AAE's experience in West Azernet Berbere, the study identifies strategies that AAE uses to link 'big D' and 'little d' development which may be applicable in other contexts. But, of course, social reality is in a constant change and

whether what holds in one context will hold true in another context or in the same context over time is an empirical question (Bryman, 2012). However, the thick description provides users with a full account of the situation to make their own judgments about the transferability of the experience (*ibid*).

#### **4.2. Selection of Cases**

I choose to conduct my field work in AAE due to my previous experience in the organization and the social network I have which helps me to get easy access to the field. Of the different program areas, I choose Azernet Berbere for two basic reasons. First, it is one of the oldest active operational programs of AAE. The organization has been running different program over the last nine years. I believe this long service and accumulated experience will give me a nuanced view to holistically answer my research question. The second reason is its geographical proximity and accessibility from the capital. Compared to other development programs, Azernet Berbere is the closest one with regular public transport service.

The specific cases are selected using purposive sampling method in which cases were selected to provide a good deal of homogeneity and heterogeneity (Bryman, 2012) as well as relevance to the purpose of the study (Creswell, 2007). Using this method, I choose three projects that feature participation and empowerment as a central strategy as well as aim to achieve both ‘Big D’ and ‘little d’ development but different in their target population; women, minority groups and the general public. This mix gives comprehensive picture of the situation and enhances the explanatory power and theory generation capacity of the study. These cases were selected by reviewing project proposals, reports and discussion with AAE staff in the field. Below is an account of the three projects included in the study.

**Wekti Rahmet Women Saving and Credit Cooperative (WRWSCC):** It was established in September 2006 by the support of AAE and the district cooperative and marketing office. The main objective of the cooperative is to enhance women’s access to and control over financial resource, empower and build the capacity of women to lead and sustain a dignified life. Currently it has 52 members, all women. WRWSCC is legally registered and led by an executive committee comprising chair person, vice chairperson, secretary, treasurer, accountant, internal auditor and other sub committees such as saving committee, loan committee, and education and mobilization committee. While the sub committees are mainly accountable to the executive committee, the executive committee is accountable to the general assembly which meets twice a year. The committee performs its daily operation based on their

bylaw which is crafted and approved by active participation of its members. The executive committee and members meet every other week for saving. In the meantime, they also discuss crucial issues, pass decisions on urgent matters. While their saving increases from 0.25 cents to 15.00 ETB a month, the lending capacity is projected from 100.00 ETB to 6,000.00 ETB<sup>5</sup>. By the time this study is conducted, it has a running capital of ETB 164,000.00.

**Berkefet Negat Kokobe iron, fiber, hide and skin producing and marketing cooperative:** This cooperative, hereafter called Berkefet Skill Based Cooperative (BSBC), was established in November 2004 by twelve artisans, blacksmiths and tanners (5 women and 7 men). Currently the cooperative has 52 members, of which 25 are women. These groups are marginalized and excluded by the majority due to traditional beliefs. The main objective of the cooperative is to improve economic wellbeing of members, raise the consciousness of members to claim and defend their rights as well as create a platform to raise their collective voice, tackle the root causes of marginalization and exclusion in the community. Like WRWSCC, BSBC is a legally registered cooperative which has its own bylaw, executive committees and subcommittees which manage and lead its operation. By the time this study is conducted, it has a total capital of 340,000.00 ETB.

**Vicky water project:** Vicky water project is implemented by AAE, the community and the district, zonal and regional administration and water development offices. The project was started in October 2008 and ended on May 2010. The main objective of the project is to improve community's access to safe and potable water, reduce the workload of women and girls, prevalence of water borne diseases and enabling the community to participate in the management of its own development process. The project benefits more than 20,000 people living in Lera town and six adjacent rural kebeles. The total cost of the project was about 17,000,000.00 ETB.

In order to ensure sustainability of the project and enhance the capacity of the community to manage and led its development process, Vickey's Lera Women Water Development Association (VLWWDA) was established in October 2008 along with the commencement of the project. The association is led by board members elected by the community. The board is accountable to the general assembly which consists of 147 elected representatives of each kebele. The board meets every month to monitor and gauge the performance of the association and the general assembly meets every six month for the same purpose. The

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<sup>5</sup> ETB – Ethiopian Birr, is an Ethiopian currency 1USD=18.32 birr

association has a district level coordination office run by qualified professionals to undertake the day today administrative and technical operation of the association. In addition, the association has seven water management committees consisting of 13 individuals who are responsible for the management of the schemes in their respective kebeles.

### **4.3. Selection of Research Method**

As I have argued above based on my ontological and epistemological position and research questions, I opted for a qualitative method. Qualitative method is an umbrella that refers to a set of investigation strategies that share certain characteristics. Hence, a choice has to be made again. Since the aim of the study is to explore how AAE uses participation in service delivery as a means to achieve ‘little d’ development in practice, project stakeholders and participants experiences, views and opinions is crucial. Therefore, I found interview to perfectly fit this purpose for various reasons. To mention a few, interview enables me to understand the world from the interviewee point of view, to unfold the meaning of the experiences, to uncover their lived world before a theoretical explanation (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009:2). Tim May (2009) also asserted that, interviews yield rich insights in to people’s biographies, experiences, opinions, values, attitudes and feelings. Similarly, Bryman (2012:68) argued that interview is particularly helpful for generating an intensive detailed examination of a case which is the objective of the study. Hence, a mix of individual and group interview methods is used in this study.

Regardless of its usefulness, the interview method has also its own limitation. Critiques mentioned that interview method is individualistic and credulous in a way that it focuses on individuals and takes everything an interviewee says at face value without maintaining a critical perspective and embedding it in a social situation (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009:294-295). However, I was aware of this critic and tried to address the issue by a series of critical follow up and probing questions that provide the context.

All the interviews, both individual and group, were semi structured based on interview guide prepared for this study. This is because semi structured interviews gives me a chance to structure my thoughts, stay within the topic and further investigate the answer. At the same time, it enables me to debate from the standardized set of questions if unforeseen information appeared to be important in the interview session. Semi structured interview also gives the interviewee a chance to express himself freely, move back and forth in time and issues under discussion. Hence, I believe the data obtained using this method is rich and provide in-depth

understanding of the subject. Different interview guides were used for different categories of participants. See Appendix I.

All in all, three focus group interviews and 31 individual interviews were conducted from 11 to 28 March 2013 in a field work in West Azernet Berbere and Addis Ababa. The three focus group interviews were conducted with management committees of each project. The aim was to get a general overview of the project, and examine the process, major achievements, challenges and opportunities. This was followed by 19 individual interviews. Although I planned to conduct 21 interviews, I only managed to conduct 19 interviews due to the water shade development campaign undergoing by the government throughout the district. The informants from WRWSCC and BSBC were randomly selected on voluntary basis during their regular biweekly meetings whereas informants from Vicky water project were selected using snowball sampling method.

Since AAE executes projects together with government offices, it was important to include their views and opinions. Hence, ten interviews were conducted with government officials; three kebele administrators and seven sector office expertise and officials that actively participate in the implementation of the selected projects. The last three interviews were conducted with AAE staff in the district and national office. These informants were purposively selected based on the relevance of their position and expertise to the subject matter. Except two individual interviews that were assisted by translator, all other interviews were conducted without a translator. In addition to the primary data, I have also reviewed secondary sources of data such as project documents, agreements and reports and program evaluation documents.

#### **4.4. Ethical Considerations**

Before the beginning of each interview, I briefly introduced myself, the objective of the study to informants and kindly asked their willingness to participate in the study. Although I did not use informed consent forms or any sort of this kind, all informants were happy to share their experience and be part of the study. I also asked and got their permission to use a recorder. At the end, I also asked informants if they wanted me to keep their anonymity. Only three informants asked me to keep their anonymity and the name change is indicated in the bracket where used. Otherwise, the names mentioned in this study are the real names of informants.

#### **4.5. Data Interpretation and Analysis**

First, I thoroughly went through each and every interview to get a complete picture of the data. Then, I transcribed important parts of the interview in a way that maintains qualitative richness of the phenomena and categorized them into my research questions. Afterwards, I tried to identify patterns and think in terms of concepts, themes, process and outputs as suggested by Mikkelsen (2005) to interpret and give meaning to the data. The quotes and transcriptions used in this study are my own literal translations.

#### **4.6. Interpretation of the Research Questions and Concepts**

The first research question aims to provide the context and explore how AAE participate the community and other stakeholders in development projects. As a result, the discussion on this part of the study is less analytical. It aims to identify the type of participation and interest of different actors at different stages of the project cycle, namely planning, implementation and monitoring and evaluation. In this study, planning refers to the process of identifying local needs and priorities that will be developed in to project proposals. Implementation refers to the actual execution of projects. And, while monitoring refers to a process of providing ongoing supervision, evaluation refers final measurement of changes against project goals.

The discussion in the first part feeds to the second research question which is more analytical than the first one. The analytical attentions in this part focuses on identifying the different forms of power, empowerment, influencing and advocacy caused by individuals' participation in different stages of the project, hence 'little d' development. Therefore, the second research question aims at analyzing how AAE links 'big d' and 'little d' development. In this study, while 'big D' refers to development projects that primarily aim to providing basic social services like water and microfinance to communities, 'Little d' development refers to the process of enabling and empowering local people to claim, defend, influence and advocate for their own rights and interests.

The last research question explores the challenges and opportunities to participate communities in the development projects and link 'big D' and 'little d' development. Besides, unless and otherwise indicated, in this study, government refers to the district level administration and sector offices.

## **5. Findings and Analysis**

This chapter presents the findings of the study. It is divided in to three major sections, which address each of the research questions. The first section, 5.1, presents how AAE engages the community and government during planning, implementation as well as monitoring and evaluation of development projects. The second part, 5.2, discusses how AAE links ‘big D’ and ‘little d’ development in its development projects. The final section, 5.3, touches upon the major challenges and opportunities in ensuring participation of the community and other stakeholders in development works and trying to link ‘big D’ and ‘little d’ development.

### **5.1. Participation of the community and government in development projects**

Any development project has three phases’ namely planning, implementation and monitoring and evaluation. The following part explores how the community and other stakeholders, primarily the government, participate in these three phases.

#### **5.1.1. Planning**

According to informants from AAE, district level planning can be seen at three different levels. The first is a three years or three and half year’s strategic plan, which is prepared every three or three and half years period to maintain organizational alignment and fulfill government requirement for operation of NGOs in the country. It outlines broader objectives, outcomes, indicators and hierarchies of change in line with the CSP (Ambachew, 28/03/13).

According to Ambachew Deresse, Impact Assessment and Shared Learning Coordinator of AAE, the first three year strategic plan is prepared following the entry phase, which usually takes nine to twenty one months. The plan is mainly based on findings of the baseline survey and context analysis undertaken during the entry phase and appraisal study conducted before the inception of the program. At the completion of the first three year plan, internal and external evaluations that inform the next strategic plan are carried out. The internal evaluation is a peer review in which the program is evaluated by AAE staff, stake holders and the community. The external evaluations are undertaken by a commissioned consultant and regional government bodies. Similar process is followed for the second and the third three year strategic plan and the fourth phase out plan (Abebe, 28/03/13; Ambachew, 28/03/13). Based on the findings and recommendations of these evaluations, the DA prepares a draft three year plan and organizes a series of consultation meetings and workshops with the community, the government and other stakeholders to get feedbacks and comments

(Abdulkadir, 14/03/13; Abedi, 15/03/2013, Lemma, 18/03/13; Ambachew, 28/03/13; Abebe, 28/03/13).

The second level of planning is annual plan. Annual plan is an operational plan with detailed list of interventions and budget to achieve the objectives of the strategic plan. AAE's annual plan preparation starts in June or July. This coincides with midterm Participatory Review and Reflection Process (PRRP) (Ambachew, 28/03/13; Abebe, 28/03/13).

PRRP is AA's planning, monitoring and evaluation tool aimed to enhance accountability and transparency of the organization to the community and other stakeholders. It is conducted at different levels to assess what has been done, identify strengths and limitations, and draw lessons and articulate different ways of doing things in the future (ALPS, 2006). In AAE, PRRPs are organized twice a year in June/July and January/February which are commonly referred to as midterm PRRP and annual PRRP respectively (Ambachew, 28/03/13).

The purpose of the midterm PRRP is to assess the performance of the DA in the last six months and to serve as an input for the coming year's annual plan. Hence, PRRPs are instruments to update the context and identify new insights, interests and issues in rolling out the three years strategic plan. The purpose of the annual PRRP is to gauge the performance of the organization in the previous year and declare approved plan and budget of the year to the community and other stakeholder (Ambachew, interview 28/03/13).

In Azernet Berebere, PRRPs are conducted at three stages; larger community level, CBOs level and district/ government level. Gelila Seyoum, Azernet Berbere DA Program Coordinator, elaborated the practice of PPPR in the district as follows;

The larger community level PRRP is conducted in different clusters on a round basis. It is attended by 80 - 120 people comprising of project beneficiaries, women, children, kebele administrators, development agents, health extension workers and other development actors in the cluster. The PRRP with CBOs is attended by 35 - 40 CBO leaders. Finally, the district level PRRP is conducted with government officials and experts in the district capital. The findings of the preceding two PRRP sessions will be summarized and presented to the district level panel by AAE.

In relation to planning, the majority of informants from government office and AAE mentioned that PRRP sessions are important events that help AAE to directly involve and incorporate the views and interests of the community and the government in local planning. Gelila further explained that;

In PRRPs, the focus group discussions give the community a chance to identify critical issues and problems that the organization has to focus in the coming periods. We use the findings of these discussions as an input in preparing our annual operational plan.

However, informants of this study including AAE staff admitted that ‘local priorities’ identified both in three year strategic plan and annual plan may not always be the top priorities of the community.

It does not mean that AAE will intervene on whatever is prioritized by the community. AAE, as an organization, has its own strategic goals and priorities. Sometimes, the top priorities identified by the community might not fall within our strategic priority and meaningfully contribute to our organizational goal. In such cases, we [AAE] go to the second, third or fourth priority of the community, which aligns with the priority of the organization (Gelila, interview 22/03/13).

In addition to organizational goals and priorities, Abebe Wagaw, Decentralized Support Department Manager of AAE, added that the priority of the community could also be compromised due to the interest of the government. He noted that;

Although AAE’s work were participatory enough and we tried to identify and respond to community’s interest, regional signatories and other government structures may require modifications, adding or removing some issues before the approval of the strategic plan. This entails compromising the interest and priority of the community to satisfy the demands of the government.

The above two quotes from Gelila and Abebe clearly indicate that the community does not have full control over the final output of participatory process in planning. This implies that local views, priorities and interests are either appropriated by government’s interest or dropped because they do not fit into the already determined goals of the organization.

On the other hand, Abebe added that the community and other stakeholders will be acquainted with the organization’s priority through time and start to identify issues that fall within the brackets of organizational priorities as their top priority. He noted;

During the entry phase and first few years of operation in a new district, there are usually conflicts, quarrels and serious arguments with the community and other stakeholders on project ideas and priorities. But over time, they [the community and local government] try to identify issues that fit with AAE’s interest, objective and priority.

The above practical story is similar to what Moss (2001) called ‘planning knowledge’ where villagers acquire new planning knowledge based on agency’s objective analysis and perceptions of short term project deliverables than real needs and interests. I argue this process will reduce the incorporation of local knowledge, generation of new ideas and solutions that are effective and appropriate to the needs and priorities of the community.

In addition to PRRP sessions, all informants explained about the regular monitoring visits, discussions and observations as planning instruments. All participants of the group interview with leaders of BSBC noted that,

AAE and the district cooperative and marketing office usually come and visit us either jointly or independently. They see what we are doing, attend our meetings or inform us to organize a separate meeting for them. Then, they ask us about what we need to be able to expand our business and achieve our goals. Then, they incorporate these issues in their plan and allocate budget accordingly in the coming year.

The third stage is activity or project planning. This stage starts with the announcement of approved plan of the year in annual PRRP sessions and dissemination of hard copies to government offices (Abedi, 15/03/13; Gelila, 22/03/13; Ambachew, 28/03/2013). Following this, all informants mentioned that, joint discussions will be made with sector offices and CBOs leaders or the community in general. During the discussion, each activity will be further refined and explained. For instance, Abedulkadir Yesuf, head of the district cooperative and marketing office, point out that generic plans like ‘capacity building’ will be smashed into specific activity plans or project ideas. Based on these discussions, project proposal will be prepared by the committee, the sector office or jointly and submitted to AAE for appraisal. However, Ambachew pointed out that due to capacity limitation of CBO leaders and sector offices, in some cases AAE prepares project proposals on their behalf. After appraisal, a tripartite agreement is signed between the community, AAE and sector offices.

Informants also explained that there is a probability to change approved plan and budget during the abovementioned discussions. Aferane Chamiso, accountant of WRWSCC, explained her experience as follows;

Once I remember, we asked AAE to support us in constructing our own office. We got a promise that it will be included in the following year’s plan and they did so. In between, the general assembly agreed on the urgency of the issue and passed a decision to construct the office by ourselves. Then latter, by the time AAE came with the budget to discuss the construction of the office, we already

had office. So we negotiated and changed the allocated budget from office construction to a revolving loan capital.

Compared to the first two stages of planning, it is possible to argue that, the community has greater say and control over planning process at the third stage. It has the power to decide on the specific activity, the process to be followed and even to revise the budget.

However, although informants from AAE, government offices and the community confirmed that the community participates in planning to identify local needs and interests, the process and the output of the three planning process reveal the opposite. From what the interviewees stated, one can infer that the community has limited control over the outputs of the planning process. In addition, efforts to identify and incorporate real local needs and priorities in planning process are limited. Moreover, real needs and priorities of the community are compromised due to government's interest and pre-determined goals and priorities of the organization. Besides, the use of participatory tools and methods is also found to be insignificant. *Weyeyt*, which literally means discussion either in the form of formal or informal meeting, is mentioned as the main participatory tool used in planning.

### **5.1.2. Implementation**

The implementation phase usually starts after the signing of the tripartite agreement that stipulates the roles and responsibilities of each party (Gelila, 22/03/13; Ambachew, 28/03/13). Although the degree and level of participation varies depending on the project, in general, the participation of the community in implementation phase ranges from contributing labor and local material to managing and administering the execution of the project. Abedi Shifa, the district's water and mines development office expert, noted the involvement of the community in Vicky water development project as follows;

In implementation of the project, the community has done 27 kilometers of trench excavation and backfill, transported pipes, fittings and other construction materials to the site as well as constructed road to one of the springs. A certain amount of distance was allocated to each kebele depending on the size of the population and topography. Then, the kebele administration and the water committees divide the distance to each village and the village committees mobilize the community to do the task within the agreed deadline.

All informants form Vicky water development project also enthusiastically described their involvement in the above mentioned activities. They all stressed the severity of the problems and challenges they faced while collecting water as the main reason for their active

involvement in implementation of the project. Fikerte Haile, member of the general assembly of VLWWDA, explained the situation as follows;

The community was eager to get clean and potable water in the nearby. We suffered enough from water borne diseases and travelling long distances. We used to walk an hour and half along with hyenas at night. Women were raped on their way to collect water. A child is disabled due to a fire accident; a baby boy was also taken by a hyena and later found dead while his mom was away to fetch water. Girls were also usually late in schools. We have faced all the plights one can imagine and a lot more can be said about our life before the coming of Vicky water development project. As a result women, children, youth, elders, students, government officials and even pregnant women happily participated in the implementation of the project. Everyone was committed and worked so hard to see a dream come reality.

Although all informants from Vicky water project mentioned their eagerness to get clean and potable water in the nearby as the main reason for their participation, a few also added, inability to pay penalties as a factor for their participation. Nurit (name changed), one of the beneficiaries of Vicky water development project, said;

I participated because I could not afford to pay 50 ETB penalty if I did not attend the excavation or backfill program for a day. So, I participated in all the programs regardless of other personal chores I had.

Nurit also added that she did not know who decided about the penalty. But, Berkeneshi and all participants of VLWWDA group interview indicated that the penalty was decided by the community in a meeting and the money was used to provide attendees with tea and coffee. Participants of VLWWDA group interview added that labor contribution of the community is estimated to worth around two million ETB (VLWWDA group interview, 16/03/13).

In implementation phase, the community also participates by providing local construction materials and other inputs for the project. Informants from BSBC and WRWSCC group and individual interviews mentioned their participation in collecting and contributing local construction materials like wood and stone for the construction of their office.

The participation of the community, in this regard, is instrumental which on one side aims at enhancing cost effectiveness and, on the other side, aims at securing access to basic service, in this case access to potable water and capital. In addition to its instrumental role, Elfneshi and Abedi discussed the relevance of community participation in terms of its contribution for building sense of ownership and ensuring sustainability of projects. And hence, the

participation of the community in labor and contribution of local construction material is used as a means to enhance cost effectiveness, ensure ownership and sustainability as well as secure service.

Informants of this study also discussed about their participation in managing and administrating the implementation of projects in their respective areas. They stated that the executive committee of each CBO takes the leading role in the overall execution of the project. Participants of BSBC group interview explained their experience as follows;

Once we [the committee] signed the agreement with AAE and the district cooperative and marketing office, AAE transfers the money into our bank account. Then, it is all our responsibility. We implement the project according to the agreement and our bylaw. Even sometimes, when necessary, we also make amendments. But, obviously, we notify them about it. All in all, the committee is fully responsible for everything including handling cash, making transactions and implementing the project as planned. However, if we encounter difficulties or need their [AAE or government staffs] technical assistance, they are available to render the support we need. Otherwise, implementation is our main responsibility.

All informants from AAE also stressed that implementation of projects is supposed to be the main responsibility of the community, its leaders and the government. They underlined that, AAE's role is to facilitate the process, provide financial and technical support and build the capacity of the community and the government to manage and lead their own development. Nonetheless, they also pointed out that AAE also involves itself in implementation of projects when there is a capacity gap or a special urgency to finish the project on time.

While the previous quote emphasized more on the role of the executive committee, Elias Siraj, Ahmed Hashim and Habib Abederhman, members of BSBC, also noted how ordinary members work with the committee and took active part in implementation of projects. Ahmed Tundale, member of BSBC, noted his experience as follows;

As we are producing and marketing cooperative, we have a lot to do with buying inputs and selling out products. Hence, members are actively involved in this process depending on their knowledge and skill. For example, we buy fiber from farmers every week. In this process, it is not only the committee who are involved. But other fellow members, especially fiber workers, also work with the committee on a round basis.

Similarly, other informants also mentioned about the participation of the community and members in REFLECT<sup>6</sup> circles, trainings and exposure visit programs as direct beneficiaries, in addition to their participation in different meetings and discussions. One of the participants of the group interview with WRWSCC illustrated the participation of members in decision making with example as follows;

Let's say, AAE supports us a project worth ETB 20,000.00 for revolving loan capital. Then, it is the general assembly, which decides on the loan ceiling, interest rate and other important issues related to the utilization of the fund.

Compared to the previous stage, the participation of the community in this phase is more pronounced. The community is given full responsibility to manage and administer its development process. Moreover, participation in REFLECT circles, meetings, and trainings is found to be a means to aware, sensitize and empower the community to lead and administer its own development. Hence, the practice of participation in the implementation of projects is transformative.

In implementing projects, except Madiya Mossa, member of WRWSCC, and Nurit Akmel, who seem not to be clear about the role of the government, all other informants mentioned technical support, legal advice, monitoring and supervision as the major responsibility of government. Besides, some participants of the group interview with VLWWDA mentioned the role of the government in co-financing the project. In this regard, the participation of the government can be seen as instrumental that is meant to enhance cost effectiveness and ensure sustainability of projects. In addition, Gelila and Ambachew mentioned that the involvement of the government in implementation of projects augments the relationship between the government and the community, enhances responsiveness of the government to the needs and demands of the community and contributes to scaling up of best practices to zonal, regional and nation levels. As such, the participation of the government in implementation of projects could be seen as transformative. Hence, the participation of the government in implementation of projects is, at one and the same time, instrumental and transformative aimed to enhance cost effectiveness, ensuring sustainability, enhancing the relationship between the duty bearer and right holders as well as influencing practices and replication of best practices for wider impact.

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<sup>6</sup> REFLECT is an acronym for Regenerated Fererian Literacy and Empowerment through Community Techniques. It is an adult literacy and empowerment tool which brings communities together to identify, discuss and take action on issues that are close to their lives.

### **5.1.3. Monitoring and Evaluation**

As discussed in the previous section, in addition to its planning role, PRRP is a monitoring and evaluation tool in AAE. In PRRP sessions, informants of this study ascertain that the community and other stakeholders take active part in assessing the progress and gauging the outputs of joint projects. In the sessions, the community evaluates projects based on a set of standards and further identifies strengths, limitations, challenges and opportunities as well as suggests different ways of doing things in the future. Deberitu Leramo, beneficiary of Vicky water development project, explained her experience as follows;

Last time me and other four women from our kebele participated in a meeting. There were also representatives of water committees, cooperatives, government officials, and teacher and parent representatives from schools that AAE supported previously. In the session, AAE staff presented what they did in the previous year. They presented planned budget and performance by sector and activity. Then, participants were divided into smaller groups to discuss, ask, comment and give feedback on each activity. Latter, representatives of each group presented their findings to the panel and suggested mechanisms to improve future endeavors. In the session, underperforming offices and CBOs were openly criticized. I remember AAE was also criticized for lacking regular monitoring and supervision.

Other informants also highlighted that PRRPs create opportunities for communities to express their view, reflect and give critical comments on the process and outcome of projects. Moreover, they all pointed out that, their views and opinions expressed in PRRP sessions are valued and accepted by AAE. However, as Geila explained and quoted in the planning part of the discussion, PRRP sessions took place in different clusters on a round basis and participants also change over time. This implies that participants of each PRRP sessions do not have a clear picture of what was discussed and planned in the previous PRRP to rigorously reflect on and gauge improvements or make sure that previous comments and opinions are incorporated. Owing to this fact, I found informants strong claim that their voices in PRRPs are incorporated in plans to be naïve.

In addition to PRRPs, Abedulkadir, Gelila, Ambachew mentioned that, AAE and district government officials undertake joint and independent monitoring and supervision visits to projects every two or three weeks. They pointed out that the purpose of these supervision visits is to assess the progress, identify gaps and provide solution to challenges. However, Hashim Dawed, accountant of BSBC, stated that it is not only the government or AAE staff who go and question about their performance. He said that committee also questions the government and AAE if they did not play their role as indicated in the proposal and the

agreement. Some participants of the group interviews have noted that they are free to comment on and express their opinions about the performance of AAE and government sector offices.

Moreover, informants mentioned that they have their own internal monitoring system to gauge their achievement and assess the performance of committees, in addition to the monitoring and supervision programs that they have with AAE and the government. Almost all informants explained about monthly, quarterly, annually and other occasional meetings as a means to monitor and evaluate the overall situation in their cooperatives and association.

Although I have a reservation on the effectiveness of PRRP process as a monitoring and evaluation tool, it is true that in PRRP sessions the community gets a chance to express their opinion and question the government, AAE and their leaders about the process and outcome of the interventions. Moreover, the existence of internal monitoring and evaluation forums and meetings is vital in building the culture of accountability and transparency, which by itself is transformative.

From the above discussions, it is possible to understand that different actors have different interests and purposes in participation. It is also possible to observe different forms of participation at different stages of the project cycle and within the same cycle. It is also clear that participation can also be one and at the same time a means and an end in itself, hence transformative. The following section presents how AAE uses participation in planning, implementation and monitoring and evaluation of service delivery projects as a means of empowerment and advocacy.

## **5.2. Mechanisms and Strategies to link ‘big D’ and ‘little d’**

As presented in the second chapter, NGOs tend to be best known either as service providers or empowering and advocating agents for change. While their engagement in service delivery is understood as ‘Big D’ development - a project based intentional activity which has little intention to challenge existing power relations and social structures in society - and their engagement in empowerment and advocacy is understood as ‘little d’ development. However, Carroll (1992), Chhotray (2008), Gujit (2008), Lewis and Kanji (2009) and other prominent scholars discard this dichotomy and see the role of NGOs in service delivery as an instrument to catalyze and empower the community. The following section presents, how AAE uses participation in service delivery as a means to empower grass root communities and enable

them to claim, defend and advocate for their rights and interests. It explores the process and strategies employed by the organization under a limited legal environment.

### **5.2.1. Understanding Service Delivery in AAE**

Addressing the immediate and basic needs of communities is one of the priority areas of AAE. As a service delivery agent, AAE is engaged in availing services in health, water, microfinance, education and providing assistance to communities in emergency (AAE, 2012). All informants from AAE argued that AAE is engaged in service delivery because access to basic social services is a fundamental human right and, lack of this, is a root cause of poverty and further perpetuates inequality and injustice. Moreover, they assert that the organization's engagement in service delivery is not an end in itself, but a means to organize and mobilize communities to claim, defend and advocate for their rights and interests. Abebe has eloquently expressed why AAE is engaged in service delivery as follows;

AAE uses service delivery as an entry point or a cause to bring people together. By enhancing community participation in planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of service delivery projects and following process oriented approach, we aim to empower people living in poverty to own, lead and sustain development projects as well as lobby, influence and advocate for their own development. Hence, the fundamental focus is not only on delivering the service itself, but on empowering and enabling people along the journey.

The overall framework of this study in general and the following section in particular, is fundamentally based on the above overarching understanding. The next section, presents how AAE uses participation in service delivery as a means to empower local communities to advocate for their rights and interests.

#### **A. Mobilizing and Organizing Communities**

*'Yeneka ena Yetederaje akal hulem yashenfal'* which literally means enlightened and organized group usually wins (Ambachew, interview 28/03/13).

Mobilizing and organizing communities into groups, associations, cooperatives and other forms of collective engagement is one of the strategies employed by AAE to link service delivery to 'little d' development. In explaining his experience in the last 20 years in AAE, Abebe noted that;

Now it is like a tradition. Wherever we go and whatever we do, we usually organize CBOs that manage and administer the project. In the short run, these organizations help us to easily mobilize the community, enhance cost

effectiveness and ensure sustainability of projects. In the long run, they will be strong organizations that represent the voice and interest of their constituency.

Ambachew further supported and explained the above statement by taking VLWWDA as an example.

What we [AAE] want to see is beyond sustainable provision of water for Azernet people. AAE want VLWWDA to be a vibrant women association, which engages in promoting women and girl's right, address harmful traditional practices (HTPs) and makes the community to understand and respect the leadership potential of women. We want to see this organization to be a real women organization, which represent and struggle for the advancement of women's rights and interests.

Based on their practical experience over the years, all informants from AAE supposed that CBOs like VLWWDA, BSBC and WRWSCC in the long term will play crucial role in securing the rights of their members, influencing and making the government accountable and responsive to their needs and interests, as similar organizations did in the past. For example, Abebe explained his experience with Dalocha Women Water Development Association (DWWDA) and Lalo Mama Community Based institution as follows;

When AAE was about to phase out from Dalocha, the district government interfere and decided to dissolve the association and take over the water scheme. However, the association did not give up easily. Instead, it opened charges against the district government and the administrator was sentenced to six months imprisonment. But, currently, DWWDA like other sector offices gets regular budget from the government. In addition, another CBO that we [AAE] organized with Agri Service, local NGO, in Lalo Mama gets regular budget from the government and this year raised additional 3.4 million ETB from GOAL Ethiopia for the execution of different projects.

These examples show the development of local civil society that addresses the needs and rights of its constituency and make government accountable and responsive to their constituency. Through these structures, as argued by Gujit (2008), communities have claimed and defended their rights, challenge existing structures and strive to bring systemic change in the society. Given the limited legal space for the involvement of NGOs in the advancement of human and democratic right, equality, justice and policy advocacy, Ambachew described CBOs as 'the best entry points'.

Although AAE's staff foresee the transformative potential of CBOs informants from government offices stressed on their instrumental role. Whereas, individual informants of this study focused on the importance of the service itself, individual economic benefit they gained and personal change they achieved as a result of their membership. Only very few individual informants and participants of WRWSCC and BSBC group interview talked about the importance of collective engagement to influence, lobby and advocate for equality, justice and advancement of their rights and interests. Participants of BSBC group interview have said the following about their practical experience in discussing the importance of collective engagement to bring justice to their members;

Four years ago, there was a quarrel between a son of our member and some other person from the majority. The case was not that significant to flare up a fight that could take someone's life. The guy was sure that we were illiterate, did not know our rights, the law or had someone who could stand on our side. He cruelly killed the son of one of our member. Everyone was angry. Then, the association decided to take the case on her behalf. We took the corpus to a forensic hospital in Addis Abeba [the capital of Ethiopia], collected all the evidences and opened a charge against the person. The court sentenced him to eight years of imprisonment. We know, the offender deserved more punishment, but hadn't we been organized and the cooperative decided to take the case, he would not have been imprisoned for eight days let alone eight years.

Nonetheless, in general, the practical progress of the cooperatives and the association that are included in this study lags behind the rhetoric, but still they have untapped potential that could be exploited in the future. In a follow up question, Gelila pointed out that although the CBOs included in this study are so far mainly engaged in the routines of managing and administrating projects, she noted that there are other vibrant CBOs like women watch groups that have good track of record in protecting, promoting and advancing the rights and interests of women.

## **B. Networking and Linkage**

In addition to grass root and district level efforts, Gelila and Ambachew also discussed the importance of establishing networks, forums and unions of CBOs at different layers as essential vehicles to scale up local efforts into zonal, regional and national levels. However, in this regard the DA has not progressed that far except in the establishment of district level women saving and credit cooperatives union. Ambachew mentioned fear and unwillingness of different layers of government as the main obstacle in establishing zonal and regional level networks that promote influence and advocate common interests.

### **C. Building Leadership Capacity of Communities**

.....We are illiterate farmers. But, if they [the government] do not require us to have a degree as a prerequisite, we can lead the country' (VLWWDA group interview, 16/03/13).

Informants from AAE argued that CBOs need strong and visionary leaders to achieve their instrumental and transformative role in the process of development. Abebe and Gelila said that it is through successive training, experience sharing and exposure visit that AAE empowers representatives of people living in poverty, women and excluded people to become leaders in their community and the country at large. Informants of this study have also revealed the impact these capacity building interventions on their individual lives and its contribution to handle their organizational responsibility, assume new positions and roles in government and other formal and informal social structures. Hashime noted the following in explaining his experience;

The most important thing I got from AAE and my membership in the cooperative is not the financial gain; it is rather the different training, knowledge and opportunities. Previously, we [tanners, blacksmiths and fiber workers] were excluded from decision making and different leadership positions in society. After being organized in a cooperative we got chances to demonstrate our potential. For instance, I assumed different positions in the kebele administration. To mention, currently, I am an accountant to the kebele youth multipurpose cooperative, chairperson of the unemployed youth association, secretary of the village edir<sup>7</sup>, coordinator of the village development group, member of the kebele land administration and use committee, vice spokesperson of the kebele council and, last but not least, I am an accountant of BSBC. All these happened to me in a few years because of the skill and knowledge I acquired from AAE.

Similarly, WRSCC group interview participants noted about the different roles they assumed in different political and social structures after they assume leadership position in the cooperative. One of the informants of this study, as a kebele administrator, happened to be a former accountant of Hayat Women Saving and Credit Cooperative, which was initiated by AAE in 2003. She explained the contribution of AAE and her cooperative for her current leadership role as follows;

Being an accountant for my cooperative was my first public duty and I served for four years. In due course, we used to get various trainings on women's right, violence, HTPs, family law, accounting, management and a lot more. At the end of one of these trainings, there was an exam and I stood first out of all the

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<sup>7</sup> Edir is a traditional institution which is established by neighbors to handle and raise fund for funeral.

participants, including men. Everyone was surprised. I got a prize from the district administrator and assigned as representative of women in the kebele administration office and later promoted to be administrator. Now, it is almost four years since I became the kebele's administrator (Sofia, interview 21/03/13).

The majority of women informants also aspire to be future leaders of their community and the country. One of the participants of VLWWDA group interview said 'we are illiterate farmers. But, if they [the government] do not require us to have a degree as a prerequisite, we can lead the country'. Informants from the government office have also mentioned about the contribution of these and other cooperatives in enhancing the representation of women in government structures and building their leadership capacity. Amedegeba, expert from the district women and children affairs office, stated that many of the women running for the 2013 area and regional election in each kebele are from these and other similar cooperatives organized and supported by AAE in the previous years.

The study also found out that many of the participants of the group interviews play multiple roles in different projects initiated and supported by AAE. For example, two of the executive members of WRWSCC were found to be board members of VLWWDA and members of the kebele women watch groups. Likewise, another executive member of BSBC is also a chairperson of Community Based AIDS Program (CBAP) circle in his Village.

The statements from Hashime, Sofia, Amedegeba and other informants indicate success stories of empowerment and power over process at grass root level. Hence, the participation of the community in managing and administering projects and subsequent capacity building interventions served both as a means for successful implementation of projects and a source of social and political transformation of power.

However, I doubt that the closer proximity and incorporation of CBO leaders to government structures may challenge their future potential to be critical about government and question its accountability, transparency and responsiveness to their needs and priorities. However, in an informal discussion on the issue, AAE staff noted that 'it will not be easy for them to forget about their root and history. The more chance and power they get, the more they become concerned to their groups'. In addition, as Kabeer (1999) argued, the concentration of power on few individuals, like Hashim and others, might in the long run produce other dominant powers and create enclaves within the poor, women and marginalized groups itself.

#### **D. Increasing the Consciousness and Building the Capacity of Communities**

..... I wonder how I become this courageous to talk in front of other people especially newcomers like you now. I was usually afraid and shy to talk. But now, I do not' (Hairiya, interview 22/02/13).

In addition to building the capacity of leaders, Gelila noted that AAE also targets raising the consciousness of members and building their capacity to be aware of their own context, be competent and successful in their individual ventures. In this regard, she added that the organization employs a mix of interventions that create platforms for members to discuss and reflect about their situation and organizes specific and well-tailored training programs that hone their skills.

All informants of this study mentioned that their participation in the respective cooperatives and association and education they got have increased their consciousness and enlighten them to see things from a different perspective. For instance, Elias stated that 'we learned that we contributed a lot for our exclusion by daunting ourselves and accepting their attitude as a fact'.

Likewise, informants from WRWSCC also mentioned that the support and reliable service they get from their cooperative have boosted their confidence. For example, Madiya and Nudeme mentioned that they used to work under high pressure and they were afraid to take risks when they took loan from local lenders. But now, they mentioned that they are doing their business with less pressure, more confidence and as a result become more productive than they used to be. Individual informants and some WRWSCC and BSBC group interview participants noted that the REFLECT program have increased their awareness about hygiene and sanitation, the importance of saving, equality, justice and time management in addition to the literacy and numeracy skills they gained. In these sessions, they noted that they share their personal experience, daily life routines and develop a sense of belongingness. Hairiya Awole presented her experience as follows;

I am a widow. I and fellow women did not have the courage and confidence to speak in public. Even when I have personal issues or quarrel with neighbors, I used to beg my relatives or other people to advise me on how to handle the issue or to speak on my behalf in front of elders or kebele courts. I could not articulate my thoughts and comprehensively present my ideas. But now, I am able to express myself, open charges, present and defend my case in courts and other gatherings. Different trainings and meetings with AAE, government officials, the committee and members gave me a chance to experience and develop my speaking skills. I wonder how I became this courageous to talk in front of people

especially newcomers like you now. I was usually afraid and shy to talk. But now, I do not.

From the above assertions it is possible to deduce that informant's membership and participation in different projects have enhanced their assertiveness, understanding about their situation, increased their confidence and inner worthiness, hence, power within. This fact, I argue, will somehow counter balance the creation of new dominant powers and enclaves of power within the poor as discussed in the previous section. Furthermore, the sense of belongingness that members and beneficiaries of different projects developed lays the impetus to other forms of power such as power with and power to and lead to corresponding forms of empowerment.

#### **E. Facilitating Government and Community relationship**

There is a natural relationship between the duty bearer and right holder. While the right holders claim rights, the duty bearer fulfills them. Hence, our [AAE's] purpose is to promote the growth of this natural relationship between the two parties. In the process, AAE's role is facilitation and providing technical and financial support. But, we need different things on each side. We need the right holder to be conscious, organized, consolidate power, advocate and influence the duty bearer. And, we need the duty bearer to recognize citizen's rights and be responsive to their legitimate demands. By engaging on both sides and exerting efforts to enhance the relationship, we assume the rights and interests of people in poverty will be protected and fulfilled (Ambachew, interview 28/03/13)

All informants from AAE, in one way or another, touched upon and supported the above quote from Ambachew. They all agree that the role of AAE in development is to facilitate and enhance the relationship between government and community.

In order to build on and enhance the relationship between community and government, Gelila noted that the two parties have to come together first. And, she said that implementing projects together serve as one of the means to introduce and acquaint themselves with one another. In this process, Ambachew added that the government will know the needs and interests of the community and the community will also know the duties and responsibilities of the government. Individual informants and some group interview participants raised issues that supported this assertion. For instance, participants of BSBC group interview mentioned that it is after the coming of AAE that the government started to talk and think about tanners, and blacksmiths. One of the individual informants from BSBC, Habib, said that 'AAE introduces us to the government'. Besides, women informants from VLWWDA and WRWSCC also pointed out that, it is with the coming of AAE that women's issues first came

to the forefront in the district and organizing women became agenda of the government. Informants from sector offices also noted the role of AAE in introducing new ideas, working modalities and agendas in the district. Therefore, by bringing forgotten issues to the forefront, engaging on both sides of the equilibrium, and facilitating the natural relationship between the government and the community, AAE promotes ‘little d’ development.

#### **F. Advocacy by Example**

Ambachew and Abebe noted that before the introduction of the new proclamation, AAE used to work on policy research and advocacy issues. However, they mentioned that the involvement of the organization in this regard is quite limited now. All informants from AAE marked the importance of working with different layers of government as important strategy to influence government policies and practices. Abebe noted that;

I think we are still doing policy and advocacy work, but not in the conventional way through campaigns. By working with different government structures we try to influence their policy and practice. For example, recently the minister of Women, Children and Youth Affairs Office discussed with AAE on the possible ways of expanding our women watch groups program to a national level. But obviously, this kind of efforts usually requires more time, resource, and establishing mutual understanding and trust. At the same time, you do not know to what extent this trust and mutual understanding stretches out. Sometimes it might stretches well, but sometimes it might not be.

Gelila and Ambachew also listed out a number of approaches that the government has adapted from AAE and expanded at zonal, regional and national levels over the last few years. Among others, they mentioned Tse-Tse and Trypanosomiasis control in Dawero zone, Community Based AIDS Program (CBAP) in Azernet Berebere and other districts, Women watch groups in Silte Zone and SNNPR regional state, alternative basic education program at national level and so on. Even though these success stories of influencing government policy, agenda and development practice are overwhelming, Ambachew noted that ‘this approach is not usually perfect and does not mean it has worked for everything’.

To be more effective in using this approach, he further added that NGOs need to proactively scan the local, regional and national level political dynamics and strive to exploit opportunities. Other informants also mentioned documentation and sharing of best experiences as a strategy to influence government’s policy and practice. This approach is similar to what Rose (2011) called persuasive advocacy. Although Bebbington *et al.*, (2007) noted that the best advocacy is done by NGOs drawn on their best experience; Ambachew and

Abebe's assertion in the above paragraphs show its dependence on the good will of the government.

To sum up, by organizing and mobilizing communities, enhancing linkage and networking with different actors, increasing the consciousness and building the capacity of communities and leaders, facilitating the relationship between the government and the community and using persuasive advocacy strategies, AAE tries to link 'big D' and 'little d' in development in a limited legal environment. These strategies complement and augment each other and enabled AAE to enhance the leverage of target oriented and project specific service delivery projects to empowerment and advocacy.

### **5.3. Challenges and opportunities**

This section explores the challenges and opportunities in enhancing the participation of the community in planning, implementation and monitoring and evaluation of development projects and linking 'big D' and 'little d' development in AAE.

#### **5.3.1. Challenges**

One of the challenges repeatedly mentioned by informants from government office, AAE staff and the community alike is lack of information and limited capacity of the community. It is indicated that community members are suspicious, fearful and resistant to participate in development projects at the beginning. In this regard participants of BSBC group interview discussed their experience as follows;

When AAE first came to our village and asked about us, they were informed to contact one of our fellow, Awole. When they went to his house to ask for more information, he ran away into the woods because he was afraid that they might do some harm to him. They left a message about their purpose and left. He was not even that welcoming when they visited him for the second time. In the meantime, the community was also widely talking that AAE could make us convert our religion and resettle us in another region. Because of this, many people were unwilling to come to meetings and join the cooperative at the beginning.

In addition, individual informants also added that ice-breakers and first participants, especially women, were blackmailed by the community. Fikerte mentioned that the founders of Hayat Women Saving and Credit Cooperative were labeled as notorious, jobless and beyond the control of their husbands. As a result, she added that, it was very challenging to bring more women in to the association at the beginning.

Illiteracy of the community, especially women, and lack of capacity and previous experience in managing and administrating projects are also mentioned as obstacles. Gelila explained that even though it is possible to find some people who complete primary education or have basic reading and writing skills, the majority of the members and leaders in most CBOs are illiterate. They also have limited skills, capacity and previous experience. And hence, she stated that acquitting them with basic skills, knowhow and building their capacity from the scratch requires more time, energy and commitment.

Regular life routine and household chores are also mentioned as challenges to enhance the participation of the community and ensure their empowerment in the process. Almost all women informants of this study mentioned that household roles such as cleaning, taking care of children as the major obstructing factors for their limited participation in the development process.

On the side of the government, lack of experienced personnel, frequent turnover and poor hand over process are mentioned as serious problems in West Azernet Berebere. Gelila and Abedulkadir mentioned that most of the staffs in government offices are young fresh graduates who come either to gain few years of experience or to wait until they find promising jobs in cities. In addition, Ambachew noted that, lack of genuine interest, courage, and commitment of government staff to fulfill their responsibility and play their agreed roles as another challenge. Informants from BSBC and WRWSCC stated that the cooperative and marketing office do not fulfill its roles and responsibilities. Some of the group interview participants of WRWSCC indicated that

The law [proclamation 147/2001] states that the district cooperative and marketing office is responsible for auditing cooperatives in the district yearly. In addition, it is also stated in our project agreement. However, they did not perform any audit for the last couple of years. Although members are complaining that they did not get their dividend on time, we will not do that unless we got official audit report which shows our net profit.

Besides, government officials and expert's frequent meetings, campaigns and other urgent political assignments have hindered the successful implementation of joint projects. Informants from the government office were also innocent to admit these issues as a challenge. Informants from BSBC and WRWSCC noted that the REFLECT program which they used to attend every week is now interrupted for three weeks due to the water shade management campaign by the government.

In addition to the operational issues, it is indicated that government officials see themselves as controllers and other development actors as subordinate. Abebe noted that this sentiment coupled with long bureaucracy drags the peace of development process. Besides, Gelila noted that government is also suspicious about AAE's work with CBOs, when they start claiming and defending their rights and question about their accountability. In such instants, she added that, 'they [the government] even consider us as we are organizing rivalries against them. Besides, as repeatedly mentioned throughout the study, all informants from AAE also mentioned the new charities and societies proclamation as an obstacle to intensively work on empowerment and policy advocacy issues. In line with this, Ambachew said the following

Although the situation was not that much conducive to work on policy, advocacy and right related issues from the beginning now it is officially prohibited. Now, we are only allowed to engage in areas that the government have identified as charitable purpose such as education, health, infrastructure development and so on. Hence, our engagement in rights, policy advocacy and influencing is latent.

On the side of AAE, frequent staff turnover and frustration is mentioned as a challenge. Gelila explained that the process of empowering local communities, changing attitudes and practices could not easily happen in short time. It requires more resource, time and devotion. As a result sometimes staffs became frustrated. In addition, Abebe mentioned that lack of proper understanding of participatory development and the required attitudinal and behavioral competency as a challenge on the side of government officials and AAE staff at different levels. He further argued that,

We [professionals] are brought through a traditional education system that makes us to think that we are always right and have the solution for everything. As a result, we lack internal reflection and willingness to learn from the community. But, if we want to bring change in people's lives, we need to change our attitude, behavior and practice first.

In addition, Abebe added that limited budget, human resource and slim organizational structure as a challenge to follow process-oriented development approach that empowers and capacitates local communities. Moreover, both Gelila and Abebe mentioned weak internal linkage, communication, documentation and limited upper structure support as a challenge to scale up best practices and influence government and other NGOs.

### **5.3.2. Opportunities**

One of the opportunities mentioned by all informants of this study is the strong dedication, courage and commitment of the community. Abedi explained his experience in Vicky water project as follows

The participation of the community in Vicky water project was beyond our expectation. Everyone was cooperative, committed and willing to contribute what they have. All in all, we finished the project eleven months earlier than the plan. This would not happen if the community was not cooperative and supportive.

In addition, the tradition of working together and collective engagement through different schemes like Edir and Debo<sup>8</sup> are also mentioned as a contributing factor for mobilizing and organizing the community for development.

The presence of good policy and legal frameworks that promote participation are also presented as important factors to enhance participation and mobilization of the community. In this regard, informants mentioned the national constitution and proclamation 147/2001 as vital. Besides, sectorial policies and strategies recognize the role of non-state actors especially NGOs in the process of development. Abebe mentioned his experience with the national food security policy as follows

Before assuming my current position, I was national food security and emergency coordinator. In that position, my major responsibility was to asses and critically examine national and regional food security, agriculture and emergency related policies. In my experience, regardless of where they are copied from and limitations in implementation, the policies are well designed and have sufficient room for the engagement of NGOs in the sector.

Last but not least, informants reveled that, AAE has smooth and respectful relationship with government officials and the community. Moreover, it is also indicated that AAE has close relationship with communities founded on values of trust and solidarity that ease the process of development. In explaining about their relation with AAE, one of the participants of BSBC group interview said ‘our relationship with AAE is like a father and a son’.

Therefore, in order to increase the participation of the community in planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of projects and enhance the leverage of service delivery projects to ‘little d’ development, efforts need to be made to address the challenges and exploit the opportunities.

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<sup>8</sup> Debo is a tradition where farmers work on group on each other’s field on a round basis.

## **6. Conclusion**

The critics about poor performance of NGOs over the last two decades focuses on NGOs inclination towards ‘big D’ and underlined the loss of transformatory edge of participation as a political action and urged them to realign their orientation towards ‘little d’ development. However, several African governments, including Ethiopian government, have recently introduced new laws and proclamations that restrict NGOs engagement in ‘little d’ development. And hence, the aim of this study was to explore how AAE links ‘big D’ and ‘little d’ development using participatory development approaches in such a limited legal environment.

To begin with, addressing immediate needs and providing basic social services to communities in need is one of the focus areas of AAE. This is mainly because access to basic services like education, health and water is a fundamental human right and, lack of it, is a root cause of poverty and further perpetuates inequality and injustice. Besides, service is found to be a means to organize and mobilize communities to claim, defend and advocate for their rights and interests in AAE. The overall framework of this study is based on this thinking. Hence, by exploring how the community and other stakeholders participate in planning, implementation and monitoring and evaluation of service delivery projects, the study identifies mechanisms and strategies AAE uses to link ‘big D’ and ‘little d’ development. Besides, the study identifies opportunities and challenges in the process.

Although the type and purpose of participation varies, the community and the local government participate in each stage of the project cycle. In planning, although it is widely claimed that the community participates in identifying local needs and interests, the findings of this study show that the community has limited control over the outputs of the planning process. Local views, priorities and opinions are either appropriated by the government’s interest or dropped because they do not fit into already determined goals of the organization. Besides, efforts to generate innovative ideas and identify and incorporate local knowledge, real needs and priorities of the community in planning are found to be limited.

In the implementation phase of projects, on the one hand, the community participates in contributing labor and local materials. In this regard, participation is used as a means to secure service by the community and a mechanism to enhance cost effectiveness, ensure ownership and sustainability of projects by AAE. On the other hand, the participation of the

community in REFLECT circles, trainings and exposure visits and managing and administering the implementation of service delivery projects is found to be transformative.

In monitoring and evaluation phase of projects, although I have reservation on the effectiveness of the method, through PRRPs the community gets a chance to express their opinion and question the government, AAE and their leaders about the process and outcome of the interventions. Moreover, the existence of internal monitoring forums and meetings is important to build the culture of accountability and transparency which by itself transformative.

By participating the community and other stakeholder in the abovementioned phases of service delivery projects, AAE presumes to empower and enable communities to claim, defend and advocate for their rights. In order to do so, one of the strategies identified in this study is organizing and mobilizing communities into groups, associations and cooperatives. It is indicated that CBOs, on one hand, facilitate successful implementation of projects and, on the other hand, lay the foundation for the development of local civil society that represents the voice and interest of grass root communities. In addition, linking and networking these CBOs with other similar organization within and outside the district is also identified as crucial to consolidate power and scale up local efforts into zonal, regional and national level movements.

In addition, the study reveals the engagement of the organization in building the leadership capacity of the community and its leaders and witnessed success stories of empowerment and power over process at local level. The study reveals the immense contribution of different capacity building interventions that enabled CBO leaders to successfully handle their responsibility, assume new positions and roles in government and other formal and informal social structures. Similarly, the organization's work on raising the consciousness of communities and building their capacity has boosted participants assertiveness, confidence and sense of belongingness which feed into other forms of power and corresponding forms of empowerment.

However, I suspect that the closer proximity and incorporation of CBO leaders to government structures may challenge CBOs future potential to be critical about government and question its accountability, transparency and responsiveness to the needs and priorities of their constituency. This is one of the areas that future researchers need to investigate.

The findings of this study also show the importance of working with government and the community as an important mechanism to enhance the leverage of service delivery to advocacy and influencing. Likewise, the study reveals that bringing these two actors in the implementation of projects have augmented their relationship and enhance responsiveness of the government to the needs and demands of the community. On the other hand, through positive engagement and working with different layers of government, the finding of this study show that, AAE have influenced government policies and practices over the years. These strategies complement and augment each other and enabled AAE to enhance the leverage of service delivery projects to empowerment and advocacy. However, different strategies and mechanisms that enable NGOs to achieve ‘little d’ development would be identified if similar studies are conducted in other organizations and countries as well.

At the end, the study discussed the challenges and opportunities that enhance or constrain participation and efforts to link ‘big D’ and ‘little d’ development. Illiteracy, suspicion, fear, resistance, lack of information, limited experience in managing and administering projects and household routines are mentioned as major challenges on the side of the community. Similarly, lack of experienced personal, frequent turnover, poor hand over process, frequent meetings and campaigns, lack of genuine interest in projects, and, last but not least, the new societies and charities proclamation were mentioned as the major challenges on governments side. Likewise, staff turnover, limited budget, human resource and slim organization structure, weak internal linkage, communication and documentation, limited upper structure support were mentioned as challenges on the side of AAE. Overall, lack of proper understanding of participatory development and the required attitudinal and behavioral competency is also mentioned as a living challenge.

On the contrary, strong dedication, courage and commitment of the community, the tradition of working together, presence of good policy and legal frameworks, smooth and respectful relation with government and community are presented as important opportunities to enhance participation and link ‘big D’ and ‘little d’ development. Hence, efforts need to be made to address the challenges and exploit the opportunities to enhance participation and link ‘big D’ and ‘little d’ development.

To conclude, participation is a dynamic concept that accommodates different interests and purposes at different stages of a project cycle and within the same cycle. On the one hand, this study reveals that, participation can serve as a means to enhance cost effectiveness, ensure

ownership and sustainability of service delivery projects. On the other hand, it also shows that, participation in service delivery projects allows communities come together, discuss and reflect on their own experience, develop important skills and knowledge, get practical experience in management and administration, consolidate their power and take collective action to claim, defend and advocate for their own rights and interests. Therefore, it is possible to deduce that participation serves different interests and plays key role in linking ‘big D’ and ‘little d’ development. In general, AAE’s experience in empowering local communities and enhancing their capacity for organization and collective action using the aforementioned strategies earmarked a shaft away from the conventional approach of advocacy by NGOs to communities themselves.

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## **Appendix 1: Interview guides**

### **Interview guide for Group Interview**

*Village* \_\_\_\_\_

*Name of the project* \_\_\_\_\_

#### **A. Personal details**

Name

Age

Sex

Marital status

Level of education

Responsibility

How long do you know AAE?

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#### **B. About the committee**

- When, how and why is the committee first established?
- What are the major responsibilities of the committee?
- How and based on what does the committee run its daily operation?
- How often do you meet among yourselves and with the rest of your members/the community?
- How do you pass decisions and deal with problems?
- To whom are you primarily accountable and how?
- How do the committee participate its members in planning, implementation, and evaluation of its work?
- Is there a mechanism that members can assess, gauge or question about the works of the committee?
- How do you communicate and interact with AAE and government?

#### **C. How do the committee work with AAE**

- What kind of projects are you working with AAE?
- How are the projects initiated?
- How is the committee involved in planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of these projects?
- How have members been involved in planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of these projects?
- Do you think your opinions and ideas are valued and incorporated in the process? Why and how?
- Do you or members have benefited from participating in the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation projects. If yes, in what ways?
- Is there any mechanism that the committee and members can ask AAE or the government about implementation of the project?

#### **D. Major achievements**

- What are the major achievements of these projects in the life of individual members and as a group as a whole?
- How do you think this change happened?
- Out of all the projects which one was most effective and why?
- What do you think needs to be done differently for the future?

#### **E. Challenges, opportunities and lessons**

- What are the challenges of the committee in running its daily business? And how do you solve them?

- What are the major opportunities for the committee to effectively discharge its responsibilities?
- What do you learn in working with AAE
- What do you think is special about AAE
- Anything you want to say about your work with AAE?

### **Interview guide for individual beneficiaries**

Village \_\_\_\_\_

*name of the project* \_\_\_\_\_

#### **Personal details**

Name	Age
Sex Marital status	Number of children
Level of education	Main source of livelihood
Any role in the village	

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#### **About his/her involvement in the project**

- What do you know about AAE?
- What projects are you working with AAE?
- Would you please generally tell me how you are involved in projects with AAE?
- How, when and why do you get involved in the project?
- Have you been participated in planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the project and how?
- Why do you participate in planning implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the project?
- What do you benefit from your participation in the process?
- Do you think your say is incorporated in planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of projects? And How?

#### **About changes in his/her life**

- Tell me about your life before the beginning of the project?
- What is changed in your life after you join the project?

#### **Relation with the committee, government and AAE**

- Who is mainly running the projects?
- What do you know about the committee?
- How and who elects them?
- How do you work with them?
- Is there any mechanism that you can check and ask about the performance of the committee?
- How do you communicate with AAE and government officials?

#### **Challenges and opportunities**

- What were the challenges for you to take part in the project? And how do you solve them?
- What were the opportunities for you to participate in the project?

- Anything you want to say about AAE?

### **Interview Guide for Government Officials**

Village \_\_\_\_\_

Name of the project \_\_\_\_\_

#### **Personal details**

Name	Age
Sex	Marital status
Level of education	Responsibility
How long do you know AAE?	

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- What do you know about AAE?
- What projects are you working with AAE?
- How were the projects initiated?
- Would you please generally tell me how you work with AAE?
- What are the major responsibilities of the office in the process?
- Have you been participated in planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the AAE projects and how?
- Why do you participate in planning implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the project?
- Do you think your opinions and ideas are valued and incorporated in the process? Why and how?
- How do you interact with the community and AAE in implementation of the project?
- Is there any mechanism that the community and AAE can ask the office about implementation of the project?
- What do you think are the major achievements of AAE in working with your office and the community?
- What has been changed in the lives of the community?
- How do you think does this change happen?
- What are the major challenges and problems in working with AAE and the community?
- How do you solve problems and challenges?
- What were the major opportunities in the process?
- What needs to be done differently in the future?
- What do you learn in working with AAE and the community?
- What do you think is special about AAE?
- Anything you want to say about AAE?

## **Interview guide for AAE staff**

### **Personal details**

Name	Age
Sex	Level of education
Responsibility	How long have you worked in AAE

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- Would you please explain me about the mission and vision of the organization?
- What are the major focus areas of the organization
- What are the major role of the organization in development
- What are major engagements of AAE in service delivery?
  - Why is AAE engaged in service delivery?
  - Would you please generally tell me how AAE execute service delivery projects?
  - How are service delivery projects initiated in AAE?
  - What are your planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation strategies?
  - Why do you involve the community and the government in the process?
  - How do you involve the community and the government in the process?
  - What are the major responsibilities of the organization in service delivery projects?
  - What are the major challenges and problems in working with the government and the community?
  - How do you solve problems and challenges?
  - What were the major opportunities in the process?
  - What are the challenges or problems of service delivery projects?
  - Is there any mechanism that the community and government partners can ask the office about implementation of the project?
  - What are the major achievements of AAE in service delivery?
- What are your major engagements in advocacy and empowerment?
  - Why is AAE involved in advocacy and empowerment work?
  - Would you please generally tell me how AAE is involved in advocacy and empowerment?
  - How are advocacy and empowerment issues identified?
  - Do you involve other actors in your advocacy and empowerment efforts? If yes, who are they and how are they involved?
  - What are the major challenges in advocacy and empowerment work?
  - What are the major achievements of AAE in advocacy and empowerment? And how is that achieved?
- Linking service delivery and empowerment
  - Are there efforts to link service delivery and advocacy/empowerment role of the organization?
  - How do you link service delivery and advocacy and empowerment roles of AAE?
  - What are the challenges and opportunities to link service delivery and empowerment?
  - What are your future plan/strategies to link service delivery and advocacy/empowerment role of the organization?

## **Appendix 2: list of informants**

### **Individual interviews**

No	Name of the respondent and the project	Date	Sex
<b>1</b>	<b>Woktie Rahmet Women saving and Credit cooperative (WRWSCC)</b>		
1.1	Hairiya Awole	22/03/2013	Female
1.2	Madiya Mossa	22/03/2013	Female
1.3	Nuria Selman	22/03/2013	Female
1.4	Nudeme Erdo	22/03/2013	Female
1.5	Laffisa Nuru	22/03/2013	Female
1.6	Aferane Chamisso	22/03/2013	Female
<b>2</b>	<b>Berkefet Skill Based Cooperative (BSBC)</b>		
2.1	Elias Siraj	20/03/2013	Male
2.2	Ahmed Tundale	20/03/2013	Male
2.3	Ahmed Hashim	20/03/2013	Male
2.4	Habib Abederhman	20/03/2013	Male
2.5	Hashim Dawed	21/03/2013	Male
2.6	Halima Ahmed	21/03/2013	Female
<b>A3</b>	<b>Vicky Water Project</b>		
3.1	Elfeneshi Kedir	18/03/2013	Female
3.2	Berkneshi Geberehana	18/03/2013	Female
3.3	Fikerte Haile	17/03/2013	Female
3.4	Nurit Akmel (Changed for this report)	16/03/2013	Female
3.5	Deberitu Leramo	17/03/2013	Female
3.6	Sofia Jemal	16/03/2013	Female
3.7	Berete Erchefo	22/03/2013	Female

### **Informants from Government offices**

No	Name	Responsibility	Date	sex
1	Abedu Fedelu	Cooperative and marketing office expert	19/03/2013	Male
2	Abdulkadir Yesuf	Cooperative and marketing office head	14/03/2013	Male
3	Lemma Tadesse	Cooperative and marketing office expert	18/03/2013	Male
4	Abedi Shifa	Water and mines development office expert	15/03/2013	Male
5	Shesu Edris (name changed)	Women and children affairs office expert	19/03/2013	Male
6	Mohammed Shifa	Ferke Saving and Credit Cooperative's union manager	14/03/2013	Male
7	Amdegeba Argedo	Women and children affairs office expert	19/03/2013	Male
8	Sofia Werkito	Lera Kebele Administrator	21/03/2013	Female
9	Nuru Said (Name change)	Duna Keble Administrator	21/03/2013	Male
10	Tewfik Kercha	Demala Kebele Administrator	15/03/2012	Male

**AAE staff**

No	Name	Responsibility	Date	sex
1	Gelila Seyum	DA Program Coordinator	22/03/2012	Female
2	Ambachew Derese	Impact Assessment and Shared learning coordinator	28/04/2012	Male
3	Abebe Wagaw	Decentralized support Manager	28/03/2012	Male

**Group Interview**

No	Group Interview	Date
1	Wektie Rahmet Women saving and credit cooperative	15/03/2013
2	Berkefet Skill Based Cooperative	13/03/2013
3	Vicky women water development association	16/03/2013