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**Department of Management**  
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**Popular Participation in Decentralized Governance**  
**(With Especial Emphasis on Adi-Haki Local Administration, Mekelle City)**

**By**

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**A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Master of  
Arts Degree in Development Studies (Governance, Democracy, and Development  
Specialization)**

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**May, 2011**  
**Mekelle, Ethiopia**

## DECLARATION

I, ADONAY HABTU, hereby declare that the thesis entitled“(**Popular Participation in Decentralized Governance in Mekelle City**)” submitted by me for the award of the degree of Master of Arts in Development Studies, Mekelle University at Mekelle, the Department of Management, is original work and it hasn’t been presented for the award of any other Degree, Diploma, Fellowship or other similar titles of any other university or institution.

Mekelle, Ethiopia, May 2011

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ADONAY HABTU

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Date

## CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this thesis entitled “**(Popular Participation in Decentralized Governance in Mekelle City)**”. Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of MA, in Development Studies to the College of Business and Economics, Mekelle University, Department of Management, done by Mr. Adonay Habtu Belay, Id.No.FBE/PG/089/2002 is an authentic work carried out by him under my guidance. The matter embodied in this thesis work has not been submitted earlier for award of any degree or diploma to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Principal Advisor: Tesfay Aregawi (Ass. Prof.)

Mekelle, Ethiopia, May 2011

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Co-Advisor: Abadi Afera (MPA)

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## Abstract

*The study examines the aspects related to the level of popular involvement, mechanisms to improve and barriers in decentralized governance in Adi-Haki local administration in Mekelle City from the point view of citizens, councilors, public officials and civil society organizations. The paper seeks to find out who are the governance actors that participate in different stages of the governance process and the level of their involvement. The research is conducted on a representative samples at the local administration level. It was based on 200 questionnaires filled in and 180 returned by the respondents and interview with councilors, public officials and civil society organizations. The novelty of the research lies in the fact that it was based on triangulation both on the officials and citizens, perception about popular participation in decentralized governance. The research shows that there is low level of popular participation in the decentralized governance process with inadequate space provide to the actors and in sufficient means for popular participation. The research provides with enough evidences to characterize the local administration in Mekelle city as a form of consultation according to the Arnstein's ladder of popular participation.*

Key words: 1.popular participation, 2.decentralized governance, 3.decentralization, 4.local people or community,5. Adi-Haki local administration, 6.Mekelle City.

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## **Chapter one: Introduction**

### **1.1. Background of the Study**

Recently the terms “governance” and “good governance” are being increasingly used in development literature. Bad governance is being regarded as one of the root causes of all evil within societies (UNESCAP, 2000). Rather Good governance has been taken as a solution for such problems in the developing countries and one of the peculiar features of good governance is citizen’s participation through democratic decentralization or devolution of power to local level of government (Muhammed 2006). Kumera in 2006, affirmed this assertion by stating it was expected that the decentralized system would create local governments, which are more aimed at democratic decision making through active participation of people.

In view of the potential gain from implementing decentralization, it has become a popular strategy and has attracted a great deal of attention by transferring responsibility of the center to local government in many developing countries. Believed such transfer of power to bring and contribute to democratic governance. Following the 1991 government change, Ethiopia has adopted a decentralized system of governance as a departure from the past political system which did not allow for self rule (Tegegne 2010). According to Loop 2002, (cited in Muhammed 2006), the 1990s are considered as a period of democratic decentralization with a number of implementation impediments especially in Africa. According to Yigremew (2001:103), out of 75 developing countries, all but 12 were actively pursuing decentralization policies that devolve functions and responsibilities from national to local level.

Decentralization drive in Ethiopia has proceeded in two phases. The first wave of decentralization (1994/1995) was centered on creating and empowering national/regional governments and hence was termed as mid level decentralization Tegegne (2010). The second wave of decentralization (2002/2003) known as District Level Decentralization Program (DLDP) expanded the process of decentralization down to wereda level. This was a major step in



empowering citizens to participate in economic and political decisions affecting their life Meheret (2007).

Devolution of power (decentralization) does not by itself mean decentralized governance. In practice, what has been changed is the center of decision making from the center to the local level (regions, districts, and locals). Just because a governmental unit is smaller in scope does not necessarily mean that the people are not going to be involved in governing their own affairs. The local level governments may be unresponsive to the needs and demands of the people. The decision making may not be transparent and predictable. If there is no local people participation, accountability may not be achieved as powerful local elite may make it difficult despite a formal election system. Devolution can only be areal self governing exercise if it is based on the principles of decentralized governance (Tsegaye, 2006).

Generally, decentralization that goes down to the local level is more effective in citizen's participation. As Sharp, 1996 also stated it; decentralization increases citizen's participation, and helps to formulate realistic and locally relevant plans, which result in efficient implementation. He added, decentralization increases flexibility and responsiveness in the management of development plans, because decisions to correct mistakes or to adjust to changing circumstance can be made at the local level.

## **1.2. Problem Statement**

Some studies undertaken before the second wave of decentralization in different regions of Ethiopia (for example, de Jong et al 1999, Meheret,1999) exemplify that regardless of general legal provisions and political pronouncements towards participative and democratic local governance local governments were not playing their role as expected. Yigremew (2001:103) mentioned a very pressing issue by saying "it seems that local governance has not been given sufficient attention, and many feel Ethiopia decentralization stops before it reaches the local levels...there also indications that those lower levels of government lack autonomy, representation and sufficient resources".

The second wave of decentralization intended to address shortcomings of the first. With this in view, 'District Level Decentralization program and Urban Management Program' initiated to facilitate the implementation of devolution of power and responsibility to Woreda level of government. As such, the program was limited to four Regional states (Tigray, Oromia, Amhara and Southern Nation, Nationality and Peoples of Ethiopia) (MOFED, 2002).

According to another study conducted after the second wave of decentralization by Meheret (2007) as one manifestation of governance at local level, participation at the woreda level were dictated by the non-elected Zonal administration. However, the status of Zonal tiers of administration remains unclear and varies from one region to another that woredas are under tight control of zones. At worst, he added, there is low/weak level of involvement and participation in local governments especially at woreda level. Today, the present system of local government structure seems top-down, and that in turn had undermined the participation of the citizen's. One hopeful note is that, popular participation and decentralization go hand in hand. By the way of contrast, the decentralized structures offering the citizen's lesser avenues for participation. In this regard Tegegne,(2010) stated that, even though at lower level of administration governance and decentralization matter most, local governments were not capable to bring genuine participation effectively due to lack of decision making power, resource and authorities.

As Tegegne (2010) argued that people at the grass roots level so far have failed to perceive the benefit of decentralization in terms of space being provided for genuine and meaningful participation because of the intervention of regional and local authorities(zones). This is owing to the fact that local authorities often fail to deliver what is expected of them. Further, as Meheret (2007) described that the higher level government needs and preferences will gain currency over the citizen's at local. Of course, the decentralized system was considered a major governance reform agenda with significant promises as well as challenges. Empirical studies suggest that the concrete realization of genuine decentralized governance waiting for some time to come. Participation (Tegegne 2010) at wereda administration is inadequate and far from the true sense of empowering the citizen's.

According to Tegegne and Kassahun (2007) Participation is manifested at local governments with no more than in the form of consultation which can not qualify as a good approach for ensuring citizen voice. They further, mentioned several constraints for ensuring citizen voice such as:” heavy reliance on traditional mode of representation through elected council members, and by resorting to mass mobilization and mass consultation”. Therefore, the same study argues that, it is clearly impractical to see at local administration level effort with a view to enhance participation at the grassroots level. Though this approach could be commended for avoiding top-down approaches by inducing the indirect participation of the community through selected actors, direct participation of citizens in the exercise has not been realized to date (Ibid).

Therefore, the gaps identified in both wave of decentralization poses forward question - why and how decentralization experiment at local level of governance has taken on weak step in the direction of de-concentration vs. decentralization. The gap in this regard had to be filled in order to move forward.

Studies that link popular participation in decentralized governance in Ethiopia were scanty and very limited. Especially, in Tigray, empirical evidences are far and lagging behind theoretical understanding. Thus, today, several years after the introduction of the decentralized system of governance, there are still many questions regarding popular participation, as one pillar of decentralized governance. Hence, this study addresses two issues that were not covered widely in the literature. The first issue is the lack or thin of literature about level of popular participation in governance experiences within the Tigray context, up to the knowledge of the researcher this has not yet been explored and analyzed through empirical studies, so it was important to examine it at local administration level critically. Even, perhaps the best place to see, understand and explore participation is at the local level, where the concerns of the grassroots or locality intersect most directly with that of governance. The second issue is the identification of barriers and mechanisms of popular participation in decentralized governance and finally to propose ways through which popular participation in decentralized governance can be improved within specific context.

### **1.3. Research Question and Objectives**

#### **1.3.1. Research Questions**

1. What is the level or extent of popular participation in decentralized governance?
2. What are the mechanisms to popular participation in decentralized governance?
3. What were the obstacles or constraints to popular participation in decentralized governance?
4. How can popular participation in decentralized governance be improved?

#### **1.3.2. General objective of the study**

The general objective of the study is to explore the level, mechanisms and obstacles of popular participation in decentralized governance in Mekelle city administration in general and in Adihaki local administration in particular.

#### **1.3.3. Specific objectives of the study**

The specific objective of the study includes:

1. To explore the level of popular participation in decentralized governance.
2. To assess the mechanisms of popular participation in decentralized governance.
3. To identify the barriers to popular participation in decentralized governance.
4. To identify ways through which popular participation in decentralized governance can be improved.

### **1.4. Scope and Limitation of the study**

#### **1.4.1. Scope of the study**

Useful discussion on participation requires a context (Mosse, 2001:18). Thus, the study was only confined to the Adihaki local administration in Mekelle city. And it tries to explore the popular participation in decentralized governance.

Specifically, the delimitation (scope) is made to localize the research problem in terms of subject, group and period in which a researcher perceives the problem. The scope of the research problem was delimited by the following aspects;

1. The study was delimited to the area, that is, Adihaki local administration and ten kebele It was delimited to 200 sample size considering the time, and money, but it was made to be representative;
2. It was also delimited to the four sampling groups/units such as the household respondents, members of different associations, council members , and officials and administrators in the study area;
3. The study was also delimited to the triangulation method only, which is the combination of both quantitative and qualitative approach;
4. It was also delimited to instrument/ tools such as for measuring the variables in the study;
5. It was delimited to simple random sampling technique and purposive sampling ;
6. More over, theoretically the study is confined to a devolution type of decentralization vs decentralized governance.

These delimitations may help the researcher for conducting the study and the findings of studies also confine to these delimitations.

#### **1.4.2. Limitation of the study**

The limitations of the study were the following:

1. Relatively speaking, Mekelle is an urban city so that the finding may not be representative of the region as a whole.
2. The study confines itself to one type (devolution) of decentralization. It would have been good if the study had mainly incorporated the other types of decentralization such as administrative and fiscal decentralization.
3. The study also confines itself to associations only. No attempt was made to include the views of private sector and NGOs organizations.

### **1.5. Significance of the study**

A thorough understanding of this study is vital issue for designing appropriate reform, institutions, decentralization and other interventions for popular participation as one indicator of decentralized governance. It is useful to establish a regional perspective and thereby to enhance popular participation opportunities at local level. As well, the outcome of this study may serve as a source of additional information which may be significant to citizens, reformers and local governments during the designing and implementation of decentralized governance. Furthermore, this study is an excellent addition to the already existing literature on decentralization and governance.

Finally, this study may provide information and knowledge that can be used by government and development planners, decision makers, donors, non-governmental and community organizations to set policies or design strategies in such a manner that offering the people greater avenues for genuine popular participation.

## **Chapter Two**

### **2. Review of Related Literature and Conceptual Framework**

Recently, many literatures elucidate on nexus of participation and capacity of public institution particularly at the local administration level particularly in developing countries. In light of this, this study paper has tried to crucially raise and examine certain basic issues pertaining to questions concerning with governance, decentralization, decentralized governance and participation. We need now to discover how exactly and by what mechanisms these various key issues and factors are linked to the popular participation and to each other.

Taking this in to consideration, in what follows, the research study paper tried as much as possible review of related literature.

#### **2.1. Decentralization and Related Concepts**

In a general way decentralization refers to “the transfer of power, responsibility, resource, functions and services from center to other units of government”. In the same manner, according to Barnett, Minis and Vansant (1997), is that it is “the transfer of authority, planning, responsibility, and decision making from the central government to its field organizations, local administrative units, and semi-autonomous local governmental or non-governmental organizations.” It can be described as “the redefinition of structures, procedures and practices of governance to be closer to the citizenry”.

In a nutshell, decentralization can be viewed as “an ideological principle associated with objectives of self-reliance, democratic decision making, and popular participation in government affairs, and accountability of public officials to citizens”.

Decentralization in the political administration context is “.....the devolution of resources, tasks and decision making power to democratically elected lower level authorities that are largely independent of the central government”. As Frizen and Lim, (2006) noted that decentralization

has been a prerequisite for good governance in such a way that to improve levels of popular participation, accountability, efficiency, and responsiveness to local needs and concerns, among other goals.

The various definitions of decentralization provided by different authors could be recapitulated as:

Decentralization... (is)...the transfer of responsibility for planning, management, and resource raising and allocation from the central government and its agencies to(a) field units of the central government ministries or agencies,(b) subordinate units or levels of government, (c) semi-autonomous public authorities, or corporations,(d) area-wide regional or functional authorities, or (e) non-governmental private or voluntary organizations.

While the transfer of responsibility is critical in the above definitions, the agencies or authorities to whom the power is transferred are several, which can be with in the same structure or outside the structure. In addition, decentralization has different dimensions such as the type of activities over which power or authorities is transferred; the level to which they are transferred; the individual or institution to which they are transferred; and the type of political, administrative and legal machinery used to make the transfer.

Decentralization is a complex and multifaceted concept. However, it is operationally defined as follows: *It refers to the empowerment of people through the empowerment of their local governments. It is the process of dispersing decision- making governance closer to the people or citizen.*

## **DIFFERENT TYPES/FORMS of DECENTRALIZATION**

There are three important types of decentralization (Rondinelli, 1981, and Boro, 2002). These are administrative decentralization, political decentralization and fiscal decentralization. It is necessary to clarify our concepts in order to gain a proper grasp of the relationship between the official decentralization policy and its role in enhancing popular participation. At best, it will



help in assessing the effective transfer of decision making authority and responsibility from higher level government to the local level government and thereby to the people or citizens at large.

### **Fiscal Decentralization**

This is characterized by the re-assignment of spending, taxing and borrowing authority from central to local level governments. It refers to the transfer of power and resources between the center (higher) government and sub national (lower) government (Lidija R. Basta 2002). In particular, this type of decentralization deals with the introduction of tax-sharing and grant system between the higher and local governments. According to Tsegaye (2006) fiscal decentralization can take many forms, including:

- a. Self- financing or cost recovery through user charges;
- b. Co-financing or co-production arrangements through monetary or labour contributions;
- c. Expansion of local revenues through property or sales taxes, or indirect charges;
- d. Intergovernmental transfers that shifts general revenues from taxes collected by the central governments for general or specific uses; and
- e. Authorization of municipal borrowing and the mobilization of either national or local government resources through loan guarantees.

In line with the preceding theoretical discussion, the Ethiopian decentralization has devolved resources and finance to lower levels of government. Proclamation no.33/1992 is the most important legal instrument in the fiscal decentralization of Ethiopia. The proclamation defined the sharing of revenue between the central government and national/regional governments. The proclamation among others specified the basis for revenue sharing, expenditure and revenue assignment, subsidy (grants) and borrowing (TGE, 1992).

## **Administrative Decentralization**

The essence of administrative (bureaucratic) decentralization is intra-government transfer of authority and responsibility among units of administration within the same organizational hierarchy. It is a de concentrated form of administrative organization that involves delegation of responsibility and functions by central head quarters to field offices. This is a bureaucratic-administrative arrangement whereby the authority to make decisions is retained by central headquarters. Since they highly regulated by central administration, local governments and branch offices are limited to executing policies and plans formulated by central authority. Their discretion in matters of decision making is very much restricted. Lacking independent legal existence, local authority exercise delegated authority that can be revoked by the center when circumstances precipitate such an action. In sum, administrative decentralization can not promote democratic self rule and participatory development because it does not confer decision-making authority up on local communities and institutions of governance. Hence, this model has limited use for studying the contribution of official decentralization policies to democratic self government and local decision making by lower tiers of government (Smith, 1980; Rondinell, etal., 1989; Davery etal., 1996; cited in Meheret, 2002).

## **Political Decentralization**

Political decentralization, on the other hand, refers to the complete devolution of decision making power and responsibility from central governments to local governments. It allows wider latitude for popular participation in governance. This type of decentralization is widely applicable in highly decentralized political system. Often, there are legal provisions to protect any intervention by higher governments in matters exclusively determined to be of local jurisdiction (Meheret, 2002)

Apart from legal guarantees for autonomy, politically decentralized governmental units have independent revenue and taxing authority, and can prepare and approve their budgets and socio-economic development plans with out having to seek central authorization. Further, they can also have elected councils/legislative assemblies and executive administrations primarily accountable to the electorate. Independent revenue powers and the presence of elected councils answerable to

the citizenry constitute important yard sticks for devolved local governments. These two aspects of political decentralization have the single most important advantage of advancing democratic self-rule and popular participation because decision making authority is effectively transferred from the central government to local government structures (Smith, 1985; Slater, 1989; Cited in Meheret, 2002). From the preceding theoretical discussion, one can say that it is political rather than administrative decentralization that enables to transfer decision making authority and responsibility to lower level of government.

The various dimensions of decentralization are also expressed in terms of different modes of decentralization; i.e. de-concentration, delegation, and devolution. Each of these forms decentralization has its-own characteristics explained shortly as follows;

### **De-concentration**

De-concentration is the weakest form of decentralization and used most frequently in unitary states—redistributes decision making authority and financial and management responsibility among different levels of the national government (Getachew Adem, 2001: 05). In de-concentration, the central government shifts the workload (responsibility) to staff or offices outside the national capital or it can create strong field administration of local administration capacity under the supervision of central government.

### **Delegation**

Delegation is a more extensive form of decentralization. Through delegation, central governments transfer responsibility for decision making and administration of public functions to semi-autonomous organizations not wholly controlled by the central government, but ultimately accountable to it. Governments delegate responsibility when they create public enterprises, or housing authority, transportation authority, special service districts, semi- autonomous school districts, regional development corporations, or special project implementation units. Usually in

delegation, some authorities and decision-making power is passed down to entities of the lower administrative organs (Ibid).

## **Devolution**

In devolution, which is the highest form decentralization, governments devolve to / substantially share powers and functions vertically, and hence they transfer authority for decision making, finance, political matters like election and management to semi-autonomous units of local government with legally-acknowledge status. In devolution, local governments are given legally recognized boundaries in which they enforce an independent authority to plan and implement programs (Lidija R. Basta, 2002). It (devolution) implies the transfer of responsibility, power and resources from the higher (central) government to democratically-elected local authority. By the same token, Balogun (2000) described as, in devolution, the decision makers are the local electors since they drive their power and legitimacy not from a central authority.

In this regard, one can be asked whether “privatization” should or should not be regarded as a model of decentralization. Some recent analyses appear to suggest that privatization represents a subset of decentralization. However, this study has decidedly excluded privatization and divestiture from the definition of decentralization. While private sector participation in development is now accepted as a reality and a desirable option privatization raises questions that are radically different from those of decentralization.

All these in turn indicate that there is no standard model of decentralization and every effort and attempt to implement decentralization can be considered as a unique experience. Despite difference in the nature and scope of decentralization experiences, any form of decentralization unanimously calls for the devolution of political, administrative and fiscal powers so that local governments perform their function with no or minimum interference from the center but working within the frame work of the central government development policies and strategies( Cheema and Rondinelli,1986, Danny,2008).

## 2.2 Local government in Ethiopia; Constitutional Status

The debate for the second phase of decentralization, i.e. local level decentralization, began at the drafting stage of the 1995 Constitution. At that stage the status and powers of local government was at issue. Some argued that the structure and powers of local government should be provided for in the federal Constitution. Others argued that the matter pertaining to local government should be left to the regions. In the end a compromise was reached. Thus under the federal Constitution an obligation was imposed on the regional states to establish local government and to provide it with adequate powers. However the structure of the local government and the exact powers and functions that were to be devolved to it were left for the regions to determine. In 1995 the biggest four states (Amhara, Oromia, Tigray and SNNP) soon followed by the other states, established a three tiered local administration through their constitutions. In 2001, again the above four states, followed by the other states, amended their constitutions and re-structured their local administration and devolved more power to local level (Zemelak, 2009).

### **Local government institutions**

Presently Ethiopia has a three tiered local government; *zonal, woreda and kebele* administration; the *kebele* administration being the lowest level local administrative institution.

Generally zonal administration is not an autonomous administrative institution. It is just a branch of the regional governments that is established at zonal level, holding a number of *weredas* in it (Mehiret, 2002). Zonal administration is provided with certain powers and functions by the regional government by way of deconcentration. There are 66 zonal administrations in the country. A zonal administration, generally, does not have representative council. It is rather run by appointees of the head of the regional government. The most important function of the zonal administration is liaising between the *woreda* administrations and the regional administration. It also coordinates the works of the *woreda* administrations within the zone and provides them with technical assistance. In Amhara, Gambella and Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples regional states, at zonal level, what is commonly referred to as ‘nationality administration’ is established. It is established in accordance with art 39(3) of the federal Constitution which

guarantees the right to self-government to each ethnic group and that requires the establishment of government institution to same.

Below zonal administration there is a *woreda* administration. A *Woreda* administration is the most important local administrative institution under the Ethiopian local governance system. It is established by all regional states on a geographical area in which approximately 100, 000 or more people reside. Presently there are 557 *woredas* throughout the country. A *woreda* has a representative council and an executive council. The representative council, which is called *woreda* council, is comprised of elected officials. It has also a *woreda* administrative council, the executive organ of the *woreda* administration, which is comprised of a *woreda* administrator who is elected by the *woreda* council from among its members and other members who are appointed by the *woreda* administrator upon the approval of the *woreda* council. The lowest level of local administration is the *kebele* administration. It is established in a geographical area which is inhabited with 10,000 or more people. The *kebele* administration has a representative council called *kebele* council and an executive body which is referred to as *kebele* administrative council (Zemelak, 2009).

### **Powers and functions of local government**

The Zonal administration, as was pointed out, acts with deconcentrated power, as agents of the regional government. Its main function is to coordinate the works of different *woredas* under it and liaise between the regions and the *woredas*. The zonal administration that is established for regional minority ethnic groups in Amhara, Gambella and SNNPR though recognized as the highest political organ of the ethnic group concerned, have no clear competences, save determining the working language of the zone. The regional constitutions invariably provide that the *woreda* and *kebele* administrations have the power to draft and implement their own plans regarding the *woreda's* or the *kebele's* economic development and social services and administrative matters. However the economic development and social service matters which are under the jurisdiction of the *woreda* and the *kebele* are not clearly provided for in the constitutions. The distinction between the competences of the regional administration, the *woredas* and the *kebeles* is vague. In practice the *woreda* works in the area of primary education,

primary health care, rural water supply and rural roads. However these competences are not provided for in the state constitutions or any framework legislation. They are exercised based on political considerations. As almost all the *weredas* and *kebeles* are controlled by the ruling party there is no much of a controversy about who does what for now. But when and if the opposition parties manage to control local government the vagueness in the in allocation of functional competences among the different level of government is likely to cause much disagreement (Ibid).

### **Financial sources**

Under the regional constitutions the *weredas* are given the power to adopt their annual budget. The constitutions also provide that the *weredas* can make use of sources of revenues which are not administered by the state government. However, the regions have retained almost all revenues sources which they are authorized to make use of under the federal Constitution.

The *weredas* collect land use fees and agriculture income taxes. However the proceeds are transferred to the states treasuries. The only reliable financial source of *weredas and kebeles* is the block grant that they get from the regional administration. The block grant covers around 83% of the *weredas* budget (Ibid).

### **Autonomy**

According to government policy documents, *woreda* administrations are supposed to be autonomous administrative units. However without clear functions and internal financial sources, one can hardly speak of *woreda* autonomy. In addition as all local governments are controlled by the ruling party and by other ethnic based parties, which are, at least allegedly, invented by the ruling party itself, and as decisions within the ruling party are made in a centralized manner, one cannot speak of local autonomy. The practices also support the above assertion. Under the regional constitutions zonal administration is provided with the responsibility of coordinating and assisting the *weredas*. As some studies show, however, the *weredas* are under tight control of the zonal administration. They do not have fiscal autonomy. As the *weredas* get much of their revenue (83%) from the regional government, they are required to get their budgets approved by

the zonal administrations. According to a study conducted in the Amhara region an expenditure exceeding 30,000 Ethiopian Birr (R2000) needs the approval of zonal administration. Any economic and social plan of a *woreda* needs to be submitted to zonal administration for approval (Ibid)

## 2.2. What is governance?

Recently the terms “governance”, “decentralized governance” and “democratic governance” are being increasingly used in development literature. Bad governance is being regarded as one of the root causes of all evil with in societies. Major donors and international financial institutions are basing their aid and loan on the conditions that reforms that ensure good governance are undertaken(UNESCAP, 2000).

The concept of governance is not new. It is as old as human civilization. Governance can be used in several contexts such as corporate governance, international governance, national governance and local governance (UN Legal Notice, 2008).

Governance has been defined in different ways by looking at its different aspects. There are those who define governance by taking in to account its domain (the activities of stake holders). Such classification has been considered governance as the function and exercise of power of government. This definition confines governance to mean government. But this definition is being criticized as narrow since it conceptualizes only one type (class) of people (Tsegaye, 2006).

Governance this day goes more than just interactions between systems of government and the governed. Rather includes the ways that people and civil society engage and overlap. There are, therefore, those who define governance in a broader way including the civil society (Ibid).

According to Leila Frischtak (1997), Governance is generally defined as “the exercise of political, economic and administrative autonomy to manage a nation’s affairs and public resources and an attempt to resolve conflicts at all level. It is seen as encompassing the



mechanisms, processes, and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their rights and obligations, and mediate their differences”.

Similar definition is provided by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP, 1997) defines governance by looking at the process. Accordingly governance is “the exercise of economic, political and administrative authority to manage a country’s affairs at all levels.....it comprises the mechanisms, processes and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights, meet their obligations and mediate their differences”. UNDP has a list of attributes of governance. These includes: participation, rule of law, transparency, responsiveness, consensus orientation, equity, effectiveness and efficiency, accountability, and strategic vision.

To sum up, the term “governance” is intended to reflect the broader concerns of the state and citizens, yet it is a term with out precision or agreed usage. Governance is a very diffused and flexible concept interpreted or understood in various ways. It is a multifaceted concept encompassing all aspects of the exercise of authority through formal and in formal institutions in the management of the resource endowment of a state and it is also a broad reform strategy to strengthen the institutions of civil society, and make government more open, responsive, accountable, participatory and democratic (Huther and Shah, 2003; Martin et al 1998:5).

### **2.3. Decentralized Governance**

Devolution of power does not by it self mean decentralized governance. In practice, what has been changed is the center of decision making from the center to the local level (regions, districts, and locals). Just because a governmental unit is smaller in scope does not necessarily mean that the people are not going to be involved in governing their own affairs. The local level governments may be unresponsive to the needs and demands of the people. The decision making may not be transparent and predictable. If there is no local people participation, accountability may not be achieved as powerful local elite may make it difficult despite a formal election system. Devolution can only be areal self governing exercise if it is based on the principles of decentralized governance (Tsegaye, 2006). Since governance is the process of decision making

and the process by which decisions are implemented, an analysis of governance focuses on the formal and informal actors involved in decision making and implementing the decisions made and the formal and informal structures that have been set in place to arrive at and implement the decision.

USAID (2000) defined decentralized governance as follows:

“The process of governing democratically at the local level, viewed broadly to include not only the machinery of government, but also the community at-large and its interaction with local authorities”.

From United Nations Development Program (UNDP) view point, decentralized governance is characterized by three critical dimensions;

- **Performance of the local authorities** (in terms of fiscal effort and discipline as well as allocation and operational efficiency) in managing public resources and discharging their responsibility for the delivery of economic and social services; protection of the environment and management of natural resources; and promotion of economic development.
- **Participation** of organized and individual citizens in local public sector decision-making, through mechanisms that supplement and enhance, rather than replace or contradict, the functioning of the institutions of democratic representation.
- **Partnership**, between local authorities, civil society organizations and private sector units for the provision and production of local collective goods and services.

## 2.4. What is Participation?

Literally speaking, participation means inclusion of people. Participation has been included as an important element in the development strategies of many developing countries. Participation has become an essential ingredient and a prerequisite of good governance. Participation is also part

of the process of development and democratization. In this regard, Dalton (1996:40), has said, “With out citizens or public involvement in the process, democracy lacks both its legitimacy and its guiding force”.

Development as a process of increasing people’s capacity to determine their future means, that people need to be included (to participate) in the process. There is, therefore, a line of argument that people everywhere have a basic human right to take part in decisions that affect their lives. It is confirmed by Lister (1998:228), such that” the right of participation in decision making in social, economic, cultural and political life should be included in the nexus of basic human right....citizenship as participation can be seen as representing an expression of human agency in the political arena, broadly defined; citizenship as rights enables people to act as agents”.

Political Participation has been an issue in development management (administration) since its inception and its significance increased principally as it becomes part of official rhetoric. Participation can be exercised or observed both at individual and community levels, the later being the sum of the former. Individual Participation rises up to popular participation where a large proportion of people are invited and expected to express their wishes on issues of governance. In popular participation, the majority should prevail over the minority, which is an imperative tenet for democratic government. As noted by Cunill (1997:76-77) “popular participation refers to political participation but distances from it at least in two ways: it abstracts both participation mediated by political parties, as well as the one exercised by citizens when they elect political authorities. It expresses instead-although with multiple meanings the direct intervention of social agents in public activities”. In this sense, popular participation is located beyond the classic forms of in direct representation and involves direct ways in which citizen’s influence and exercise control in governance. From this perspective, Gaventa and Valderrama (1999), “participation has included the realm of knowledge and direct action, not only the realm of representation”. Even if, previously participating in decision-making process and government structures has been regarded as the causes of catastrophes and conflicts.

Participation is linked to decentralization (Tsegay, 2006). This is because proximity to the constituents will present an opportunity for the local people to influence their government and thereby creating political space for groups who were originally excluded from decision-making process. In this case, involving people directly to articulate their interests, needs and wishes is one of the central ideas of decentralization. The local government should be responsive to people's needs and demands accordingly.

Participation has been also advocated as a way of input to programs initiated or introduced by local level governments (Ibid). In this regard, participation is related to the preparation of the programs. This can be done, not only by involving people as and when it is convenient, but also by putting the interest of the public at the first place.

Participation has been defined both in narrow and broad terms. In its narrow contention and understanding, Participation is defined as “the active engagement or involvement of citizens with public institutions, such as in voting, election, and campaigning including non- violent protests”.

Participation is also broadly defined as a “collective sustained activity for the purpose of achieving common objectives, especially for a more equitable distribution of the benefits of development and expression of opinions over the issues of governance (UNESCO, 1979:15)”. “In the context of development, community participation refers to an active process by which beneficiary or client groups influence the direction and execution of a development project with a view to enhancing their well- being in terms of income, personal growth, self-reliance or other values they cherish” Paul (1987).

Participation operationally defined as *a process whereby decision- making, prioritizing issues, and also allocating resources is influenced directly by citizens*. All men and women, inclusive of the physically challenged, should have a voice in decision- making, either directly or through legitimate intermediate institutions that represent their interests.

Decentralized governance can be enhanced through the participation of organized and individual citizens in local public sector decision-making, through mechanisms that supplement and

enhance, rather than replace or contradict; the functioning of the institutions of democratic representation. Participation of citizens and ever concerned associations is a key corner stone of decentralized governance. Participation reflects the involvement of citizens in the over all institutions, social and political systems. People and concerned stake holders usually should have responsibility to participate in decision making process and implementation processes in public institutions of a given society so that government of a given state not only makes informed choices with respect their needs, but also respects, and defends individual and group rights and freedoms, improves the interface between public and the private. Therefore, it is not beyond imagination that governance is not like a machine that goes by it self; rather, it essentially and efficiently needs substantial, persistent, informed and responsible participation in their public affairs that affects or may affect their lives. Besides, the principle of participation derives an acceptance that people are at the heart of decentralized governance. On top of this, they are not only the ultimate beneficiary of governance, but are also the agents of it.

These definitions imply that the meaning and scope of participation has been changing from time to time. In the 1950s and 1960s, for instance, participation was feared as a disruptive influence and was very limited in scope even in development programs. Participation in this period was defined in pure political terms: it meant voting, party membership, activity in voluntary associations, protest movements, etc. with the emergence of the new public administration movement in the 1970s, however, the meaning of participation began to be redefined in terms of development and the administrative or implementation process in addition to its political aspect or content.

Evidences show that the type of government (system of governance) largely affects participation. For instance Oakley et al (1991:14) mentioned possible obstacles that could hinder participation. These include, inter alia, bureaucratic or administrative obstacles (centralized government structure), structural obstacles (ideology, political and legal system), and socio-cultural obstacles (mentality of dependency, culture, and tradition).

These refer to the existing varied perceptions of participation as a means and as an end. Participation as a means entails using it to achieve some predetermined goals or objectives. In other words, it is a way of harnessing the existing physical, economic and social resource in

order to achieve the objective of development programs and projects. In this case, as an end takes a passive form and becomes a short-term exercise. On the other side, participation as an end is essentially a dynamic process which unfolds over time and whose purpose is to develop and strengthen the capabilities of people to intervene more directly in every aspect.

In the means facet, the involvement of people is limited to providing information and expressing felt needs and preferences and their role don't go beyond consultation. To the radical model on the other hand, participation goes beyond the efficiency and success of projects and programs. Here, "participation is seen as a process by which the position of people in terms of access to scarce resources and institutions of political power is significantly altered and their present state of dependency is overcome" (Yeraswork, 1995:45).

For the last twenty years, the concept of participation has been widely used in terms of development process. For much of this period, the concept has referred to participation in development projects. Gradually, the concept of participation is being related to democratic governance (Gaventa and Valderrama, 1999; Villarin, 1999; Bartholdson and Rudqvist e tal, 2002)

#### A shift in participation

From	To
Beneficiary_____	citizen
Project_____	policy
Consultation_____	decision making
Appraisal_____	implementation
Micro_____	macro

Source: Gaventa and Valderrama (1999)

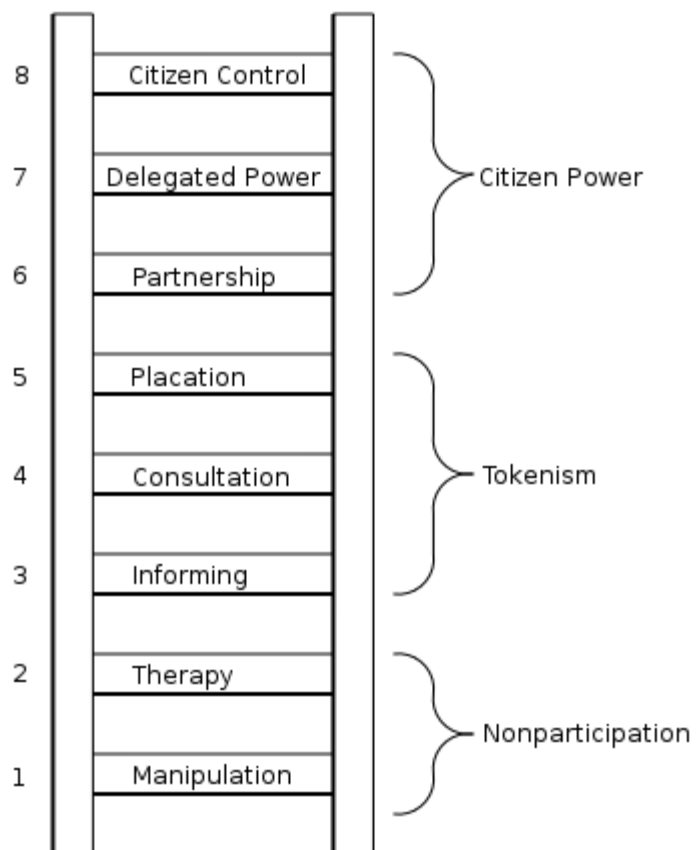
In sum, within the discussions on mainstreaming participation, the study begins to see a redefinition of the concept participation, such that it moves from only being concerned with beneficiaries or the excluded to a concern with broad forms of engagement by citizens in decision making in key arenas which affect their lives.

Although the promise is high, empirical studies suggest that to the gap that exists between the legal and institutional mechanisms for enhancing participation, and what really exercise on the ground. For instance Nickson (1998:10) confirms that “since the mid 1980s, a wide gulf has emerged between the rhetoric and reality of popular participation in Latin America local government, and the real level of participation are usually no higher than that found in other regions of comparable living standards”. Related concerns are described by Porio (1996: 81) after an assessment of the status of local governance in South East Asia; “the challenge for research in urban governance lies in the examination of the intersecting agendas of key actors and the way in which these are expressed in the practice of negotiated participatory politics”. To put it differently, what is not clear is the extent to which these are exercised in practice. The following study is intended to provide answers to these and related questions.

## 2.5. Conceptual Frame Work of the Study

After all, popular participation is about power and its exercise by several actors in the spaces provided for the interaction between citizens and local governments. Although, the spaces provided such as the structures and process for participation, defining spaces, actors, agendas, and procedures is most of the time in the control of governmental authorities and can become a bottleneck for greater participation of citizens (Gaventa and Valderrama; 1999).

Level of popular participation Arnstein (1969) offers a typology of eight levels of popular participation. The eight rungs of popular participation ladder were perpetuated in largely agreed upon by other scholars during the decades, so the researcher used the classification as well to underpin the empirical findings of



this study.

*Figure 1, Eight rungs on the ladder of popular participation*

For illustrative purposes the eight types are arranged in a ladder pattern with each rung corresponding to the extent of citizens' power. The bottom rungs of the ladder are (1) Manipulation and (2) Therapy. These two rungs describe levels of "non-participation" that have been contrived by some to substitute for genuine participation. Their real objective is not to enable people to participate in planning or conducting programs, but to enable power holders to "educate" or "cure" the participants. Rungs 3 and 4 progress to levels of "tokenism" that allow the have-nots to hear and to have a voice: (3) Informing and (4) Consultation. When they are proffered by power holders as the total extent of participation, citizens may indeed hear and be heard. But under these conditions they lack the power to insure that their views will be heeded by the powerful. When participation is restricted to these levels, there is no follow-through, no "muscle," hence no assurance of changing the status quo. Rung (5) Placation is simply a higher level tokenism because the ground rules allow have-nots to advise, but retain for the power holders the continued right to decide. Further up the ladder are levels of citizen power with increasing degrees of decision-making clout. Citizens can enter into a (6) Partnership that enables them to negotiate and engage in trade-offs with power holders. At the topmost rungs, (7) Delegated Power and (8) Citizen Control, have-not citizens obtain the majority of decision-making, or full managerial power.

In Africa, Tanzania, Mukandela (1998) has noted that decision such as, who to participate (invite) in the Ward Development Committees (WDC) should be passed through the lowest level decision making bodies for approval. This hindered their enhancement in achieving greater levels of popular participation in decision making.

In Latin America, in exploring the extent to which decentralization provides a room for enhanced popular participation at the local government, Schon walder (1997) argues that little consideration was given to the issues of power. Of course, "local elites, local governments and other actors operating on the local scene, such as political parties and even NGOs, have often been prone to co-opt popular movements in order to further their own agendas".



Along this line, Manor and Crook (1998) in their study conducted in India show how control over participatory procedures influence the involvement of citizens to participate. According to legislation, local councils should hold twice yearly meetings in each locality. However, “councilors in most places abandoned Gram Sabha meetings after the first year or two. Some resorted to subterfuge- holding unannounced meetings at times when most villagers were away at work or at the market or Staging Gram Sabha “meet-ing” in the “Mandal office”.

To effectively maximize the benefit of local governance citizens has to involve indecisions making directly either individually or in group in public activities through some established institutional channels, for instance, monitoring committees, planning processes, etc. However, the experience from the Latin America may not be encouraging. As per the two multi-country studies (Cunill, 1991; Rosemberg, 1994) in the Latin America context found that at the local government level the mechanisms had a consultative character. At best, participation was related with the process of plan formulation or enforcement of programs, but not with decision making.

Moving a way from the extreme view of direct democracy which advocated one hundred percent participation in the decision making process by citizens. Contrary to the preceding affirmation, a minimum level of participation is inadequate for healthy governance this study has determined that the citizens need to be included on critical issues but that it is difficult to carry out decision making well. In New Zealand, to provide much greater citizens involvement attempted has made through committees undertakings, focus commissions and referenda. In practice, however, that a number of shortcomings would appear such as a lack of effective public education, time constraints, misleading influences and cost limitations (Stevens, 2008).

In Bolivia, for example, Robinson found that in local governments with higher level of popular organization traditions such as union people were able to exert influence decisions over local government spending where as in other areas where people lacked organizational capacity, participation was generally low ( Robinson, 1998). In connection with this experiences in Argentina, Peru and others in Latin America, Herzer and Pirez (1991) concluded that “the existence of popular organizations with a certain presence at a local level and the occupation of political posts in the local governments by parties or individuals who favor popular

participation” appear a basic element under which citizens can exert influence decisions at the local level.

When participation is progress from lower to higher levels (information, consultation, decision making, and management) participation as a process would be demanding different attributes such as different types of skills, knowledge, experience, leadership and managerial capabilities (Gaventa and Valderrama, 1999). Empirical studies reviewed that the existence of weak participatory skill at different levels were a common problem. Similarly according to Manor and Crook (1998) the existence of low planning skills and experience of local governments in the planning process can be become another bottleneck for popular participation.

For instance, in Tanzania, Mukandala (1998) found that .....” [A] though populists clearly for outnumbered the technical-administrative groups, who also do not vote, many councilors had very poor educational qualifications. Many found it difficult to contribute meaningfully to the discussions. They had special difficulty countering the technical presentations of the departmental technical staff. Councilors were also over whelmed by the social status of the nominated members of parliament. These are invariably more educated, very well known, and more self confident. These could take on the district executive secretary, who was secretary to the meeting, and his functional experts. Councilors elected on the basis of wards therefore found it difficult to push through their particular issues from the grass room.

It is well known that the financial resources to execute different development activities to be influenced or decided by local citizens come mainly from two sources: central allocation and local revenues.

What is important to note here is that in most of the studies undertaken on popular participation in governance was tight control of financial resources by central or higher level of government and left meager financial resources for the lower level government’s activities (Mutizwa-Mangiza et al., 1996; Blair 1998). This was due to obvious as well as opaque political and technical reasons. Among others, inability of local governments to generate local revenue and allocation of insufficient resources by higher governments is the major ones. In this respect, evidences from Nigeria suggests that local governments’ over dependence on central transfers appears to have created uncertainty and lack of information about resources actually available to local governments, which facilitates local evasion of responsibility under the guise of fiscal powerlessness (Khemani, 2004).

## Chapter Three: Methodology of the study

### 3.1. Site Selection and Description of the Study area

Mekelle was founded in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. However, its heyday come soon after Emperor Yohannes IV was crowned as king of king of Ethiopia (1871-1889) chose Mekelle as the seat of his government (Mekelle city administration, 2009).

Mekelle is one of the oldest cities in Ethiopia with deferent administrative status. In its history Mekelle evolved with different political and economic significance. According to the Mekelle city profile, Mekelle poly as capital city of Ethiopia, capital city Tigray province ( Kiflehoger) capital city of southern zone, seat of Enderta Awraja and capital city of Tigray National regional state ( MCA,2009). Until 1991, Mekelle was administrative capital of Tigray province with Awraja status divided in to twenty kebelles. After the fall of the Derg, with the expansion of the town and population increment, Mekelle was divided in to two woreda, Semiene and Debub, compassing twenty Kebelles. After 2007, the city is divided in to seven local administrations to directly participate the local community in development and governance activity (MCA, 2010)

Mekelle city is the administrative capital of Tigray National Regional State of Ethiopia. It is located at the northern part of the country at a distance of 870 km from the capital Addis Ababa. Mekelle is a mid-sized city with total population of 233,012 of which 113,247 are male and 119,765 female (CSA, 2009:22). It is found in 39° 28' East and 13° 28' North at an average altitude of about 2084 meters above sea level, with an average mean temperature of 19°C and the annual rain fall varying between 50 to 250 mm. Mekelle city is located at the foot of a steep cliff, Endayesus Escarpment on the east side. According to Mekelle city Administration annual report (2008), currently Mekelle city is divided into seven officially and formally recognized local administrations units: Hawelti, Adi-Haki, Kedamay Weyane, Hadnet, Ayder, Semien and Quiha. As the city council at the peak, of governance structure Mekelle is currently administrated by mayor and under the mayor state and municipal local administration, there are seven local administrations.

Adi-Haki local administration is one of the seven local administrations which is found south of the city. Within this local administration there are 10 kebeles or Ketenas. Adi-Haki local

administration has a population of estimated 25,000 thousand. Mostly, this area is relatively anew settlement but characterized by highly increasing in terms of population. Adi-Haki local administration like any other local administration under the city and woreda in Tigray has extensive functions like running all socio-economic development in the area including health, education, and other infrastructure development. In practice, however, it is subject to the control and supervision of the city administration in matters ranging from budget preparation and approval to undertaking socio-economic development projects. Under the local administration there are kebelles with their own representatives. It is the lower tier of government structure in Mekelle established for the purpose of direct local community participation in their issues. In Ethiopia, the administrative and governance structure of the lower tiers of government should organize in a manner of the federal state. That is local government structure should have local council (legislative), executive (cabinet) and judiciary (Tegegne and Kassahun, 2010).

### **3.2. Data Type and Source**

In this research both primary and secondary data type were used as sources of information. In line with this, the primary data sources were collected from four sampling groups/units such as residents of the local administration; from officials and administrators in the local administration; as well as local organizations and councilors in the local administration through questionnaires, and interviews.

While the secondary sources include different books, published and unpublished journal articles, office documents, government reports, websites or internet, working papers, previous studies....etc. through such a mixed of data generation, the limitation of one was settled. The data type is confined to literatures and empirical data and information in the areas of the popular participation and in Adihaki local administration as one local government in Mekelle of Tigray National Regional state.

### **3.3. Research Design and Strategy**

This research was relying on both qualitative and quantitative types of research. That is, **triangulation**, which is combining both quantitative and qualitative types of research. The researcher believes this is a good way of approaching the research as it enabled him to counteract the weaknesses in both quantitative and qualitative type's research.

The quantitative type was applied more to analyze the level of popular participation in decentralized governance collected from citizen's by the use of self administered questionnaire (which includes only closed ended questions). Where as the qualitative type was applied more to analyze the mechanisms, and barriers of popular participation in decentralized governance collected from the four sampling groups/units mentioned earlier by way of interview.

### **3.4. Sampling Method, Sampling Frame and Sampling size**

Both probability and non probability sampling technique have been used or employed to collect all the necessary data at different stages. First, random sampling technique was employed in the study area. The target or study population was the citizen's in the study area. The study area has a population of estimated 25,000 thousand. And out of that 4,473 are households. With regard to the sample size, although the researcher believes that more sample size could have better represented the whole population, to make the research more manageable, a total of 200 sample respondents then have been selected from the residents of the local administration proportionate to its population size.

In addition, based on purposive sampling technique, respondents from the four sampling groups/units mentioned earlier who have direct relation ship with popular participation in decentralized governance in the study area by way of interview also included.

### **3.5. Data Collection instruments**

The research tried to use certain valid data gathering devices to be logical and objective. My proposed data- gathering instruments are selected and used for actually give the information which the researcher wanted.

### **3.5.1. Questionnaire**

In undertaking this research, standardized questionnaire, which is a close ended ones, consists of 16 objective questions ( items) were prepared in English and for clarity and convenience purpose, latter translated to Tigrigna, having with boxes to tick and to rank to collect information from the community. To fill the questionnaires, the researcher hired two individuals from Mekelle city as enumerators for the study. This was arranged in a way the data collection time fits the researcher. One-day training or detail discussions were also offered to the enumerators to make them informed and aware of the purpose of the study, give them detailed explanation and to provide the enumerators with the feed forward about the data collection in advance.

Each question was explained with adequate clarity and precision. The questionnaires were first tested and then the necessary amendments were made.

The questionnaires were filled in the residence areas of the community door to door. All questionnaires were checked and approved by the researcher at the end of every day.

### **3.5.2. Semi-structured Interviews**

When data collection by questionnaire is finalized, using the semi-structured interviewing, which in perhaps the most common type of interview used in qualitative social research; the researcher wants to know specific information which can be compared and contrasted with information gained tools and was used to gain in-depth insights in to the operation of the local administration. These methods have also the opportunity to be more effective because of its, high response rate and follow-up questions and verification of unclear issues could be done on the spot. The questions were framed to attract open responses in a flexible order to allow for a natural interaction between the interviewer and interviewee.

In doing so, the same questions need to be asked in each interview. Although, the researcher also wants the interview to remain flexible so that other important information can still arise. Five interviews were conducted with the three remaining sampling groups/units such as from some officials and administrators in the local administration; as well as local organizations and

councilors in local administration who have direct relationship with popular participation in decentralized governance in the study area.

### **3.6. Method of Data processing and Analysis**

All the data were cleaned and checked for consistency. Then the questionnaires were analyzed using the Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) program. Then, having analyzed the data, the Significant part of the result were based on descriptive methods such as frequency, averages, percentages and other measures of central tendency used to summarize and present the data. Qualitative information collected through interview was also incorporated into the quantitative results.

The conclusions and generalizations in this research have been arrived at carefully and cautiously on the basis of the processed data gathered through the valid data gathering devices. The conclusions and formulations of the research process involved inductive- deductive mode of thinking. Likewise, a generalization of the research findings is, of course, dependent upon the methods, instruments, and sampling procedures followed.

## Chapter Four: Results and Discussions

### Introduction

In the previous chapters the, theoretical and historical evidences of the issues related to the study were presented. While in this chapter the practical assessment are addressed. The analysis and interpretation of the findings are presented the data using the appropriate instruments.

As it was stated in chapter one, the sample size of this study was 200 but only 180 respondents returned the questionnaires. Respondents were local residents of Adihaki. In-depth interview was also made with the local administration's top official and key informants about the level, mechanisms and barriers of popular participation at the local administration under study. Results on the findings are mainly discussed based on the interviews and information from the local residents and key informants interview is used to triangulate the data collected using other instruments mentioned above. It is, then, supported with the documentary reviews and analyses of different policy papers, legal documents and other relevant literature. The analyses presented here are descriptive, exploratory, and narrative.

No attempt has been made to present a full-flagged analysis of all indicators of popular participation in governance process in the local administration under discussion. Rather it is limited to identifying and explaining of the level, mechanism and barriers of popular participation in governance and in coming up with certain possible ways to enhance the level of popular participation in governance in a context-specific manner.

Accordingly, the findings of the study are drawn from standardized questionnaire, structured and semi- structured interviews, observation, and document reviews that are undertaken by the researcher considering the local administration under study from March 1, 2003 E.C to April 30, 2003 E.C. The data were updated through telephone conversation, where ever necessary.



#### 4.1. Demographic Characteristic of Respondents

**Table 1:** The demographic characteristic of respondents

No	Description	Sex	
		frequency	Percentage
1	Male	118	65.5%
2	Female	62	34.5%
	Total	180	100%
	Distribution	Age	
	Age range	frequency	Percentage
1	From 25-35 age	33	18.3%
2	From 36-45age	101	56.1%
3	From 46 and above	46	25.5%
	Total	180	100%
		Educational	
	Grade level	frequency	Percentage
1	0-8 grade	19	10.5%
2	9-12 grade	47	26.1%
3	Certificate and diploma	66	36.6%
4	Degree and above	48	26.6%
	Total	180	100%

Based on table 1, from 180 respondents 118 (65.5%) of them are males and the remained 62 (34.5%) are female. This indicates that the dominant respondents were males.

The age distribution ranges from 25-35 years (18.3%), 36-45 (56.1%) and 46 above age were (25.5%) which implies that, relatively speaking the majority age of respondent was found in the productive age level. Meanwhile the educational background of the respondent were 0-8 grade (10.5%), 9-12 grade (26.1%), certificate and diploma (36.6%) and the remained (26.6%) were

degree and above. Depending on this data, the dominant numbers of the respondents' educational background were at certificate and diploma levels.

## **4.2. The Level of Popular Participation in Decentralized Governance**

Under the FDRE constitution article 50(4) state or regions can establish government or other administrative level where they find it necessary. It also stated that adequate power shall be given to the lowest units of government to enable direct citizen participation. In the same manner the FDRE constitution article 88 (1) declared "State government shall promote and support the people's self rule at all level". This ensured that there is a legal ground in Ethiopia to establish a local government where regional governments find it necessary. It also emphasized that local government is established nearest to the local people having a government structure and capacity to empower local community. The Tigray National Regional State constitution article 71 also stated that a local government is a government tier next to the regional government. In article 74(1) TNRS constitution also stated that Woreda administrative have the highest government power where it established. This implies that Woreda/ district government is the closest government tier to the people having a government structure and capacity to function over its jurisdiction. Having this legal ground , as cited in Balogun (2000), and backed up by Kumera (2006), there was no doubt that the new decentralized governance structure has brought the government closer to the people and expected to provide spaces for promoting popular participation. So, the next part of the study is to assess the level of popular participation in decentralized governance in the context of Adihaki administration, Mekelle, Tigray, Ethiopia.

### **4.2.1. The Level of Popular Participation in Decision Making in Kebele Meetings**

As a key area of decentralized governance, table 2 is constructed to depict or show the belief of the people whether their views are considered in kebele level decision making.

**Table 2:** The extent to which respondents perceive their view taken in kebele meeting.

Rating scale	Never	Rarely	Some times	Often	All the time	Total
Frequency	10	28	50	67	25	180
Percentage	5.5	15.5	27.7	37.2	13.8	100%

As it can be summarized from table 2, respondents replied that 25(13.8%) as always and other 67(37.2%) as often. Having this percentage, it can be inferred that almost 92(51%) of them believed that their view has been considered all the time and often in the decision making. the sampled respondents feel their views are appreciated and taken account of.

Based on evidences from table 2, there was consensus among the respondents regarding the consideration of their views/opinions while decisions are made in the kebele. The controversy, however, was that some of the respondent's believe that the meeting was called upon when the people were required to provide (contribute) material, labour and financial assistance and when the higher level government disseminates its programs and then the local administration wanted to consult. This was in line with the empirical findings of Tegegne (2007), phrased as: "people participation at local level administration was limited to material contribution, which was far from the true essence of empowering the local people".

As per the views of the officials, plans and programs were flown from the city administration to local administration and kebele level in an unbroken line. Indeed this has affected the independent decision making power of the local administration in Mekelle City. In spite of the expectations that decentralized system would create local governments which facilitate citizens' participation and empowerment, the system is still suffering from lack of structural empowerment. The researcher argues that obviously this discourages the motivation of the local people to participate in decision affecting their livelihood.

Formal and official rhetoric aside, in reality, in Mekelle there has been very little devolution of authority and functions from the city administration to local administrations and kebeles. As such, local governments in Mekelle City did not have sufficient decision making authority to serve as autonomous institutions of decentralized governance, nor did they stand on their own without strict follow up and supervision by the city administration. Therefore, it is safe to say that decentralization in Mekelle at local administration level was deconcentration. In this regard, Oyugi (1998) after his assessment on devolution of power in Kenya's local government; he reflected the following:

*“.....local governments in Kenya are mere appendages of the central government.*

*There is virtually nothing of substance they can do on their own. As decision making institutions, they have built-in structural limitations. In the circumstances, it is question- able whether, in fact, local governments, especially local councils, have any impact in the areas under their jurisdiction”.*

As Meheret (2007) noted, the major factor that contributes to the “disempowerment” (a term I use reluctantly for lack of a better alternative and I did not mean the total loss of power of the government), of the local people is due to the fact that there was “limited decision making authority....devolved to the local level administration”, as the saying goes “there is a limit beyond which a hungry man milk a hungry cow”.

Based on the above discussions the researcher underlines that, the level of empowerment of the local people through decentralization is not as expected.

#### 4.2.2. The Level of Participation in Prioritizing and Deciding of Local Concerns

The following table is about the involvement of the local people on local concerns.

**Table 3:** the level of decision making in prioritizing problems, needs, and demands

Rating scale	Never	Rarely	Some times	Often	All the time	Total
Frequency	7	13	92	45	23	180
Percentage	3.8	7.2	51.1	25	12.7	100%

#### 4.2.3. The Level of Participation in Deciding and Prioritizing Spending

This table describes the participation of local people in budgeting process.

**Table 4:** Level of decision making in prioritizing spending

Rating scale	Never	Rarely	Some times	Often	All the time	Total
Frequency	11	9	84	47	29	180
Percentage	6.1	5	46.6	26.11	16.1	100%

Better to consider the above two tables together and indicated that, 92 (51%) and 84(46.6%) of respondents replied that, sometimes their views were taken in to account in prioritizing and deciding local concerns and spending. In contrast to the above percentage results regarding the participation of local people in identification of their pressing needs and existing problems to be taken in to account in planning and budgeting, former studies by World Bank (2002) shows that people were excluded from participation in determining their needs and priorities. This was supplemented by another study undertaken by (MOFED, 2005) which asserts that “no indicative

budget is taken in to discussion with communities, which are in effect asked to list their wishes rather than determine their priorities”.

In the same year (2005), the local (wereda) governments started to use the bottom-up guideline in its planning and budgeting activities (CIDA, 2005). Consequently, empirical finding undertakings by Kassahun and Tegegne (2007) indicated some improvement in accommodating community’s voices in determining their preferences and needs to be accounted in the planning and budgeting processes.

Another study ( unpublished) recently conducted by Ministry of Capacity Building (2010) in Tigray, at wereda level, affirmed this assertion by stating that, 33% and 41% of the respondents respectively, replied that sometimes in prioritizing and deciding in planning and budgeting their views in a wereda administration taken in to account. From this, it is safe to conclude that, the local administration in Mekelle City has better achievement as compared to the average disclosed that by Ministry of Capacity Building (2010) in Tigray, at wereda level.

The researcher, with the ambition of triangulating these findings contacted the local administrators for reasons of low accommodation of the views of the local people. Accordingly, the following reasons were forwarded.

- Sometimes, the demands (needs) from local people were beyond the capacity of the local administration. Hence, the local administration opts for prioritizing and deciding on behalf of the dwellers, given its capacity constraints. E.g. Some soft infrastructure such as: education, health related cases.
- At other times, the demands of the dwellers were beyond the mandate of the local administration. E.g. demanding hard infrastructure such as: roads, electricity.

Taken together, the findings of the study can be summed as indicators of green light/ new beginnings and amendments on voicing the views of the local people and incorporating them in participatory planning and budgeting.

However, building on the discussions made so far, the researcher clearly observes significant gaps in the proper implementation and follow up of the bottom-up guide line in planning and budgeting activities. Since the planning practice has a top-down approach, it has not yet encouraged the participation of the local people in the identification and preparation of plan. The local people were represented by their officials at the city council. Because of their technical capacity, the sectors played a significant role in the preparation of the city plan. It became possible that some local needs, which were beyond the department jurisdiction, might be escaped from inclusion in the plan.

Under such a scenario, the researcher is convinced with Mihret’s (2006) argument, that, “the higher (regional) government’s priorities will take precedence over the local people’s needs and preferences”. By the same token in Mekelle, the City administration’s priorities will take precedence over the local people needs and preferences at local administration level.

#### 4.2.4. Participation of Civil Society in Decision Making

These associations include mass organizations (youth, women, farmer etc), community based associations, professional associations, religious associations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs).The following table is about participation level of civil society in decision making process.

**Table 5:** Participation of civil society in decision making

Rating scale	Very low	Low	Medium	High	Very high	Total
Frequency	28	66	61	10	15	180
Percentage	15.5	36.6	33.8	5.5	8.3	100%

Table 5 clearly depicts that, 28(15.5%) and 66(36.6%) respectively, believed that there were very low and low participation of civil society in decision making. Taken together, it can be inferred that about (52.1%) of the sampled respondents feel that the extent of participation of civil society

in decision making were not appreciated. This indicated that the level of involvement of civil society in decision making in the local administration under study area was minimum or little.

The proclamation number 32/ 1999 E.C of Tigray Regional State, permits participation in council meetings without decision making in the name of Associations such as: women's, youth, farmers, merchants and professional association. While this was a good opportunity to influence decision making, interview discussions revealed that, the participation of those Associations is little except those few attempts taken to involve women and youth associations.

In the study area it can be argued that, decentralization has not led to significant growth of formal and independent civil society at grassroots level except the hierarchically organized women's and youth associations. According to Teketel (2001), the above observations pointed to the little opportunity provided by the decentralization process in strengthening or encouraging civil society in Ethiopia. According to Muiretal (2004), Ethiopian decentralization has not been opened much space for the role of civil society and there was a widespread perception, especially amongst critics of decentralization, despite government permeation of organizational /institutional life, and that civil society was yet weak. The sector thus remains weak and underdeveloped and the potential of decentralization in creating a vibrant civil society in Ethiopia seems unrealized.

According to the Ministry of Capacity Building of GOB (2004) further affirmed that there was no forum that brings civil society actors and government to undertake dialogue on how to engage with each other. It can be argue that, the absence of such interface made it difficult to realize the voices and aspirations of citizens.

A number of studies such as Tegegne et al (2004), have also claimed that there is marginal level of independence provided to civil society in particular in the areas of conflict prevention, resource management, policy making, and planning.



Other studies like (Teketel, 2001) and (Muiretal (2004),) claimed that the existing decentralized governance structures had not benefited women from the point of views of empowering and providing them with access to decision making. According to the studies, some improvements in the role of women in Ethiopia are believed to be due to NGO activities rather than decentralization. While this observation may be true, it is important to undertake comparative studies on the role of women in localities where NGO operations are underway and otherwise.

As per the views of the speaker of the city council, there was also a problem of coordinating the city plan with NGO programs and activities. In the local administration even in the city, civil societies such as NGOs were not incorporated into the making of the city plan. To avoid duplication of efforts in some projects, it is better to include the NGOs' plans in to the city plan. To be effective, the city's comprehensive plan must reflect the plans and policies of the NGOs.

In line with, country level finding by Meheret, (2002), this study found that, in Mekelle the ruling party TPLF had a heavy presence in this local government in many aspects. Indeed this limits the space for non state actors to fully participate in economic and political issues affecting the locality. One indication of single party dominance was the fact that all the local administration cabinet members, all councilors and even most associations were members of the ruling party. The absences of a leveling field for non-ruling party actors and civil society organizations can not advance competitive politics and can be a bottleneck for popular participation in decentralized governance. In this regard, Zemelak (2009) noted that, the dominance of all local government institution by the ruling party has diminished the role that local government could have played in embedding democracy at grassroots level. The lack interest of the opposition parties in local government was also another challenge for the democratization process at local level. Obviously, this state of affairs will have serious long term implications for the institutionalization of governance and popular participation at the local level.

#### 4.2.5. Participation by own will

The following table is about the participation will of the local people.

**Table 6:** Participation by own will

Rating scale	Very low	low	Medium	high	Very high	Total
Frequency	Nil	31	39	72	38	180
Percentage		17.2	21.6	40	21.1	100%

Table 6 clearly depicts that; the majority of respondents 110 (61.1%) replied that, they have been participating by their own will.

#### 4.2.6. Deciding location for projects

As one key areas of decision making, this table is about the involvement of local people in deciding location for projects.

**Table7:** deciding location for projects

Rating scale	Very low	low	Medium	high	Very high	Total
Frequency	5	36	57	68	14	180
Percentage	2.7	20	31.6	37.7	7.7	100%

Table 7 clearly depicts that; the majority of respondents 82 (45.4%) had taken the pots ion of high and very together in deciding location for projects.

#### 4.2.7. Selecting beneficiaries for credit

Following a participatory mechanism in selection of creditors is a manifestation of decentralized governance. This table is about the level of participation in selection of creditors.

**Table 8:** Selecting beneficiaries for credit

Rating scale	Very low	Low	Medium	high	Very high	Total
Frequency	21	33	48	70	8	180
Percentage	11.6	18.3	26.6	38.8	4.4	100%

Table 8 clearly depicts that, the majority of respondents 70 (38.8%) had taken the position of high in selecting beneficiaries for credit.

### **4.3. Mechanisms to Improve the Level of Popular Participation**

#### **4.3.1. Regular Flow of Information on key Issues**

Transparency requires that governments consult broadly to ascertain citizen interests, publicize plans and decisions, and share information widely and in good manner. Transparency is built on the free flow of information that is vital for active participation in governance process. Information about the government plan and budget is central to the local people. Government, therefore, should not with hold any information except the ones affecting state and national security (Tsegay 2006). So, regular flow of information on key issues is critical to improve the level of popular participation. The following table is dealing with the extent of information flow on key issues.

**Table 9:** Level of information flow on key issues

Rating scale	Very low	low	Medium	high	Very high	Total
Frequency	54	51	48	27	Nil	180
Percentage	30	28.3	26.6	15		100%

As it can be seen from table 9, with respect to the level of information flow on key issues, respondents replied that 54(30%) and 51(28.3%) of them have taken the position as very low and low respectively. Taken together, 105(58.3%) of respondents indicated that there was limited level of information flow.

Flow of information of the local administration was limited to responding upward to the city administration through reporting system. The local administration prepares plan and reports to the city administration, which might not use the information. So, information dissemination was a matter of routine practice mainly dominated by reporting flows.

Cabinet members of the local administration appointed by the mayor of the city administration must also report to the city council. This was done two times a year during the general meetings of the city council. In this regard, in the absence of local council representation, it was difficult to conclude that the local administration is established to represent and empower the local people.

Tsegay (2006) in his study conducted in Gurage Zone in Southern Region in Ethiopia found that, in principle, meetings of the Zonal Council was open to all and people were permitted to attend deliberations. The level of consciousness among the public did not allow them to attend the meeting of the Gurage Zonal Council. Information on budgets, financial reports, project reports, tender contracts, and recruitment opportunities were available to the people, but there was no enthusiasm among the public to use this information even though the information was critical to their interest.

As it was mentioned that, in the case of Gurage Zone, the level of consciousness among the public have hardly been allow them to attend the meeting of the Gurage Zonal Council. Where as in the local administration in Mekelle city administration, there was limited information about such cases.

Except administrative matters, there was no implementation of laws and regulations that required the local administration to share information with the public on key issues. The information that should be made public was not yet defined. As a result, the kind and quality of information disseminated to the public were done under their own initiatives.

#### 4.3.2. Mechanisms to Determine Local People Concern

The existence of mechanism (e.g. surveys, public forum) to determine local people needs and wants will enable the local administration to articulate the people’s concern in a better way. Table 10 is about the level of such mechanism.

**Table 10:** determining of people’s needs and wants, e.g. surveys, public forum

Rating scale	Very low	low	Medium	high	Very high	Total
Frequency	31	81	52	16	Nil	180
Percentage	17.2	45	28.8	8.8		100%

Table 10 clearly depicts that, significant number of respondent’s 112(62.2) belief that there was limited mechanism in place in determining their needs and wants.

As per the views of officials that, there was yet not a formal mechanism to determine people’s needs and want such as formal surveys, public form.

#### 4.3.3. Mechanisms to Improve the Level of Popular Participation in Planning and Budgeting

It is good, if a local government have a mechanism to involve people in planning and budgeting undertakings. The following table is regarding such a mechanism.

**Table11:** Mechanism of popular participation in planning and budgeting, e.g. consultative council meetings, public hearing

Rating scale	Very low	Low	Medium	high	Very high	Total
Frequency	26	64	55	25	10	180
Percentage	14.4	35.5	30.5	13.8	5.5	100%

Table 11 clearly shows that, taken the ranges of low and very low together 90(50.9%0 of respondents replied that there was less number of mechanisms to involve people in planning and budgeting undertakings.

In Mekelle city, people were able to participate in the planning and budgeting undertakings by the means of what was known as public hearing. Public hearing was held biannually. Up to 500 people were involved and articulate their needs and demands in the plan in one session.

Regarding the plans might come from the city administration to the local administrations, prior to enforcement there was a discussion among the people and the local administration. Infected, the discussion was made for the sake of information and consultation. In contrast to the above finding, Tsegay (2006) in Gurage Zone found that, the non-existence of a mechanism such as: Public hearing was made the level of participation extremely low. In comparison to Gurage Zone, in Mekelle city was a better achievement.

As per Villarín (1999), in congress there was an empowerment bill that had provisions in the code for mandatory public hearing and consultation, sanctioning local officials who potentially violate the participatory provisions of the code, and increasing substantive representation of civil society in local government units. In the local administration such code and provisions were totally absent. Where they are democratically constituted, there should be a means of involving the local people in decisions that affecting their livelihood. If there was no rule that allows the participation of people, it was obvious to had difficulty to articulate needs and demands of the local people.

Bur et al. (1999) in their study in European found that, examples of mechanisms for participation as ‘Participatory Learning and Action, PRA, Panning for Real, Community Bases, Citizen

Panels, Citizens Juries, Focus Groups, Stakeholder Forum, and Youth Parliaments'. Although none of them were in practice in the study area.

#### 4.3.4. Predictability of Results

If a local government is following a transparent mechanism and then the local people can predict easily what will have happen/results of decisions. The following table is regarding the levels of predictability of results.

**Table 12:** Predictability of results

Rating scale	Very low	Low	Medium	high	Very high	Total
Frequency	46	66	39	29	Nil	180
Percentage	25.5	36.6	21.6	16.1		100%

Table 12 clearly depicts that, in respect to predictability of the results respondents replied that, 46(25.5%) and 66(36.6%) of the respondents taken the position of very low and low respectively. This shows that the level of predictability of results were low.

#### 4.3.5. Answerability of Achieving Tasks as per the Expectations

Accountability is the degree to which decision makers in government, private sector and civil society organizations have to explain or justify what they have done or failed to do. Accountability, therefore, differs depending on the type of organization (Olowu, 1993, Tsegay, 2006). In the context of Mekelle city, since mass organizations were weak, accountability was not yet raised as an issue. The interest in this study was, therefore, limited to the accountability of the local government to the public as well as to institutional lines. So, the existence of both upward and dawn ward accountability is imperative. That is to check whether plans were

achieved as intended or otherwise. Table 13 is about the answerability/accountability of officials to a local people.

**Table 13:** Answerability of achieving tasks as per the expectations

Rating scale	Very low	Low	Medium	high	Very high	Total
Frequency	84	46	33	17	Nil	180
Percentage	46.6	25.5	18.3	9.4		100%

As it can be seen in table 13, the majority of respondents 84(46.6%), with respect to the answerability of achieving tasks as per the expectation had taken the position of very low. This was very extreme condition and indication of an almost non existence.

In principle, the local administrator was supposed to be accountable to the city administrator, and the public around the local administration. In practice, there was only up-ward accountability. No institutional and legal mechanisms were to ensure dawn ward accountability.

As Mihret, (2002), noted that, putting institutional and legal mechanisms for ensuring public officials answerability of task achievement as per the expectations of the people is a concrete manifestation of decentralized governance at the local level. Government/ party dominance of local government can only reinforce up ward accountability. Given this situation, it will be a long road before decentralized governance that is answerability to the community emerges in this city.

#### **4.4. Barriers to Popular Participation in Decentralized Governance**

Popular participation in decentralized governance can be exercised by individual public as well as civil society organizations. However, in the local administration, there was low level of awareness of individual people as well as civil society organizations towards their rights and responsibilities. Thus, even if in principle, meeting of the local administration was open to all and people were permitted to attend deliberations. The level of awareness among the public did



not allow them to attend the meetings of the local administration. This could hinder their participation in governance process.

Many studies (for example: Cunill,1991; Rosemberg, 1994) found that, strengthening of participation in local government has to do with the strengthening of direct popular participation in decision making by individuals or groups in areas affecting their life, often through newly established channels e.g. monitoring committee, planning, budgeting process .

In the local administration, there was not only direct but also indirect participation. Hence participation process or mechanisms were consultative in character. That was far from a true sense of empowering the local people.

Representativeness is an attribute of decentralized governance as noted by Mihret (2002). The term is used to refer to the participation and presence of different groups and interests in the leadership and management of local governments. In contrast, local governments in Mekelle city administration are sorely lacking in this respect. This study has revealed that the governance and leadership structure of the local administration was highly unrepresentative. All but women's the councils and their executive leaderships did not adequately represent community, religious organizations, private businesses, and NGOs. For more information see the table below.

Different studies (for example; Balogun, 2000 Meheret, 2002) suggest that, the involvement of different organizations and interests promotes popular participation and thereby enhances the role of a local government as facilitator rather than as the sole actor in the governing process. Since the focus of governance is the people, there was no reason why they should be excluded from decision having a bearing on their life and well-being. In Mekelle city, the control of the structures and processes for participation-defining spaces, actors, agendas, and procedures were in the hands of governmental institutions and could become a bottleneck for effective involvement of individual people and civil society in decision making.

As Heller (2001) and Osmani (2000) argue that, in this respect the main challenges encountered were the unwillingness of the higher governments to relinquish and those who control them had

little interest in distributing power. It holds true in the local administration under study. Rather than building 'partnerships' with civil society organizations and thereby overlook power inequalities in the area, except the physical appearance of women's and youth associations there was nothing to say as meaningful practice (instead of token).

A number studies (for example: Herzer and Pirez, 1999; and Robinson, 1998) found that, the people were most able to counter existing power relations where they were strong civil society organization or popular organizations. Although in the local administration under study were no strong popular organizations.

According to Balogun (2000), governments are these days encouraged to consider power sharing arrangements which would ensure the active engagement of local actors in the development and governance of local communities. The main pillars of the new decentralization strategy are the acknowledgement of the existence of a growing number of non state actors, the utilization of the actor's abundant reservoirs of 'energy' and resources, and the channeling of their contribution towards a common purpose which is the enhancement of the welfare of the local people. While in the local administration, the experience to date, however, points to a situation in which the government takes the important decisions while nongovernmental actors simply react.

Therefore, unless the citizenry perfect the art of "associating to gather" in voluntary bodies, they do not stand a chance of holding the state accountable for its actions. Pluralism is thus the antidote to state authoritarianism. It enables otherwise defenseless individuals to join forces to from political parties, interest groups, and community action bodies-all with the aim of counterbalancing the power of state institutions and making the latter respond to popular needs.

At this point, it is worth to underline the little effort made attempt by the city administration regarding involvement of people, NGOs, and other mass associations although there was no binding code to did so like the empowerment bill in congress.

As per Villarin (1999), in congress there is an empowerment bill that has provisions in the code for mandatory public hearing and consultation, sanctioning local officials who potently violate

the participatory provisions of the code, and increasing substantive representation of civil society in local government units. In Mekelle city council such code and provisions were totally absent. If there was no rule that allows the participation of people, it was difficult to articulate needs and demands of the local people.

As per the legislation of the city administration, councilors should hold biannually meetings in each locality. In fact, there was no such experience in the locality. In line with this, there was clear power imbalance among the three branches of the local government's i.e. executive, legislative and judiciary. For instance, pre 1994, the city council was led by the head of the executive or the mayor of the city. Post 1994 there was a single improvement which was the introduction of speaker of the council for the first time in the history of the city administration. Gradually, vice of the speaker, other staffs and other facilities was introduced. Although, yet suffering from related shortcomings.

The following table is provides information about members of Mekelle city council.

**Table: 14** members of Mekelle city council

S. No.	Wereda	Sex			Age		Educational Background				Occupation		
		female	male	total	18-35	>36	<1-4	>5-8	9-12	Diploma And above	Civil servant	farmer	merchar
1	Kuha	16	16	32	16	16	06	07	10	09	10	16	06
2	K/weyane	31	30	61	29	32	06	06	27	22	23	18	18
3	Aider	22	22	44	20	24	04	05	07	28	25	13	06
4	Semien	29	28	57	27	30	07	04	14	32	26	09	21
5	Adi-Haki	15	17	32	10	22	01	05	09	17	15	09	08
6	Hawelti	29	29	58	24	34	01	04	14	39	22	21	15
7	Hadnet	22	23	45	16	29	05	05	09	26	15	15	14
	Total	164	165	329	142	187	30	36	90	173	136	101	88
	Percentage	49.84	50.13		43.16	56.83	9.11	10.94	27.35	52.58	41.33	30.69	26.74
Total number of councilors 329													

Source: Mekelle city council

As indicated in table 14, In Mekelle city council, the many of councilors had poor educational qualifications. It was obvious to find it difficult to contribute meaningfully to the discussions especially in the areas of planning and budgeting. Very well known, councilors elected on the basis of political considerations therefore found it difficult to push through their particular burning issues from the locality. In this respect even the standing committee of the city council was weak. It was led by par timers.

In Mekelle city, the absence of a strong and determined political will in determining the status of the local administration in providing and enforcing opportunities for participation at the local level was another barrier to strengthening popular participation. According the revised city proclamation of Tigray (107)/2006, cities are classified as emerging municipal cities, municipal cities and town, establish public agencies or privatize service (Art 11/3).

In Mekelle, the local administration was not established by proclamation yet. There were confusions on the status and structure of the local administrations.

In many documents of the city administration the term local administration was given a wereda level and status. Some administrators of the Adi-Haki local administration state that “there is a problem in the organization of the local administration, it is the name and the salary that gives it a woreda /district status but its functions is just like kebele”. In the local administration except some sectors, all sectors including social service are included like in any other woreda. From this it is clear that the absence of clear and legally defined division of power between the Zone/city administration and the local administration would affect not only the popular participation but also the line of accountability and capacity of the local administration. What was left in this respect was the higher governments political will. Hence, in Adi-Haki local administration, from the interview and document analysis, it was clear that the local administration has neither a Woreda, nor a Kebelle status and structure that the local administration to function flexibly.

Another common barrier to the local administration in Mekelle city was lack of financial empowerment. Budgeting as a major part of finance was decided at the city council level. The local people at the local administration had no say about. Along this, barrier for popular participation in decision making found in different studies (for example: Blair, 1998) was the control of financial resources by higher levels of government and left the meager resources available for local activities.

## Chapter Five

### Conclusion and Recommendation

#### 5.1. Conclusion

In a nutshell, the following conclusions can be drawn from the research study:

##### **The Level of Popular Participation in Governance**

The researcher argues that the level of popular participation in governance in Mekelle city at local administration level did not go beyond consultation. The study could not characterize this form as active participation because the research sketches portray of a moderately involved people, who was sometimes poorly informed and some times had a chance to be heard about local administration activities; the officials in Mekelle city hold the control over the governance process.

According to the ladder of participation proposed by Arnstein (1969), the researcher have collected the necessary information about popular participation in governance, and had enough evidences to argue that, according to this classification, local administrations in Mekelle level falls in the fourth rung of this classification, namely **consultation**.

##### **Mechanisms to Improve the Level of Popular Participation in Governance**

The existence of free flow of information on key issue is a pre requisite and improves the level of popular participation in governance. However, there was low level of information disseminated under the study area. Except for matters of administration purpose, there was no implementation of laws and regulations that required the local administration to share information with the public on key issues. The information that should be made public was not yet defined. As a result, the kind and quality of information disseminated to the public were done under their own initiative.

The only tool which installed to participate (regard less of their participation) in the planning and budgeting in Mekelle city was known as public hearing. The study found this tool inadequate to articulate needs, priorities, and demands of the people taking in to account the areas and population of the city.

At worst, despite the statistical significant relationship (correlation) between accountability and popular participation go hand to hand with decentralized governance that there was no downward accountability in the local administration under study. This was a concrete manifestation for those argue that “government/ party dominance of local government can only reinforce upward accountability”.

Institutional and legal mechanisms were imperative for ensuring public officials answerability of task achievement as per the expectations of the people, although the local administration certainly lacking in this regard and then reduced the responsiveness of the local government to local concerns. Given this situation, it will be a long road before a local administration in Mekelle city that is answerability to the community emerges.

### **Barriers to Popular Participation in Governance**

In the study area the following main barriers to popular participation in governance were identified among others:

- ✓ In Adihaki local administration in Mekelle, there was low level of awareness of individual people as well as civil society organizations towards their rights and responsibilities. Obviously this could hinder their participation in governance.
- ✓ This study had revealed that the participation and representation of the general public in the power structure, and process at the local administration was highly unrepresentative. In addition, the issues of representation were exacerbated by the unbalanced power relation between the local administration and civil society organizations. All but women’s the councils and their executive leaderships did not adequately

represent community, religious organizations, private businesses, and NGOs. In short, in this respect, very little has been achieved in Mekelle.

- ✓ In Adihaki local administration, the control of the structures and processes for participation-defining spaces, actors, agendas, and procedures were in the hands of higher government. If the experience to date offers any lesson, it was that the local was yet too badly organized and poorly led to challenge the dominance of the higher in local-level governance.
- ✓ In the local administration under study, there was less strong popular organizations tradition except, the physical appearance of women's and youth associations there was nothing to say as meaningful practice (instead of token).
- ✓ Non existence of an empowerment bill that had provisions in the code for mandatory public hearing and consultation, sanctioning local officials who potently violate the participatory provisions of the code, and increasing substantive representation of civil society in local government units.
- ✓ In Mekelle city, the absence of a strong and determined political will in providing and enforcing opportunities for participation at the local level was considered as a barrier to strengthening popular participation in governance.
- ✓ Another barrier to the local administration in Mekelle city was lack of financial empowerment. Budgeting as a major part of finance was decided at the city council level. The local people at the local administration had no say about.

## 5.2. Recommendation: Considerations and Options

### **The Level of Popular Participation in Governance**

In Mekelle, neither did the government initiate decentralized governance institutions and had local and indigenous form of self-administration led to popular participation in local government. The people seem to live in two worlds' there were difficult to unite. There was clear paradox of decentralization. As some argue as "Decentralized there centralized here". But if they were allowed chance to decentralize more to a form of devolution; they would easily open up their world view to new realities, and their community to more inclusive and active popular participation in governance than any other time.

To improve the level of popular participation in governance, the researcher suggests the following interventions:

- ✓ The study suggests that decentralized system is more responsive to community's preferences than centralized system. So, the city administration should transfer decision making power to the local administration so as to enhance the level of popular participation.
- ✓ Local government can promote governance when the people are empowered to decide on key areas or issues affecting their well-being. By putting in place institutional and legal mechanisms for insuring the dawn ward accountability and responsiveness of public officials to the needs and problems of the public. This makes the people decision maker rather than consultant as the experience to date at the local level.
- ✓ To date, there was no local council at the local administration level. The researcher strongly recommended having local council to local administrations.
- ✓ The level of popular organizations was very low at local administration level. Hence, it is imperative to enhance their participation through involving even the traditional and informal institutions such as: Idire and Equb.



## **Mechanisms to Improve the Level of Popular Participation in Governance**

The researcher recommends the following mechanisms to improve the level of popular participation in Mekelle city, these tools deal with different aspects of local government activities, such as communication, budget preparation, and planning process.

- ✓ Local government newsletter, issued on a regular basis (weekly, biweekly, monthly), which contains most important information on activities within the local government. It can be distributed through children in schools or by placing free copies in public buildings. Usually, this newsletter is free of charge. The cost of printing depends on volume, frequency and print sophistication. For smaller local government it could be just 1-2 pages copied on a photocopying machine.
- ✓ Utilizing media through press conferences, press releases, and inviting them to important events. In short, having regular time in media.
- ✓ Citizen Meetings with council members – organized frequently and regularly, for example: monthly
- ✓ Informational brochures, such as: a “City in Brief” document that contains general information on city authorities, telephone numbers, working hours, organizational chart, board, council, committees, advisory groups, etc. Can be prepared and distributed among citizens along with local newsletter or placed in public buildings. Brochures on city services, explaining procedures and providing examples of application forms also have proven useful as effective communication tools.
- ✓ Feedback channels: such as letters and phone calls from citizens (e.g. establishing toll-free phone lines); complaint/comments boxes in public places; establishing and responding to a special e-mail address for comments can be utilized. The most important issue here is to manage properly the comments received by citizens: a return message or a card should acknowledge those who sent the comment. The local government should

report in the media or other public source on the type of comments received and actions undertaken to address the comments.

- ✓ Talk shows / interviews – in local TV or radio on the most important local topics like investment plans and the budget. If possible, there should be an opportunity for citizens to call local government officials who appear on TV or radio directly and ask questions.
- ✓ Public hearings – on different topics, for example, on budget planning. It is important to thoroughly prepare for the hearing by arranging for an appropriate facility, thoughtful presentations, rules for the meeting, and a good facilitator.
- ✓ Methodology of conducting meeting with citizens – In order to hold and conduct meetings efficiently, an appropriate room and agenda can be prepared, and facilitation with tools like a flip chart or other visual aids can be used.
- ✓ Youth city council – to involve young people in local government activities and teach them about governance and its values. This may be most effective if the youth council has some of its own responsibilities and its own budget.
- ✓ City festivals, city days – these are good tools to integrate citizens to the entire community, especially if they are involved in preparation of the event.
- ✓ Task forces – utilized in different areas, e.g. area of economic development (Economic Development Task Force) to prepare and/or review an economic development strategic plan.
- ✓ Staff person in charge of citizen participation within the local government offices, or an interdepartmental team managing citizen participation activities, can be of significant help to ensure continuous participation.
- ✓ “My vision of the Local Government” contest – usually to support the community based on strategic plan preparation process; that might be organized for young people to draw

their attention to city activities and to collect their opinions for the future of the local government.

- ✓ General public surveys, which can identify priorities of the public or gather more precise information on a particular subject. Usually, a survey is conducted by professionals interviewing a representative sample of the community. Sometimes it is possible to use students to conduct surveys after conducting training, which limits the costs of the survey process. The most important part of surveying is analysis, which should not only count answers but also analyze the relationships between different types of answers. Only such an analysis provides real knowledge on the situation. Such analyses should be conducted by an experienced specialist.
- ✓ Local partnership programs – This often takes the shape of a contest designed for citizens groups or NGOs, focusing on a ways to address a particular problem. It requires a clear statement of rules including the criteria for the competition and the evaluation of project proposals submitted by applicants. This is a good way to directly involve citizens in solving local problems by putting their own resources to use.
- ✓ NGO charter – The NGO charter usually takes the form of a local government council resolution that establishes local policy on civic initiatives.
- ✓ Publications on subjects such as the role of civic society or the role of neighborhood councils.
- ✓ Mayor's message on the budget – Materials prepared to facilitate discussion on the budget before it is adopted by the council that explains local government priorities and constraints of the budget, etc.
- ✓ Budget-in-brief – Short version of the local budget written in clear language, understandable to local citizens. Usually, this type of document consists of an introduction by Mayor in which he/she explains the city's priorities and the most important issues in the budget. This is followed by an explanation of the sources of

revenues and expenditures, perhaps divided by program or department. Special attention in the Budget-in-brief is devoted to capital expenditures. A budget-in-brief brochure also contains general information on the local government, such as the members of the board and the council, the administrative structure, or other explanations of the budget document.

### **Barriers to Popular Participation in Governance**

In the study area the following methods to overcome the barriers to popular participation in governance were identified among others:

- ✓ The government should provide a training to inform and aware individuals and civil society organizations regarding their rights and responsibility of direct participation on the areas affecting their livelihood. .
- ✓ Rules and mechanisms for direct participation in governance and institutes measures of direct accountability of local governments to communities need to be established, in order for new relationships of trust and cooperation to develop.
- ✓ The ability of local governments to exploit new legal spaces is reflected in their capacity to establish innovative and enduring mechanisms for citizen participation in decentralized governance, which allow decision-making to reflect citizen's needs and priorities.
- ✓ The success of involving citizens in governance in Mekelle city administration rested in the ability of the city administration to establish effective alliances with various organizations of civil society.
- ✓ There should be an empowerment bill that has provisions in the code for mandatory public hearing and consultation, sanctioning local officials who potently violate the participatory provisions of the code, and increasing substantive representation of civil society in local government units.
- ✓ Financial empowerment with accountability is as equally important as political empowerment, so, the local administrations in Mekelle should have such empowerment as far as popular participation in governance is concerned.

- ✓ Finally, above all there must be a strong and determined political will in providing and enforcing opportunities for participation in governance.

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## Appendix A: Questionnaire

**Mekelle University**

**College of Business and Economics**

**Department of Management**

**Graduate Studies Program**


### **Introduction of the Questionnaire**


This questionnaire is designed to assess the level of popular participation in decentralized governance process in Mekelle city by a postgraduate student for the partial fulfillment of the requirements of the award of master's degree in development study. I am asking you the following question about the local administration at Adi-Haki in Mekelle city. Moreover; the information which is expected from the respondents has a great role only for the success of this research that it will not be used for other purpose.

Besides, this questionnaire will take a few minutes and is completely confidential, strictly for academic purpose. I would like to give too much thanks in advance for your cooperation.

Name of Enumerator -----

**Direction: - On the following pages you will find Different questions. Please read each question and provide appropriate response.**

 Mark '✓' in the boxes to indicate answer of choice

 Write your answers briefly on the blank spaces where necessary

## **Appendix 1: Questionnaires to be filled by Sample Households**

### 1. Basic Information about the Household

#### 1.1 Identification

I would like to start by asking you a few questions about yourself:

#### 1. Address

Administrative unit (Kebele) .....

House No. ....

2. Sex                       Male                       Female

3. Age     19 – 29               30 – 39               40– 49               50 – 59               ≥60

#### 4. What is your level of education?

- |                                       |  |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-literate | <input type="checkbox"/> Vocational              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Primary      | <input type="checkbox"/> diploma holder          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Secondary    | <input type="checkbox"/> first degree holder     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> High school  | <input type="checkbox"/> Second degree and above |

### 2. To Explore the Level of Popular Participation in Decentralized Governance

How often would you say your views are taken in to account in the following

#### 1. In any kebele meetings

Never  Rarely  Sometimes  Often  all the time

#### 2. Participating by own will/belief

Never  Rarely  Sometimes  Often  All the time

#### 3. Prioritizing and Deciding problems and needs/demands within the local administration

Never  Rarely  Sometimes  Often  All the time

#### 4. Prioritizing and Deciding spending within the local administration

Never  Rarely  Sometimes  Often  All the time

#### 5. Deciding location for projects

Never  Rarely  Sometimes  Often  All the time

6. Selecting beneficiaries for credit

Never  Rarely  Sometimes  Often  All the time

3. To Assess the Mechanisms to Improve the Level of Popular Participation in Decentralized Governance

7. Regular flow of information on key issues

Very high  High  Medium  Low  Very low

8. Mechanisms in place to determine that peoples' needs and wants, e.g. surveys, public forum etc

Very high  High  Medium  Low  Very low

9. Mechanisms are installed to allow citizens participation in planning and budgeting, e.g. consultative council meetings, public hearing, etc

Very high  High  Medium  Low  Very low

10. Predictability of results

Very high  High  Medium  Low  Very low

11. Answerability of achieving tasks as per the expectations

Very high  High  Medium  Low  Very low

12. The participation level of civil society organizations in decision making process

Very high  High  Medium  Low  Very low

## **Appendix B: Semi-Structured Interview**

1. How often would you say the views of the local people are taken in to account in the local administration decision making process?
2. What are the factors that constrained popular participation in governance? If any, how could they be overcome?
3. Do you have mechanisms to participate the local people in decision making?