

Mechanisms for

Mapping and Relating to local institutions:

A Pilot Study on NGOs -- Community-Based and
Civil Society Organisations in Ethiopia.

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Findings and **RECOMMENDATIONS**

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Abbreviations and acronyms

CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
NGOs	Non Governmental Organisations
Oromo, Amhara, Kembata, Guraghe, Tigray, Gedeo, Wolayta and Gamo	Regional ethno-linguistic grouping where the study has been undertaken
Council of Senecha, Debo, Jigie, Ye Joka, Bayto, Woyane	Social political organisations
Senbete, Mahber, Edir, Equib	A political movement from Tigray
Bete Kihnet	Social associations
TPLF	The Church's HQ
GCA	Tigrayan Peoples Liberation Front
ALF	Global Coalition for Africa
Peasant Association, Service Co-operative	Africa Leadership Forum
	Official organisations of the peasants

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Foreword

The current dynamics of political change and opportunities for political participation in governance in Africa are unprecedented. A significant challenge, however, is to place these dynamics in a coherent perspective and within the context of basic principles of democracy and good governance, and determine how, in the implementation of such principles, relevant experiences may be shared between and within African countries.

This study aims to facilitate the definition of indigenous ideas and systems which embody and institutionalise good governance and political pluralism within the context of African cultural traditions by promoting increased understanding of the process and requirements of democratic transition. **While it is of fundamental importance that communities themselves define approaches to, and processes of, participation, democracy and good governance, it is also necessary that such approaches be synthesised with universal principles of democracy which assure both political contestation and political participation.** Without this, political transitions may well result in varying degrees of political liberalisation, but not functioning democracies.

From a policy perspective, the study has provided information which will enable policy makers to identify the institutional gaps that inhibit a transition to democracy. They will then be faced with the challenge of identifying ways and means of

- **helping to foster institutions which currently do not exist;**
- **reorienting institutions which have been diverted to non-democratic ends;**
- **building in-country capacity for democratic governance on the basis of African demand and with a minimum of outside expertise.**

Although the study itself is concerned with mapping and relating to civil society in Ethiopia, it is recognised that **consolidation and sustainability** are major issues. In this regard it is hoped that increased understanding of the processes, problems and requirements of democratic transition might also lead to increased awareness of such concerns as how political change might be sustained in a conflict-free environment, what is required to prevent a relapse into old practices, how those democratic principles inherent in traditional societies might be drawn upon, and what socio-economic conditions are necessary to underpin the process of political reform.

Many finger at the major problem inherent in the political transition in Ethiopia as being the extreme weakness of the home-grown middle class organisations and social movements and their failure to develop coherent strategies for promoting broad based and well organised citizenry. Indeed, this claim is grounded on the fact that some of the salient features that underlie the socio-economic and class formation of the Ethiopian society make it difficult to preserve and consolidate democracy. These are

- there are few, if any independent functional civil organisations with the requisite skills to interact and interface with the political establishment.
- The middle class comprising the intellectuals, the entrepreneurs and others who could be materially independent, politically organised and ideologically assertive in playing a prominent role in the founding and leadership of civic organisations and in articulating shared universal values are distinctly absent in the country.
- the lack of opportunities for self organised civil associations, whose functions are to preserve basic rights of its constituents and the society at large, educate the citizens and advocate popular claims, build a consensus and promote political and moral ethical values and disseminate them among the populace, it has become difficult to nurture a sense of civil society. The Ethiopian State is too powerful in the face of an embryonic and weak civil society; resulting in a complete absence of space for effective civic participation of the citizenry in national life.¹

Despite these facts, the common assumption that the proliferation of social organisations, mainly indigenous non-governmental organisations, is in and of itself an index of democratisation is contested. The assumption seems plausible. After all, what is more obvious in projects of democratic transition than the goal of increasing the number of CSOs and other social institution's that will build stronger civil societies that in turn spawns favourable conditions for the growth of democracy in Ethiopia? Nevertheless, the assumption is open to question!

The growing number and diversity of grassroots organisations mean that the organisations have very uneven political and professional capabilities, and differing levels of commitment to processes of democratisation. They provide a range of social, humanitarian and relief services of varying proximity and relevance to the ends and purposes of democratic reform. They do not function simply as instruments to those ends, but have their own inclinations, concerns and motivations, which democratisation of politics and societies must take into account.²

¹ It is clear that for the current democratic movement experiments to survive, a balance should be created between the State and civil society which function as an effective counter-weight to the power of the State and its bureaucratic machinery and can check the excesses of the heavy handed bureaucratic rule and bring about change in the institutional arbitrariness and actions of the local agents of the State.

² Also, it appears that the proliferation of NGOs over the last decade has been more as outcome of funding by external donors than an indigenous "grassroots" phenomenon. Problems such as these constitute significant obstacles to the realisation of the democratic potential of African community groups.

Executive summary

The central hypothesis of the study is that the absence of a strong, robust and assertive civil society in Ethiopia is claimed to be the main impediment to the development of a political culture that should underpin the basic tenets of good governance and democracy. Indeed it is claimed very often that there are few, if any, independent functional civil organisations, whose functions are to preserve basic rights of its constituents and the society at large, educate the citizens and advocate popular claims, build a consensus and promote political and moral ethical values and disseminate them among the populace. The result - it has become difficult to nurture a sense of civil society.

The study has been undertaken in a sample ethno-geographic divides of the country; viz.: the Oromo, Amhara, Kembata, Guraghe, Tigray, Gedeo, Wolayta and Gamo. Findings deduced from the sample study indicate to the rich associational life of rural Ethiopia. The number of civil society institutions comprising of Senbete, Mahber, Edir, Council of Senecha, Peasant Association, Service Co-operative, Debo, Jigie, women's networks, Women's Association, Youth Association, Ye Joka, Bayto, and a lot more variations of the above in form and function amount to almost 199,000 community based organisations. For many millennia, these organisations have regulated civil life long before Governments interfered in the family life and the concept of NGOs and Donors existed. Today, with less than 20 per cent of the population having access to what we call the benefits modern civilisations, these organisations still lead families through a tumultuous century that we are just leaving behind. While these CSOs are quite assertive and account for the much resistance against repression and colonial aggression in Ethiopian history, the study has clearly identified the following strength, opportunities and threats as far as their democratising role is concerned:

1. Individual CSOs have the structure and function characterised by autonomy, capacity, cohesion and complexity to represent the collective awareness, vision and ideology of their members and manage the affairs of the socio-entities they represent.
2. The fact that these civil associations are capacious, autonomous, complex and cohesive means that they display strong individuality that makes it difficult to promote common political culture and inter and intra-cultural ideological unity across communities, ethnic divides and language barriers.
3. Such ideological and socio-political unity of purpose has usually been forged by national leaders who have very often rallied the populace against external and internal aggression. With some exceptions of the 16th century Oromo insurrection to the North, Woyane rebellion of 1943 in Tigray and the 1991 victorious entry of rebel forces to Addis Abeba based on civil society; popular insurrection against central government has always been led by war lords, the army and generals.

While the Dergue had tried over a fifteen year period to inculcate communism as a working ideology for the Ethiopian public through heavy ideological mediation in discussions clubs ("Wuyiyit kibeb"), these have been totally negated by the actions of the government that specialised in harassing the poor. The report discusses these historical roles of civil society and defines grounds for civic education that will enhance the role of grassroots organisations in the development of political culture. The main recommendations of the follow-up programmes to enhance the role of civil society organisations in the evolution of political culture and democratisation process in Ethiopia hence focus on

- CSO capacity building in peace and civic education including development of curriculum
- Documenting indigenous conflict management best-practices to develop local and regional capacity building targets
- Civil society monitoring of key indicators of good governance as annexed here
- Develop ideological basis for the development of political culture in agro-pastoralist communities in the Somali Region of Ethiopia.

Section I.

CONCEPTUALISING THE POWER OF CIVIL SOCIETY

- 1) In its initial application, little distinction was done to differentiate “civil society” from “society”. If anything, civil society was perceived as a way of conceiving society when the latter is politically active. To Hobbes, society by nature is in a state of perpetual warfare. It is the task of the state to impose order upon this violent competition among individuals. What emerges out of Hobbes’s position is the establishment of “order” through near total subjection of individual to unlimited power (1988 a. 37).
- 2) Locke on the other hand sought equilibrium between the unlimited power of the state and individual rights. It is here that the idea of a constitutional state comes to the fore (Keane 1988a: 39). Locke posits that it is the state’s responsibility to settle conflict in the society. The state in this sense does not occupy a position opposite to that of the society, but is if anything compliant. To Locke, society becomes civil when it seeks to define and establish legitimate political authority. Notably, the processes of establishing norms that define legitimacy are also aspects of “civil society”. To crown this, is the process by which the dominant class create and protects its hegemonic grip on the state, while allowing the same to be presented to subordinate classes as legitimate.
- 3) Adam Fergusson (1991) predicates civil society on the transition of “rude” society into “commercial society”. Under the former, no private property existed, and relations between men were casual. It is the acceptance of subordination by men to avail authority that facilitates the emergence of civil society.³ (Jenny Pearce, 1994: 19).
- 4) To Herberson, civil society is treated not as synonymous with the adaptation of particular rules of the game, but as those behaviours by which different cultures define the rules of the game. Herberson also argues that the missing dimension supplied by the idea of civil society is that, in the process terms working understanding concerning the basic rules of the political game or structure of the state emerge from within society and economy at large. In substantive terms, civil society typically refers to the points of agreements on what those working rules should be. Attributing his position on Gramsci, Callaghy notes that society consists of autonomous societal groups that interact with the state but delimit and constrain its action. Associational life is seen as salient to civil society.

³ Pearce Jenny “Civil Society in Latin America: Historical Discourses and Contemporary Problems” in Peace studies, 1994. P 19

- 5) Conventionally, civil society is defined spatially as the political space between the household and the state⁴ (Bayart, 1986). Alfred Stefan (1988) takes a more organisational and instrumentalist view and thus sees civil society in terms of an arena of negotiation and organization. It is where individuals attempt to constitute themselves in arrangements through which they can express themselves and advance their interests. It thus comprises a set of non-governmental organisations, institutions, associations (formal and informal) authority structures, and collective activities, which group the mass of population together in different ways. They may be differentiated and compared on the basis of what institutions play the most important roles within them (Ngunyi/Githaika, 1993).
- 6) But organisational and instrumental definitions tend to ignore relational aspects of civil society. Thus, for instance, although state and civil society are separate from each other, they are also in several ways dependant on one another at times even mutually reinforcing. To Keller (1987), civil society exists outside of the formal political arena even though it can be drawn in when there is a political crisis. Accordingly, civil society is not society writ large, but merely a subset of it. What defines civil society is therefore its agenda. Manifestation of civil society tends to be situational and intermittent... Groups may not have been born as civil organisations but are moved by circumstances (such as demands for constitutional reform, governmental accountability, human and political rights) to engage in politics.
- 7) Building on this instrumental and organisational model, Bratton (1994) celebrates the catalytic role that such groups can play in incubating and then spurring regime change. Diamond, Linz and Libset see civil society in Africa as fostering political democracy. Civil society has become a cutting edge of the efforts to build a viable democratic order. Ndegwa (1996: 6) disputes this position. To him, there is nothing inherent about civil society organisations that make them opponents of authoritarianism and proponents of democracy. Accordingly the impetus for civil society involvement in the democratisation movement can be located in two externalities ... a wider social movement and political opportunity. Ndegwa further disputes the civil society liberalisation thesis of Bratton and Chazan that organisations in the civil society, including NGOs are central to opposing undemocratic governments and furthering and consolidating democracy. Katumanga (1998) seems to validate Ndegwa's position but goes further to argue that, civil society's mobilisation is constrained by issue designs upon which campaigns are predicated. The ability of civil society organisations to design and mobilize groups on issues that have resonance in their social reality in the process beat off ethnicity driven statization tendencies, makes it hard for them to achieve commitment of rural and urban marginalize groups. Basing his arguments on the constitutional reforms agitation in Kenya, Katumanga notes that, it is a few radical individuals in the youth movements who made concerted attempts to radicalize the reform programme albeit with determined resistance from other civil society politicians.
- 8) Katumanga (1998) like Ndegwa (1996) notes that in most cases, it was individuals who carried the banner of their organisations and in most cases, little mobilisation was done to bring the entire organisations on board for reform. Others like the church organisations save for people like Reverend Njoya and Mujunga opted to maintain a studious mediation committee (even though they had initially made commitments to align themselves and actively participate in the reform contestation with the state.
- 9) In literature on the nature of African civil society, three theses compete for mastery. One thesis is spatial and contestational. Popularised by Diamond (1991) and Rothchild (1988), it sees civil society as being primarily constituted to present a polarised position from that of the state. On this view, civil society is, *ipso facto*, in perpetual conflict with the state. Bayart, (1986) would seem to

⁴ Bayart J. F. (1986), "Civil Society in Africa" in Patrick Chabal (ed) "Political Domination in Africa", Cambridge University Press

accept the conflict thesis but he would narrow the realm of conflict to a narrow issue: civil society's attempt to breach and simultaneously counteract totalisation tendencies of the state.

- 10) Taking the contestation thesis further, Bratton (1988) notes that transitions have been greatly enhanced by protest and reforms spearheaded by civil society. He thus calls for access to independent material, organisational and ideological base. The assumption in this thesis is that there is necessarily a connection between NGO activity and democratic struggle. Associational life is likely, to Bratton, to be most developed in economies that have undergone the greatest degree of indigenous capitalist industrialisation (1989: a 427). Chazan (1992: 298) equally attributes potency of democracy in an economically independent civil society. To Ndegwa (1996), this is not necessarily the case. If anything, the propensity of NGOs to actively engage the state in democratic space is hinged on threats the state imposes on the specific interests of the NGOs. Accordingly, civil society constituents such as local voluntary organisations or associational bodies can be said to contribute to democratic fervency in Africa, if they embrace and express values of a democratic movement. This implies a dynamic in a given direction and shared values. Civil society accordingly lack such purposive cohesion given its diverse and narrow interests ... the only ideology that civil society has in common is that pluralism facilitates individual groups co-existence which at times run counter to democratic interests.
- 11) On the other hand, even if he were right, there would be some salient questions to ask. What determines whether and under what conditions a given organisation? Is or is not involved in political transformation, what the boundaries of civil society seen as associational life are, which associations are eligible (notwithstanding their function, origin, or membership).
- 12) In his acknowledgment of civil society's democratic potential, Gibbon (1994) calls for its separation from the state. Such a separation, he observes, would under gird it from "statisation" effects. This, he notes is realisable through radicalisation. This he contents must proceed from within as opposed to bureaucratic expansion of politics exterior to the civil society. Gibbon (1994) position would be right if he predicated it on the organisations are actually and interested in transformation hence associational space friendly, the reality is that many organisations are not only hostile to democratisation but also reproduce statist tendencies (ethnistic and bourgeois driven) that undermine the very essence of this process. Most are mainly urban, middle class dominated, student unions, women groups, professional bodies, human rights organisations, and churches and swallowed on the Bretton Wood liberal and market logic. Hence, creating no avenue or room through which interventions from below can take place. Worse still, interventions and political agitation is a function of leadership.
- 13) Mamdani (1997), Ndegwa (1996) point to heterogeneity of the civil society cannot be said to represent society in totality. It is in response to this that Mamdani calls for bifurcation of civil society to different spheres of lumpen and bourgeoisie interests. Adding his voice to Mamdani (1992) Gibbon (1993), Ngunyi (1993) content that civil society in Africa is not only differentiated but is at times polarised. The former not only takes place when different institutions of civil society, pursue different causes without deterring each other, or being indifferent to one another. Ngunyi attributes polarization to state patronage and situates civil society's subservient position to this.
- 14) Yet, Ngunyi (1996) and Gibbon (1994) are right, in one sense if the English speaking civil society were to facilitate linkages with rural based civil society organisations. If they were to take up their bread and butter, Agrarian issues and if they were to help them organize, articulate, lobby and pressure, the state for their interests. The salient question thus is how to engender the foregoing. This calls for evolution of a process to facilitate inhibition of green movement related issues among urban based civil society through extended dosage of issues, mobilisation strategies, etc.

- 15) The principal advocate of disengagement/ incorporation thesis is Azarya (1988: 6) who argues that relationships between state and civil society do not always have to be acrimonious. But that they can be cordial - this is what he calls Incorporation. In his incorporation thesis, Azarya points to the state's magnetic capacity to attract segments of society (who find it desirable for close ties). This position is similar to Keller's (1997) position, that what defines civil society is its agenda. Accordingly, it is created when autonomous associations adopt and act upon a civic agenda. This position in essence perceives civil society as a manifestation that is situational and intermittent. Thus, when there is no agenda, "peace" should logically prevail between state and civil society. In his disengagement bit, Azarya notes that when civil society organisations withdraw from the state to keep a distance from its channels, as a hedge against statization tendencies. Closer to this position is Chazan (1992: 296) which sees the potency of democracy in an economically independent civil society. Chazan moreover notes that most good is derivable not only from an economically independent society but also state influence. Chazan contends that despite negativities associated with informal economy, it contributes directly to the fortification of the civil society by increasing resources its disposal while brooding its geographical scope. These even though, these activities tend to weaken the power of incumbent regimes, they also serve to promote linkages between social groups and state agencies in the process do have an important bearing on the distribution of power and creation of entrepreneurial groups whose positions do not depend on access to state resources (Chazan 1992: 298).
- 16) A mutation of Azarya's position is Goran Hyden (1992), Ngunyi (1994) thesis which blames the bad blood between the state and civil society on collapse of normative order, mediating their interactions. Arguably, the re-establishment of such an order then logically ought to engender peace. The problem with this thesis is the assumption that there has existed such an order in the context of the colonial and postcolonial state. Both States have been extractionist and facilitated the process through literal occupation of the society. To engender control of the African society, the colonial state stifled the traditional African civil society, which was rooted in certain sets of moral, religion, and philosophical principles. Economic, social, and political life process was predicated on this. Boundaries between social, political, religious, economic realms were porous and fluid. Hence, duties, rights and responsibilities juxtaposed themselves alongside kinship social and family ties before flowing into its political realm. It is this structure that tempered state power. The colonial state not only arrested and destroyed this growth. It also set up rigid boundaries in the political, social, economic and legal realms.
- 17) The problem in Africa is this dislocation, more so given the fact that the political actors, double up in the economic realms, without being accountable to the body politic thus loosening control. Normative order can only emerge with the dismantling of the neo-colonial state. It is this nature of the neo-colonial state that informs the acrimonious relations between it and civil society. An accountable state with legitimate power and representative structures would by inference facilitate the emergence and sustenance of a normative order. Otherwise, any attempt to engender such an order with a neo-colonial state would stem from a compromise of interests incumbent upon a trade-off between bourgeoisie interests and the state against the Green movement.

Section II

BACKGROUND, JUSTIFICATION AND METHODOLOGY

Since its emergence in the early 20th century, the modern Ethiopian State has been typified by autocratic leaders and primarily existed for the benefit of the powerful elite of the centre. The overwhelming majority of the people had no role in governance and are unfamiliar with their rights and obligations as citizens.

- ✓ Practices such as free elections, the formatting of political parties, free and open discourse on public issues are all foreign concepts that need to be installed in the minds of the majority of the populace. The lack of democratic culture is also clearly manifest in the disarray and inability of the "opposition" forces in civil society to achieve internal unity; which has been unable to unite or put together a coherent political alternative to the existing leadership.
- ✓ Organisations of civil society operate between the State and the citizenry and give structure to the representation of interests of a diverse body of the populace. It is an essential prerequisite as it facilitates the opportunity for participation in the political life for the citizens at large. The contemporary reality of Ethiopia is that the various social, economic and political organisations self-help groups and professional associations, etc. are very weak.
- ✓ the tendency to reduce broad-based and complex categories in civil society, like national tradition, the people and democracy of autonomous content, and the plenitude of meaning implicated in these categories, to a set of signification tied to particular class interests or political projects; and the imposition of ground themes and formulae onto the concrete situations faced by particular communities in civil society and nations;

The interest for this study emanates from precisely this fact. Five hundred years of proactive destruction of the Ethiopian civil society has rendered the nation war-torn and unmanageable for a large part of its history. This is also true from dialectical and historical perspectives. A cursory review of civil society growth and the ramifications of its representation would help us take off into the study's findings.

Early in civil society philosophical and political history, Rousseau made us aware the formulation of the relationship between the citizen and the State' which was rather abrupt. Mediation was needed to make viable the relation between the isolated citizen and the institution responsible for the management of the republic.⁵ Hegel's made the distinction between the family and the State that leads universal history and the civil society and discerned that there is a dialectical mediation between the primary social forms, the family, and the highest one -- the State. This mediation is fulfilled by the civil society.⁶ Alexis de Toqueville learned and observed that the struggle of democracy was based on

⁵ It is in relation to this point that he introduced the subject of the civil religion which he understood was necessary to establish the rules of the game in social matters without consensus, which implies some degree of hegemony within the society the social contract cannot exist

⁶ where human beings work, and through their labour satisfy their needs where justice must be administrated in-order to protect their rights: the actualisation of the principle of freedom, where particulars and common interests are safe guarded.

the existence of "free association", while a source of his serious concern was what he considered the "tyranny of the majority", because without the "majority rule" democracy cannot exist but in it he believed, lies the main threat to democracy.

Here we touch on an important point: the need to defend and protect the civil society from invading interests; especially in minorities whose interest could be bulldozed by the majority. In connection with this, the ideas of Antonio Gramsci are very important, not only in clarifying what civil society is but also in exploring the beliefs, assumptions and values and representation of these (not necessarily true or false) which reflects the needs and interests of a group or class at a particular time in history.

Civil society is highly contradictory area of social reality and, thus, cannot, and should never be hypothesised. It is hence necessary to perceive that the ideological confrontations are articulated by a particular kind of actor/s -- the intellectuals (organic or traditional) social dimension of this class is manifested by its ability to articulate symbols and ideas so as to organise social actions of the social subjects in function of whom it works. The "intelligentsia" as a social class lacks autonomy, and it is always necessary to discern at whose service the intellectuals are doing their work.

Such a study of civil society in Ethiopia, hence, whilst, necessary in order to discern, amidst the ambiguity of popular symbols, popular wisdom, popular praxis, the orientation of people's wishes and expectations as enshrined in what constitutes the ambit of civil society study, will have an inherent bias of the intellectual; be it organic or traditional. Because, at the level of people's consciousness, these things are often mixed up, weakening popular resistance as countervailing forces to the unrestricted power of the State; it must be articulated in such a way that the new systematisation fits within the possible limits of people's consciousness to make it stronger. Criticism of "common sense" in order to introduce "good sense" into the social process indeed demands much more than ideas and reflection. The legitimacy of the State and its democratic agenda in Ethiopia has always and will continue to depend in important ways on it being perceived as reasonably honest, predictable, transparent and accountable in the execution of the State's responsibility.⁷

In the above introduction, the attempt has been to identify some of the impediment for the consolidation and preservation of democracy. Philosophically, economically, socially, politically there exist almost insurmountable obstacles to the flourishing of democratic governance. However, other societies with identical features have managed to install and maintain multi-party democratic system. While it is too early to decide how civil society will participation the system of governance will evolve, there is no reason to believe that democracy is a prognostically ill-fated agenda for the Ethiopian State and civil society. Skilled and committed State and civil society leadership can mitigate conditions that are hostile to democracy.

The rationale for the study on mechanisms for relating to and mapping emanates from the simple but important assumption and belief that the growth of Community-based and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), in the current transition to democracy, is in itself an index of democratisation. After all, what is more obvious in projects of democratic transition in Ethiopia than the goal of increasing the number of CSOs and other social institution's that will build stronger civil societies that in turn spawns favourable conditions for the growth of democracy in Ethiopia?

⁷ Public sector corruption and inefficiencies undermine political, economic and social stability by undermining citizens' faith in the democratic process. In situations where officials, small or big, are seen to be using their positions to advance parochial interest and self aggrandisement, a general loss of respect for authority and the law occurs and despondency in the general population develops. It is apparent that as the country enters this new era of political pluralism and democratic governance there is a need to overhaul the administrative machinery and develop institutional alternatives to the centralised, bureaucratic and hierarchical organisational structure.

The TOR of the study has revealed the extent to which CSOs are and can be involved in the democratisation process, in increasing the accountability, predictability and openness of good government. Towards this end the final report of the study will focus on

- **a pilot national computerised data-base on NGOs and CSOs**
- **capacity assessment of CSOs in selected areas**
- **linkages to civil society, Government and the private sector**

Using a base-line data collection questionnaire, participatory methods, literature survey and log-frame analysis of the collected data we have come to the conclusion that the pilot communities used for the study have shown that there are no less than 199,000 civil society organisations in Ethiopia (coming in different names – EDIR, MAHBER, equip, kinship, clan and lineage organisations. The sample database is provided with a powerful tool MS Office ACCESS II. While this represents the hardware aspect of the study, the qualitative assessment of how to relate to civil society and its organisations as represented by CSOs, CSOs and NGOs has also been undertaken and the report dwells in some detail in this area. Indeed the entire effort of the whole exercise is to see how civil society can be strengthened to develop an effective counterweight to the powers of the State.

The study adopted an "institutional" approach to investigation of the role of CSOs in democratisation. The thesis of study is that the prospects, nature and outcomes of political transition depend on configuration of political institutions in state and civil society. The key research question becomes: "is the endowment of political institutions conducive to democratic transition?"

Hence, the first attempt in the process of over-hauling the approaches to develop the civil society sector and interface with it is to know what the sector looks like in the first place. For this endeavour, it is necessary to create a national computerised data-base of Community-Based Organisations and selected study on CSOs and Networks. The second phase of the study is largely influenced by the finding of the first phase. The highest priority for us here is the study is how to uncover the great collective experience of CSOs and convert brutal lessons into improved practices for the future: i.e. enhancing institutional memory. The potential areas of qualitative assessment however will encompass the role of individual CSOs under survey and their nexus with democracy and good governance.⁸

Indicators for evaluating the performance of civil society organisations as it relates to their capacity include inter-alia:

- there are adequate number of staff to perform key functions with the necessary and congruent skills for the task; the number of staff can be expanded without disrupting key functions and overwhelming the organisations and resources are distributed efficiently and according to predetermined and established criteria;
- services are delivered in a timely and efficient manner and meet needs of beneficiaries and constituencies; service delivery can be expanded without over-extending the organisation; organisation has a planning process that is documented and utilised; information is gathered and records are kept that permit assessment of progress in meeting objectives;
- organisation has received recognition from community groups and has a standing in the development community; specific procedures exist for beneficiary input and influence; organisation possess independent audited annual financial statement and has standard financial control system that can absorb additional resources without much disruption;

⁸ detailed indicators with their means and sources of verification will be developed in line with the annexed norm.

- organisation has demonstrated experience of entering into formal agreement exchange services to resources, has a proven track record of working with the government and in government agencies and has funding base of its operation and is capable of generating counterpart funds and has strong local membership and is accountable to its beneficiaries.

The final output of the study is a report which provides a descriptive profile of the CSOs, an analytical assessment of their capacity and development priority, proposed actions for subsequent resource requirements, identification of areas where the CSO needs assistance and the scope and magnitude of that assistance.⁹

How do the outputs relate to the TOR?

The TOR identified that, although the type of information to be utilised may vary from area to area, the first order of business is therefore to choose a principal conceptual framework to guide data collection and analysis regarding mapping and relating to CSOs. Relevant criteria for choosing a framework included: the power of a given set of factors to explain transitions, the susceptibility of concepts to empirical investigation, and the potential of the approach to generate policy recommendations. By these criteria, the study was conducted from the perspective of political institutions in civil society.¹⁰

In this sense, we can safely state the TOR has been followed strictly to produce the current documentation presented here. The three outputs expected have been achieved:

1. This qualitative assessment report on relating to CSO and NGOs in Ethiopia
2. An electronic database - whose sample print outs and guidelines for use are attached. The database is being widely used in Ethiopia now.

⁹ In every phase of the analysis and synthesis, we will encourage the community members and the target group to take the lead while the research teams act more in the role of facilitator and as technical resource personnel. The goal is to help the community and target groups through the research exercise come to a rational assessment of their communities' problems and possible solutions.

¹⁰ Nor would a research approach based on the contingent political dynamics of interactions among individuals be the most fruitful. Certainly, the study should not ignore the fascinating "give and take" between public office-holders and popular protesters over the question of who has the right to rule. But there is a danger that a study based on contingent interactions would be too ideographic, that is, that it could dissolve into unconnected series of singular stories about particular country experiences. Moreover, the conceptual building-blocks of the contingency theory are inherently difficult to research.

Section III

PROFILE OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN ETHIOPIA

This section of the report identifies local level social institutions in the different parts of rural Ethiopia that are important for mobilising the population for democratic participation, resources and conflict management. The participation of people through their local institutions in the promotion of good governance, laying the foundation for the development democratic culture and the proper management of natural resources (land, water, forests, soil, grazing areas) will in the years to come be a major contributing factor for the promotion of sustainable livelihoods that will enable people to pursue meaningful livelihoods and towards achieving the goal of sustainable development.

In spite of this fact, the emphasis given to strengthening local institutions in Ethiopia has not been satisfactory. As a result, efforts to mobilise the populace and initiate the citizens towards democratic culture has been a futile exercise until the present day; although the participation of grass-root institutions in administration of resources and management of political change has been indispensable for a number of reasons.

- People's behaviour is conditioned by community norms and consensus, so building democracy at the heart of society requires more than just individual incentives and persuasion.
- Institutions encourage people to take a longer-term view by creating common expectations and a basis for co-operation that goes beyond individual interests. To the extent institutions are regarded as legitimate, people comply without (or with fewer) inducements and sanctions.
- Institutions, especially at local levels, are important for mobilising resources and regulating their use with a view to maintaining a long-term base for productive activity.
- Available resources can be put to their most efficient and sustainable use with location-specific knowledge, which is best generated and interpreted locally.
- Monitoring changes in resources' status can be quicker and less costly where local people are involved; making adaptive changes in resource use is speeded up where local decision-making has become institutionalised.
- While local institutions are not always able to resolve resource management conflicts, if they are absent, all conflicts must be dealt with at higher levels, yielding slower and often less appropriate outcomes.

**CIVIL SOCIETY
ORGANISATIONS AND
LOCAL GOVERNANCE
REGIMES**



**The Cases of the
Oromo, Southern Nations and
Nationalities, Amhara and
Tigray**

I. CSOs among the Oromo:

The Gada

The Gada System, being the basis for all social, economic and political relations in Oromo society, is the most pervasive institution among the Boran pastoralist of southern Ethiopia. It is a function of three sub-system based on differentiation of society in time. These sub-systems are the Gogessa (patri-class), Luba (generation set) and the age-grade.

Gogessa is equivalent to patri-class, and the Boran society is divided into five Gogessas each of which resembles a party in the sense that they define the conditions of competition and recruitment for political office. Every Boran is borne to one of the five Gogessas and children always belong to their fathers Gogessa. Gogessa offers a list of contenders for Gada leadership, who are elected every eight years. Aba-Gada and his councillors are elected by each Gogessa to represent the whole Boran society. Within each Gogessa certain patrilineages are privileged to provide candidates for political office, particularly for the office of Aba-Gada, the highest authority in the Gada System.

A segment of generations that make up Gogessa is known as Luba. Gogessa is perpetuated by a series of new generations, each of which successively emerges every 40 years. Each Luba is identified by a prominent person in the generation set. Every Boran must be able to identify his Luba affiliation and hence his Gogessa in order to compete for a Gada office and to get a wife. Every Luba passes through eleven age-grades during its life time. Each age-grade lasts eight years and the successive transition is marked by rites. The roles and rules attached to the age-grade system is the most important element that regulates the Gada system. In the Gada system every Boran of specific age-grade is expected to perform a certain function according to specified rules and regulations. There are eleven age-grades through which a person passes during his/her lifetime from birth through old-age.

From birth to age 24 years, a person passes through three age grades, namely Daballe, Gamme Didiko, and Gamme Gurguda. In the first age-grade he is immature and innocent, and is assigned a symbolic role. Children at this age are considered by Oromos in general and the Boran in particular as free from social evil and spiritually clean to whom God would speak. Hence, boys in this category are expected to mediate with God the childless, one whose cow is barren or one whose all cattle have died. *Gamme Didiko* is too young and looks after calves and small stocks within close range from *Ollas* or villages. At *Gamme Gurguda* stage he is mature enough to tend big stock over the whole grazing range and to handle the arduous task of drawing water from *Ellas* to water stock.

The next three stages - 4th, 5th and 6th - are important age - grades from the stand-point of political role. The fourth age grade known as Kussa is when Lubas elect their leaders and obtain names. They are named after their leaders. The seeds of Gada leaders or Adula councils are sown at this stage. Next is Rabi Dori which, along with the older Kussa grade and the age set or Heriyar group, is an important wing of the Gada leadership. It conducts raids on enemy territories and resources and protects the Boran against alien intruders. Unlike prior age grades, boys belonging to Ilman Korma are allowed to get married, although not to raise sons until they enter the senior stage at 41- 44 years and daughters later at the Gada grade.

Gada¹¹ is politically the most important grade. At this stage Lubas assume political power while three other councils leave office. During this period the members of Gada councils visit all parts of Boran territory to meet with the people, perform ritual ceremonies at various shrines, settle disputes and convene assemblies. After eight years in service the council members retire and enter the Yaba grades handing over power to the incoming *Roba Dori* grade. Yuba is the retirement stage and constitutes five grades. The first four are the most active life when the men act as advisers to their successors. This is between ages 54 and 85. Beginning 86 years of age through 93 is the last grade of Yuba stage marked by Gadamogi rites as the man enters and leaves his last phase of service as the most senior advisor. Upon completion of the Gadamogi grade he retires as Jarsa (old man) and is cared for. Other institutions of less importance to the Gada system are the Heriya and Kalu.

Heriya: The Heriya or age-set group comprises of people born during the same Gada leadership period; they remain the member of the particular age-set and are not initiated into a next stage as in the age-grade system. The most important function of the age-set system is to initiate boys into adulthood and train contemporaries for military service. Along with older Kussa group and Raba Dori group this group forms the military force of the Gada leadership or the defence force of contemporary Adula and Gada Councils. The age-set does not perform a significant economic function in the Boran Society.

Kalu: Kalu is a religious leader in Boran society. He is believed to be of divine origin and a prophet. The Kalu institution consists of two senior Kalus and three junior Kalus. Kalu is hereditary passing from and to elder sons. Kalus maintain the relationship between God and the Boran by ritual performance. To a lesser extent Kalus also picture in the Gada political system. They co-ordinate election of Gada leaders.

Apart from their political significance, the Gada leaders also have important roles in resource management. While rules and regulations laid down by the Gada tradition must be respected by all local level councils of elders, any problem regarding resource use and maintenance which could not be solved by these elders would be handled for resolution by the higher Gada leaders. Likewise, the age-set Heriya which serves military purpose and the Kalu which is a religious institution do not play any active role in economic management. This is the function of local level institutions, the subject of the next topic.

Other forms of voluntary organisations

There are other forms of local voluntary organisation which the Oromo use for insurance. There are *idirs* at the PA level in which men and women are members. *Idirs* organise people to help each other during crucial periods such as death and weddings. Women's *idir* collect butter for weddings. *Idir* also makes easy to renew things if there are accident or other misfortunes. If a house burns down all idir members have an obligation to construct a new house; if cattle get sick or have accidents the members slaughter and divide the meat and then they pay money to the owner at a fixed time. The usual amount for an ox is 200 Birr, for a cow 180 Birr, and for a young bull or heifer 80 Birr.

Among the Arssi Oromo most people belong to idir; membership may range from 45 to 140 and the average contribution is 2 Birr per Month. Idir money will be paid out when someone dies. If a husband or a wife of a member dies, 300 Birr will be paid to the widower. For the death of a son a daughter, the member will be paid 150 Birr; if the member was told

¹¹Note that Gada mean one of three things. It may represent the whole institution of Gada, or one specific period of Gada leadership or the sixth stage of age-grade system. It is distinguished in the context it is used.

the passing of close relative (merdo) the rate varies between 30 to 50 Birr. The idir of the Arssi Oromo women is traditionally known as *Wijjo*. The idirs of each balabala of the Arssi Oromo gives services and advantages to lineage members when the members have to pay guma (blood compensation), Gabara (bride-wealth) during marriage, and when imprisoned or penalised by a court. The *Wijjo* is organised by the Arssi Oromo women on the same lineage basis for the similar objectives. *Sadete* is *idir* for Muslims which is used to organise coffee ceremonies and snacks (*kurse*).

There are credit associations (*equib*) which they use for economic security at times, economic and social crisis. Every member pays a fixed amount of money. There is judge to supervise and administer rules and regulations. The sum of money collected from each member goes by chance to one member every week so that the opportunity rotates every week to each member until all the members have an equal' chance.¹² The money obtained from equib by the women are used either for their own private purposes such as buying cloth for themselves or as additional expenses for family necessities in the household. Their husbands cannot dictate how they use the money. It is their right to use it for any thing they need. It can be invested in the farm or education based on the willingness and decision of the females. If the women want, they can discuss with their husbands how to use the equib money.

There are religious associations (Mahber) in which they prepare feasts in rotation but also help each other during serious problems such as crop failure, accidents such as fires burning houses and crops, etc. Members of Mahber are mostly Orthodox Christians.

People from outside the PA can become members of idirs and Mahber but not equib. Generally members of equib are local people. Idir is a crucial association for wedding (marriage) and mourning. Like in all other places in Ethiopia, Among the Arssi Oromo any person irrespective of age, sex, and ethnicity or wealth difference can be a member of an idir. Mahber is exclusively a religious association for the believers in Orthodox Christianity in the name of Saints. The equib, and Mahber are associations through which the people in the PA practice collective actions and reciprocity. Mahber particularly can be considered as a form of redistribution. For the Arssi Oromo, forms of collective action, reciprocity and redistribution, (with out formal disciplines and regularity), are practised through feasts that can be prepared during sadaqa (a feast prepared by wealthy person for the poor at any time), Mowlid (the birth day of a prophet Mohammed), and Arefa (Id Al Fatir).

Community Decision - making

At present, the dominant local political institution is the PA. Moreover, the Shanacha (elders) are elected by the people through lineage structure to resolve disputes before they reach legal courts but they do not have political power. The leaders of the PA or government institutions do not come into conflict with these traditional leaders of the community but they try to co-operate with them.

Even though important decisions are made by PA leaders, the Gada traditional political authority is still maintained. Authority circulates among the five Gada at the turn of every 8 years. The Gada leaders are relegated to rituals, marriage and other minor social aspects being excluded from matters of land or any other resources. During the “Dergue” regime, the institution of Kallu was suppressed as a backward cultural practice. The ritual activities of the Kallu were obliged to be hidden and it was not openly exercised as it today.

¹² For example, for equib whose members are 30, the chance for every member to get the sum of the money collected each week from every member has to rotate for exactly 30 weeks. The women who get money from equib have the right to use it for anything they need.

Elected leaders of peasant Associations are important for access to land and employment. They are also intermediaries between the state and the society through which government directives, policies and other information are disseminated and implemented.

The PA has two divisions. The first is administrative: it has the responsibility for implementing government regulations, for example tax collection, implementation of political decisions, organisation of farmers for group work like terracing, afforestation, etc. The second division is “Shengo” which implements laws. The members are elected by the farmers in the PA and decide penalties up to three months in jail or 300 Birr fine. People bring disputes to the executive committee of the PA. The PA directs the disputes to the Shanacha. If the Shanacha could not resolve the dispute it is directed to the Shengo. The PA Shengo under a higher body which is the Wereda Shengo (now called the Wereda Court) under the present government. If a person does not agree with the decisions of the Qebelle (PA) Shengo he can take the case to the Wereda Court where the decision is final. The community ranked local organisation in order of usefulness as follows:

1. Council of Senecha
2. Peasant Association
3. Idir
4. Service co-operative
5. Senbete
6. Mahber
7. Debo, Jigie
8. equip
9. Women association
10. Youth association

II. CSOs among the Amhara

Religious institutions

Mahber and Senbete are religious associations found by a group of people who belong to the same church. Members vary between 10 to 12 in number so that the feasts correspond with the month of the year. Each member is responsible for the feast (food and Tella) on his/her turn. Idir is a sort of religious burial association which is launched in order to share the burdens of individual households when close relatives die. Members contribute regularly in order to cover the expenses of funeral ceremonies, food and drinks needed. Idir is a prominent association in Northern Shewa as is the case in most part of Ethiopia. Usually each parish in Northern Shewa has one idir.

Economic Institutions

Equib is a major economic institution that primarily serves to save cash. It is a formalised association with a secretary and a judge and usually a board of three persons. Each member has to find a guarantor of the equib for members to ensure that the member does not fail in his duties after he/she has received his/her lot. Sometimes people join equib to buy something that they could not afford from their pocket. These include clothing, food, household equipment, livestock, to pay tax, etc.

Political Institutions

The Council of elders is an institution where people appeal when they are involved in conflict with their fellow individuals. Certain individuals respected for their experience and wisdom play a significant role in conflict resolution. The moral authority they assume help them solve a number of problems. In this respect a council of elders has much more acceptance than a local justice department sponsored by the Peasant Association. The role of spirit possession cults in conflict resolution is not something to be underestimated in this area. Spirit possession in Northern Shewa is closely intertwined with the elements of the wider cultural fabric of the study.

Labour Agreements

No man works alone. All activities are done in Debo. Debo is one of the work arrangements temporarily arranged to share the agricultural work in the field. The activities include ploughing, manure spreading, threshing. Members of the Debo are required to work on the other members plot when requested. Food and drinks are offered on the day of the Debo so that the participants could work the whole day. The most important factor in the participation is neighbourhood. Partnership is also based on kinship relationships. Wangle is anything from just lending hand to a neighbour for a short time and without food and drinks.

Among the Amhara there is no discrimination in being a member of any idir. That is, members could be poor or rich. The exact number of Mahber is not known but it is believed to be an average number. Some wealthy persons of the village lend money to those who are facing financial hardship. Generous villagers lend money without interest to persons whom they trust. However, individual lenders lend money on the basis of interest. This takes 2 forms. In the first type of agreement a borrower would pay 1 quintal of Tef for 100 Birr. The

price for 1 quintal of Tef is 120 Birr. In the second type, the borrower would pay interest of 10 Birr per 100 Birr. If someone's house is set on fire everyone in the area will go to the rescue of life and property, by helping to put the fire out and removing everything possible.

If the house burns down neighbours, friends and relatives will help the household to reconstruct the house by providing materials and labour. They also give the household crops if the stock is destroyed, in the form of a gift, or a lone to be repaid during the next harvest. If livestock are lost or stolen friends, neighbours and relatives will search. If they are not found they will help by providing oxen for ploughing until he gets his own back. They will also contribute money so he can buy replacements. If someone is unable to get enough labour at the right time relatives, members of Mahber, neighbours and friends will work on his land as Debo. During famines rich people will help those who are more vulnerable.

Community Decision - Making

Disputes within households are usually resolved by neighbours. Mostly such disputes are settled at this level. However, if neighbours cannot solve the problem relatives will get involved in arbitration. If the dispute is between husband and wife arbitrators would be the relatives of both parties. If this level also fails, the elders of the community will get involved; if dispute between husband and wife it will next be dealt by the marriage committee (persons, usually father figures, who initially attended the marriage settlement). Disputes between households are first consider by neighbours and relatives of the two opponents and then by elders of the community. The villagers have local dispute settlement mechanisms.

They are called shimgllna and court tribunal. The institution of shimgllna is a traditional council that comprises respected elders who analyse complaints as to the causes of disputes and reach decisions. Elders are respected and it is expected what they do is just and moral. The Fird-Shengo is established by community elected persons so as to settle dispute in accordance with societal norms and traditional principles. The latter operates in compliance with government regulations. Arbitrators at all levels are usually respected, honourable and elderly people. The police will be involved in cases that the community is unable, or does not want to deal with especially when violence and serious offences such as murder are involved.

Bewitching also has an important role to play in resolving conflicts in the community. First one of the disputants will report the dispute to the sorcerer/ess , usually the victim. The other party will be sent a summons to appear before the sorcerer/ess for mediation. When both appear they will be put under oath to tell the truth and will come to terms on conditions the sorcerer/ess decides, having sworn not to break up the mediation and to keep their allegiance to him/her. If the offender then does not to keep follow instruction the witches, using their magic powers, will inflict a death penalty on him or her and the families. Usually the family is inflicted with diseases which are said to be insoluble and incurable by any means and die one by one after unbearable suffering

In the case of local rules anyone who offends will be given a penalty in terms of money and warned off. If he or she continues to err, he/she will be renounced and segregated from the community.

Credit and Social Security

Among the Amhara in Shewa many households need credit in May and June to buy seeds; from August to October they borrow for consumption and some borrow between June and August. This credit is sought from relatively wealthy people in the community, traders and money lenders. If they take from a rich household they may or may not pay interest. Most of the time they are not paying interest . If they take credit from a moneylender they pay 10%

interest every month until they return the money. If they take credit in cash from grain traders they repay in a fixed amount of grain when they have their harvest.

People in the area established idir, equib, and Mahber to help each other in times of personal crises. These have served as life and property insurance. When the accident is major one, the person will be assisted by member who are not in this institution. He is given money, grain, and some household goods depending on the kinds of crises. They also receive help from kin who live nearby. The idir and equib have their own regulations as to how much to give for what types of crises.

People in the area consider Mahber to be very important because they believe that whatever they share through the Mahber will be paid back by God after death. There is strong attachment to the Orthodox Church and Mahber.

Idir is a territorially based voluntary association of peasants formed for mutual help and co-operation. Idirs closely resemble one another with regard to the resources they mobilise from members and the kind of assistance they provide in return. The only difference is in the number of members of each idir. The primary objective of all the idirs is to help member, household (in material ways and with and labour) in times of difficulties such as the death of a member, loss of property, accidents, and the like. In order to achieve this objective, the members of one idir of peasants for instance collect a membership fee of 0.25 cents monthly and two Qu'una (about 20 kg.) of beans annually from each household head. Widows and divorced household heads pay half of this amount. The money and the grain is stored in the house of the treasurer for a later distribution to members faced with problems according to the rules and regulations of he idir. Part of the money is also used for buying cups, digging tools, and other materials employed in preparing graveyards and mourning with families whose members have died. The amount of assistance that idir provides to members depends on the nature of the problem that a given member faced. If the problem that an idir member household head faces is the death of a family member, the amount of assistance provided on the exact relationship that the deceased individual has with the head of the member household.

III. CSOs in Southern Nationalities

Among the Wolavitta Community decisions are usually made by elders. These decisions are also made by the PA. The elders decide for example on matters of disagreements and misunderstanding and telfia (kidnapping a women for marriage). The PA decides on matters of theft and burglary. Disputes within and between households are resolved by local elders. Thieves can be fined up to 1000 Birr or imprisoned for three months. Cases of murder goes to the Woreda or higher court. The local experts are the local health experts known as Wegesha who adjust dislocated limbs, midwives and those engaged in thatching roofs, producing farm implements; and traditional healers. It is their talent that qualifies them to be experts.

The development of local organisations:

Going back to their ancestors (i.e. pre 1910) there were men and woman's idir and Mahber (women on St Mary's day and men on St Gabriels's days) and equib (cash and butter for women, and cash for man). Between 1968 EC and 1983 EC there was a Peasant Association. Between 1972 EC and 1981 EC there was a Producers' Co-operative). Between 1972 EC and 1983 EC there were a Revolutionary Ethiopia Youth Association and Women's Association. In 1981 EC women formed a Saving and Credit Scheme: there are 4 groups in this scheme and every member contributes 10 cents per week. This money bears interest. Redd Barna offers to each group monetary aid on the basis of their capital growth. The prime mover of the scheme is Redd Barna. The community ranked social organisations in order of usefulness as follows:

- Idir
- PA
- Equib
- Women's saving and credit schemes
- Mahber
- REYA (Youth Association)
- REWA (Women's Association)
- Producers' Co-operative

Kembata

Among the Kembata the elders of the community also have a significant role in decision-making. But elders and the PA leaders are not the same people. Elders are chosen according to their long term credentials such as their experience, previous success as mediators, fair judges, their wisdom, age, and concern for the people. The decisions include ways of controlling the natural resources of the area, and also some other important decisions that affect the daily lives of the society.

Disputes are considered by the PA leaders. There is also court tribunals where people file complaints against whatever is done to them. For criminals (murderers, etc.) and thieves, the PA and the elders would not have anything to do. It will be the Woreda Juridical body that has the power to see and give judgement. However, if the thieves or murderers admit their guilt, the elders may ask excuse for the sin that they committed by consulting the Woreda's judicial bodies.

Gamo

Among the **Gamo** kinship stretches up to the clan level. The notion of self includes the whole gamut from the “I” through the immediate relatives up to the clan. This extension of the border of kinship to the clan level makes Gomo’s socio-economic kinship roles loosely articulated. Clan level obligations are mainly attendance at mourning and wedding ceremonies. There are no economic, ritual or any other obligation attached to the lineage. The elders receive a special care from members of the family and they do some supervisory work. It is men of “Choma” who are very active in social activities. Most of them become involved in the elders committee and chair various social meetings. People assist their elders in any kind of work they want to get done. They help them willingly in agricultural work and take and bring messages to and from different distant places. Elders have the power of being listened to, acceptance in reconciling disputes and recognition.

The primary decision -makers among the Gamo are the elders. There is a five-men elders’ committee which can decide on claims and other different issues relating to land, livestock and other property ownership. They can make a person pay compensation for his bad deeds toward someone else. Elders can also make people repay money or property owed to others. They are entitled to divide the plots between different people if there are competing claims or they can decide to give the plot to one or the other. However, the decisions of the elders may not be binding. Every dispute within and between households is first seen by the elders. Usually the dispute is resolved by them. When disputes are beyond their capacity they refer the case to the PA court. If the matter is serious enough the PA may refer it to the government police.

Among the Gamo people borrow cash and grain from relatives, friends and money lenders when they face problems. During the 1987/8 drought many households borrowed cash and food from each other. For example 44 percent of the hundred households sampled in the IFPRI study borrowed cash and/or food. In most cases largesse took the form of gifts rather than loans. According to the study more than 50 percent of respondents shared food with relatives who asked them for help. As far as the loans are concerned interest rates varied from 0 to 100 % payment.

Equibs have recently been started but they are not as widely practised as elsewhere in Ethiopia. The amount is also very low. The smallest is 5 Birr and the highest 20 Birr per month. As it has already been pointed out the most widely practised form of social security is the “Maskel Bank”. There are also idirs of various sizes which support the deceased during mourning. The support ranges from condolence to financial reward depending on the amount of fee members pay. There are different kinds of Mahber, religious group association based on the objective of mutual assistance to members who need the help of others. These create a sense of belongingness, close friendship and good relations between members. They meet at least once in a month in one of the member’s houses. Members share condolences and happy times. It is voluntary. Leaders are democratically elected for an unlimited period.

There are different redistribute mechanisms among the Gamo. The first, and perhaps the most conspicuous, is the institution of huduga. Huduga is a politico-administrative institution in which wealth generates leadership. Underlying the notion of huduga lies Gamo understanding of wealth. Accordingly, to have is to give. A wealthy person is the one who gives most. A person becomes a Huduga either by his own personal initiative, family connection or by the people’s proposal. The people select eight Lazansa very close to the candidate who are meant to serve as go between. Once they secure his consent, (often he would not be hesitant), the ceremony called Chawga is held whereby cattle are slaughtered

(maybe as many as 17 depending on the capacity of the in coming Huduga), and traditional foods are served.

Other than the feast, the incumbent Huduga is supposed to hand out everything he can afford to the people. There are different Huduga stages. Huduga Kema is the first stage where a person is assigned to alleviate the major problems of the people. Literally Kema means to cover. Huduga Kema lasts for a year during which he would be put to a teat. The last stage is Huduga polchanto or Tseranto. Polchanto literally means over and above the required. A Huduga becomes a Polchanto after having held lavish feasts for the people at various times. Indeed, a Huduga polchanto needs to be very wealthy to live up to the expectations. He is distinguished from other Hudugas by his Tsenbero, a decorated spear with a copper coil called Ankasse. To be a Huduga is very exacting so that some of them go bankrupt as a result of the responsibility. Huduga Polchantos' responsibilities, for instance, extend as far as five Quebbele PAs. Against such a background it would be necessary to see the other side of the coin. There are no economic rewards attached to the institutions of Huduga.

Gedeo

Among The **Gedeo** four local organisations are present in the community that help to provide a form of social security. They were created in the following years; they are ranked from most to least useful for the community: 1911 EC - Idir, 1933 EC Equib, 1933 EC Mahber, 1967 EC Peasant Association. Previously there was a community decision - making system called Gada. It made decisions from simple disputes to complex questions by putting the dispute through the system hierarchy Aba Gada, Aba Roga , Hyiticha, Jslksbs. The final decision was made by the Aba Gada. Since the introduction of state- decision - making institutions there are several possibilities for dispute resolution depending up on the desire of those involved. Some go to the hierarchy to settle their dispute or the PA may recommend that the case be seen by the hierarchy. If the case is serious they will be sent to the police or court. The PA also have local police, a prison, and court to exercise power over local lawbreakers. At times of personal crisis such as fire the community will give assistance. The elders assess the damage and co-ordinate to raise the funds for compensation.

Most people belong to idir; membership may range from 100 to 300 and contributions may range between 2 and 3 Birr a month; there is also a contribution to be made when someone dies. Anyone can be a member. There are a number of idirs in the PAs most people belong to more than 1 idir on the basis of kinship or neighbourhood.

St Micheal's Mahber is usually for men and St Mary's for women. There are Mahber to which both men and women belong. Membership may range between 15 and 20. Poor people do not belong to Mahber. The basis for membership is affiliation to Orthodox Christian religion and willingness and capacity to prepare feasts on the day. The main function of these associations rests in the feeling of belongingness and mutual support.

There are other types of Mahber but not religious ones, organised and lent money by the MCH programme of the Catholic Relief Service. There are 3 of these each having 30 members who are 11 mothers. Some of these women are skilled at making pottery, some in spinning, some in other handicrafts, and some in trading. On the basis of their skills they obtain loans and engage in business activities which can enable them to generate income.

The contribution to equib is usually between 3 and 5 Birr a week and membership may range between 70 and 80 . Payments are made every week. People from outside the PA may belong to any equib. There are many Equibs in the PAs. People's decisions about which equib to join depends on the amount of money collected in each respective equib as there are rich and poor people's Equibs. People borrow much from the idirs, friends and relatives. The idirs

often charge interest of 10% per annum. People also borrow from money lenders (typical loan up to 300 Birr), relatives and friends, and the village idir. There are special kinds of savings associations organised for some particular festival and the saved amount plus the interest obtained from lending by the association is paid usually a month before the festival.

Guraghe

Among the **Guraghe** both the PA and the elders make community decisions. However, most of the decisions are made by the elders. These decisions concern the social and economic problems of the community. Decision-making elders are chosen by the people in their respective villages. Disputes within households and between households that are related are usually resolved by the family council. The council is appointed during marriage negotiation. If the council cannot resolve the problem it passes the case to the elder's council where such disputes are usually settled. Disputes between households that are not related go straight to the elders' council. If things are not resolved at the elder's council they pass to the higher body known as ye joka kicha. This is named after the place known as ye joka, near Imdibir where selected members of the Sebat Bet Guraghe tribes gathered to settle complex issues for the first time. The higher elder's council has regulations on murder, theft and several major and minor crimes like burning one's house, causing injuries (e.g. broken leg etc.).

Recently the increasing cost of living forced the ye joka to change certain rules including the amount of bride wealth, the number of yegenia (friends of the groom and bride) and expenses for feasts incurred during collective labour (geiz and wosacha). However, following requests from the community and in order to reduce crime rate in the community, the ye joka has decided to increase the rate of restitution (from 2,000 to 20,000 Birr) for every crime (it used to fine people between 500 and 5000 Birr depending on the type of crime). If someone murders someone else he immediately runs away taking his possessions and family with him, after which he applies to the council, through his relatives, for the case to be mediated. After obtaining the consent of the family of the deceased the ye joka investigates, collects evidence and finally judges and decides how much the murderer should pay to the injured party. The Government police and the community have been accepting all the decisions the elder make.

The Guraghe ranked local organisations in order of usefulness to the community. They said that before 1940 there were idir: there are idir just for men, just for women and mixed. Around 1945 equib were introduced and, as for idir, there are 3 kinds. since before 1941 the Ye Joka meeting has existed. This is the association in which elders of the Guraghe community meet to mediate or give solutions to quarrels and any problems between individuals and within the community. This association presently deals with many problems of the community. It also has regulations by which every member of the community is governed. Also existing since before 1941 are the Mahber. There are separate ones for men and women. They are religious groups. In 1961 the Sebat Bete Guraghe Road Construction Organisation was set up. The organisation built the first road that passed from Wolkite through Imdibir to Hosaina in 1965. The ranking of organisations in order of usefulness is as follows:

1. Idir
2. Sebat Bete Guraghe Road Construction Organisation
3. Equib
4. Ye Joka
5. Mahber

IV: Civil Society Organisations in Tigray

In Tigray indigenous self-help association have existed for long. *Mahber* is an association for mutual aid based on attachment to a specific patron saint. Mahber is an association in which a group of people organise monthly feasts in the name of a particular patron saint in turns. Mahber are widely formed, each with a recognised name. Mahber membership does not involve ascription as a principle of recruitment and Mahber cross-cut neighbourhoods, wards and parishes. Mahber are social gatherings which enable members to get together and at the same time serve as a mutual aid system assisting a member in trouble, consoling the bereaved, and settling conflicts. Mahber are based on a good spirit and members who quarrel with one another can be expelled from membership. Mahber membership may involve couples or individuals. About 12 couples (one for each month and Apostle) form a Mahber and each couple has to host the monthly meeting once a year. Mahber may also be organised on the basis of gender. There may be a Mahber exclusively for men and another for women (usually in the name of St. Mary) in a community.

Senbet Mahber: there are also meetings held weekly on Senbet (Sunday). These are held after church services. Here too, the host member has to serve food and drinks for the participants. Regarding membership, both sexes are eligible to become members and even children go to such meetings with their parents.

Idir which is a society for mutual aid and burial; *Equib* which is a rotating credit association; and *Kusukus* which is a one time self -help or aid contribution made by interested group members to cover the commitments or needs of one or all the member. When members of a community need to buy an expensive item i.e., when they cannot afford to buy the thing individually, they temporarily form kusukus for that limited purpose and start to raise money together. For instance, during the various religious festivals it is customary to slaughter an animal. The rich can afford to buy one on their own but the poor cannot and they turn to kusukus. At such moments, the elders call a meeting on a Sunday (after church services) and discuss ways of buying an animal to slaughter for the occasion. When they reach a decision, they appoint individuals who can implement the decision . Then they appoint ad hoc committee which collects the contributions from every individual member and buys the animal. The animal is slaughtered on the festival day and the meat is shared among the members proportionally. If a person contributes more money, he could get proportionally more meat.

Kusukus is also used on such occasions as when a women becomes a widow, when a person becomes destitute, or when someone is sent as a representative to a distant place. The community discusses and decides what kind of assistance should be collected and provided. According to the decision, the contributions would be collected and handed over to the beneficiary in the presence of some elders of the community.

A neighbourhood, defined in Tigray, in residence terms, is an ego-centred quasi-group and is a reciprocal set of obligations between neighbours. Neighbours have reciprocal rights and duties in supporting one another's life crisis ceremonies. At baptisms, marriages, funerals, the sponsor provides the food. His neighbours provide labour for doing all the preparations. For women the neighbourhood is the main arena in which day- to- day interactions, involving help and borrowing, takes place.

Neighbourhood membership may overlap with membership in other groups in which mutual aid and support takes place, for instance Mahber. Therefore, one's neighbour could be one's Mahber co-member, relative, etc. at the same time.

In Tigray if a house burns down, relatives contribute a piece of wood each to rebuild the roof (the rest is of stone). When an oxen dies there is no assistance unless during its owner tells others it is ill and invites them to share the meat. Usually it is split into 12 parts and each person pays 10 Birr. Relatives and idir also assist in times of crisis. However, idir are not common in the village. Mahber is practised by some households. Members are of the same religious group. Every member contributes 25 cents per month. The main purpose is to celebrate St. Mary; each member prepares a feast on the 21st day of every month when it is his turn and all the members join in the celebration..

Community decisions are usually made by the peasant association council locally called as the “Bayto”. Elders try to solve simpler problems. If they cannot solve it, the “Bayto” will look at the case and try to solve. When the case beyond the capacity of the “Bayto”, it will be sent to Subha Saesie woreda council. Cases beyond the capability of the woreda council, will be passed on to the zonal council and finally to the regional council. The decisions passed by the peasant association and the elders concern mainly the social and economic problems of the community. Decision - making elders are chosen on the basis of their age and influence in the community and are chosen to resolve mainly disputes within households and between households and individuals. At times of divorce elders are nominated by the two spouses.

The main local political institution which has important power in the community is the “Bayto”. The “Bayto” is responsible for keeping peace and order in the community and settling disputes which could not be solved by the elders. The members of the “Bayto” are elected democratically by the community and serve freely without any salary.

V: the number and size of CSOs in Ethiopia

The number and size of CSOs in Ethiopia has mainly been derived from case studies on the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Church (EOTC), around which a majority of politically and organisationally conscious Ethiopians have been traditionally organised around. The church today has a constituency marked by

- 30,000 churches
- 40 million followers and
- 400,000 clergymen

Although Christianity and Islam have co-existed in Ethiopia since the turn of the first millennium, Ethiopia has customarily been known as a Christian country (or in the more dramatic rendering, "an island of Christianity"). This was because, enjoying royal patronage, Christianity became the dominant religion and the dominant culture. As such, it has left an indelible stamp on the history of the country and the psyche of its adherents. The heritage of the Orthodox Church permeates the art, architecture, literature and moral perception of that section of the population which has played the dominant role in the country's history. Church and State existed through the centuries in a symbiotic relationship, the former providing legitimacy, the latter protection and endowments.

While there was little fundamental conflict between Church and State, the Church itself has been rent often times by internal controversy. Which was the real orthodox doctrine of the Orthodox Church was not always so easy to determine. Sectarianism was therefore an endemic syndrome in the Ethiopian Church. The high point in doctrinal controversy was reached in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries when the Church was divided into warring factions espousing divergent interpretations of the nature of Christ.¹³ Another significant feature of Ethiopian Christianity has been the underlying tension between the Church establishment on the one hand and monks and hermits on the other arraigning the former for tainting itself too much with earthly dispositions, including material possessions and political involvement.¹⁴ This could have had a disempowering effect that later led to its total lack of leadership of the Ethiopian civil society during the "Dergue" era.

Other sources of information of course is the rich associational life in rural Ethiopia that is exemplified by the different CSOs found in communities. In the four regions and thirty five districts that were used as pilot counting bases, peoples' organisations exist in numbers ranging from 7-39 in each PA. An average number of 23 people's organisations of varying sizes from just three people to 200 people have been recorded in each. While this permutations resulted in close to half a million CSOs, a realist estimate was used using the 30,000 church centres and accounted for by the Sebeka Guba'e (the administrative units of the Church Administration - Bete Kihnet. The attached questionnaire has been used to document this work.

¹³ For this see, Donald Crumme, *Priests and Politicians. Protestant and Catholic Missions in Orthodox Ethiopia 1830-1868* (Oxford, 1972), Ch. II.

¹⁴ Tadesse, *Church and State*, pp. 108-118.

Case study

The role of civil society organisations in national liberation and democratisation

The Bayto and TPLF in Tigray

The monarchical rule of Haile Selassie has been overthrown by popular mass upheaval in September 1974 prompting peoples' expectations to look forward towards the realisation of tangible social, political and economic changes. A group of military officers and NCOs, with the advantage of its relative organisational strength and armed capacity, usurped power promising to lead the country towards a system that could guarantee social well-being, economic prosperity and political stability. The military Dergue's motto "Ethiopia Tikdem" (Ethiopia First) which reflects its nationalist fervour was soon supplanted by 'Ethiopian Socialism' which was later to assume communist "internationalist" stance. With these two-edged strategies, the military Dergue attempted to consolidate its power.

However, not having clear insight and dependable skill to proceed in the direction it set for itself, the "Dergue" seemed to have been confused at the beginning. It was at this juncture that political organisations founded abroad and having a good deal of experience in socialist theory returned home to assist the "Dergue" in its new venture. Other political organisations were also formed on a multinational basis as quasi opposition. Sooner or later, these organisations began to confront each other on a wide variety of issues. By default and owing to the lack of vision these groups mutually excluded themselves turn by turn. Capitalising on such weaknesses of its contenders the "Dergue" was encouraged to take measures that quelled their resistance after it made sure that nothing could shake it from power.

In the process of resisting the Dergue's omnipotence, the dreadful periods of white terror and red terror ensued in which about thousands of young men and women were massacred. The military regime proved that it could not bring about the unity of the country on the basis of freedom, equality and justice. Economic development, social well being and political stability thus failed to be achieved either. Most importantly, the question of nations/nationalities was by-passed due to being eclipsed by the class struggle. In its unabridged lust for power the military junta officially inhibited the coming to the fore of a responsible political opposition. The politically active individuals that survived arrest and the killings narrowly escaped to either abroad or left for the jungles to operate underground. Still other clandestine nationalist groups cropped up from among the ranks of the student movement.

One of such clandestine organisations was the "Tigrayan National Organisation" already in existence since 1972.¹⁵ In the words of a TPLF combatant: By this time Tigrayan students of the university had decided to boycott the "Development Through Co-operation Campaign" launched by the military government and to go back to Tigray to help their people in their own way.¹⁶ Subsequently, the armed wing of the TNO that called itself the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front was formed on 18 Feb. 1975. Ever since its formation, the TPLF had to negotiate and fight with various political organisations; but basing its struggle entirely on the power of the people as represented by the Baytos - civil society organisations that existed in Tigray. The root cause for the founding and development of the TPLF was the failure of the central government to respond to the

¹⁵ Berhe, A. *Origins and Development of the National Liberation Movement in Tigray: A socio-historical Analysis*; MA draft thesis. ISS, The Hague, p. 31.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

pressing demands of the people in general and its reluctance to find lasting solutions to the key problems associated with the question of nationalities in particular.

Extensive agitation work among the people by appealing to base instincts that easily provoke their feelings was a method applied to rally the masses behind the group. The TPLF aptly invoked the historical and cultural pride of the people which were allegedly diminished owing to acts of injustice and bad administration. According to the TPLF, the only way out of such predicaments was to unswervingly fight against the system. At times, the militants used pamphlets, dramas, traditional songs, cultural shows, etc. to arouse mass interest and, most importantly, to attract the youth to the struggle.

Thus, in a short period of time the youth began to join the armed struggle in large numbers. The new recruits were given military training and a comprehensive and general political education on the essence of peoples revolution in general and the Tigrayan People's New Democratic Revolution in particular.¹⁷ So the formation of the agit-prop was a key instrument for mass mobilisation. To appear influential and display euphoric heroism in the armed struggle against the government or other forces was also a factor that accounts for speedy attraction of man-power and material support. Ranging from the early minor clashes against government forces and other groups like the EDU and the EPRP to the decisive victory over the most reinforced garrison (the 604th Core) of the government at Shire-Endaselasse in Feb. 1989, all undertakings in this regard presented the TPLF as invincible while at the same time disturbingly demoralised the enemy. As a result several government soldiers were taken captive while several others peacefully gave-up hoisting white Kerchiefs on top their guns.

The TPLF handled and treated captured Ethiopian soldiers in a humane manner to the extent of even reorganising them into political groups. This in turn earned it political and military advantages by way of which it could manage to wage a conventional war. The most important factor for mobilisation again was the organisation of *Baytos* and the wise management of local resources for organisational purposes. Around mid-1978, there were *Baytos* from the village to the provincial levels. *Baytos* were people's councils at the top of which sits a member of the TPLF leadership. *Baytos* were meant for local administration and at the same time were used for purposes of control. They were associations along sex, age and professional lines and serve as sources of recruitment for the army, as spies to know public attitudes, relationships, and as source of financial and material support. The formation of MLLT as a political agency consolidated democratic centralism making opposition to the young movements liberation agenda difficult.

In its effort to smoothen its relations with the people and to win public allegiance embarked on implementing infrastructural and other social projects. These include the construction of roads, clinics and schools; redistribution of land among the farmers, literacy campaigns, and so on. The Front's approach in terms of policies and the conduct of the armed struggle, though appears to be confusing, should not be considered accidental or lack of political wisdom. Such a juxtaposition and skilful utilisation of "nationalist" slogans and practice at the same time must be seen from the angle of lending room to options in the pragmatic sense. The Front's method to mobilise the masses and consolidate the guerrilla army enabled it to dismantle Africa's most equipped and trained war machine of the military regime and go up the ladder of political power. Its guerrilla forces, almost all of which were of peasant origin, shabby looking, ferocious, ill-dressed with sandals made of rubbers, carrying *Kalashinkovs* and explosives around their waist drove out the military junta out of its merciless tow decade rule, and disarmed and dismissed one of the biggest armies in the Continent.

end

¹⁷ Weyeen, Op Cit. 1978, p. 17.

Section IV

DISCUSSION ON THE DEMOCRATIC ROLE OF CSOS IN ETHIOPIA

The main question for the study is: what can be done to strengthen the Ethiopian CSOs sector to live up to the promises of nurturing a robust civil society and a more sustainable form of democracy? What are mechanisms for relating effectively with community-based organisations and study to map out existing formal community organisations? The design identifies various strands of the literature on political change suggest that democratic development derives from three distinct sets of factors.

Democratisation depends upon the emergence of supportive set of political institutions. Institutions are recurrent and valued patterns of political behaviour that give shape and regularity to politics. They may be manifest as political rules or as political organisations. As the building blocks of democracy, certain combinations of political institutions must be extant or emergent if a democratic transition is to occur.

While northern Ethiopia, the seat of the classical Ethiopian civilisation, offers few cases of democratic governance in the past, the southern part witnessed certain democratic and egalitarian forms of administration and decision-making. Of these institutions, the *Gada* system of the Oromo is perhaps the most famous. It was an age-grade system whereby the power to administer the community was transferred to the sixth age grade every eight years.¹⁸ The transfer of power was preceded by an energetic election campaign, featuring oratorical skills, traditional wisdom as well as recitations of military prowess. It was marked by the *Butta* ceremony, which combined a military campaign to a new target and a joyous occasion of feasting and singing. Although there were individual officers entrusted with specific responsibilities, power resided principally in the assembly, known as the *chafe*.¹⁹

But, except in a few areas like the Boran on the Ethio-Kenyan border, the *Gada* system did not survive long after the phenomenal migrations of the Oromo to the northern highlands in the sixteenth century. From the outset, the system had inherent deficiencies. It was a male-oriented institution and excluded the female members of the community. Moreover, as Mohammed explains, it "worked ideally for small groups whose members knew each other and met face to face when the situation demanded".²⁰ Another inherent weakness of the system was that the communal assembly could make decisions but had no power of enforcing them. As the Oromo abandoned their original homeland and settled in the central and western highlands of Ethiopia, the institution faced even more formidable challenges.

The shift from pastoralism to sedentary agriculture intensified and the attendant competitions and quarrels facilitated the emergence of a strong arbitrating force. Moreover, the increase in agricultural production made possible by the fertile lands of south-western Ethiopia led to the accumulation of

¹⁸ The standard work of reference for this has been: A. Legesse, *Gada: Three Approaches to the Study of an African Society* (New York, 1973). But see also the more recent Mohammed Hassen, *The Oromo of Ethiopia: A History, 1570-1860* (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 10-16.

¹⁹ Mohammed, pp. 10-12, 14.

²⁰ Mohammed, p. 12.

wealth and to social stratification. The spoils of the endemic wars that attended the migrations of the Oromo also tended to benefit certain sectors of the community at the expense of others; the powers of the Abba Dula, the institutional war leader, were visibly enhanced as a result of this process. The dispersal of clans of the same tribe in different directions as well as the merger of clans of differing tribal origin also contributed towards weakening the hold of the *Gada* rules.²¹

The upshot of this process was the emergence of Oromo monarchies in south-western Ethiopia. In addition to the two states of Limmu-Enarya and Gomma that are the subject matter of Guluma's thesis cited above, these were Gera, Guma and the most celebrated of them all, Jimma Abba Jifar. Further to the north, in Wellega, emerged the principalities of Leqa Qellam and Leqa Naqamte.²² This transformation from the egalitarian *Gada* institution to monarchical rule appears to have been completed by the beginning of the nineteenth century. Two external factors that further enhanced the process were the juxtaposition of these Oromo communities with long-standing monarchical forms of government among the Omotic peoples of Southwest Ethiopia (notably Kafa, Janjaro, and Enarya) and the advent of Islam in the nineteenth century.

Unlike the Oromo, some peoples of the Lower Omo have been able to maintain to this day a participatory form of decision-making. A notable example are the Mursi, who have the reputation of debating an issue until a consensus is reached. Like the *Gada* system of the Oromo, only the male members of the community take part in these meetings (known as the *Methe*) which form a testing ground as much for social standing as for oratorical skills. For "... what is at stake in a public meeting is not just the reaching of a decision on some matter of current concern, but also the reaching of a decision on status ranking within the community".²³

These meetings are often held in conjunction with some public ritual functions, sometimes lasting up to four consecutive days. This institution has given rise to the *Jalabai* (pl. *Jalaba*), the influential speaker who usually comes in towards the end of the debate and whose role it is to sum up and synthesise - in Turton's words "'an authority' even if he is not 'in authority'".²⁴ As a result of this institution, which they apparently share with other East African pastoralists, the Mursi have not developed "chiefly power"; the only approximation to that is the role exercised by the priest.²⁵

Elsewhere in Ethiopia, the scales were decisively tipped towards authoritarian rule. A strong dosage of authoritarianism has permeated the classical Ethiopian state. The monarch has enjoyed extensive, and often absolute, powers over life and property. Even before the absolutist monarchy of Haile Sellassie, one can cite the case of the medieval Emperor Zara Ya'eqob (r. 1434-68), who, through a combination of religious fanaticism and political authoritarianism, exercised a terrifying hold over his subjects.²⁶ An important feature of this strong monarchical rule was the impermanence of the nobility. On the occasions when the nobility posed a challenge to the monarchy, as for instance during the so-called *Zamana Masafent*, or in its English rendering "the Era of the Princes" (c. 1770-1855), the nobility vied for control of the monarchy rather than acting as a Corporate entity.

The Wayane rebellion of 1943 pushed the central government into imposing direct rule of an exacting nature under the veteran leader of the Resistance to Italian Occupation, *Ras Ababa Aragay*.

²¹ Guluma Gameda, "Gomma and Limmu: The Process of State Formation among the Oromo in the Gibé region, c. 1750-1889", MA thesis (Addis Ababa University, Dept. of History, 1984), pp. 36, 41-48.

²² For a general discussion refer to Bahru Zawde, *A History of Modern Ethiopia* (London, Athens, Addis Abeba: 1992), pp. 18-19.

²³ David Turton, "The Social Organisation of the Mursi: A Pastoral Tribe of the Lower Omo Valley, south-west Ethiopia", PhD Thesis (Oxford, 1972), p. 302.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 279.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 352.

²⁶ Tadesse Tamrat, *Church and State in Ethiopia 1270-1527* (Oxford, 1972), pp. 238-42, 284-85.

This lasted until 1947, when *Ras* Seyoum and later his son *Ras* Mangasha were successively appointed governors of the province until the 1974 revolution. The overall process of centralisation was started well before 1935 but picked up momentum after 1941, with the laying down of the new provincial administration structure, the re-establishment of the ministries in a more strengthened form and the expansion of the bureaucracy.²⁷

The State, which thus began to exercise ever tighter control over its subjects, assumed leviathan proportions under the totalitarian rule of Mengistu Haile-Mariam. This final period lasted from 1977, when the popular movement that had been the springboard of the 1974 revolution was finally brought down to heel, to 1991, when Mengistu regime collapsed. At no other time in Ethiopian history has a government had such *total* control over its subjects as in that period. The peasants were controlled by the peasant associations. The urban dwellers were under the tight supervision of the urban dwellers associations. Neither labour, nor the youth, nor the press - in short no component of what is understood by civil society was allowed even a whiff of autonomy. It was one big exercise in recasting society in the image of the political regime.

In sum, Mengistu brought the authoritarianism inherent all along in the Ethiopian political tradition to its highest pitch. In two other respects could the Mengistu regime be said to have been the culmination of the inherent authoritarianism of the Ethiopian state - in its militarism and its pronounced ideological motivation. We shall look at these two aspects in some more detail.

Because pressure for regime transformation and transitions to democracy has come from below, outside the decrepit, authoritarian state, in civil society; we assert that society yields the spontaneous interests, demands and institutional mechanisms of democratic transition and the state has only a limited role to play. Its function will not be to manage society's democratic aspirations and activities, but to create the enabling conditions for their free play. Institution's and groups in civil society must form and run themselves. When they begin to address longer socio-economic and political issues beyond their limited sectional concerns, or to co-operate with the state on certain matters, they should be able to do so in terms of their specific interests and competence, not as mere instruments or extensions of governments.

Participation in citizenship is the basis of all other forms of participation in development. Divorced from participation in citizenship, the concept of political participation in development becomes a mere administrative strategy-- a callous manipulation of the innocent and ignorant even if the end result might be a "successful project" - but the end can never morally justify the means. Sadly much of the current jargon about popular participation is based on the administrative desire for project success and effectiveness.

Radical shifts in the political order have been a catalyst if not the cause of recent moves towards democratisation. Donors are now more open and explicit in their coupling of economic and political reform. While such external pressure have the features of a new Western imperialism, they can help promote an environment more amenable to political change. They cannot, however, replace the need for the majority of people to exert greater influence on governments by becoming citizens of, rather than subjects within, their own countries. One path for enabling such a change is to reframe participation so that it explicitly includes popular action in the political realm of citizenship. This is not to be confused with mobilisation for new political parties. Rather, the issue is to include the dimensions of citizenship--individual and communal right and obligations vis-à-vis a the state--within the practice of participatory development.

The evidence for this assertion is the virtual absence of civic education training as a key component of many development programmes and projects. It is the fundamental argument of this paper that civic education - learning about and appreciating one's rights, duties, obligations and

²⁷ For the details of the process, the reader is referred to Bahru, *Modern Ethiopia*, pp. 128-148, 201-209.

responsibilities as a citizen and the immediate rules, laws and governance structures within which one exercises citizenship is the first and fundamental step in development participation.

Without it, Ethiopia will make no significant headway either with new strategies for development or with its tentative lurch towards democratic governance. Democracy could easily degenerate into anarchy if popular participation in citizenship is not viewed as a critical factor in both African development and democratic governance without political participation in citizenship. A recent study proposal by the GCA/ALF on the transition to democracy and good governance identified the following objectives, i.e., to field a research initiative along the lines of:

- **the impact of geopolitical locus and influence of the former colonial history;**
- **cultural and traditional dynamics and the development of a political culture;**
- **origin and nature of the process of change and attitudes of political leadership;**
- **regulatory procedures required to facilitate pluralistic expression through people's organisations;**
- **the role of civil society in the process and how it can further impede encourage such a process;**
- **the role, function, and capacity of existing community based institutions in mobilising support for change, particularly in regard to enhancing accountability, openness and adherence to the rule of law;**
- **institutional requirements for enhancing and sustaining future democratic practices, especially in the areas of accountability, openness, and predictability;**
- **the general internal and external dynamics which affect political change.**

There are, of course, limits to political participation in development. These might be imposed by such factors as the poverty level to which individuals and communities belong.

- For the very poor are often precluded from participation because they are preoccupied with mere survival. In fact, more than in the past, aid has become an essential, indispensable fact of life catalysing the rise of social forces it finds compatible. Others are precluded because of illiteracy, physical handicap, inadequate clothing for public appearance at formal gatherings, lack of social and political 'connections' and cultural traditions such as those that discriminate against women's participation in public meetings and affairs.
- More than that, there are limitations against political participation imposed by the technical nature of the issues at stake. At a slightly higher level many community based organisations simply do not have the technical capacity to engage in serious dialogue with governments on issues which turn out to have a highly technical and complex arguments to arrive at meaningful solutions. Many organisations have yet to demonstrate capacity to master the technical skills to meaningfully engage in political dialogue.
- Beyond platitudes and good intentions many civil institutions cannot participate in political dialogue because they lack the personnel with requisite skills and facilities such as research centres and Think Tanks, to inform their arguments or present credible data to support their assertions. Far more critical in determining both the level and quality of dialogue between governments and civil society is the political and economic context in which states find themselves.

The preceding section has put the context which sets the limits to any realistic discussion about dialogue and interface between governments, people's and community based organisations and other civic institutions in support of political reform.

- Political participation represents the transformation of the human person . It is the persistent passion for cardinal human and organisational values, that take stock of every detail of the

performance levels, definition of goals and evolving them into concrete actions. Behind all these are human beings, who relentlessly administer, manage and operate to serve one goal - success. It is creating a system of fostering and breeding leaders, trouble shooters, practical risk takers and many innovators' throughout civil society - the emergence of civil society as an effective counter-weight to the power of the state; a strong process indicator for participation in decision making and, hence, governance.

- The performance of a community is directly linked and dependent on the activities of participating community members -- selection, deployment and development of peoples' faculty and aptitude: *where the ultimate goal is for good old wisdom and indigenous knowledge to over-power 'imported ideology' and intellect, where analysis didn't impede action ... keeping things simple in a complex world ... allowing some chaos in return for action and inviting oneself to the luxury of a proactive approach to solving problems.*
- Hence, the empowerment training must, as a priority, address the need for to secure the crucial capacity for self-reliance, self assertion and self-empowerment without which CSOs will be ill-prepared to create the setting for self-empowerment of local communities. Their task should therefore be to transform themselves into credible grass roots democratic institutions which reinforce democratic values -- *a conditio sine qua non* for the transformation from the realpolitik of indifference, denial, scepticism and repudiation to that of self-empowerment, self assertion and participation.
- the State should carve a role for itself confined to charting out overall development strategy and formulation of economic policy; participation in projects which the private sector is not prepared or unable to carry out and to create enabling conditions for the private sector expansion. While the participation of the private sector in the development process is essential, certain conditions prevailing make the state still a necessary actor in the economic management. A new set of economic policies and political will, would have to be demonstrated to reduce its direct influence the day to day administration of the economy.
- We speak of development as a dynamic process of change and growth, negating the 'old' and building up on the new. The development of human society more specifically can be difficult to interpret in a general form. It is seen in terms of greater understanding of the social, economic and political processes; enhanced competence to analyse and solve problems ... expansion of manual skills and greater control of economic resources, restoration of human dignity and respect -- again demanding a higher degree of rootedness. But who is to spearhead the empowerment of people, those affecting the process to fulfil the dictates of the developmental processes of transition, emergence and formation of an event or phenomenon for sustained development?
- In so far as civic education is provided by the state, it is usually part of a humanities curriculum in formal education; treating constitutional history, the state's view of citizen's obligations and is divorced from application to daily life. What is needed instead is a real-life use of civic education in development projects and programmes; in other words a conscious coupling between material improvements in people's lives and the same people's rights as citizens. Such a link is very occasionally to be found in the participatory approaches of NGOs and CSOs because, by and large, they are concerned with empowerment and have adopted ostensibly political psycho-social methods, sometimes under the rubric of social welfare programmes.
- The second way in which participation can lead to better governance is through its legalisation. People should have statutory rights for involvement in decisions on development initiative impacting upon them. Systems of development administration should enjoy

statutory regulation to ensure that bureaucratic practices are subject to challenge and independent judgement.

- There has been a dramatic expansion in the numbers of and official assistance to CSOs working in Africa. One rationale for an increase in finance to CSOs from the public purse is that CSOs have comparative advantages over governments when it comes to realising cost-effective sustainable development. This capability is attributed, in part, to an CSO's ability to obtain real participation of rural people. In addition, and more recently, it is being argued that CSOs have an important role to play in Africa's democratisation. This position is based on the liberal expectation that through their own growth and work with GROs, African CSOs will strengthen organisations composing civil society that will, in their turn, provide countervailing power to an autocratic state.
- The expectations associated with the civil society argument place a significant burden on NGOs and CSOs and may be unrealistic. For it can be argued that instead of promoting democratisation, the historical and prevalent role of CSOs--providing services in substitution or complementarity to the state--has weakened the grounds of popular political action by functioning as a palliative for a state's failure to deliver the economic and political goods promised at independence. Moreover new NGO regulation sets limits to the potential democratising impact that CSOs may have. Realistically, therefore, if NGOs and CSOs are to promote democracy they must more consciously strive to do so.
- Achieving meaning and sustainable democracy is far from simple. It may include several aspects:
 - guarantees of human rights, including freedom of speech and association
 - rule of law
 - free, fair and fully contested elections at periodic intervals;
 - a multi-party system; orderly transition of government and elected representatives fully accountable to voters.

Democracy cannot be achieved overnight. Just as economic growth means little unless it is translated into improvements in human lives, so democracy can be merely an empty ritual of periodic elections unless people participate, aware and empowered, in all the institutions of civil society . Elections are a necessary, but certainly not a sufficient, condition for democracy. Political participation is not just a casting of votes; it is a way of life.

BUILDING SOCIAL CAPITAL IN AFRICA

Civil Society in Africa: Breaking the Conceptual Paralysis

As one of us has noted elsewhere, there is a kind of catalepsy, or less polemically, to use Mamdani's phrase, a "paralysis of perspective" about civil society in Africa. We submit that this paralysis is rooted in five untested assumptions frequently made about civil society generally and applied, *tout court*, to the specificities of Africa.

1. First, it is assumed that by definition, civil society is a countervailing power on the state. That assumption is moored on a fact true of Western society but hardly so of Africa: namely, that political resources are on the whole fairly distributed in society, or at any rate, that the rules for the distribution of such resources are even-handed. On this accounting, civic groups have, roughly, an equal chance of accessing these resources. That assumption, in turn, rests on a view of the state as a largely passive and generally indifferent bystander with limited adjudicatory functions. As the groups slug it out in the civic arena the state steers clear, coming in only to stem acrimony and adjust the conflicts that may get out of hand. This

assumption ignores the fact that in Africa the assumed boundaries between state, political society and civil society are rather porous, one often blurs into other. As a corollary, the hands-off state implicitly assumed by some of the literature is untenable. The state in Africa is neither indifferent nor passive. (Ekeh, 1992.). Historically, its political project has been domination and its *modus vivendi* the fragmentation of any opposition to that project. In analysing civil society in Africa, therefore, one must explore not just civil society's pluralising potential but also the ways in which the state uses the civic sphere. It uses some civic institutions as vehicles for its hegemonic project, shrinking the popular sectors of civil society and sundering and frustrating democratic deepening in the process.

2. Secondly, current civil society literature has fallen under the spell of formal civic institutions. The peril in this bedazzlement lies in the implicit assumption it rests on: namely, that formal institutions are representative of key social and political interests. Which often means that interests not articulated within these formal organisations are either given a dismissive nod or ignored. Thus, much of the less "radical" literature on civil society in Africa focuses on business associations, labour unions, women's groups, welfare associations, professional groups and the Church. The reason may be easy to hazard. Organised groups are more amenable to empirical investigation. But focusing on them blinds investigators to the fact that much associational life in Africa takes place outside of formal groups. There is good political sense in this. Formal groups are easier to target through licensing, criminal law, official slander, harassment or even prosecution of their leaders.
3. Thirdly, much of the literature frequently overlooks the ways in which the larger conflicts in political society are reproduced in civil society. The orthodox belief that civil society is an arena for negotiating interests itself a touchstone of democratic deepening masks the point that civil society can and often does feed into and aggravate existing social and political cleavages. Put differently, this assumption *declasses* and *de-ethnicises* civil society, thereby obscuring the ways in which the twin cleavages of class and ethnicity, seen by many as the bugbears of African politics, find voice and sustenance in civil society.
4. Fourthly, the key assumptions made about the state in Africa are not tenable in the context of the actual reality. Generally seen as incompetent and prebendary and often described as de-institutionalised, neo-patrimonial and sultanist, the state in Africa has been written of as an artefact of research, a museum and period piece to be occasionally dusted to surfeit the fancies of political archaeologists. This is rash. Much of the weakness of civil society in Africa has to do with the active role the state has played in fragmenting and dissipating the energies of those it distrusts. Behind its dour, turgid and seemingly lifeless aspect, the African State is "alive and well". (Sangmpam: 1993; 73) Part of the skepticism about the future of state in Africa rests, as Krasner points out, on the model against which the African State is judged. Set against "the fluid, efficiency governed, adaptive [state] model of neo-classical economies" the African State is a shambles.²⁸ Judged thus, it seems fore-doomed by the challenges it faces. However, this proof by analogy is bad social science: teleological rather empirical and historical. It assumes that what the liberal state does is the natural purpose of the state, any state. And seeing that the African State does not do these things it is concluded that it is decrepit.
5. Finally, the assumption that civil society groups properly so-called is those that are self-organising and also relatively autonomous of the state are inapplicable to most civic organisations in Africa. African Civil society's scope for self-organization and self-direction is often severely restricted by invasive NGO and registration of society's laws. Groups distrusted by the state must torture language into euphemisms that the hatchet man from the Office of the President finds acceptable. A welter of annual licensing requirements is often

²⁸ See Krasner, especially from pp. 74-80.

the occasion for chastising those who have not stuck to the mandate for which they were registered. Draconian powers of de-registration hung over all registered civic organisations. Those that forget that the government possesses such powers often find themselves proscribed or driven into expensive lawsuits. In terms of funding, formal civil society institutions are even more dependent. The orthodox view is that middle class forces will put their money into causes that they would like to advance. In Africa, however much of the emergent middle class has come into its own with the help of the state. If they support causes that the government dislikes, their lifelines could be severed. (Kennedy, 1994; Sahn & Sarris, 1994) Moreover, even those that have not been nurtured by the state know that the state's capacity to harm them is still considerable, economic liberalisation notwithstanding. Bereft of local financial support, local organisations must then depend on external funding. Hence, the key role of donors in Africa's re-democratisation. These propositions are put forward as flash cards for the central thesis, that existing conceptions of civil society have limited explanatory power for the complexities of associational life in Africa. A first corrective step is a search for a more acceptable conception.

Expanding the Horizons beyond a Designer Concept of Civil Society

If, as we have implicitly suggested, civil society is a concept made to order for the political reality of western society, should we use at all in the study of African society? With great reservation, we argue that it is still serviceable for our purposes. But we suggest two emendations.

First, we propose a shift in perspective from a pre-occupation with organisations and institutions to *an activity view* of civil society. Those who focus on organisational forms and institutions do a great injustice to civil society in Africa. Much that is both interesting and transformative in the continent occurs outside or at the periphery of formal organisational life. Spontaneous protests, laxity and indiscipline and active non-cooperation with the state are important civic activities that take place outside of formal organisations. Spontaneous, non-confrontational methods such as these are safer ways of registering one's disagreement with the government than more robust public thorough-fare activities such as protest marches, placard-waving and burning effigies.

Moreover, an activity view of civil society also allows us to include within civil society activities, which would otherwise be invisible. For instance, much that is articulated by ethnic and kinship groups, such as families and clans, is easy to ignore, dismissed as *not-civic-activity*, since these groups hardly meet the definitional criteria of civil society. But even without treating ethnic groups as civic groups we need to see that many of their activities engaging the state are civic activities. No account of African civil society is complete if it does not deal with this fact. The key corrective here is perhaps to alert students of African politics why clan and ethnic groups have remained so fundamental to African politics. Two reasons stand out.

1. For one, tribe and ethnic identity give groups a political language. As Lonsdale reminds us, a political language "unites people over what to argue about; it provides the images on which they can base their ideologies [and] ideologies mobilize political support around social divisions." (1992: 211)
2. Moreover, in the context of an increasingly mobile and deracinated African professional class, ethnic identity provides social anchorage and orientation. Many urban based professionals are members, if not senior officials of their clan and tribal associations. If they intend to pursue a political career, clan and ethnic support may make the difference between failure and success.
3. Two, people's histories and identities are encoded in their customs, as are their philosophies of power, justice and entitlement. In those African countries where official histories and

ideologies have reworked the past in order to buttress predatory government, ethnic awareness and historiography, even if oral, may be the only effective counterweight to the state's hegemonic project. On this view, rather than see ethnicity as the rupturing force of African politics we see it as the proper starting point for the study of African social movements and of civil society. One recognises thereby the fact that democratisation will not advance unless we explore "the interior architecture of tribe." (Lonsdale, id: 210). This means explicating not just the "social and moral codes of ethnicity" and kinship but also, crucially, investigating the ways in which these codes intersect with issues of class, gender and poverty.²⁹ The point being to illuminate the intuitively felt but rarely expressed fact that in Africa class and tribe are not always opposed categories.³⁰ Ethnicity supplies the grammar and metaphor of African politics, even for the middle classes. It frames the political and social demands that they make on the state. The African middle class straddles the twilight zone between individualism and communitarianism. They are not just members of a class; they are also sons and daughters of the tribe. They are held up as icons of its progress and power. Its emissaries at negotiations and their exploits the stuff of which fireside tales is made.

4. Three, as we note below the violence of the colonial state nurtured civic resistance and more important led to substantial distrust of the state and other official institutions. Traditionally high trust institutions such as the family, clan and tribe then became the site for political activity.

There is a third corrective. We propose to move away from pre-occupation with rights articulation and advocacy as the key features of civic action. We argue that rights articulation reveal a western bias. Therefore groups organised for economic ends are frequently not treated as civic actors. They are seen, more sceptically, as instruments for personal accumulation. This conception unfairly circumscribes what civil society means in Africa. Groups created to advance personal economic interests such as farmers' co-operatives and associations, clan and tribal welfare organisations, are often the most active sites of state/society conflict. They help nurture economic elite, especially in the rural areas, that is relatively independent of the state and that often incubates future political leadership.

²⁹ See generally pp. 208-215 of Lonsdale's chapter.

³⁰ In Kenyan politics, for instance, most of the young professionals (especially lawyers: Paul Muite, James Orenge, Kiraitu Murungi, Gitobu Imanyara, Kijana Wamalwa, George Kapten, Gervase Akhaabi and political scientists: Prof. Anyang Nyong'o and Dr Mukhisa Kituyi) who entered elective politics with the advent of multi-parties fought for seats in their rural homes rather than in the urban areas in which they had build their professional practices and careers and where, presumably, one would expect that they had more contacts. A salutary reminder that in their minds they see no contradiction between their class affiliation and their role as leaders of their tribes.

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**Database on Civil Society Organisations
(CSOs), Community- based Organisations (CBOs) and Non-
Government Organisations (NGOs) in Ethiopia**

A research programme of the
Centre for Human Environment supported by the
Commission of the European Union

Further to the study initiated by the Centre for Human Environment funded by the European Union, we are in the process of developing an CSO, CBO and NGO data-base with the intent of mapping CSO, CBO and NGO activities. We will complement / supplement this initiative using all information provided earlier by secondary data to complete the work. We need your co-operation in completing this questionnaire which will supplement the above effort. The information might seem repetitive but please bear with us and complete all relevant information. **PLEASE PRINT IN CLEAR LEGIBLE LETTERS AND USE EXTRA SHEETS SHOULD YOU DESIRE TO PROVIDE MORE INFORMATION.**

1. Name of Organisations _____

2. RRC/Mol _____ Registration _____ status, _____ No., _____

3. 3.1 Year established _____
3.2 Address Woreda _____ Kebele _____ House No. _____

4. Constituency and membership Community-based _____
Church/community-based _____
Citizens groups _____
Others, please specify _____

5. Form of organisation
Community-based _____ (yes/no) Corporation _____
Religion-based _____ (yes/no) un-incorporated _____
Region-based _____ (yes/no) association _____
Others _____

6. Administered by board _____ (yes/no)
If yes, number of Board members _____

7. MAJOR ACTIVITIES OF YOUR ORGANISATION

- | | |
|----------|-----------|
| 1. _____ | 6. _____ |
| 2. _____ | 7. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 8. _____ |
| 4. _____ | 9. _____ |
| 5. _____ | 10. _____ |

8 Are you involved in development or social relief programmes

Water resources
Crop production
Livestock

Health/PHC
Skills training
Extension

Credit		Tree planting / biodiversity	
Entrepreneurship		Soil / water conservation	
WID		On/off farm employment	
Capacity building		Rural/urban infrastructure	

10.5 Are you involved in advocacy works as a major area of operation yes no

10.6. Budgets/ expenses: kindly specify where possible according to categories otherwise totals would do

	Management costs	Row-Total
1991		
1992		
1993		
1994		
1995		
Total		

11. Personnel (volunteer and professional) composition

	Classification	Number of staff			
		Headquarters		Project	
11.1	Professional (1st degree and above)				
11.2	Para-professional (2 year diploma/equivalent)				
11.3	Clerical / secretarial				
11.4	Support staff (Drivers, assistants)				
11.5	Volunteers				

Thank you. Please return the completed questionnaire to THE CENTRE FOR HUMAN ENVIRONMENT, Facsimile 513838, PO Box 13309, Addis Abeba OR CALL US TO COLLECT IT AT 512879, 513541.

Questionnaire completed by _____ Position _____

Signature _____ Date _____ Seal _____