

Overview Paper

Study on Effective Empowerment of Citizens in Ethiopia

Brian Pratt and Lucy Earle

July 2004

CONTENTS

Executive Summary	3
Key Lessons.....	4
1. Introduction	6
2. Background.....	6
3. Methodology.....	7
4. Agency, Opportunity and Empowerment: Examples from the Case Studies	9
4.1 Community Initiatives undertaken without external support.....	9
4.2 Initiatives of Ethiopian NGOs	13
4.3 International NGO or Official Agency Programme and Projects	16
4.4 Multi-stakeholder programmes.....	22
5. Analysis of Key Issues and Recommendations	25
5.1 Agency and Opportunity.....	25
5.2 Empowerment	26
5.3 The Role of the State	27
5.4 Flexibility and Customised Approaches	28
5.5 Focus on Gender	28
5.6 Approaches to Capacity Building	29
5.7 Working at the Intermediary Level	30
6. Issues for Future Capacity Building of Civil Society.....	31
Summary Conclusions	33

Executive Summary

This report is based on the findings of sixteen case studies of empowerment in Ethiopia. These are presented in the attached annex. The emphasis of the case studies is on poor groups, marginal people, women, minorities, and socially excluded youth, in both rural and urban settings. They document a highly diverse set of development initiatives involving a wide range of sectors and organizational groupings. Some of these are examples of spontaneously formed indigenous groups and their efforts to address their own local needs, while others are examples of projects within large-scale donor funded and driven programmes. In each case, local researchers sought evidence of empowerment, through an analysis of agency and opportunity structure.

Overall, the case studies illustrate that agency can both be the driver of local, autochthonous development initiatives and the result of externally promoted projects that provide a supportive and enabling environment for communities to build up their human, social and economic assets.

The case studies also give an insight into the circumstances that create opportunity. This can involve direct support from the State or from an NGO. However, the role of the State in creating opportunity is not consistent. Some of the case studies show local authorities actively supporting community initiatives and providing an enabling environment. Others show a more passive yet still positive attitude. However, in some cases, local authorities purposefully obstructed community initiatives, or community efforts were stymied by inadequate (particularly legal) frameworks. Occasionally, attempts on the part of local authorities to constrain the work of community groups were overcome by appeals to higher levels of government.

In terms of empowerment, the case studies show the different routes that communities and individuals can take to achieving this. Some groups were able to achieve a considerable amount of success in their development initiatives without any external assistance. Taking advantage of the opportunities available to them, and using their skills and assets, these groups demonstrated high levels of agency and indeed, of empowerment. A number of case studies show how projects and programmes have enabled communities and individuals to regain access to and control over economic and social assets. Others illustrate attempts to reaffirm community and individual's psychological assets by building up self-confidence. Improved access to assets and an enabling environment can enhance the ability of communities and of individuals to feel they have control over their lives, which in turn increases their ability to engage in dialogue with external bodies, such as local authorities and other citizen groups.

The examples documented in the case studies also show how success can breed success. Positive community experience of implementation and management of service delivery programmes can give groups greater levels of self-confidence when dealing with other problems, for example, local authority attempts to interfere or take control of community initiatives. In this way, direct benefits to the poor through service delivery provision can lead to other impacts and the potential to build up further assets. Many of the case studies provide examples of groups showing an improved ability to engage with wider issues, plan future work, diversify their activities and approach government for positive collaboration or to demand support. This would suggest the sustainability of an empowering approach.

What distinguishes most of the case studies analysed here from other service delivery programmes is that they have been designed with a long term strategy to *build communities*, going beyond pure service delivery. They show the importance of participation strategies, linked closely to models of intervention that build confidence, capacities and local organizations over time. This type of asset building is seen as an essential part of these programmes, not an unexpected 'add-on'. These conscious strategies seek to provide key services whilst creating and strengthening sustainable, self-managed community institutions.

Key Lessons

- Sufficient time must be allowed to prepare communities and build capacities at different levels. Successful initiatives documented here were not rushed. Short-term projects, even if they provide infrastructure within a short space of time, are unlikely to build psychological assets or promote attitudinal change. Lessons from capacity building exercises need time to be internalised by recipient communities.
- Evidence from the case studies suggests a slower but more participatory approach within communities will eventually pay dividends. While this might absorb both time and financial resources, in many cases, the benefits will outweigh the costs. Many traditional development projects have failed in Ethiopia.
- Collaboration and mutual respect between stakeholders is likely to provide long-term benefits. It is understandable that poorly resourced local authorities might attempt to take control of resources, but all parties are likely to gain more if the authorities instead provide the type of positive environment which will allow other initiatives to flourish.
- Informal organizations such as Iddirs are widespread in Ethiopia, and trust seems to be a key variable in promoting collaboration. Heavy handed interventions are not the way to build on this positive base. Instead, support is needed to remove unnecessary obstacles (such as the lack of local level legal structures) that can hinder community initiatives, and to provide enough regulation for the public good (so as to prevent, for example, corruption). Strong informal associations are one of Ethiopia's most important assets in terms of building social capital and providing survival mechanisms, and should be considered a solid base for future development.
- Flexibility must be a key component in any programme within Ethiopia, considering the social, cultural, ethnic and ecological diversity found across the country. The evidence would suggest that universal programmes are unlikely to have the same positive impact as those that are responsive to local contexts and needs. This would entail programme design that sets out agreed goals and operational modalities and ensures accountability, but does not compromise on operational flexibility. Thus, for example, local level funding mechanisms may have the same agreed minimum accounting requirements, but specific types of work supported may vary. (See for example, the two case studies on education for evidence of how these vary at local level but stay within nationally agreed goals.)
- Programmes must take stock of local capacity: for example, water service provision in some areas might require the creation of water committees, whilst elsewhere, upgrading of basic education, particularly of women, may well be a priority in order to achieve programme goals and develop local social capital.

- In order to ensure a responsive approach, flexibility must be stressed in original programme design protocols. Programmes must then also ensure participatory processes at all levels, from needs assessment and design through to implementation and monitoring and evaluation.

1. Introduction

This report contributes to the Civil Society Capacity Building Project currently under preparation as part of a collaboration between the World Bank and the Government of Ethiopia. The project will seek to enhance the ability of people and organisations to participate effectively in local governance, service delivery and development action. The research on which this report is based found varying levels of ability amongst different groups to engage with local authorities and to influence their own development. The case studies analysed here document how 'empowered communities' had high levels of agency and provide insight into the way in which groups and individuals were able to build up and draw upon certain key human and social assets.

This report is based on sixteen case studies of empowerment in Ethiopia. These case studies are presented in an accompanying annex. Following discussions of the background context and methodology in sections 2 and 3, this report provides an introduction to the detail of each case study in section 4, drawing out issues around the concepts of agency, opportunity and empowerment. Section 5 presents further comparative analysis of the case studies and sets out recommendations for future programme work on civil society in Ethiopia. Section 6 then provides commentary on more specific issues surrounding current practice of capacity building and implications for future engagement in this type of work. The report ends by presenting summary conclusions.

2. Background

This study was conceived as a response to the need for greater understanding and analysis of experiences of empowerment in Ethiopia and their contribution, or potential contribution, to ongoing and planned programmes of decentralisation, democratisation and public sector capacity building, as well as other initiatives of the government and people of Ethiopia. Specifically, this study is intended to inform investigations into possible civil society capacity building programmes.

Despite the large number of relief, welfare and development programmes and projects in Ethiopia, the evidence (including some of that gathered for the purposes of this report) would seem to suggest that empowerment is not always a priority for the sponsors of these interventions. Overall, external NGO and government assistance in Ethiopia has been characterised by a "giving" mentality, in which external resources have compensated for domestic shortfalls in basic goods (notably food) and services. Ethiopia is a very poor country and the resources at the disposal of the state are severely restricted; it is not a country that has resources and a government unwilling to utilise them for poverty reduction purposes. Similarly the availability of social services, such as health and education, for the Ethiopian population is limited, as is access to economic services such as credit and marketing opportunities. The developmental challenge in Ethiopia is considerable and should not be underestimated.

Whilst the provision of basic services is important, efforts to alleviate the widespread poverty found in Ethiopia must also focus on empowerment. From the time of the Empire onwards, successive rulers of Ethiopia have attempted to maintain a

command and control centralised state. It is only in the last decade that the government has sought to implement a programme of decentralisation, devolving some authority to the local level, and has been more supportive to the efforts of civil society groups. However, it is still a widely held view that the central state will be the engine of economic and social development.

In order for Ethiopia to fulfil its potential, attempts must be made to encourage the full engagement of its population in the development process. This requires the state to remove obstacles to development and to introduce policies which encourage and permit local communities, civil society and others to use their own social and economic resources to positive ends. As a part of this, the state clearly has a role in providing positive, rather than negative, regulatory frameworks. The state should also work with its employees across the country, to break with the historically held assumption that the state exists to control, own and tax, rather than to serve, facilitate and support the actions of its citizens.

3. Methodology

The case studies were undertaken with a view to analysing successful experiences of citizen and local (Woreda and sub-Woreda) empowerment in relation to:

- i) Governance
- ii) Service delivery
- iii) Other development initiatives

It was assumed that empowerment could take place at the individual level, or within groups or organisations, both formal and informal.

For the purposes of this study, the term *empowerment* was defined as 'Increasing the capacity of individuals or groups to make effective development and life choices'. Empowerment is considered to be dependent on the interplay of two variables, *agency* and *opportunity*.

The World Bank's text *Measuring Empowerment* defines these two variables thus:

'**Agency** is defined as an actor's ability to make purposeful choice. The capacity to act as an agent implies the actor is able to envisage and choose options.'

'**Opportunity** structure is defined as those aspects of the context within which actors operate which determine an actor's ability to transform agency into effective action.'

In the case of this study, therefore, agency was broadly determined by the 'human capital' of individuals and groups and their ability to act, whilst opportunity structure was what promoted or constrained the use of agency for community action.¹

¹ For example, the World Bank Woreda study from 2001 documented cases where the development priorities of Woreda authorities failed to match those prioritised by the local community. The opportunity to influence the Woreda was therefore low for community members. However, regardless of the Woreda resource allocation decisions, communities achieved the successful completion of their top priority interventions. Sometimes the communities presented their problems to other bodies (religious institutions or NGOs). In other cases, communities mobilised their resources to achieve their aims. These are excellent examples of agency by communities and exploitation of alternative opportunity structures (*Woreda study 2001*).

The case study research sought to document evidence of self-determined action, which was not simply a reflection of external (state or NGO) sponsorship. As such, this action could be regarded as a positive sign that communities were engaging in their own development through specific activities. The research also looked for evidence of local resource mobilization, as well as partnerships of community groups with different stakeholders (avoiding, however, 'contractual' type relationships in which community members would provide labour for food, for example, or where contributions were a condition on external aid).

At all stages of the research, it was important to acknowledge and highlight the interplay between agency and opportunity. Researchers were aware, from the start, that they might find examples of *agency without opportunity*, which would be reflected, for example, through indigenous self-help organisations, where regardless of state or other inputs, a community of people had taken control of their own development programmes. Or alternatively, they might find cases of *opportunity without agency*, where the local level implementation of external programmes would follow a blueprint, with very little participation from the user community at any stage of the process. Clearly, the interplay of opportunity and agency can have both positive and negative effects on potential for empowerment or dis-empowerment. Thus an increase in agency can change opportunity structures and vice versa. It is necessary to examine both vicious and virtuous cycles in order to understand the synergies between agency and opportunity.

However, factors that impact upon empowerment were further complicated by an acknowledgement amongst the researchers, that agency can be understood in a variety of ways, and that fixed external definitions should not be imposed upon or override the perceptions of the people affected by the initiatives under study. Agency can be understood in terms of psychological, information, organisational, material and financial assets, as well as other human assets of individuals and groups. As such, the researchers attempted to capture an understanding of 'agency' amongst poor people by exploring, in each specific case, what they felt made a difference (psychological assets) or where it was thought people had taken the initiative, made decisions and developed their own responses within a project or other framework (material or organisational assets).

The case studies collated in the annex to this report do not constitute evaluations of the individual interventions. The aim, as noted, was to review a wide variety of examples of empowerment and show how groups of people had either evolved their own development strategies based on an approach that demonstrated agency, or had been assisted to do so by improving their opportunities and access to resources. The research team was dependent upon the help of well-placed individuals to identify the cases, but it must be assumed that there are many other examples in Ethiopia that could have been included and made an important contribution to this study.

4. Agency, Opportunity and Empowerment: Examples from the Case Studies

It is clear that in a country as large and diverse as Ethiopia, programme design must take into account issues of ethnicity, religion, attitudes towards gender and varying livelihood strategies as well as regional and other differences.

The study purposely included examples of initiatives that reflected the diversity of organisational forms and ethnic groups, different levels of domestic and foreign input and the partnerships and relationships between different actors. As such, the study sought to capture cases that illustrated the roles of central government, local government, official aid agencies, International and local NGOs, and formal and informal civil society and community groups. The study also examined a range of sectors: water, agriculture, credit, marketing, education, vocational training, rural development, adult education, pastoralism and natural resource management.

The following section presents findings from the case studies and assesses levels of empowerment through discussion of agency and opportunity structure. Taking into account the diversity of initiatives studied and approaches to development taken, where applicable, issues of capacity building, mechanisms for community engagement in development processes, communities' assets and the institutional environment are discussed.

For ease of presentation, the case studies have been grouped according to the types and combinations of stakeholders involved. These are:

- 4.1 Community initiatives undertaken without external support
- 4.2 Initiatives of Ethiopian NGOs
- 4.3 International NGO or Official Agency Programmes and Projects
- 4.4 Multi-stakeholder programmes

4.1 Community Initiatives undertaken without external support.

In a country often regarded as aid dependent, and sometimes characterised as dominated by a passive approach to change, it is encouraging to be able to document examples of purely indigenous initiatives in which communities and groups have forged their own approaches to development. The degree of agency demonstrated by these groups is impressive. It is clear that the way in which these local groups took control of their own development was both a reason for their success and a characteristic of the way they worked. What these cases do not explain is why some communities are able to demonstrate this type of agency and others, apparently are not. Whilst the study draws on examples from different ethnic groups, these represent a limited sample, and it would be wrong to draw conclusions regarding different degrees of agency based on ethnicity. What can be demonstrated is that *trust* is a quality which can be found in 'successful communities'. Several of the cases presented here, and the accompanying study on Associations, refer to strong degrees of trust within indigenous groups. The challenge of any intervention is to maintain and foster trust rather than weaken and damage it.

The case of **Awra Amba** (Case 5) provides an example of a community that, against considerable odds, developed its own distinct approach to resolving local issues, addressing economic and social development goals, and responding to pressures

and influences of the outside world. Established as a community in 1980 and consisting of 19 households, its membership has now increased to 90 households. The community is structured into nine sub-committees, to which residents are elected, under the overall development committee. These cover various aspects of community life. The community has undertaken adult literacy campaigns, provides pre-school facilities and encourages livelihood diversification along with environmental protection. The researcher noted a high degree of gender equality: there is provision for maternity leave, early and forced marriages are outlawed and domestic reproductive work is shared between men and women. Underlying their core values of equality, transparency, honesty, self-help and hard work is a memorandum of understanding that was drawn up, in a participatory manner, by members of the community.

The community of Awra Amba has survived for over twenty years and has, it would appear, been almost strengthened by adversity. Its approach to local level development has, over the years, attracted support from NGOs and governmental agencies (both Ethiopian and external). However, the majority of external interventions have failed, principally, it would appear, as the needs of the community members themselves were not prioritised. For example, although the provision of modern looms meant weavers were producing improved products, they were not able to access better markets for their products. Community members were also provided with livestock that was inappropriate because of local land constraints, or for which they were unprepared in terms of technical capability. These inputs were received on credit, and recipients are now indebted and reluctant to participate in future schemes.

Despite these problems and pressure from the authorities under the previous government, which at one point forced the community to leave its land, the Awra Amba community has shown remarkable degrees of agency and has established itself as an example of the benefits of group solidarity. Their initiatives and mutual support mechanisms have attracted new community members and they are trusted by surrounding communities to provide certain services. The regional government has also expressed its support for Awra Amba and is considering replicating some of its principles in other communities. This is particularly remarkable considering the conservative nature of Amhara society and the problems of food insecurity in the region. Although community members have renounced all religious rituals and ceremonies, they have based their work on traditional values of honesty and hard work, and have, as such, avoided alienating outsiders. Building on the enabling and trusting environment within their own community, members have been able to develop a range of new ideas and practices that increase social, economic and educational assets. Furthermore, they have been able to introduce these to neighbouring communities, impressed by these innovations.

The shorter case study from **Lalibela** (Case 2) documents a similarly indigenous initiative, but one that involves a far newer group of young people. Established in 2000 by a group of university graduates, the initiative draws on local cultural concerns and priorities in order to address a wider range of development problems. Initially, the group's founders were concerned by damage to the historic rock hewn churches in Lalibela, environmental degradation around the site and an influx of destitute people begging from tourists. Lack of government efforts to address these problems provided the original motivation for the group. The researcher notes that the complete absence of financial support for the work of the group was actually helpful, in that it compelled them to focus on community sensitisation and mobilization around their cause. It would appear that the key to the acceptance of the need for action on the part of the community in Lalibela, was the idea that they would

be saving their own 'holy land'. The group were able to introduce a new idea to the community by highlighting the importance of its traditional, cultural heritage.

Whilst the group have managed to achieve their original goals by organizing voluntary clean ups, and reforesting a buffer area, they have been motivated to build on this initial work to develop several other initiatives, including cross-generational work with local elders and young people as well as work with youth around HIV/AIDS and reproductive health. By stressing the positive elements that they identified in traditional local culture, they were able to gain the support of community elders and working with this goodwill, introduce programmes of a more sensitive, yet essential, nature. The forums that have been set up to promote exchanges of experience between elders and the younger generation have provided a space for the local community to talk about emerging social changes and problems.

In theory, the group has strong support from the Woreda administration that has now set up a steering committee to coordinate government and NGO activities in the locality and has appointed the group as chair. However, the Woreda administration lacks relevant expertise and funds and is unable to provide much practical assistance to the group and its community activities. Furthermore, there were considerable bureaucratic obstacles that the group had to surmount before they achieved formal registration with the federal Ministry of Justice, as required by law. The process of registration took over a year, and nearly caused the group to abandon its efforts. The group demonstrated considerable degrees of agency, despite structural constraints, and were able to raise awareness amongst the community of their own cultural and psychological assets.

Another small-scale initiative involving young people is documented in the example of a rubbish collection programme in Addis Ababa. The case study of **Yeka cleaning services** (Case 16), an initiative set up with almost no external help, shows how members of a marginalised group can both develop income-generating strategies for themselves, as well as provide a public service. The founder members of the group were three unemployed young men and a young woman who pooled their financial resources to start up a collection service for household waste. Initially, they had to challenge the stereotype of young people working on the street, who can force their services on households in the neighbourhood by threatening them. They also faced stigma stemming from a belief that those working with rubbish are affected by evil spirits. However, by taking their work seriously, the members of Yeka were able to challenge these traditional attitudes in such a way as to win supporters, a client base and an enhanced status for themselves. The original group has expanded to include a further eight members.

The original group were motivated to start work by a much larger, voluntary, city-wide initiative to encourage unemployed young people to clean up their neighbourhoods, which had proved popular. Whilst the group were able to take advantage of this positive environment, opportunity structures were also in place to promote their activities. The group were required to register with the city administration and report to the Kebele and Kifle Ketema. As a result, they had to meet certain obligations that strengthened their organization, including drawing up a memorandum of understanding and following reporting regimes. On their part, the Kebele made sure that the group's members were able to access training courses on the development of their association, and on waste recycling. As a result, the group now plans to undertake recycling and is negotiating with the Kifle Ketema administration for a plot of land on which to carry out these activities. The Kebele has also made the public aware of the services Yeka are providing, thus further improving their status, and business profitability. The group members themselves believe that their activities

have inspired other unemployed young people in the area to consider business initiatives, rather than waiting for a space on a government employment scheme.

On a larger scale, the annex includes a case study of the **Guaraghe People Self-help Development Organisation (GPDSO)** (Case 11). There are many other ethnically based development associations in Ethiopia, but several commentators have identified the Guarage as one of the oldest, and most independent of these. For almost forty years, this group has worked in one of the poorest, and initially most isolated areas of the country. Starting with improving road connections within the territory as a response to increasing population pressure on degraded land, they have been successful in harnessing support from the many migrant Guaraghe outside of their homeland, principally those based in Addis Ababa. The organization has diversified its areas of focus to include initiatives in the areas of health, education, agriculture and skills development. Early programmes, in particular the building of roads, were achieved by impressive ethnic solidarity between diaspora groups and the homeland, that drew on traditional Guraghe social institutions and other family ties and affiliations as vehicles for resource mobilisation. These programmes were further supported by innovative financing (road tolls to contribute to road building costs) and for many years good relations with local authorities.

Along with evidence of a high degree of social cohesion within the Guraghe community, it would also appear that the educational assets of urban Guraghe elites and their willingness to provide professional services voluntarily, contributed to the success of the organization's activities. The researcher also notes psychological assets that were developed as Guraghe migrants fought against social stigma in the cities, and constructed a new Guraghe identity around the promotion of the development of the homeland.

Initially the group was considered to be apolitical, although the present government believes the group to have its own political agenda. This has made the relationship between the central government and the GPDSO less productive and hindered Guaraghe initiatives in recent years. The organization has further suffered from allegations of corruption, and bad relations with government have caused the organization financial difficulties, as it has been ordered to stop charging road tolls. Whilst it would be inappropriate to comment on the political aspects of the case here, it is clear that for many years the group were successful in supporting major infrastructure and other programmes in their area. However, while Guraghe discourse states that development of Guragheland is only possible with the full participation of all urban and rural Guraghes, the researcher notes that Guraghe social institutions have a tendency to marginalise or even exclude some social groups, notably women and young people.

All of these cases illustrate how poor people were able to develop initiatives independently, without external governmental or other assistance. However, it should be noted that in the cases of Lalibela and Yeka Cleaning Services, groups had to negotiate with the local authorities before they could develop their programmes significantly. The openness of the local authorities that enabled these two groups to develop their activities must be seen as an important factor in their success. It is where local authorities have used their power negatively, by blocking initiatives, that so many similar ideas have failed to flourish. It is clearly in the public interest that, for example, waste collection benefits from some level of regulation. But it is also in the public interest that citizens have access to a collection service of some sort, rather than none at all. The negotiation between local authorities and initiative groups needs to be biased towards supporting the local initiative, rather than trying to stifle it, whilst

ensuring that basic regulations are adhered to. However, as these organizations grow, they may be regarded as a threat by government, as in the Guraghe people's association. The challenge is to build upon indigenous agency, trust and innovation and promote these strengths, whilst encouraging transparency. In the cases presented above, it would appear that a light touch of regulation, and some agreement to tolerate different approaches (privatised garbage collection, road tolls) rather than prohibit them, can encourage livelihood strategies amongst poor communities at minimal (if any) external cost.

4.2 Initiatives of Ethiopian NGOs

It has been argued that there are relatively few local NGOs in Ethiopia, and in purely numerical terms this is probably true, as so many of the formal NGOs present either originated from International organizations or are local offices of International NGOs. During the course of the research, however, several interesting local groups were identified, that had managed to attract external support. The largest of these was **Hundee** (Case 8) which works with communities in the Oromiya region. Its approach towards working with communities is based on initial programmes to develop 'cereal bank associations' that ensure the availability of grains for food use at the household level during the lean period. These associations are used as an entry point through which to introduce a series of interventions that aim to deal with more profound social issues, including injustices suffered by local women. Hundee seeks to empower local communities by enhancing their management skills so that eventually, the cereal banks are self-sustaining and managed by the community. As well as reducing food insecurity, the cereal banks encourage farmers to tackle problems collectively, rather than rely on handouts from government in times of shortage.

Hundee understands that attitudinal change is more likely to come from meeting local traditions half way. Of special note is the way in which the NGO has interacted with the traditional institution of the Gada, using traditional law making to achieve social reform, end harmful practices and defend women's rights. The case study gives examples of improved land holding for women, a reduction in the number of abductions of young girls and of practices such as early marriage and female circumcision.

The case study also notes the importance of training, prior to the establishment of cereal banks, to ensure that the community is adequately equipped to run these. The need for follow-up training is clearly stated, to allow for rotation of office holders. Training of trainers is also a priority so as to identify female activists who can go on to encourage influential community members to participate in workshops on social issues. It is clear that good facilitation is needed to promote discussions around more delicate social problems.

The researcher notes that the cereal banks have already started to develop a strong organizational identity. It would appear that members of the Banks have derived self-confidence from economic and organizational success. On a number of occasions they have defended themselves against the attempted incursions of the Woreda administration into the affairs of the cereal banks. These demonstrate the use of agency to maintain an enabling environment for the activities of the banks. The researcher notes, however, that decentralisation of the oversight of development initiatives to Woreda has not been a smooth process, and there is a danger that activities of this type of grass-roots group could be disrupted, both by legal restrictions and obstruction on the part of Woreda officials.

Another rural project that aims to improve livelihoods for farmers is the **Adiha River Diversion Project** (Case 12) supported by REST (Relief Society of Tigray) with funding from Oxfam America. Working to improve traditional irrigation systems, the project was designed to diversify agricultural activities in the drought prone area, where the majority of farmers were dependent on rain fed agriculture. This would be achieved by increasing the amount of irrigable land. Although traditional irrigation systems were being used by inhabitants, technical knowledge on how to maximise benefits from these was low. The systems that were in place were also generally temporary and often washed away during the rainy season. Frustrated with the limited utility of these irrigation channels, farming inhabitants of one Tabia (the lowest administrative unit in central Tigray) initiated the river diversion project. They were then assisted by REST to develop and carry out their plans.

The project began by identifying the responsibility of each actor and involved the Bureau of Agriculture and Natural Resources as well as the Baito – the locally elected body. An action-learning research and training approach was adopted that brought community members into problem identification and planning of implementation and generated practical applications from lessons learnt. Community members also benefited from specific training to help them make the most from better access to irrigated land and to take responsibility for the water system. As a result of the river diversion, local farmers' yields have improved considerably.

Whilst the principal benefit to the community appears to be economic, the researcher also note other benefits. The system is now being managed by a community water committee, but is integrated with other development activities in the area, in particular with soil and water conservation activities and education on health and sanitation. These different activities are coordinated between different actors: the community, representatives of regional government and the local Baito. It would appear that the practice of clearly setting out responsibilities at the start of the initiative, has encouraged this type of cooperation for integrated rural development. In this respect the project differs sharply from Hundee's cereal bank initiative, whose members are finding themselves excluded from other farmer oriented development interventions provided by the local Woreda.

Moving to examples from urban areas, the **Integrated Family Service Organization (IFSO)** (Case 1) runs three projects in Addis Ababa. Founded by an Ethiopian, it receives resources from international organizations including UNICEF and Save the Children. IFSO runs a counselling centre for child victims of rape, a child education sponsorship programme and a skills training programme. The organization targets children and families affected by HIV/AIDS and destitution and aims to encourage empowerment by overcoming stigma attached to these conditions and reintegrating families into the community. The projects take a graded approach to empowerment, beginning with the individual child and working upwards by involving families and communities in skills training and awareness raising. It should be noted that criteria for the selection of potential child beneficiaries are fairly tight. This is to ensure that it is the poorest and most marginalized individuals and families that benefit from the project. Good relations between different stakeholders were encouraged from the start by involving representatives from line ministries and local Kebeles as well as community organizations such as Iddirs (funeral societies), in participatory needs assessments.

Death of a breadwinner from AIDS causes social stigma to fall upon the remaining spouse and children, and can lead to family breakdown. The resultant economic pressures can also force families to withdraw their membership from Iddirs or Saints Day Associations. This aggravates the already weakened social status of the family.

However, once these families are involved in a project, they start to receive counselling and guidance, as well as financial support. Formal and informal groups set up amongst those who are attending skills training also provide support, by encouraging the sharing of experience and discussion of problems. Relationships between IFSO and the Kebeles and Iddirs are particularly productive, as these bodies now recommend individuals and families for enrolment in the projects. The Kebeles have also begun to provide protection for many AIDS orphans by allowing them to stay in the homes their parents rented, without having to pay, thus helping to prevent social exclusion and destitution.

Project beneficiaries are encouraged to form committees and to play a role in the progress of the project. Although some in the communities lack educational skills and experience and do not feel that they can make a major contribution, beneficiaries do state that they can influence the way the projects function. Some of the committees are now discussing new community income generating activities, whilst others have petitioned the City Administration to provide a plot of land to build offices for IFSO. Graduates of the skills training project have formed an Alumni Association. IFSO plans to hand over management of this particular project to the Association in 2007.

In sum, IFSO is working to rebuild the psychological assets of individuals and families affected by the stigma of an AIDS death, as well as improve the educational assets of the poorest families in one Kifle Ketema of Addis. Working at the community level and involving traditional institutions, IFSO attempts to ensure that society accepts the reintegration of damaged and vulnerable families and individuals. Beneficiaries of the projects are shown to have increased organizational assets, as, through committees and informal groups, they begin to develop income generating alternatives.

The **Integrated Holistic Approach Urban Development Project (IHA)** (Case 13) is also located in Addis Ababa and is an organization established by an Ethiopian that has drawn in international support. The project, in one of the poorest Kebeles of the city, takes a three-pronged approach through its focus on physical infrastructure, primary healthcare and socio-economic or community development. The stated aim of the project, from the start, is eventually to hand over ownership and management of the project to a local community based organization. Capacity of this CBO is developed as the project progresses and the phase-out is meticulously planned.

Needs assessments are carried out by community members, in conjunction with professionals, in door-to-door baseline surveys. Both groups are trained at the same time, to ensure professionals do not misinterpret the answers of respondents. The project trains recent school graduates as female extension workers, who then act as a bridge between the community and the project. It also gives on-going capacity building to community members who are elected to Neighbourhood Groups. These Groups meet regularly to discuss the project and possible solutions to problems they are facing. They then collaborate with project staff. Amongst other activities, community members are involved in the rehabilitation of physical infrastructure in their neighbourhood. Many have developed skills in construction which they are now able to use to gain employment elsewhere. This includes women, and the project has broken certain gender barriers with regards the type of work women were thought able to undertake.

IHA has now handed over two projects to local CBOs. This process has not proved simple, however, and there are problems with the legal environment and capacity of local authorities. The biggest challenge has been reaching agreement with government offices to take over the running of various social services that had been

provided through the project – in one example the care of the elderly and education. The relevant offices were not able to assume responsibility however, and the project phase out had to be postponed in order to raise funds to continue these activities. It should be noted, therefore, that there is a danger in assuming that state will have the funds and the ability to take over the provision of certain services. The handover was also affected by the limitations of registration mechanisms for CBOs. CBOs are not properly recognised in law, and cannot have bank accounts.

The project draws on concepts of full community participation and conscientization, and is concerned with building the psychological assets of poor communities, as well as improving physical infrastructure and public health. The researcher notes that there is a widespread fatalism amongst the poor: poverty is often regarded as spiritual and psychological. There is a clear understanding amongst project workers that changes in attitude and levels of self-belief can only be achieved over the long term. IHA staff state, 'Attitude is a major impediment to participatory development and there is no short cut to bringing about positive attitudinal changes. Without attitudinal change, reinstated self-dignity and people-centeredness, there will not be a meaningful change that brings about a sustained and improved quality of life for the poor'.

Both the IHA and IFISO projects demonstrate possible types of engagement in the complex context of urban Addis, with mixed social groups, often suffering from extreme poverty and related issues such as HIV/AIDS. Both case studies, from different perspectives, show the importance of taking a long-term approach to building capacity and developing the confidence of their clients to enable them to gain control of their own lives. Some of this can be done through training in organisational management and other interventions, but another important component of self-realisation is for people to see the successes of their own collaborative labours. These cases show how an 'indirect' entry point for the interventions (improving physical infrastructure or providing skills training) has allowed for wider achievements and realisation of longer term goals, including attitudinal changes within society towards women and those marginalized by HIV/AIDS. Both agencies showed an holistic approach and a long term vision for empowerment and poverty reduction. This permitted trust to be built through initial interventions and then coupled with longer term capacity building that has achieved impact beyond the initial programme goals.

4.3 International NGO or Official Agency Programme and Projects

Externally supported programmes appear to be better resourced and thus able to act on a larger scale than those of local agencies. The more positive examples demonstrate a longer term engagement and perspective that enables them to develop not only the organisational and physical resources of a community, but also crucially, other human assets. The ActionAid supported **Dalocha Women's Water Development Association (DWWDA)** (Case 9) is a good example of an INGO that has not only invested in the creation of a water system for a large number of people, but has also invested in the capacity development of the general population within the programme area. More specifically, it has developed the capacity of the women working in the water association, or responsible for it.² ActionAid initiated the project in 1996, responding to a critical shortage of water that forced women in the area to travel up to 8 hours a day to collect water from a river. It was thought that since it was women's lives that were principally affected by the need for water, they would be

² A similar model has been used in several sites by Water Action across Ethiopia with remarkable results.

more concerned for the proper functioning and sustainability of a water system. Ensuring that women managed the system was also considered to be a way of challenging negative assumptions about women's status and abilities. DDWDA took over the project in 1998 and now manages a network of 42 water supply points, known as water kiosks, based on two separate water systems, that provide water to 83 000 people in the project area.

A considerable proportion of costs, over the entire programme period, has been devoted to assisting women to take on governance, managerial and delivery functions. Support for the association is based on an long term approach, rather than short term one-off training programmes. It should be noted that intensive training has been undertaken over many years for all the different stakeholders, and this has included basic literacy for 500 women.

Specifically, this has involved:

- DWWDA board members (16 women) receive training one day a month for 6 years on: management and administration, financial rules and regulations, water utilization rules and regulations, water and health, gender, and protection of the water network.
- DWWDA general assembly members (178 women) are trained once every three months for 6 years in similar areas as those above, but including the management of water distribution kiosks.
- Kebele water committee members receive similar training over a similar period of time as the assembly members.
- Women water kiosk operators (64 women) receive training over a period of 7 years on: operation of water kiosks, financial accounting rules, water use and health and gender.
- Basic literacy education for over 500 hundred women, which includes DWWDA leadership, over a period of three consecutive years. When DWWDA started its operation 98% of members of DWWDA leadership were illiterate, and the objective was therefore to enable the leadership and those working as employees in the water kiosks to acquire basic literacy and numeracy skills.
- Training on conflict resolution for Kebele water conflict resolution committee members.

It could be argued that in the case of Dalocha, in order for the initiative to function properly, the programme was obliged to address the education deficits of the local population (in this case lower levels of women's schooling) before introducing specialised training related to the specific needs of the water programme. If the upward levelling of education had not taken place, then the only alternative would have been to seek out previously trained and/or well educated staff and board members. In this context, this would probably have meant working with men, rather than women. However, high levels of training invested in board members and other staff positions means that bringing in new office holders and rotating board positions is difficult. This problem is compounded by generally low levels of female education in the area.

However, the Dalocha case study also highlights the danger of a weak enabling environment (this problem has been echoed in similar Water Action programmes). In the case of Dalocha, the Association controls substantial levels of assets and revenue, and the local authorities have attempted to take control of the income without any commitment to further investment in the programme. This type of rivalry is an unfortunate feature. The researcher suggests that had the planned advisory

board been formed, consisting of government and non-governmental representatives, better collaboration with local government might have been achieved. Nevertheless, DWWDA has managed to overcome difficulties with local government, in part because it has the support of higher authorities who see the Association as living proof of its supposed commitment to local participation and women's empowerment. At the time of the most serious interference, the leadership of DWWDA were sufficiently self-confident to stand up to the Woreda administration. The Association has also been assisted by positive press coverage at the local level. Whilst open hostility has subsided, the Woreda administration continues to raise doubts about the potential sustainability of the project and the ability of the women involved to continue in management roles. They do acknowledge that so far DWWDA has an admirable record, yet they attribute this to the involvement and support of ActionAid. DWWDA on the other hand, claims that the Woreda administration is itself at fault as it is unable to engage constructively with the Association. The researcher notes that were there to be problems with water distribution in the future, the Woreda administration would use this as an excuse to oust DWWDA and take control of the project. He believes issues of power and gender to be at the root of bad relations between the Association and the local authorities.

Despite these problems, DWWDA has had considerable success, and is possibly the only large scale facility owned and managed by women in the country. It seems to be attaining financial and organizational sustainability and has brought about marked changes in attitude within the community. At a practical level, women are now freed from travelling long distances to fetch water, but women's involvement in the water system has also afforded them strategic gains. Whilst initially the discourse of women's empowerment and potential was adopted by ActionAid to encourage the formation of the Association, this language has now been adopted at all levels of the community. The researcher was repeatedly told that women have a deeper sense of responsibility, ownership and honesty than men. Both sexes explained that women were trusted in their dealings with the financial revenue from the project.

Similar long term and multifaceted inputs can be seen in the two case studies of SOS Sahel programmes, in Meket and Borena. The **Meket Development Program (MDP)** (Case 7) in North Wollo aims to enable beneficiaries to find sustainable solutions to their environmental, social and economic problems and to promote the transfer of successful experiences of self-reliant community development to other Woredas in North Wollo. As well as dissemination and replication, MDP's strategy includes work on community empowerment, improved service delivery by the Woreda, integrating relief and development and providing an institutional framework for local level cooperation. Entry points to the community have included projects to improve bee keeping and marketing of products from apiculture, along with micro-finance. The researcher notes that women have been involved in both these areas and as a result are improving their financial assets.

MDP aims to coordinate development activities between the Woreda council, the Kebele and local organizations. It believes that identification, design and implementation of community based projects should remain in the hands of the target population. However, it acknowledges that this institutional model has to be introduced at the appropriate pace, allowing partners, especially the community, to 'grow into roles that gradually demand greater and greater responsibility'. The level and types of activity should be determined not by pre-set goals, but at the rate at which local structures – CBOs and government – can establish their managerial capabilities.

The importance of working with CBOs was stressed by MDP workers in the report.

'There is a feeling that CBOs may or may not be democratic, desirable institutions: they may or may not have a place in the longer term development strategy of the Ethiopian government, but they cannot be ignored at the initial stages of any attempt to strengthen the self-reliance of the people. This is because they represent an integral part of people's identity and life. If we ignore them [...] we will never win sufficient trust from the people to introduce new ideas and approaches. Government Organizations or NGOs face considerable difficulties in promoting the degree of responsibility needed for community-led development without this initial trust and confidence'.

SOS Sahel's other project documented in the case studies, the **Borena Collaborative Forest Management project** (Case 6) primarily involves working with groups of pastoralists and agro-pastoralists as well as the urban and peri-urban poor. The project was established to address the erosion of social capital and social responsibility that has come about as traditional institutions and management systems are excluded from local governance. Control over resource use has been taken away from local communities, and has resulted in unsustainable levels of resource exploitation and increased poverty.

Although communities, elders and Gada representatives had identified the side-lining of traditional management systems as the cause of increased environmental degradation and poverty, it appears that it was only when SOS Sahel intervened and brought different stakeholders together, crucially including local government, that these explanations gained acceptance with the local authorities. A project was then established to promote the capacity of key pastoralist institutions and traditional resource management systems and to raise awareness of their potential in Woreda administrations. Activities at the grass-roots level also included improving relationships between pastoralist and other communities of resource users and running programmes on conflict management. Women's involvement in resource management and decision making has been promoted. At a higher level, partnerships have been established between the Gada and the zone's Department for Agriculture and Natural Resources to coordinate the development of natural resource management systems. All these initiatives, at many different levels, require training and awareness raising with the relevant stakeholders.

The researcher notes that the issue of gender is particularly pressing in traditionally conservative pastoralist communities. By strengthening the Gada and other traditional associations, the project will be mainly engaging with male groups. There is also hostility to changes that are seen to be imposed from outside. The aim is therefore to create women's sub-committees within forest management groups so as to introduce communities involved to gender issues, for example, women's rights to common property. There are also plans to facilitate participatory activities that allow for analysis of the benefits of shared workloads and consensus decision-making between men and women.

The Borena case study demonstrates the way in which a project can use issues of general concern (conflict over resources and environmental degradation) as an entry point to work on other social problems. The approach draws on traditional community institutions, but encourages dialogue and collaboration with government. Essentially, the project aims to build up the capacity of pastoral communities to negotiate with other social groups to resolve conflicts and to improve their engagement with local authorities. With better negotiating skills, previously marginalized community institutions should have a greater ability to become involved in governance partnerships over local resource use.

These two SOS Sahel supported projects demonstrate attempts to open up opportunities for participating communities to enter into partnership with local authorities over development initiatives and resource use. Both have a focus on developing the capacity of poor communities to engage with a range of different stakeholders. These programmes have the advantage of longer term commitment on the part of sponsoring organizations and benefit from an approach that understands that capacity building should happen at different educational and human resource levels, as well as at different times during a programme. Planning and monitoring is required to ensure that community groups have the capacity to maximise benefits from resources and to make sure that 'skills gaps' do not appear, that may undermine the programmes.

A further example of an INGO working with traditional institutions is illustrated in the study of **Dire Dawa Iddirs** (Case14). The INGO ACORD began working with Iddirs (traditional funeral societies) in Dire Dawa town in 1995. Iddirs are the most widely spread type of civil association in Ethiopia: 87% of people in urban areas belong to at least one. The dominant form of Iddirs are those based on the immediate neighbourhood and some involve women only. Iddirs provide support, money and other assets to their members when they suffer a bereavement. ACORD chose to work with Iddirs because they are self-initiated and aimed at mutual support. The idea behind the project was to tap into the potential of these groups and help them to take on new developmental roles. The major components of the programme involved providing grants for revolving credit funds geared to income generation, and implementing joint community projects. Iddir members also received comprehensive training to build capacity to engage in the project. This included capacity building on organizational and cooperative management, group dynamics, entrepreneurship and book keeping.

Initially, members of the Iddirs showed a significant degree of mistrust of ACORD. However, the organization managed to combat this, in part by helping the poorest Iddirs to carry out their traditional services. Also, members of Iddirs who opted out of involvement in income-generating schemes did not forfeit their membership of the society. Provision of credit eventually became popular, and the figures showed a rise in income for a significant percentage of those involved. More interestingly, external support for the Iddirs built up the organizational assets of their members and provided the impetus for these societies to transform themselves into active community groups. The year the ACORD programme was to be phased out, in 1998, the Iddirs proposed the formation of second level cooperative associations that would bring together societies within neighbourhoods. The rationale behind this initiative was to minimise the costs of running saving and credit activities by jointly hiring accountants, liaising as a collective with government agencies and undertaking joint income generating projects. They have also been engaging with other development actors, such as the Family Guidance Association of Ethiopia. The formation of these second level associations has strengthened neighbourhood capacity to influence local government entities and get access to land and capital for their activities.

The Iddir leaders have shown remarkable degrees of agency in their plans to build on the work of traditional societies. However, the activities of second level associations have suffered from constrained opportunities, since their legal status is unclear. The Iddir leaders have shown significant creativity in finding a temporary measure that permits the associations to carry on with their activities. But they have spent much of their time in unproductive wrangles in court with local government which could have been avoided were there simpler registration procedures at Woreda level.

The Iddir project in Dire Dawa, and others examples documented here, have highlighted problems faced by community groups when their initiatives run up against local authority obstruction and/or legal constraints. The Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) has been working with Woredas in the Amhara Regional State to try and improve engagement of local government personnel with communities. The **Sida-Amhara Rural Development Program (SARDP)** (Case 10) centres on raising the standard of living conditions of the rural poor through improvement in service provision, promotion of good local governance and the introduction of projects to promote sustainable agricultural development. The program centres around the Woreda Development Fund which, in the context of decentralisation, aims to strengthen the Woredas themselves to improve their capacity in planning, administering and delivering services. The rationale behind this, is that improved capacity within the Woredas will encourage communities to discuss problems, prioritise them and then work with the Woredas to ensure their perceptions are incorporated into local development plans.

Whilst a recent evaluation noted the rise in skills and prestige of the Woredas and a resultant increase in cooperation and participation of communities, the researcher noted that the poorest individuals in communities were less involved in participatory planning. It is only now that the programme is developing tools to identify categories of the poor, in order to bring those who lack voice into the process. Those particularly marginalized appear to be women and Woreda personnel have lacked the ability to incorporate issues of gender into planning processes. The lack of monitoring and evaluation from the grassroots upwards has also meant that some important lessons have not been fed back to the Woreda. This constitutes a missed opportunity to give greater voice and empowerment to communities. It would appear that participatory planning remains at the level of consultation: the researcher did not provide evidence of empowered communities making autonomous demands on the Woreda. It was noted that training of communities undertaken by the Woredas was haphazard and that training on technical skills on new agricultural initiatives provided by technical advisors for the Woredas, needed to be transferred to the communities themselves.

However, in general, this move towards decentralisation, with greater responsibility for financial disbursement given to Woredas is having a positive impact on the socio-economic environment in the programme areas. Improvement in public sector capacity, when linked to increases in funds, has improved both service delivery and relationships with communities. There is considerable room for improvement though, and the planning for future phases will involve a much greater degree of participatory planning so as to work towards empowerment of communities, not just the Woredas. There is to be an emphasis on training of community representatives and Woreda personnel to encourage community ownership of future project work. There will also be targeted support for women's income generation and awareness raising amongst Woreda staff on gender issues.

Moving away from capacity building at the Woreda level, this section ends with an analysis of **The Horn of Africa Capacity Building Program (HOACBP)** (Case 15) funded by Oxfam Canada and Oxfam Quebec. This case study differs to the others presented in this report in that it looks at an overarching programme of capacity building provision for organizations in Ethiopia. The programme currently has six funding partners (five networks and one NGO) and forty non-funding partners. Partners are chosen for their focus on information and communication, voluntarism, women's and young people's issues and human rights. Training provided involves local resource management, financial management, fundraising, strategic planning and income generation, amongst other topics. HOACBP also facilitates exposure visits within the country and organizes information sharing forums.

The researcher notes that some external funders and support providers have overlooked community groups in Ethiopia that concentrate on mobilising resources locally and securing support from local government for their activities as of 'little significance for development'. HOACBP takes a different view, perceiving local resource mobilization to be a way to provide opportunities for communities to discuss and act on the problems they face. Indeed, HOACBP believes that external financial support can undermine local communities' development efforts, and as such demands that partners are able to raise resources locally. The programme also identifies a difficulty in Ethiopia of moving beyond support for individual projects to the macro level. As such, it promotes networking as one of its key objectives, focusing on information, communication and inter-sectoral cooperation.

According to the researcher, HOACBP has built up the organizational assets of its partner organizations. In particular, these organizations have managed to diversify their funding bases and network with a wider variety of organizations in different sectors and locations. Some partners are now in the process of building coalitions and a culture of documenting experiences seems to be taking root.

4.4 Multi-stakeholder programmes

The two education programmes documented in the case studies: the **Basic Education System Overhaul (BESO)** (Case 3) implemented in Dukem Town by Save the Children US/USAID³ and the **Jijiga Area Alternative Basic Education Support** (Case 4), funded by Save the Children UK, illustrate examples of multi-stakeholder programmes where, despite the institutional complexity of the education sector, models have been adapted which result in greater engagement by the primary stakeholders (children and parents) along with the co-operation of other groups, including school directors, Woreda education offices and the sponsoring agencies.

The main objective of the **BESO** project is to strengthen the involvement of communities to bring about improved quality and equity in education. It is particularly concerned to increase the participation of girls in schools. The project strengthens Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) and establishes Girls' Advisory Committees in each of the schools covered by the project. The project is also expected to increase Woreda administration awareness of the role communities can play in development of schools and education programmes. At present the project is underway in nearly 1000 schools and it eventually aims to cover a total of 1500.

BESO aims to achieve its objectives through training and mentoring of the different local stakeholders that can have an impact on improving the quality and outreach of their schools. In particular, the PTAs are expected to play an active role in the project. Members of the PTA receive training, as do Woreda officials and the community, to raise awareness of their own role in the promotion of education. Issues covered involve gender, resource mobilization and the accountability of PTAs to the community. The PTAs are provided with grants (between 3000 and 5000 birr) to undertake specific mini-projects within their schools with a 25% contribution from the community itself. They are mentored by the project's School Development Coordinators who act as a bridge between the PTAs, the Woreda education offices and Save the Children US.

³ A similar programme is also being run by World Learning also with USAID support.

The funds provided by the project have been described by stakeholders within the community as having served as a type of stimulation. Being given responsibility for planning and implementing projects is seen by them as an empowering approach. Building up psychological assets, the project has helped communities to see that they themselves can bring about change. BESO appears to have encouraged self-confidence and real interest amongst the PTAs: members drop into the school to see for themselves how initiatives are progressing. Whilst the mini-projects generally revolve around improvements to physical infrastructure, efforts have also been made by the PTAs to undertake advocacy with communities on the abolition of harmful traditional practices on girl children, early marriage and abduction. Contributing to national decentralisation processes, the involvement and influence of parents and the community marks a considerable shift away from previously *dirigiste* attitudes towards schools and education programmes on the part of the local authorities.

The **Jijiga Area Program of Alternative Basic Education (ABE)** support is attempting to counter the principal problems of the education sector in the Somali region. Levels of participation in education are critically low, mainly because of the inappropriateness of the formal education system for the children of pastoralist and agro-pastoralist families. Furthermore, most formal schools are to be found in urban areas, thus further limiting pastoralist children's access to education. As a response to this, Save the Children UK, in conjunction with the Regional Education Bureau, designed an alternative basic education project relevant to the culture and lifestyle of Somali pastoralist communities. In particular, this has meant introducing a flexible school timetable and calendar, building new schools that are more easily accessed by pastoralist children, training teachers in new, participatory teaching methods and introducing more relevant and appropriate teaching materials, including some in local languages. The project has had particular success with the retention of new teachers drawn from local communities. The curriculum was tested and reviewed by a multi-stakeholder team that involved community members, students, teachers and subject specialists.

Of particular interest is the way in which communities have been involved in the education programme, the sustainability of which is seen to depend on a community sense of ownership of the schools and ability to manage them. Building awareness and capacity amongst communities is reported to have been time consuming. This was attempted through sensitisation workshops, experience sharing visits and training on roles and responsibilities. However, as a result, communities have supported the renovation of school buildings as well as contributed to the construction of low cost classrooms for ABE schools. Perhaps more importantly, their own ideas and local knowledge have influenced the project, including in the review of the curriculum, and they now also play an active role in the monitoring and managements of daily school activities. The researcher notes that as a result of this involvement, parents have actively encouraged their children to attend the schools and there has been a significant growth in enrolment and attendance. Whilst girls' enrolment in particular has increased, there is still considerable gender disparity in provision of education: the number of girls attending ABE schools is below half that of boys.

The ABE programme has had an impact on communities, students and on teachers but has also drawn in local administrations, which, according to the researcher, had never previously been involved in educational issues. Also recipients of capacity building, the local administrations are now playing an active role and allocating resources for teaching staff in the new ABE schools. The project has also played an advocacy role in that it has increased awareness within the Regional Education Bureau of the need for a special approach towards children of pastoralist families.

The ability of different stakeholders to work together in these two education programmes are interesting examples of the potential of multi-stakeholder programmes, where no single group lays claim to a monopoly of control or ideas over the education of children. The case studies show how the different authorities have accepted alternative approaches to the management of schools and development of educational programmes that set out to achieve a better education system. This is potentially a difficult area, in which both local political and professional interests could insist on their pre-eminence. However, these programmes have managed to bring local communities and parents into management, resource allocation and other decisions regarding education. Perhaps the key to the success of these programmes, is that they seek to encourage local participation in enhanced governance of schools whilst, through improving access to funds, also allowing schools and communities to make decisions locally, based on local need.

5. Analysis of Key Issues and Recommendations

This section looks at key issues arising from the case studies and analyses these through a comparative analysis of different initiatives. Leading on from this, each section provides recommendations for future programme work in Ethiopia.

The key issues covered are:

- 5.1 Agency and Opportunity
- 5.2 Empowerment
- 5.3 The Role of the State
- 5.4 Flexibility and Customised Approaches
- 5.5 Focus on Gender
- 5.6 Approaches to Capacity Building
- 5.7 Working at Intermediary Level

5.1 Agency and Opportunity

It seems clear from the evidence of the case studies, that where levels of agency are already high, progress towards development goals is more rapid and these are more likely to be sustainable. The cases of indigenous initiatives would seem to illustrate this conclusion. However, these cases also show how opportunity structures can encourage local people's initiatives to flourish. This is often dependent on the local government's willingness to accept alternative approaches, or to seek ways around legal inadequacies. Thus where agency meets opportunity a positive environment for local level development is created. One can surmise that where agency has met with obstruction the reverse is the case.

The research process did not cover cases where high levels of agency had been met by totally negative and destructive reactions on the part of local authorities or other powers, sealing off opportunity structures to the extent that people were frustrated in their self-help ambitions. However, a number of initiatives demonstrate that community actors have had problems with local government. This is both because legal systems can be inadequate and because local authorities may wish to control all development initiatives in their locality. The frustration of local efforts is noted in the case study on the Dalocha Women's Water Association, where local authorities tried to shut down and then take over the programme, and in the experiences of the Unions of Idirrs in Dire Dawa, where inadequate legal systems could not cope with new forms of organisation.

The accompanying study on Associations in Ethiopia produced by INTRAC and the World Bank has shown that where formal structures are not supportive, local agency can still achieve a considerable amount, but this will be constrained to what local people feel they can achieve without the support or acceptance of higher authorities. The authors note that many local associations, and even government employees, utilise a risk aversion strategy by trying to avoid contact with local authorities, on the assumption that these will hamper or try to control their activities. However, the same groups often do mention that local authorities can also provide support.

The case studies that form the basis of this report do provide examples of support for community initiatives from local authorities. It is not the case that opportunities are never provided by local authorities. The case studies of educational programmes show how, with sufficient will and resources, multi-stakeholder programmes can

flourish. Elsewhere researchers note how sympathetically authorities have supported informal associations by, for example, assisting with disputes, providing resources, and helping community members access services and training.

In the examples where local authorities have not provided this type of assistance, the case studies suggest that local authorities should be encouraged to consider how they can promote local initiatives and alternative approaches to development, rather than how to control or even frustrate their activities. There is perhaps a need to remind local government officials that their role is to serve the citizenry. Furthermore, a common theme of the studies is the adequacy of current legal structures at the local level. Some rules on local registration are left over from an earlier now irrelevant age and could probably be revised relatively easily.

5.2 Empowerment

As noted in the methodology section of this report, there are many dimensions to empowerment. The cases studied here cover a great number of these. In some of these studies, particularly those of indigenous groups that initiated their work without the stimulus of external funding, empowerment has come about as a result of collective awareness of the group's potential to bring about positive change. In other cases, such as the Meket Development Programme, Hundee's Cereal Banks, SIDA's Amhara rural development programme and REST's initiative in Tigray, a preliminary focus on 'economic empowerment' has been a first step towards more deeply embedded ability amongst these groups to deal with structural impediments to their collective development. Without this type of 'follow up' action, these programmes would represent little more than marginal increases in income for the groups involved. Whilst this is important, the study sought examples of efforts to strengthen communities that had gone beyond the income generating aspect of a project or initiative.

Organisational empowerment is to be found in many of these programmes, for example, Hundee's Cereal Banks, Dire Dawa Iddirs, Borena Forest Management, Dalocha Women's Water Association and IHA in Addis Ababa. Here a great deal of effort has been invested in organisational sustainability so as to maintain other services and programmes. This in turn has encouraged members to work collectively towards further development goals. The organisational development work was usually tied to longer term capacity building at different levels which included, where necessary, improving basic education, plus specific programmes on managing organisations, chairing and governance etc. depending on specific needs. In some cases, training had also been provided for local authorities, to improve their ability to engage with community groups. The existence of many local indigenous forms of association no doubt provided fertile ground for some of this training work, as some of the managerial concepts are not totally alien. An element of success in organizational empowerment as shown in a number of case studies, is the strategy of building on existing experience and working practices, and then enhancing and improving these. This avoids the categorisation of this type of work as the transplanting of 'foreign' models.

Psychological empowerment was also common to many of the cases and is specifically mentioned in the studies documenting Dalocha, Awra Amba and IHA and IFSO in Addis Ababa, amongst others. This is a difficult concept to measure and describe, and although few agencies set out to systematically monitor empowerment

in this manner, there are references throughout the case studies to improved degrees of psychological empowerment. In some cases such empowerment is little more than remedial, for example, the counselling and work with raped children in the IFSO programme. Elsewhere a more instrumental approach to empowerment can be found, where it is recognised that improved self confidence and capacity to engage with different stakeholders will permit the achievement of other goals. Whilst for other programmes psychological empowerment is their underlying goal, and the programme become the means to achieve this. It is important to understand the distinction here, as the instrumental view centres around reaching a specific goal and regards empowerment as one of the ways of achieving this. But if empowerment is the goal, then the activities to strengthen self confidence may need to be set in a more flexible framework where activities change depending on responses to them and the development of the engaged population. An example of this would be the IFSO programme to reintegrate families affected by the stigma of HIV/AIDS into their community. Thus the activities and packages of inputs may need to be amended as the programme progresses. Finally, we see other cases where, by default, empowerment is regarded as a positive consequence of a programme. Thus for example, the Yeka rubbish collection programme dwells on the difference between the group involved and their peers, in that their success in an income generating initiative has bred self-confidence and the ability and willingness to negotiate with officials, clients and others.

5.3 The Role of the State

Where local authorities have been supportive, there have been some remarkable results, most notably in REST's Tigray project, the two education programmes (BESO and ABE), the SIDA Amhara initiative and others. However, a negative reaction on the part of the authorities such as that against the Dalocha water programme and the Guaraghe can be damaging. The findings in these case studies also reflect those of the study on Associations,⁴ which notes that there is still a strong residual suspicion of the state amongst most community and civil society groups. Local authorities tend to act more as though they are representatives of the state and the ruling party, rather than working in the service of their electorate. However, a number of positive cases show that the negative attitude of and towards local government is not insurmountable. It is understood that the local authorities are themselves very under-resourced, a fact which is also illustrated in the study of Associations, but this should not be used as an excuse to attempt to control all community resources, nor to disrupt local initiatives. The under-resourcing of local government and state entities should, however, serve as a reminder that even with the greatest of wills, it is unrealistic to expect authorities to respond to all the needs and demands of local communities. The issues concern both the shortage of financial resources and a severe failure to recruit and retain staff, even where posts are approved. As has already been mentioned, this is not a society which has resources that are inequitably distributed. What can be concluded is :

- a) Where the local authorities are provided with resources, (as in the example of the SIDA Amhara initiative) they will need help in dealing with these, whether through technical support, or training in more participatory and democratic approaches.

⁴ A study of organisational association of citizens. Anne Muir et al (INTRAC/World Bank 2004).

b) Local authorities must internalise the concept of service rather than control. This may require senior political leaders to reinforce this message right through the system.

c) Authorities should be encouraged to promote local initiatives. Whilst some regulation is necessary for the public interest, only a light touch is required, otherwise there is a danger that local initiatives will be stifled and constrained.

As noted in the Associations study and reinforced in many of the cases analysed in this report, the strength of communities lies in the degree of trust they have in their own organizations and the access to capital, labour, skills and leadership that these organizations can provide. Programmes should therefore be geared towards enhancing this potential, not constraining it.

5.4 Flexibility and Customised Approaches

The case studies included in the Annex draw upon initiatives in SNNP, Somali, Tigray, Amhara, Oromia, Guaraghe, the cities of Addis and Dire Dawa, and elsewhere. What is clear is that programmes that have had significant success have achieved this because they have adapted to the locality: for example, the focus on traditional management systems in the case of the Borena forest management programme, adapting education to the nature of pastoralism in Jijiga programme, and understanding the specifics of urban poverty in the IFSO and IHA programmes. What is clear in these and other cases is that standardised approaches to local level development are unlikely to be successful. Those recognising and adapting to differences in needs, culture and approach are far more likely to have an impact and to be sustainable.

In the context of Ethiopia, the need to localise responses is a major challenge for those attempting to design national level programmes. The need for adaptation must therefore be written specifically into any design. Frameworks of intentions and overall goals can be agreed nationally, but there should be flexibility to allow adaptation of initiatives that respond to the needs of specific groups. It is clear that, for example, an initiative that functions in a city will not be easily transferable to a pastoral area, especially if the population engages in pastoralism. Attempts in the past to introduce standardised solutions have largely failed, whilst the work with pastoralist children and communities documented here shows how a customised programme has already had more impact on education enrolment and participation than previous programmes. Flexibility within a national programme will create a major challenge for management and monitoring to ensure flexibility is not used as an excuse for poor accountability. This is not an insurmountable challenge however, and one counterbalance solution to this problem is support for local governance, of the sort demonstrated in the BESO education programme.

5.5 Focus on Gender

Careful reading of the case studies reveals an emphasis on improved gender equality in the majority of them. However, even with a great deal of commitment to the issue, there is no pretence that fundamental change is easy to achieve (see the Jijiga Alternative Basic Education Programme for example, where there is a marked increase in the enrolment and retention of girls in school, but at levels still well below

those for boys). There are some promising examples of cases where traditional systems have been adapted and used to promote gender equality and justice (Hundee, Awra Amba), but also an acknowledgement that working with traditional institutions will often mean an initial engagement largely with groups of men. Similarly, several of the cases note the lack of women in leadership positions. Whilst women in Dalocha control their association, it is probably the case that the external pressure they have been under from the local authorities was linked to their gender, and the influence over community affairs that their positions in the association had given them.

Specific issues around gender raised in the case studies included:

- a) Because of their general lower levels of schooling, women will often need basic education in numeracy and literacy if they are to take leading roles in governance and management of community initiatives.
- b) Specific support to women through capacity building will then be needed to assist them in taking on roles such as chairing or financial management.
- c) Cross community/gender/generational programmes are needed to deal with controversial issues (circumcision, domestic violence, land rights etc), which, where possible, could build on traditional law making practices in a gender sensitive manner.

The case studies analysed here show that women's leadership of community initiatives in Ethiopia is not only possible but also potentially very successful. However, considering the general context of women's low social status and levels of education there is still considerable need for programmes that work specifically with women, rather than an approach that 'mainstreams' gender into all existing or proposed programmes. The work of Esther Mehbrahtu⁵ recognises that poverty is pervasive in Ethiopia regardless of gender, generation or ethnicity, but clearly states that women are in a particularly vulnerable position in society and suffer multiple forms of exploitation and prejudice. Ethiopia cannot afford to neglect such a major national resource.

5.6 Approaches to Capacity Building

In terms of capacity building methodologies, a number of initiatives in the case studies are particularly notable for their approach that understands the need for a consistent and 'step by step' methodology. This is employed to develop both individual and group capacities. The SOS Sahel, IHA and Dalocha case studies, amongst others, stress the process of working with groups over time to enable them to take control of their own development programmes and future initiatives and to engage with a combination of other stakeholders. It is clear that these processes cannot be cut short. And again, as noted in the Meket Development Programme, a flexible attitude is needed, to ensure that the pace of training does not overtake the ability of beneficiaries to absorb information.

One problem that has arisen in the Dalocha Women's Water Association is the shortage of women available to take up key positions. Having trained local staff and

⁵ Making the connection between Power and poverty: Ethiopia case study, Esther Mehbrahtu, INTRAC/ World Bank, March 2004

board members, good practice would encourage the rotation of office bearers and other elected officials, but despite intensive and extensive training programmes, there are still not enough women to replace those who have gained from the long term training and are able to run the water association. This study highlights the need for follow up work to ensure a second generation or cohort of women are able to assume responsibilities in the programme and perhaps suggests the need for training of local trainers.

5.7 Working at the Intermediary Level

Although many of our cases document initiatives undertaken in very specific local communities, we should not forget the value of working at a higher level. The CIDA/OXFAM Canada programme on capacity building in the Horn of Africa appears to be responding to an important need in its work to assist a range of agencies in their capacity building programmes.⁶ In general, there have been a lack of attempts to date to work across communities and encourage second level organisations that in turn can provide community level capacity building. Any programme to support civil society initiatives in Ethiopia will have to rely on this type of organisation if it is to both scale up and maintain quality. The experiences of mass capacity building programmes in other parts of the world show that these can often quickly deteriorate into standardised packages of training modules that are poorly adapted to specific contexts and groups of people. The solution to this problem is the use of specialised support groups that can adapt wider lessons and experiences to local language, needs and contexts. The delivery of capacity building will require considerable skills and experience of working at this level. These skills need to go beyond the rather narrow and stilted forms of internal training usually delivered in cascade form through the civil service. More flexible approaches are at present also relatively uncommon in the private sector in Ethiopia, including in non-governmental organizations.

⁶ A similar programme run by Pact Ethiopia was mentioned by many of our contacts as having provided them with important capacity building services.

6. Issues for Future Capacity Building of Civil Society

In light of the government and donor interest in capacity building, this section presents recommendations for future capacity building programmes for civil society drawn from the case studies.

- Firstly there is a need to develop the capacity of local authorities and bring about a change in attitude so that they are more supportive of and positive towards community initiatives. This will require clear messages from senior government officials if it is to counteract the culture of years of centralised command and control of public services. Many local authorities also suffer from severe capacity and resource constraints. It was outside the remit of the studies to question whether it was even economically realistic to maintain some services at Woreda level, whilst there is such under-capacity. The pretence that services existed appeared to raise and then frustrate expectations unnecessarily. Instead, it might be more appropriate to focus on achieving a smaller number of priorities at this level, rather than for Woreda authorities to continue to under-perform across the board.
- Many of the cases have shown that for capacity building to be effective, time must be invested, and a carefully planned strategy developed, rather than relying on an unconnected and unplanned assortment of training courses. Future programmes should also take into account the case for capacity building to address different levels – the community, the organisation and the individual, plus technical support in certain cases – and to be adapted to local cultures and conditions. This approach would argue against the use of standard packages rolled out nationwide.
- Whilst many of the initiatives in the case studies deal with capacity building in terms of service delivery and other development interventions, a smaller number attempted to build the capacity of communities to deal with improved governance. Where this did take place, it was often hindered by the absence of matching programmes in the public sector (with the exception of the education programmes and the SIDA Amhara work). However, several of the cases did record impressive programmes of improved governance of local initiatives and projects through experiences of self-management (see for example the studies of Hundee, Dalocha Women's Water Association and the Dire Dawa Iddir councils). Here citizens were exposed and participated in a more genuine form of local democracy. These cases and the Associations study show the strength of trust and internal democracy within the community groups reviewed.
- The most positive examples of empowerment and local development clearly started from specific community focused strategies, rather than universal or blueprint solutions. They were based on the assumption that communities would engage in an initiative that was formulated in a language and a set of ideas that they could relate to. But it also emerged that most, but admittedly not all, of these community initiatives were based around existing groupings rather than new or introduced configurations. There have often been problems in the past when outside agencies have tried to form groups rather

than build on local types of association.⁷ It may be 'tidy' and less complex to establish new groups, but evidence from the case studies suggest building on local groups and traditions can be a very positive experience.

- Delivery of services can be a strategy through which participants in an intervention both make tangible gains and are encouraged and aided to build confidence and other longer term capacities. However, the danger is that the preoccupation with demonstrating success in service delivery results in the sidelining of other, less tangible, social development goals. For example, elsewhere in the world, micro-finance was seen by many as a potential entry point into community mobilisation. In reality it has been shown to be difficult to comfortably balance the two aims.
- There is a great deal of international experience in what has been called "local institutional development" (after Uphoff). Organizations such as the Aga Khan have also used this model in their programmes. However, working to strengthen local organizations requires serious investigation of what actually constitutes 'institutional development' in each specific context. This should not involve attempts to over-formalise people's movements or groups or to attempt to override their own internally generated solutions.
- Within Ethiopia there appears to be a shortage of good local intermediaries organizations who could become involved in local capacity building. The majority of the case studies showed groups working to specific programme goals, where capacity building was only one aspect of their work. Some of these groups could conceivably transfer their focus and skills to the areas of capacity building for improved local governance and empowerment, given that they already have experience of service delivery and development programmes. The need for more intermediary capacity building services should not be underestimated.

⁷ NGO responses to Urban Poverty, service providers or partners in planning. Dr. Carol Sahley and Dr. Brian Pratt, INTRAC 2003, chapter 3, and section 4.3 Case of Addis.

Summary Conclusions

- 1) The case studies show many example of indigenous agency. These require nurturing and support but often meet with constraints and can suffer from attempts by external actors to take control of them. Because of this, in some cases the population has sought to avoid 'official' recognition and involvement.

The state still needs to work hard to realise the goal of serving its population. The tendency to control remains, but where authorities have softened their attitude towards the innovations and alternative development approaches of local communities there have been some remarkably impressive results.

In order to promote a supportive environment, local implementers of programmes should engage with the local authorities so as to encourage attitudinal change. However, a degree of realism when working with local government is important. There are many unfilled vacancies in local authority offices, both because of lack of resources and a dearth of adequate candidates. Planned programmes should not, therefore, assume that local governments are fully staffed and able to collaborate in development initiatives.

- 2) There are high degrees of trust at community levels within local institutions and civil society associations. These are often based on well tested models and forms of local governance. Programmes which have built on this have shown positive results. However, this level of trust does not easily transfer to the state.

There is a clear need for improved governance within local authorities. This would include making a clearer distinction between paid civil servants, locally elected officials and the party structures. In the minds of many local people, these distinctions do not exist. This weakens governance and undermines confidence in the 'state' apparatus. Recent moves towards democratisation and decentralisation should be encouraged as a way of achieving more transparent governance and allowing local initiatives to flourish.

- 3) Programmes that have tried to build on local traditions have found a more ready acceptance from local people. There is evidence that engaging and working with traditional structures can be productive, as long as certain minimum standards are maintained (particularly with regards to gender). One approach can involve trying to reform traditional systems from within, by working with traditional law making practices.

Bringing about this type of far-reaching change at local level can be very time consuming. However, programmes that ignore or reject traditional attitudes and organisations are less likely to achieve longer term acceptance. Furthermore, any interventions with traditional organizations need to carefully planned: in some cases, traditional forms of organisation seem to have thrived despite, not because of, external 'assistance'.

- 4) There is a need for specialised capacity building suppliers who have experience in participatory methods and community development. Client based models do exist and are used in Ethiopia, but there is a need for greater commitment to these approaches. External interventions that are based on an instrumental view of community participation where beneficiaries are recruited to help the programme succeed, are far less likely to flourish.

The examples in the case studies show that positive, sustainable change is more likely to come about from a longer term and 'stepped', flexible approach to capacity building. Short term, poorly coordinated and managed interventions will not produce the same results as those that centre around the two key variables of time and flexibility.

- 5) The majority of the cases underline the need for specific support to women. This will often involve the practical upgrading of basic education, if they are to participate in higher level activities. Women will need numeracy and literacy skills before they can be trained in organizational management and accounting. This type of capacity will need to be built up over an extended period, given the time pressures and other burdens faced by many Ethiopian women.
- 6) Despite the assertions of some critics, this study has shown that there are good examples of innovative and creative approaches to development in Ethiopia which can be used to plan future programmes. The slow, even negative, national development indicators could possibly be reversed if the lessons of some of these models were used to direct future interventions.

It is, however, important to be realistic about capacity for innovative and responsive development work within the country. It is not unlimited. There is a need for exchange programmes between capacity building suppliers so that they can build up a wider range of experiences and approaches. This should assist front-line workers to improve analysis of local need and deliver the kinds of support required. This will include further training and exposure visits to successful programmes.

- 7) In conclusion, there is little evidence to suggest that universal programmes with standardised indicators will have much impact in Ethiopia. What is shown by the case studies analysed in this report is that any future programme should both be client based and flexible to local conditions and needs. Thus large national programmes must take the local context into account and find ways in which support can be carefully tailored to meet particular needs. A key indicator of future success will be the degree to which this is achieved.