

Think local, act local



Ethiopia

Effective financing of local governments to provide water and sanitation services



A WaterAid report

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Front cover image: WaterAid/Marco Betti

Contents

Recommendations	2
Introduction	3
Section 1	
National sector context	4
Section 2	
Finance for water and sanitation	8
Conclusion	17

Recommendations

- Government and donors should ensure that channel 1a, channel 1b and channel 2 finances are sufficient and flexible enough for woredas to undertake capital expenditure within their competence
- Government, civil society and donors must give sufficient attention and resources to strengthening woredas' capacity to draw up accurate plans and budgets and to coordinate off-budget investments

Introduction

Local governments are key to meeting Universal Access Plan (UAP) targets

Ethiopia began to implement the UAP two years ago. The UAP has far-reaching targets to be met over a shorter timescale than the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). WaterAid believes that local government actors are key to the achievement of the UAP targets.

This report is based on research done on local government financing for water and sanitation in Ethiopia. The local area selected for the study was Tenna woreda, but the findings are supported by other research that we have carried out in Benishangul-Gumuz (WaterAid Ethiopia, 2005),¹ and Oromiya.² Tenna woreda is located 246km away from Addis Ababa, the capital city of Ethiopia. Communities in the area are among the least served in the country. Coverage levels are just 18% for water and 6% for sanitation.

Both WaterAid's policy and practice work seek to strengthen local governments' ability to provide equitable and pro-poor water and sanitation services. The research framework was designed to explore the influence of decentralisation and water sector policy and institutional arrangements on local level financing. The underlying assumption is that, in a decentralised context, greater control and influence of local governments on adequate local financing of water and sanitation services will result in improved service delivery. This study does not set out to prove or disprove that decentralisation can effectively contribute to poverty reduction, but rather to explore how it can be made to work more effectively. The focus of the study falls then on financing mechanisms and how these impact upon the decentralised delivery of water and sanitation.

Woreda water offices have responsibility for the construction and maintenance of hand-dug wells and the development of springs, whereas other types of technologies like boreholes and deep wells are constructed and rehabilitated by the regional water bureaux. The contribution of woredas to the achievement of the UAP targets is critical, and yet they frequently have insufficient resources to carry out their mandate. In-depth study of the finance available for water supply and sanitation in Tenna throws light on the need to ensure workable water supply and sanitation financing arrangements for the lowest level of government.

¹ WaterAid Ethiopia (2005) *Financial Accountability Study of Local Government: the case of Benshangul Gumuz Menge woreda*.

² WaterAid Ethiopia/RIPPLE (2006) *Finance component of scoping visit to Oromiya, Metha woreda*.

Section 1

National sector context

Policy: The government of Ethiopia developed a water resource management policy in 1999, the goal being to enhance and promote all national efforts towards efficient, equitable and optimum utilisation of the available water resources. In 2001 the Water Sector Strategy was developed to use as a ‘road map’ towards realising the fundamental principles, objectives and goals of the water sector policy.

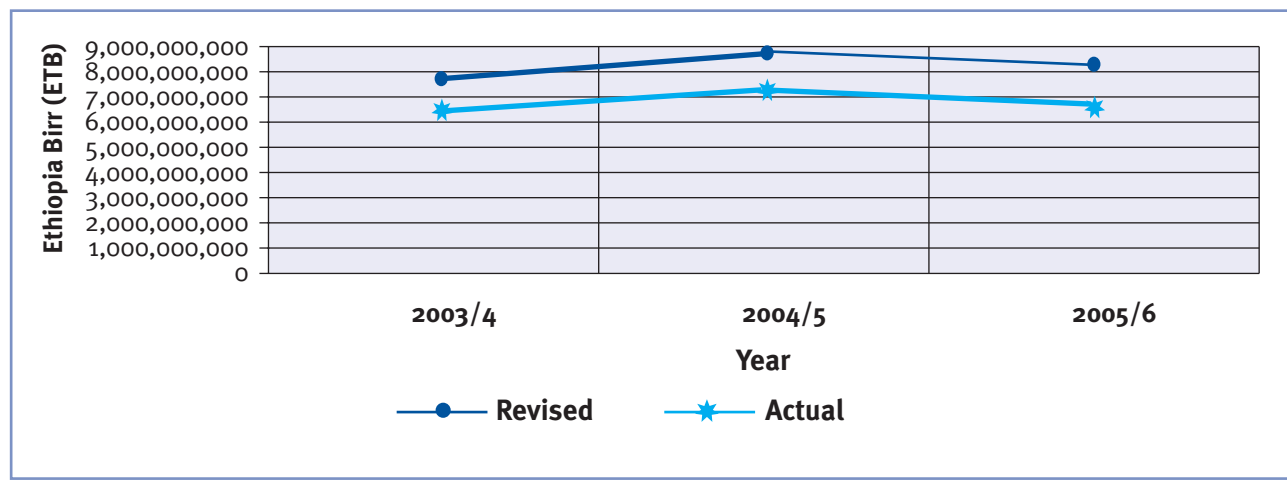
The government’s political commitment to the improvement of the sector was further embedded through the preparation of the Water Sector Development Programme (WDSP) in 2002 and the UAP in 2006, providing a policy framework with a seven-year timeframe. The UAP aims to increase rural access to potable water from 35% in 2005 to 98% in 2012 by constructing 149,024 new schemes and rehabilitating 48,510. The programme aims to increase rural access to latrines from 17.5% to 100% by constructing 13,388,678 latrines. The UAP targets enjoy strong political support at the federal level but have not been fully assimilated into regional planning, and even less so at woreda level. More guidance is needed on how the UAP targets can be integrated into regional and woreda level sector planning and budgeting.

The government drafted the ‘National Protocol for Hygiene and On-Site Sanitation’ in 2006. The primary objective of the protocol is to improve implementation of the national strategy for hygiene and on-site sanitation improvement at local authority level. It provides a basis for comprehensive budgeting, investment and sector coordination. The protocol seeks to enable universal coverage of community-led improved hygiene and improved ‘on-site’ sanitation in Ethiopia.

Finance: Implementation of the UAP will cost ETB12.5 billion. As of December 2007, 54% of this total sum had been mobilised. On the basis of data compiled by the World Bank,³ sector financing is dominated by donor funding (92% during 2006), and the national contribution to the sector budget had been declining. The key donors are the World Bank, the African Development Bank and the Department for International Development (DFID). Donor funding to the water and sanitation sector has increased sharply during recent years, largely because of the political attention given to the sector in national poverty reduction strategies, and the serious financial gap that needed to be addressed. The government of Ethiopia and donors developed a financing strategy which outlined a set of key recommendations to ensure a sustainable financing stream for the water supply and sanitation sector in Ethiopia. It gives due attention to the development of local revenue generation for ongoing operations, maintenance, rehabilitation and the expansion of coverage. However, it does not clearly address the question of how funds get down to local governments.

³ EU Water Initiative (November 2006) *Financing Strategy for the Water Supply and Sanitation sector, Ethiopia, Executive Report, Final*.

Figure 1: Trends in the national level budget utilisation during the past three years



Source: World Bank Ethiopia Country Office (unpublished)

Coordination

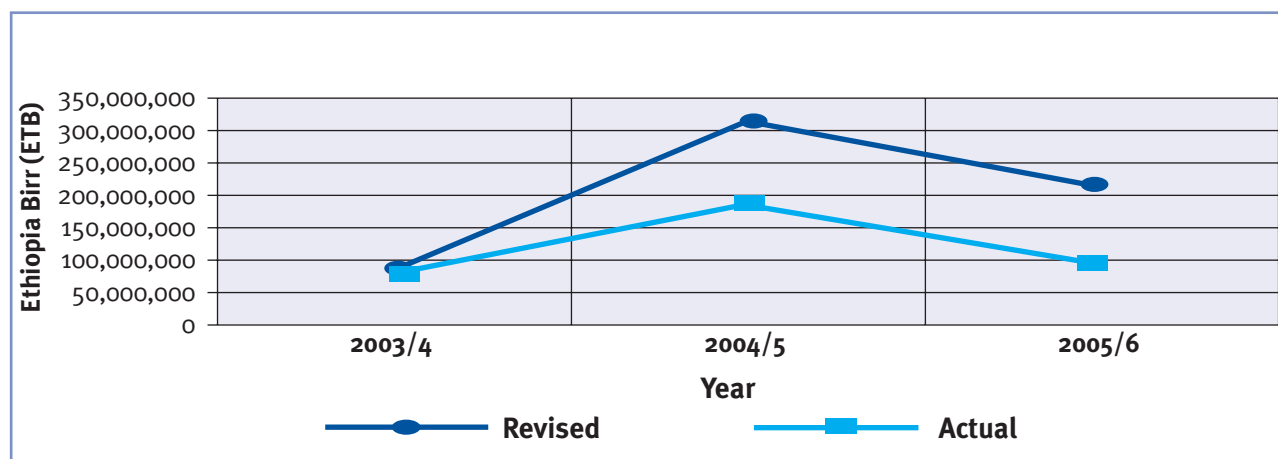
The European Union Water Initiative (EUWI) country dialogue was launched in 2005 in an effort to improve coordination of sector actors and investments. Real progress has been made – the first multi-stakeholder forum (MSF) was held in 2006 and nine key undertakings were agreed. The second MSF noted significant progress in joint ways of working, and welcomed, in particular, progress towards the harmonisation and alignment of finance flows. The move towards a sector-wide approach is likely to make sector finance less piecemeal.

Non-utilisation of sector finance has been a problem both at regional and federal level. A significant part of the available budget for water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) is not spent during any particular year. For example, Tayler and Winpenny (2006)⁴ estimate that only 61% of the available budget was spent in 2005/06. CARE (2007)⁵ report that the utilisation of the capital budget allocated to the water sector in Benishangul-Gumuz region has averaged only 42% over the previous seven years. At the end of each financial year, any unused capital budget at the regional level is claimed back by the federal government. CARE estimate that this has amounted to a missed opportunity to provide services to 70,000 people (or around 10% of the population of the region) over a seven-year period. Factors contributing to low utilisation of finance in Benshangul-Gumuz region include lack of personnel, delay in the release of funds, absence of effective mechanisms to manage the finance, weak capacity of local contractors, and a lack of spare parts and other materials.

⁴ Tayler and Winpenny (2006) *Options for DFID support to the water and sanitation sector in Ethiopia – pre-appraisal report.*
⁵ CARE (2007) *Report of review findings – Sultan Wereda, Oromia Region, Ethiopia.*

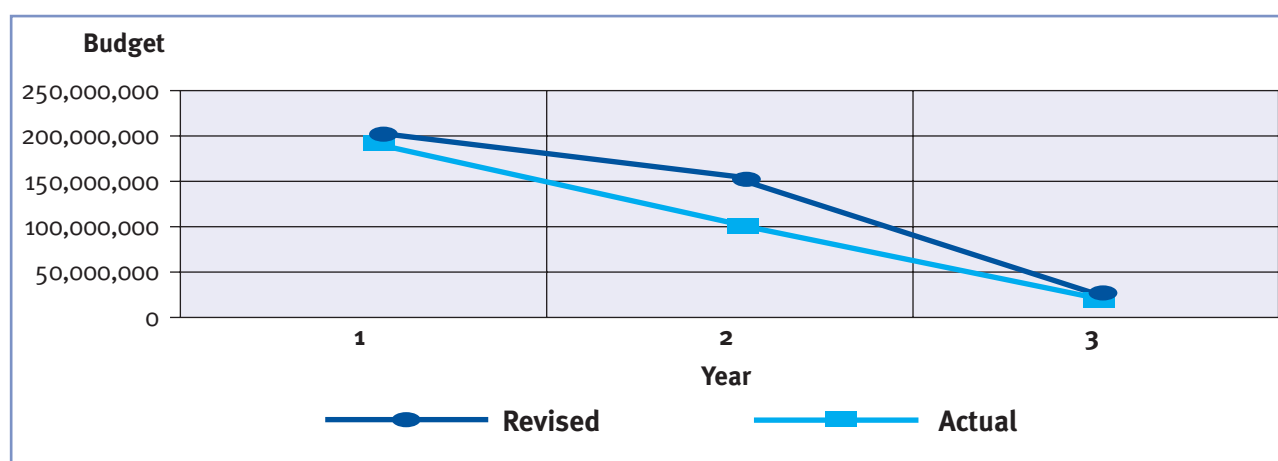
Section 1

Figure 2: Trends in the federal level budget utilisation during the past three years



Source: World Bank Ethiopia Country Office (unpublished)

Figure 3: Trends in the regional level budget utilisation during the past three years



Source: World Bank Ethiopia Country Office (unpublished)

Decentralisation: roles and responsibilities for water and sanitation

Decentralisation in Ethiopia is by devolution. The 1995 Constitution defines the powers and functions of the federal government and those of nine regional states. Regional states promulgated regional constitutions in the same year and revised them in 2001. A second wave of decentralisation to woredas was initiated in 2002. There are elected councils at each level and each tier of government has assigned revenue and expenditure obligations.

Water and sanitation institutions are arranged according to the decentralisation policy. There is the Federal Ministry of Water Resources at national level, regional water bureaux, zonal water desks and woreda water offices. The federal, regional and local government are assigned with different mandates (see Box 1). In principle, these mandates need to be reflected in the planning and budgeting process and in terms of allocation of national resources to different levels. In practice, control of the budgets lies with federal and regional levels, and a very small volume of finance is transferred through the block grant to the local level for capital expenditure.

Box 1: Roles and responsibilities for water supply and sanitation

Institution	Roles and responsibility
Federal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Policy setting: preparation and enforcement of policies, standards, and regulations ● Technical assistance to regional bureaux for big projects ● National database development ● Coordination and resource mobilisation for the Water Fund
Regional water bureaux	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Preparation of regional policies and regulations ● Study, design, supervision and regulation of water supply projects ● Construction of schemes: spring developments, small and large gravity schemes, motorised schemes, boreholes and shallow wells ● Contract out to the private sector ● Build the capacity of zonal and woreda water offices ● Set water tariffs
Zonal water offices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Capacity building and technical support to the woreda ● Implementation and monitoring assignments from regional bureaux ● Operation and maintenance in complex cases
Woreda water desks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Construction and maintenance of hand-dug wells and spring developments ● Monitoring construction done by regional bureaux or private contactors contracted by the bureaux ● Simple operation and maintenance
Peasant associations/ <i>kebeles</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Community mobilisation and contributions of labour and/or cash ● Site selection

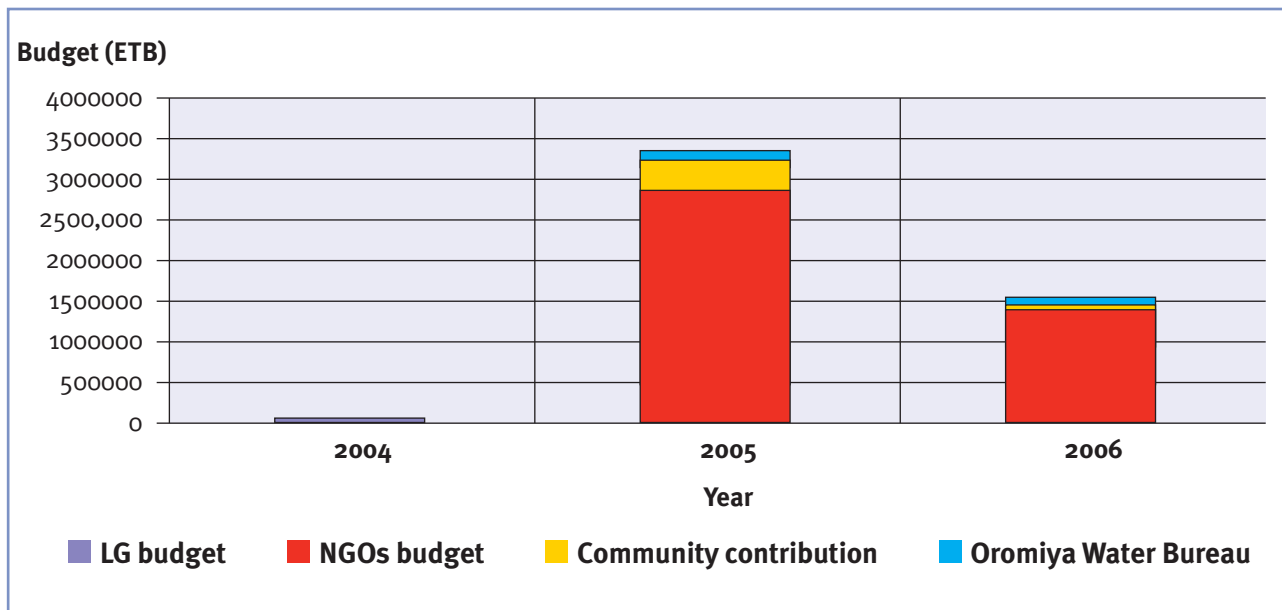
Section 2

Finance for water and sanitation

Snapshot of finance for water and sanitation in Tenna woreda

The per capita income for the local government budget revealed an increasing trend (\$8.7, \$10.3 and \$12.8 during 2004/5, 2005/6 and 2006/7 respectively). Before 2004, the overall capital budget for water supply in Tenna was dismally low. On-budget per capita capital expenditure for water supply was on average ETB 0.27 (USD 0.03), very low when compared with the average per capita costs required to construct a simple hand-dug well (ETB40; equivalent \$4.4 at \$1 = ETB9).⁶ However, non governmental organisation capital investments in water and sanitation began in 2005. This increased the budget available for capital expenditure (albeit off the woreda budget) over the consecutive years as indicated in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Trends in the share of different sources in the capital budget of WSS in Tenna



Source: produced from data compiled by Tenna Office of Finance and Economic Development (OFED)

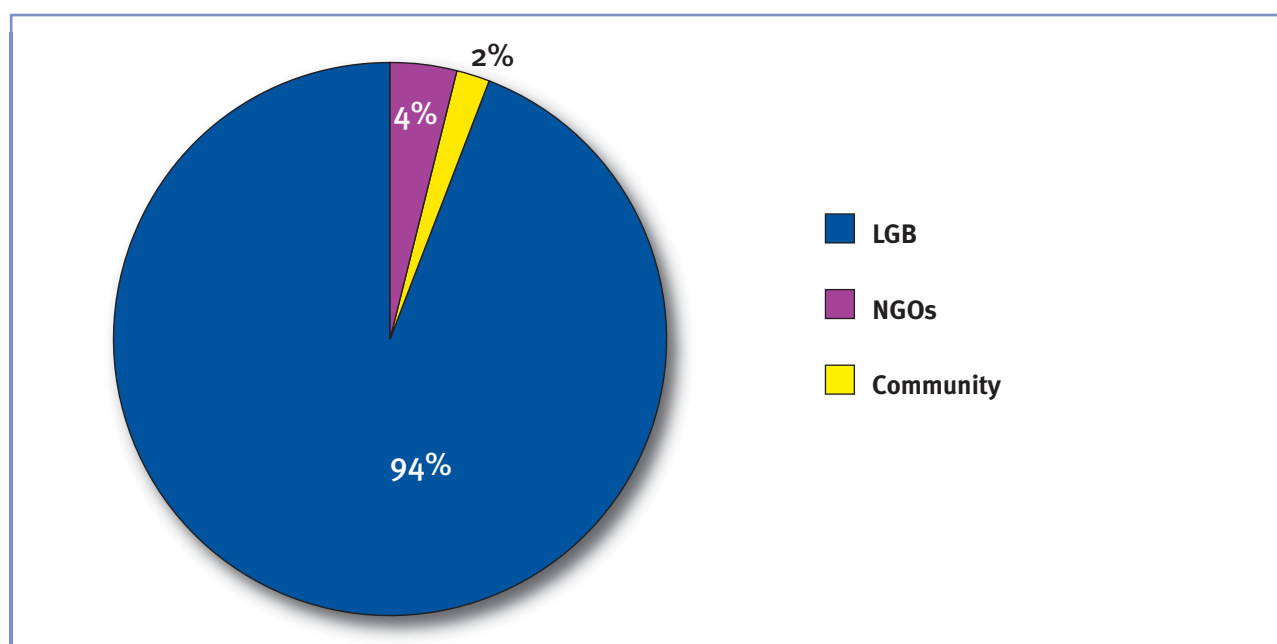
⁶ EU Water Initiative (November 2006) *Financing strategy for water and sanitation sector in Ethiopia*, p 16.

Where do woredas get their funds?

Overall, local level income is dominated by a **block grant** which comes from the regional bureau of finance and economic development. Woredas have been financed through a block grant allocated by region or woreda block grant and their own revenue since 2002, following political and functional decentralisation. The regional block grant accounts for 80-90% of the woreda/local government budget. All regional governments receive the general purpose grant which is divided up among regions using a formula proposed by the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development (MoFED) and approved by the House of Federation. Similarly, local governments receive block grants which are divided up among woredas using a formula proposed by the Bureau of Finance and Economic Development (BoFED) and approved by the regional council.

Off-budget funding represents about six percent of the local income. Despite low levels of water and sanitation coverage in the local area, there is no **sector funding** coming to Tenna woreda. Though there has been considerable external/donor funding to the sector, very few woredas receive sector funds. Instead, regions directly implement sector projects in selected woredas.

Figure 5: Snapshot of local financing in Tenna (average of 2005 and 2006)



Source: Office of Finance and Economic Development, Tenna woreda

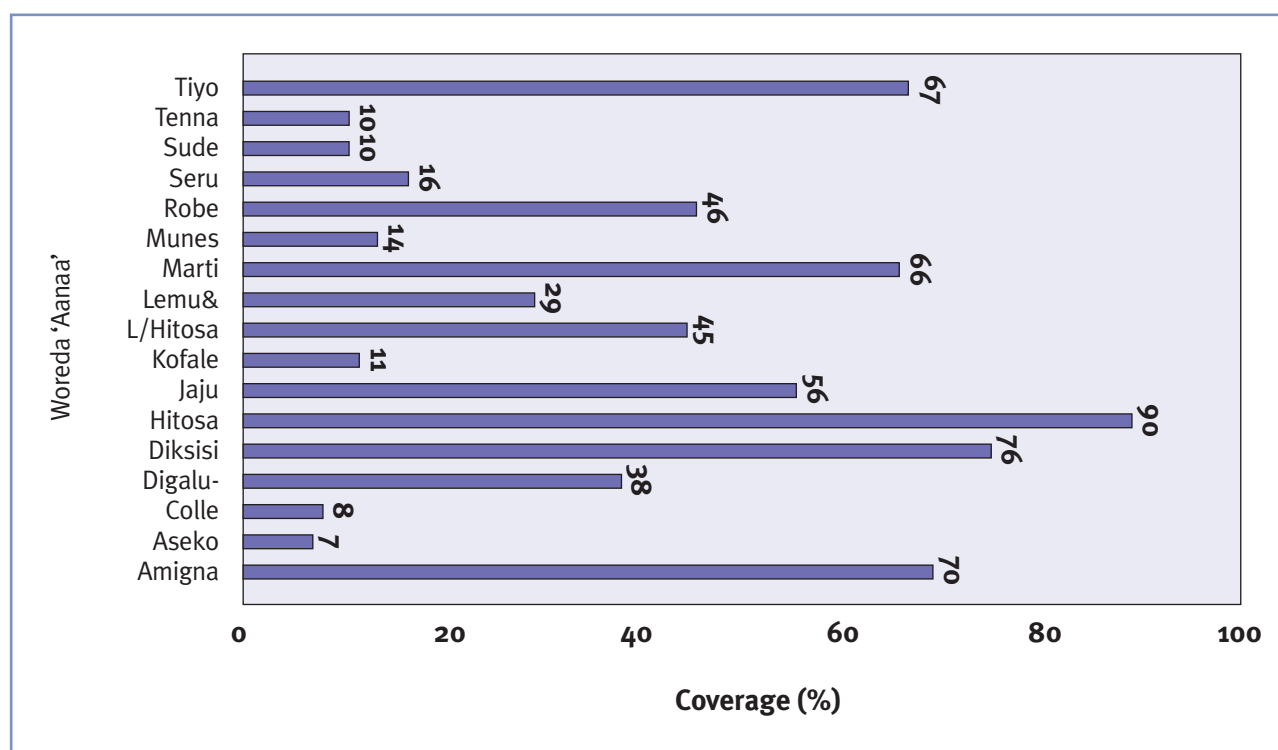
Lack of adequate devolution of sector funding to woredas means that they have insufficient resources available to take up their capital expenditure assignments. Most capital expenditure is through off-budget routes. Most of the block grant is absorbed by recurrent expenditure. The Water and Sanitation Programme (WSP) (2004)⁷ indicated that more than 95% of the woreda budget is spent on recurrent expenditure (salaries). The study in Tenna woreda also found that the zone, following directives from the Regional Bureau of Finance, has been known to limit allocation of capital expenditure to five percent of the woreda budget, contrary to the decentralisation policy.

⁷ Water and Sanitation Program (WSP) (2004) *Ethiopia Water Supply Sector Resources Flows Assessment, Sector finance working paper: No. 10.*

Section 2

A dependence on off-budget funding for capital expenditure leads to inequitable investment which in turn results in huge variation in coverage. This is illustrated by the following graph based on data obtained from Oromiya Water Resources Bureau (Figure 5). The region usually faces shortages of finance, and sectoral projects are implemented only in certain woredas. Off-budget investments in some woredas like Hitosa, where WaterAid has worked for many years, have increased the coverage. Unfortunately, the current financing system doesn't address this problem of inequity in capital financing.

Figure 6: Variation in the coverage of water in selected woredas of Arsi zone, Oromiya

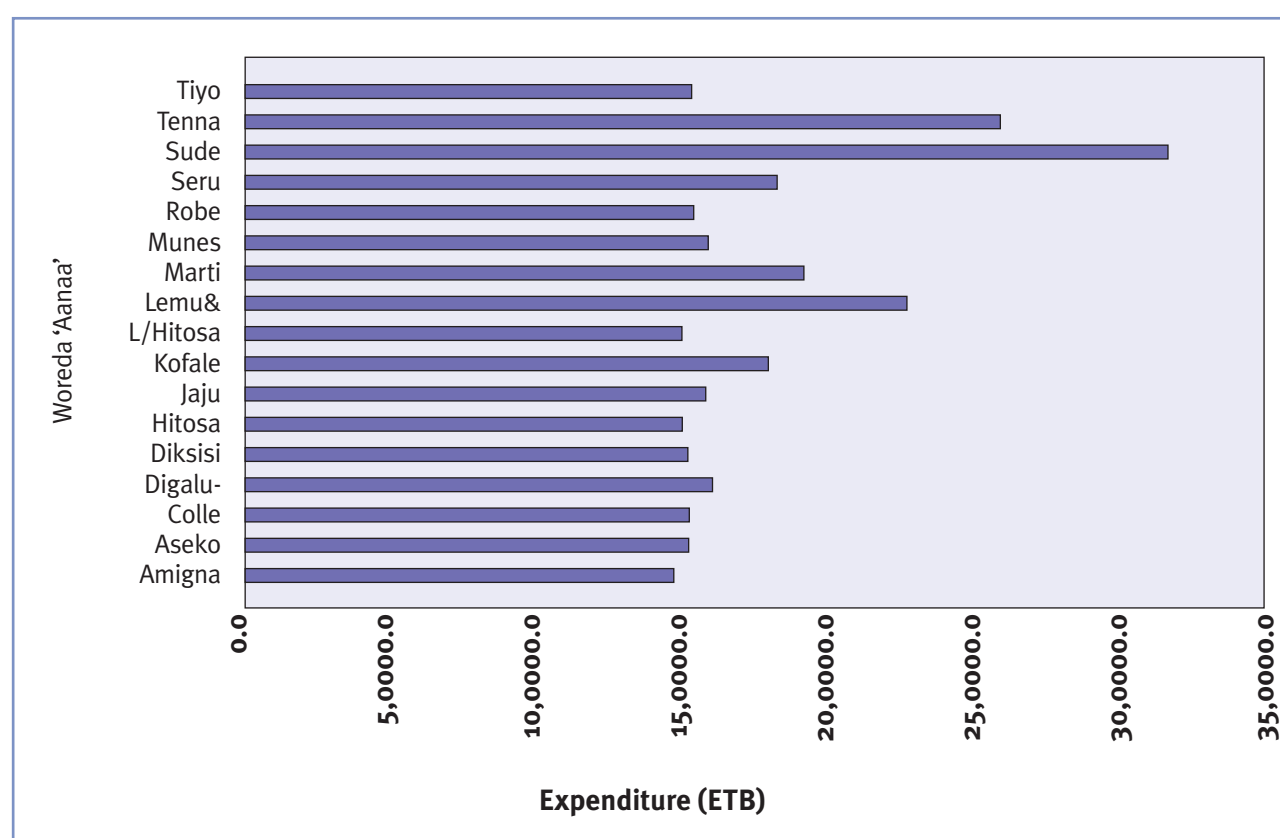


Source: produced from data compiled by Oromiya Water Resources Bureau, 2006.

Oromiya region allocates 40% of the federal transfer to regional bureaux and 60% to woredas as block grants. In theory, the region uses the unit cost approach (based on total population and population served with clean water) to determine the sectoral expenditure needs. For example, Oromiya Water Resources Bureau estimated the expenditure need for the water sector in Tenna to be ETB2,588,68 for 2006/7 or \$28,763⁸ for 2006 project year. However, the actual allocation was ETB83,678 or \$9,298, of which only ETB30,000 or \$3,333 was capital expenditure. In other words, only 32% of the required budget was transferred to the water office. Figure 6 shows the expenditure requirement for woredas in Arsi zone.

⁸ US\$1=ETB9

Figure 7: Expenditure requirement for water supply in selected woredas of Arsi zone, Oromiya



Source: produced from data compiled by Oromiya Water Resources Bureau, 2006

How do funds flow to woredas?

Until recently, funding for woredas flowed through three main channels:

Channel 1 is 'on-budget' and 'on-treasury' and is managed by the Federal Ministry of Finance and Economic Development (MoFED), Regional Bureaux of Finance and Economic Development (BoFEDs) and by woreda finance offices. A new formula to determine the allocation to regions has been recently approved by the House of Federation. Allocation to woredas by regions are made on the basis of sector unit costs and development indicators including population, mean revenue, school age population, number of teachers, number of health workers, costs of living, number of livestock and farming households, total area and size of urban population.

Woredas usually receive a large portion of their budget through block grants. In theory, the woreda has the power to decide on allocation of funds from the block grant. In practice, however, most of the grant is absorbed by recurrent costs. Any remaining budget for capital (five percent of the total budget in the case of Tenna woreda) is decided on the basis of the written directives from the zonal finance and economic development office, with the result that the woreda has no autonomy on allocation of capital expenditures.

Section 2

Channel 2 funds are made available to the Ministry of Water Resources (MoWR), then allocated to the Bureaux of Water Resources (BoWRs) and are then channelled down to woreda water offices; these funds are ‘on-budget’ but not ‘on-treasury’. Decisions on which regions and woredas benefit from these funds are usually made at federal level and the criteria used are not clear to regions and/or woredas. Donors may apply different criteria to select woredas for investment. Woredas are rarely involved in programme design and implementation. Regions have a limited role in approving, coordinating, and monitoring and evaluation of sector programmes. Some of the challenges faced by regions include the problem of raising matching funds for implementation, lengthy processes and complex procurement procedures, as well as lack of implementation capacity.

Box 2: Matching funds⁹

Sectoral projects implemented in Ethiopia like the Water Supply and Sanitation Project funded under the World Bank programme require a 10-15% matching fund from the regions. Allocation of matching funds to these sectoral projects is problematic for many reasons. The projects bypass MoFED and BoFED, and, as a result, the required matching funds are not budgeted for. Woredas cannot raise enough resources to allocate matching funds to sector projects. There needs to be greater sensitivity to different poverty levels and/or capacity to pay across regions/localities. Differences in the fiscal calendar for the government and donors affect allocation of matching funds as the timeline for budgeting passes by the time donor funds come to regions. Similarly, differences in the use of funding channels affect allocation of matching funds because channel 2 bypasses BoFED. Some of these challenges will hopefully be solved with the shift of most donors, including the World Bank, to channel 1b.

Channel 3 funds are generally transferred directly to service providers and are often entirely ‘off-budget’ as far as MoFED is concerned. These funds come from non governmental organisations (international or national) and other donors.

The WASH financing mechanisms study¹⁰ recommended the creation of a new channel – **Channel 1b**, through which sectoral funds could be channelled as a special grant, using MoFED, BoFEDs and WoFEDs in key disbursement and reporting processes. Some donors have pledged their support for the pooling of funds to be disbursed via channel 1b, but it is still unclear whether this is happening in practice and what impact this arrangement will have on the water and sanitation budgets of those woreda with the lowest levels of coverage.

This shift is to be accompanied by:

- Simplification of disbursement mechanisms so that funds are transferred and reimbursed more quickly
- Strengthening of procurement systems so that woredas are supported to employ contractors, to make purchases of spare parts, etc. more quickly and for better value for money

⁹ Taken from the RiPPLE Finance Theme case study on Matching Funds (2007). RiPPLE stands for Research-inspired Policy and Practice Learning in Ethiopia and the Nile Region, a DFID-funded, ODI-led consortium project currently hosted by WaterAid in Ethiopia.

¹⁰ Mike Thomson (2007) *Diagnostic assessment of existing financing mechanisms to inform the operationalisation of the Joint Financing Agreement, Ethiopia water supply, sanitation and hygiene sector.*

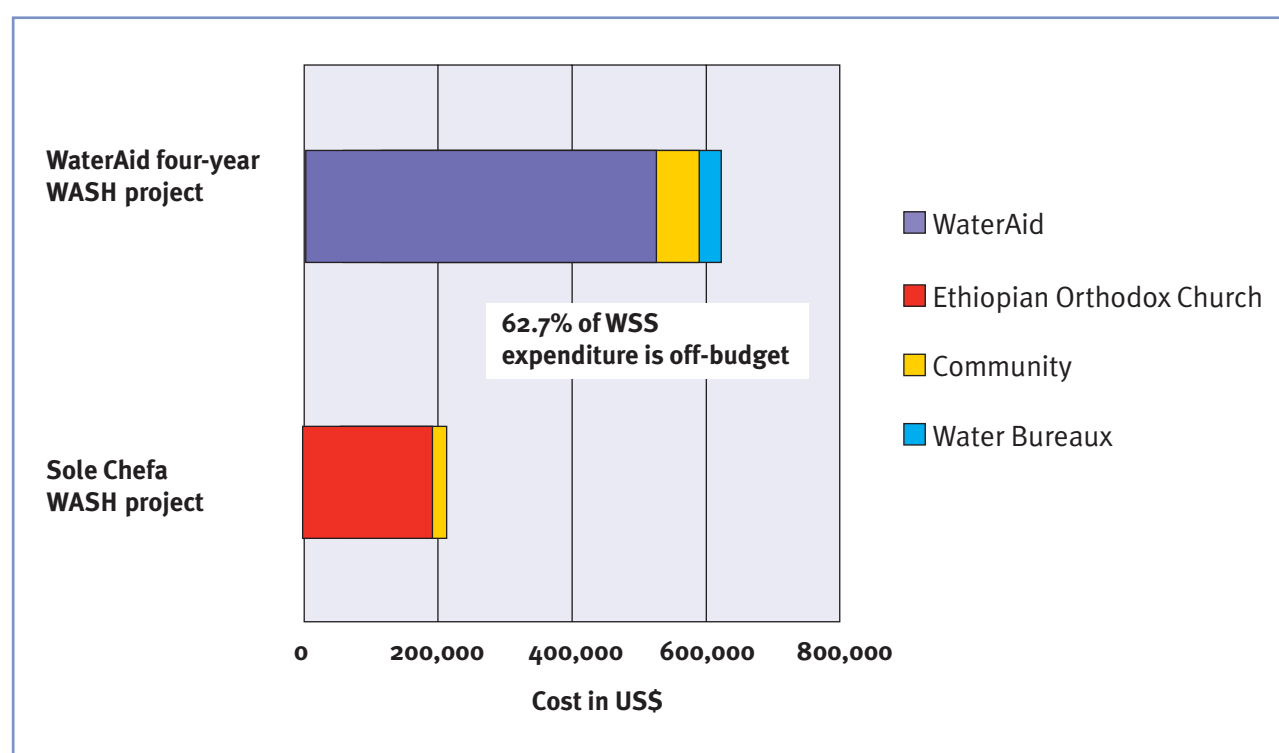
- Improvement of monitoring and evaluation systems so that financial and non-financial elements are better integrated
- Development of stronger audit systems so that there is more chance that resources are spent for intended purpose and so that there is regular review of operational processes and suggestions for improvement

Analysis of local expenditure

Prior to 2004 – when the water desk was under the office of agriculture and rural development – no budget was allocated to provide WASH services. This trend persisted even after the water desk became an independent office responsible to the zonal water resources department. The water office is not represented in the cabinet, unlike other sectors, and is therefore unable to defend its budget during budget hearing, while other sector offices have the chance to defend theirs.

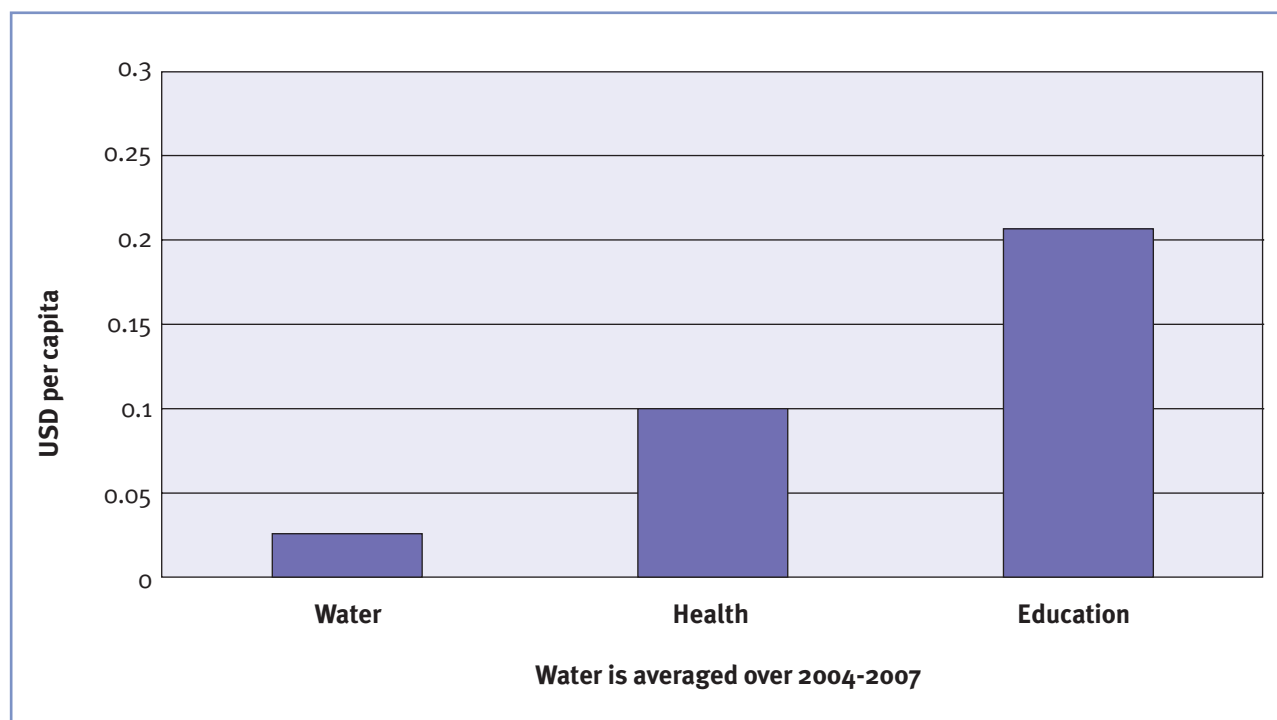
Evidence shows that at the local level capital expenditure on water supply and sanitation is extremely low. Non governmental organisations' investment in the water sector accounts for 64% of capital expenditure, community contribution accounts for 33% and the remaining three percent comes from the government. On-budget per capita capital expenditure is very low and inconsistent (\$0.03 during 2004/5, 0 during 2005/6, \$0.05 during 2006/7) for water. Compared to other sectors this per capita is relatively lower (education is \$0.25; health is \$0.12).

Figure 8: Three years (2004 to 2006) average of on-budget per capita capital expenditure for three sectors



Section 2

Figure 9: On-budget per capita capital expenditure



Box 3: Local Investment Grant (LIG)

LIG is a conditional grant designed jointly by the World Bank and the government of Ethiopia to be funded primarily by the former and any other interested donors. LIG is to be used only for capital investment and is available to any woredas, local municipalities and town administrations. It will be administered by the latter and aims at enhancing investment opportunities that are considered a priority for improved service delivery at the respective local jurisdiction.

LIG has potential to change the current budgetary bias towards recurrent allocations. It will have a considerable impact on increasing capital expenditure at lower levels. In order to make LIG effective, the government of Ethiopia and the World Bank have already agreed that the LIG should be formula-based and may start by using the current block grant formula. There are no offset clauses from the current block grant system, and any unused funds from previous years shall be carried forward to the total transfer pool.

Coordination

Tenna woreda has 13 kebeles¹¹ – 11 rural and two urban. The woreda water desk received a capital budget of ETB15,000 during 2004/5 to develop three springs in three kebeles, and ETB30,000 as matching funds to the non governmental organisation WASH project in one kebele. The WaterAid WASH project is designed to cover five kebeles. WaterAid and the Ethiopian Orthodox Church have invested in different kebeles. The water desk developed three springs in the other three kebeles. This kind of local coordination improves equity in the delivery of WASH services and avoids duplication.

Transparency and accountability

Processes for upward accountability are clearly defined in financial regulations and budget proclamations, but in practice, reporting is late and performance reporting is not standardised across woredas.

The water desk reports on physical achievements to the zone water department and the zone water department consolidates and submits a report to the regional water bureau. The water desk reports on financial expenditure to the woreda office of finance and economic development (OFED), and the OFED reports to the zonal finance and economic development desk (ZoFED), and ZoFED consolidates and submits to BoFED. Federal level expenditure is audited by the general auditor directly responsible to the Prime Minister. The regional and woreda level expenditures are audited by the regional auditors. For projects implemented at woreda level there is an inspection unit within the office of finance and economic development.

There is no established ‘downward’ accountability mechanism. In principle, both government and non-government actors should be accountable to the citizens (the end users). The community can make their views known through the kebele chairperson who reports to the woreda administrator. In principle, elected representatives are accountable to their constituencies but in practice there is no clear mechanism to ensure that citizens are involved in planning, implementation, and performance monitoring. Low capacity and insufficient skills of elected community representatives further limit ‘downward’ accountability.

Transparency in sharing information with regard to WASH financing is still a problem in the local area. Non-government actors share their project plans with the local government but there is no developed mechanism for the local government to bring other actors into planning and financial/performance monitoring. Community involvement in the planning process needs to go beyond the sharing of plans with the members of the woreda council. A system is needed which allows communities to engage meaningfully in the identification and prioritisation of their needs throughout the planning process.

¹¹ Kebele is the smallest political unit in the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. It is interchangeably used with ‘ganda’ in local language, ‘peasant association’, and ‘kebele administration’.

Sustainability

In most woredas there is insufficient finance for the operation and maintenance of existing schemes. This leads to a high non-functionality rate. To address this problem and sustain operation and maintenance services, woredas must allocate a budget for operation and maintenance based on per capita requirement indicated in the financing strategy. Donors and/or regional governments should also invest in the building of capacity for private and community water service providers to take up operation and maintenance. This would require a reformulation of law/proclamation for privatising operation and maintenance.

Equity

The poorest of the poor are not being reached for various reasons. First, funds available for the local government are very limited and benefit the more accessible villages. Secondly, few government staff have adequate training in social ranking and the identification of poverty pockets. Thirdly, the UAP aims to reach full coverage of water supply and sanitation services by 2012. This implies that all the rural and urban population living without safe drinking water and sanitation are, by default, targeted. In other words, there is no clearly defined strategy to target the most vulnerable groups.

Woreda capacity to plan and budget

Local-level planning is weak for many reasons, including limited information on coverage, limited understanding of national/regional targets, limited information regarding off-budget investments, and a lack of technical skills. Developing information systems and building local capacity is of paramount importance.

The capacity building pooled fund currently being developed could play a significant role in creating capacity at local level, provided that it is designed in such a way that it will benefit key local actors. It has three windows and each window has planned activities and a challenge fund. The second window has the potential to address the problem of local capacity if the manual is designed in such a way that local-level actors get access to the fund in creating their capacity, especially in drawing accurate plans and budgets.

Conclusion and the way forward

Blockages

This report highlights some of the key blockages relating to water and sanitation service provision at local level. These include:

- Very low levels of WSS capital expenditure made by woredas, further constrained by region/zone influence (eg limiting capital expenditure to five percent)
- Low capacity of woredas to plan – due to lack of information on coverage and lack of human and financial resources
- Lack of coordination with non-state actors active in local area – off-budget projects are not adequately linked to the local plans
- Weak downward accountability (woreda to community) reflected by lack of mechanisms which allow citizens to participate in planning, provide feedback and play a role in monitoring
- Weak upward accountability – late and inaccurate expenditure reporting and documentation

Ways forward

Federal government

- Ensure that local governments have the resources for both recurrent and capital expenditures that are required to deliver ambitious national targets
- Ensure clarity and respect of institutional roles and responsibilities in line with decentralisation
- Provide incentives for local governments to develop more inclusive, participatory and accurate plans and budgets
- Provide incentives for local governments to exercise participatory, transparent and accountable service delivery

Regional government

- Ensure capacity support to woredas in drawing up accurate plans and budgets, and implementing water supply and sanitation services
- Make sector expenditure requirements a criterion in allocating woreda block grants; and be clear about the allocation criteria in order to assist local governments during their budget process

- Empower local governments to take up more responsibilities in the provision of water and sanitation services and allocate resources for them to do this

Local government

- Develop mechanisms for participatory planning and budgeting
- Reflect and learn from previous plans and budgets to improve the quality and accuracy of woreda plans and budgets
- Identify and address challenges to timely expenditure reporting

Donors

- Provide for financial and other support to local governments in drawing up plans and budgets
- Monitor the smooth flow of finances to local government level with particular reference to channel 1b and channel 2 funding
- Support the design of equitable and effective inter-governmental transfers that allocate recurrent and capital expenditures on the basis of sector demands

Civil society organisations

- Contribute to and support local-level planning and budgeting by sharing information (planning, investments, reporting) with local government
- Report investments in the water and sanitation sector to the national, regional and local governments
- Provide financial and other support to local governments in drawing up local plans, monitoring and evaluation
- Participate in local, regional and national level dialogue on sector performance



Notes

Notes

Think local, act local

Finance for water supply and sanitation is not reaching local authorities charged with providing services. This report maps out the key blockages and systemic weaknesses that need to be addressed in order to move the water and sanitation sector forward.



WaterAid's mission is to overcome poverty by enabling the world's poorest people to gain access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene education.

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