LONG TERM PERSPECTIVES ON DEVELOPMENT IMPACTS IN
RURAL ETHIOPIA: WIDE3 TRANSITION FROM STAGE 1

THE ROLE OF THE 'GOVERNMENT GO-BETWEENS' IN
CHANGING RURAL ETHIOPIA

SHORT SUMMARY

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Part I: Key messages

The 'take away' messages for the donors

The **WIDE3 Stage 1 data** suggests that the government go-betweens deployed at the community level are uniquely placed to 'bridge' the cultural 'disconnect' between external and local development models but are presently not empowered to do this. In a number of ways (notably training, system of values, norms and practices in their organisation, and the incentive system in place) they are led to stick to translation of epistemic knowledge and at best, interpretation of the top-down intervention designs and rarely if ever move to negotiation between local/metis knowledge and external/epistemic knowledge.

In areas that are not directly clashing with local knowledge (e.g. kebele administrative services) or where the local model is evolving (e.g. modern education), the government go-betweens can play more of a role of service providers (kebele managers, teachers and school headmasters). This suggests that only if/when the community wants the service can agents become service providers. In areas where the (donor-supported) government efforts to change the rural communities is more starkly at odd with local knowledge, the government go-betweens are confined to a 'change-by-extension' role and prevented from adopting approaches facilitating complex change. They are faced with a two-pronged tension between (i) a role as service provider vs. change agent and (ii) a role as 'extension change agent' vs. 'complex change agent'.

In the WIDE3 Stage 1 communities the 'cadre' of government go-betweens who were generally more satisfied were the teachers and school headmasters, who also (i) enjoyed slightly more inputs in schools than their colleagues in the other sectors; (ii) benefited from a slightly better defined and more humane HRM framework, and; (iii) due to the lesser disconnect between external and local models (which had been negotiated albeit with teachers and school headmasters not playing the lead role in this), could take on more of a service provider than an extension role.

The government change model implicitly recognizes the particular 'location' of the government go-betweens between the higher levels of government and the community. There is not much recognition of the ensuing tension between upward accountability and local responsiveness. There is even less recognition of the fact that the government go-betweens are 'political actors in their own right' and individuals with the same aspiration to a 'good life' as anyone on both (government and community) sides, which goes hand-in-hand with a seemingly generalised low level of attention to human resource management issues in government policies and practices.

The **international literature** suggests that there is no blueprint for community level health care service provision and behavioural change promotion. In agriculture/the livelihood field, there is a movement towards decentralised management, community/demand-driven and adaptive approaches and greater emphasis on the importance of facilitation skills for extension agents, but there have been few authoritatively positive experiences of agricultural extension. There is an international trend for education systems to increasingly focus on quality and hard-to-reach groups after first successes in raising access, with implications for teachers, and a parallel trend towards greater community

involvement in school affairs. We found little about experiences of strengthening community-level administration to compare with the role of the kebele managers. The tensions between extension and change agent and between accountability for policy implementation and local responsiveness are not specific to Ethiopia; also not specific is the comparatively little attention paid to the frontline workers' own position in this.

There are factors that seem to be important for the success of government go-betweens' programmes. Notably, the government go-betweens' role needs to be coherently and sustainably integrated in the wider (national) systems; there may be a case for the central government to take on a role of 'new activism' to support the government go-betweens, in particular with regard to all components of an effective human resources management system; this demands a responsive centre; and there needs to be an appropriate balance between upward accountability and enabling local responsiveness; this has implications for the design of effective and fair performance management systems.

The one single but complex critical factor on the demand side is to embed the government go-betweens' role in the local community dynamics. Based on our analysis of the WIDE3 Stage 1 data we suggest that for this to go beyond discourse there needs to be recognition of the value of local knowledge by supply-side actors at all levels, so that the government go-betweens feel that they can legitimately recognise it as well and that they are empowered to negotiate between knowledge worlds.

The government go-betweens in donors' model(s)

First, donor discourse gives a lot of space to 'service delivery'. This has become a more frequently used terminology in 'joint government/donor documentation' such as that for the Protecting Basic Services programme and the Wereda City Benchmarking Survey. The joint discourse also focuses on local accountability (implicitly, for service delivery) much more prominently than seven or eight years ago at the outset of the SDPRP.

Second, when looking at how donors have been able to think in terms of web of development interventions the picture is uneven. The discourse highlights the importance of joint sector work, synergies between specific sectoral interventions etc. but a quite strong 'silo mentality' prevails in the large multi-donor programmes. More fundamentally there has been very little attention in donor-supported programmes to strengthening the local Councils that are mandated to 'bring all things together' at the community level.

Third, apart from regularly raising the issue of the top-down nature of policy implementation in Ethiopia, donors appear not to have given much thought about the two-pronged tension that we identified (service provider vs. extension change agent vs. complex change agent). This tension as well as questions about 'what change model', the value of local knowledge, the links with and implications for the relative power of the different policy actors and the ways in which performance is managed have not been discussed by the donors with the government.

Fourth, donors have regularly raised human resource management (HRM) issues but these efforts are scattered and not well evidence-grounded as little is known about actual HRM practices, especially at the government go-between level. Apart from some focus on pay reform there is a lot less discussion about HRM than there is about service delivery, local accountability for service delivery, and public finance management.

Fifth, there has been increasing recognition of some of the factors hampering effective service provision (in particular, lack of inputs) and donors do support interventions that start responding to this in some sectors (e.g. GEQIP in education). But this has not looked beyond and there has not been much thinking about other possible 'proactive roles' (as found in experiences outside of Ethiopia).

This suggests that to date there has been only marginally more attention to and knowledge/ understanding of the role of the government go-betweens and of the conditions in which they are

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expected to play this role on the donor side, than there is on the government's side. And the donor discussions with the government have been confined at a relatively superficial level.

Donor inputs in policy and strategies for the government go-betweens

We suggest that this should change and that there is **potential for donors to support the government go-betweens in a 'complex change agent' role**. Their strategies to do this must account for the fact that donor influence is relatively limited in Ethiopia. Thus, we suggest that: (i) it is important that donors continuously build better grounded understanding; (ii) donors could also help in comprehensively documenting lessons learned from elsewhere; (iii) there is value in acting collaboratively to address a number of 'basics' that are well recognised by the government, as an entry point for discussions on potentially more sensitive matters; (iv) institutionalising successful approaches and consulting the government go-betweens themselves should be cross-cutting strategies.

Strategy 1: Building better understanding

Much more grounded evidence on and understanding of the government go-betweens' role, effectiveness and life and work conditions is needed. Practical ways of building this include: (i) Complementing existing programme monitoring tools and approaches; (ii) Assisting the government to develop and equip Regions and weredas with comprehensive human resource information management systems; (iii) Commissioning specific in-depth studies on practices related to important HRM issues as a basis for joint reflection; (iv) Further supporting longitudinal complexity-informed village-level research.

Strategy 2: Learning further lessons from elsewhere

Donors could assist in building a database and management system for a repository of experiences with government go-betweens from other countries. This could continue to build on the literature that we reviewed for this paper. It would need to be regularly updated as a joint resource for the government and the donors. To be useful there would need to be regularly an analysis of the evidence collected in this way.

Strategy 3: Using the evidence collaboratively and gradually more deeply

The suggestions made here move gradually from simpler to more sensitive issues. In any instance attempts to address these issues should draw fully on the empirically-grounded understanding and internationally-informed knowledge obtained through the first and second strategies.

Building on government recognition of the need to provide all FTCs, health posts and schools with the required basic inputs (as outlined in the GTP), donors could jointly with the government re-design the PBS, WASH, GEQIP, the HABP and PSNP, the AGP and other programmes, to contribute to this.

Building on government recognition of the special difficulties in remote areas, donors could prioritise interventions so that they focus more or first on those, through: (i) developing and financing appropriate (financial and non-financial) incentives for staff posted there; (ii) giving priority to remoter areas in input distribution (as there are fewer alternatives if inputs are not provided as planned) and; (iii) paying greater attention to the implications of all interventions for the government go-betweens posted in these areas.

As part of this, paying greater attention to the government go-betweens' family situation, taking measures to avoid family separation as well as acknowledging and addressing to the specific vulnerabilities of female professionals (e.g. making kebele officials accountable for this), should be prioritised.

As part of these measures donors could prioritise financing to complement the government universal rural electrification programme so as to ensure access to water and electricity in all schools, health posts and FTCs where the kebele has been connected. Helping the government to rollout a programme of universal kebele-level access to internet-based resources might also be an incentive for the

government go-betweens, especially the DAs, HEWs and kebele managers, often young and 'IT-literate'.

Donors could more actively help the government to develop the 'modern HRD systems' which the government has recognised as an important priority. This would start by developing and rolling out comprehensive HR information management systems as outlined above; and move further to systematically address the critical dimensions of recruitment, remuneration, career prospects, training, and supervision and support systems, processes and procedures.

Alongside this, donors could promote and use accountability systems that recognise the complexity of change in rural communities and which empower the government go-betweens as 'complex change agents' and promote the learning/reflexive and team-based approaches that this demands. This would include developing measures aimed to promote a sense of pride for team achievements whilst also encouraging the emergence of a 'corporate' sense of value of the go-betweens' professions (redesigning existing practices of rewarding 'best performance'). Donors could also assist in developing and rolling out peer-to-peer exchange means (e.g. HEWs' newsletters, web-based wereda or even kebele resource centres etc.).

The above requires that donors also become better at strengthening bottom-up mechanisms, among others through helping with the development of more systematic processes for community assessment of the government go-betweens' performance and ensuring that these assessments do matter. There ought to be equal attention to the development or strengthening of appeal and grievance systems for the government go-betweens that should be independent from wereda and community unjustified pressures.

More fundamentally these suggestions would require that donors engage in a discussion with the government about complex change and experiences with complex change facilitation approaches and about the consideration to be given to reorienting the government go-betweens' role away from the current extension approach to a negotiation approach. This in turn has implications for the type of skills that the government go-betweens should acquire from pre-service training and for performance appraisal systems.

Building on experiences in the WIDE3 Stage 1 villages, donors could help the government go-betweens to develop targeted ways of communicating with the younger generations with a view to drawing on the generational change effect that was clear in a number of cases. Donors could also encourage the government to legitimise 'coalition of change' approaches in which the government go-betweens try to work with non-conventional partners and strike new partnerships.

Cross-cutting strategy

Donors should use and encourage the use of trial and error pilots to find things which seem to work and to find the best ways to spread things which work through different contexts; and monitor how the multiplying things are changing the larger system and to see what macro level interventions would accelerate change.

They should also always explore the perspectives of the government go-betweens and listen to their voices directly, as a privileged way of better understanding their reality, and a way of beginning to build their self-confidence and sense of power (with).

Part II: Selective summary of key research findings and conclusions

The government go-betweens' life in the six Stage 1 communities

The following key findings emerge from the 'human resource management' data related to the government go-betweens that were posted in 2010 in the six WIDE3 Stage 1 villages:

- It was **more difficult to staff remoter villages**; a more urban environment was making it more likely that government go-betweens could be from the community when this is desirable according to the policy (HEWs and kebele managers).

- There was a **fairly high proportion of 'women professionals'** among the government go-betweens interviewed, including because **all HEWs** were female as per the policy; however for many their **work conditions** were **difficult to reconcile with family l**ife and this was a serious issue.

- Almost **one third** of the government go-betweens interviewed were **separated from their nuclear family** due to their posting.

- Getting a permanent job was a motivation for some individuals.

- Kebele managers had the most diversified backgrounds. **DAs** were the **most mobile**, with frequent transfer and **transfer in remote areas used as a punishment**. **HEWs** were **not transferred even after years in remote areas.**

- HEWs with a high workload and tiring extension job did not get salary increments and might earn three times less than teachers with many years of seniority.

- There was no career path, no salary increment policy for the HEWs and the kebele managers. The **HRM framework was underspecified for all cadres**, but a **bit clearer for the teachers.** Leave policy was unclear.

- **Teachers and head teachers** seemed to be **comparatively more satisfied**, and **DAs the least**. **HEWs** expressed **job satisfaction and pride but also discouragement**, due to various issues including un-compensated hardship. All **kebele managers** had **mixed feelings.**

- Most professionals had the required qualification or were in the process of acquiring it.

- The **large majority** of respondents had received some form of **in-service training**, including the community go-betweens. There were specific professional training courses, and also training on crosscutting issues (community governance issues for male, social re/ pro/duction issues for female). The range of topics and individual experiences were **extremely varied.**

- A **large majority** of the government go-betweens **wanted to study further**; this was sometime **actively discouraged or even forbidden** if **outside of the wereda sponsored programme**. For the **teachers and HEWs** this was mainly to **continue** in their profession. For most of the **DAs and kebele managers** this was mainly to **leave the profession** for something better.

- In relation to whether party membership matters to be recruited as a government go-betweens and/or if it leads to preferential treatment whilst in the job, the data does not suggest that this would be systematic. A number of other issues appear to matter a lot more in the government go-betweens' own accounts.

We did not find any study or data which would allow comparing these findings to the country-wide situation. With regard to salaries, there is increasing concern over the deterioration of civil servants' 'actual salary level' – an issue which is now often exposed in the media. It is an 'easy target' for the government critics but we have found that donors are raising the issue as well.

A number of practices we found were **clearly not in line with the government stated policy** (e.g. recommendations from the good governance package). This includes:

- The **weak human resource management (HRM) framework**, absence of career path and of policy for leave, salary increments etc.
- **Separations from family** left unaddressed and no compensation for this
- **Preventing people from studying**
- **No compensation for posting in remote areas** and this being used as punishment – instead of trying to make it more attractive through incentives.

The **HRM framework**, whilst it is underspecified for all cadres, seemed to be **more conducive for teachers**. Among others:

- This is the most senior frontline 'cadre' and so there is a **well-established framework for the 'basics'**, like salary increments.
- More tenuously, this seniority also means that there is **more experience** with 'having people out there', in the system generally.
- Linked to this, even if not very strong there seemed to be more of a **corporate feeling** about being a teacher than about being a HEW, a DA or a kebele manager, which is facilitated by the fact that the school is an organization in the way the FTC and health post are not.
- Practically, the combination of large-scale programmes enabling teachers to upgrade to meet the new education requirements, increased attention to systematizing CPD, a work calendar which enables teachers to have time off during the school holidays also makes a difference in that **professional upgrading is more firmly established** as well.
- **Transfers** to more attractive schools are **used as rewards** (even if this is not 100% transparent) and not the other way round as for the DAs.

This somewhat **better defined and more 'humane' HRM framework and practice** may be **linked** with the finding that **teachers and school headmasters** seemed to be on the whole **more content** than the other cadres.

The government go-betweens in the livelihoods field

The government go-betweens in the livelihoods fields are the primarily the Development Agents who by policy should be three in each kebele.

In the six WIDE3 Stage 1 communities there were no examples of Development Agents evolving their own 'extension model'. The prevailing pattern, quite distant from the policy emphasis on participatory approaches and on taking account of farmers' knowledge, is one of quite strong **rigidity in what the DAs try to do and promote** (in both high and low potential areas, e.g. Girar and Geblen). There were a few examples of innovative/supportive attitude (e.g. livestock DA in Korodegaga making contact with an NGO to ask for inputs for the farmers).

The prevailing rigidity seemed to arise from a combination (in various mixes) of **lack of 'adaptation-oriented', problem-solving skills and confidence** on the DAs side, and **lack of space** for them to exert these skills. In turn, this also raised the question of how much space wereda officials (as next level of go-betweens) have, which was not clear. Packages were not 'locally adapted' in Geblen (with negative consequences as there were very few other options) and Girar (where farmers had access to other locally more successful options). They were successful for some farmers in 'potential' areas (Yetmen, Turufe), and some DA advice seemed to have helped increasing outputs (e.g. sowing in rows in Dinki, Korodegaga and Yetmen).

DAs did not work with all farmers. First, practically this does not seem feasible. Second, the 'model' of using 'model farmers' is well entrenched. Third, understandably so, DAs usually favour working with farmers who have some potential. In line with the above, model farmers were not selected because they would represent a 'local model' to be promoted – but because they were likely to be more **willing and able to adopt the external (wereda/DA) model**.

However, for a number of people in the community **the binding constraint may not be lack of access to DA advice**. Strong and experienced farmers may not need them, as the DAs themselves recognise in Yetmen. In other cases the binding constraint was the lack of potential of the options 'on offer' (Geblen) and/or the lack of access to other inputs (agricultural inputs, improved breeds, credit to buy these, land). I.e. constraints were on the supply side but not or not exclusively arising from inadequacy of the DAs. At the DA and FTC level, **lack of inputs** was a major constraint.

The 'policy' of community inputs in DA performance appraisal did not seem to be strongly institutionalised. DAs were more likely to express **little job satisfaction**, and on the other side, weredas were more likely to use **punishment measures** than incentive measures.

The government go-betweens in the field of human re/pro/duction - Health

In the health field the government go-betweens working at community level are the Health Extension Workers. They work with community members in somewhat variable health volunteer or promoter roles.

Even more so than the DAs, HEWs have a **strict menu of non-optional things** that households have to do to graduate, with the HEP. In the WIDE3 Stage 1 villages, the HEWs followed closely what they are supposed to do according to the policy, though they were constrained by lack of inputs and insufficient training in some aspects, and mixed receptiveness of people.

There were **variations** across and within villages in the extent to which the HEP promoted by the HEWs produced **attitudinal change** in relation to sanitation, hygiene, nutrition and family planning. There seemed to be an **evolution everywhere** though more urbanised sites were more receptive to some of the teaching (e.g. latrines in peri-urban Girar).

The HEWs have started playing an important role in maternal and child care too, though with variable ability of providing essential services like attended deliveries.

Two major factors affecting the effectiveness of their work were either the **lack or the irregularity in the provision of inputs** and the **community's unhappiness** with lack of/slow progress on the **curative side**. The former undermines their credibility; the latter is one of the reasons of the communities' mixed receptiveness to the HEWs' teaching.

There were trends toward expanding the range of services that HEWs might offer. However, this may not be sustainable and effective without significant improvement in the provision of inputs for the HP and in the professional supervision services. It would also require **addressing human resource issues** such as lack of a clear career path and non-compensated hardship in the remoter villages.

The government go-betweens in the field of human re/pro/duction - Education

In education the government go-betweens at community level are the teachers and head teachers of the community primary schools. Even in villages where there is a secondary school or one not far away, staff working in those schools are not expected to have the same kind of interactions with the community.

Primary school head teachers and teachers are **under pressure** due to the **continued rapid expansion of provision**. This expansion arises from a mix of **genuine push** by communities as interest in education is rising everywhere, and **intense 'UPE campaigning'** (which teachers dislike having to do) as parents also have incentives 'the other way round'. The mixes differ across communities and vary over time.

School staff and parents are **concerned about education quality**, and point at many gaps in the supply of education inputs – including qualified teachers (with slight and recent improvements in some cases). These **common concerns** bring them together. But **they don't see eye to eye** with regard to how education quality can be reached. Absenteeism continues to be raised as an issue, with parents continuing to cause it as they need children's labour.

School staff report a **heavy workload**. They usually **like their job**. There is evidence that continuous professional development activities is on the rise, with an emphasis on school-based modalities, but some schools expressed a sense of lack of support.

The way teachers are assessed is reportedly becoming more **participatory**. Discourses stress **collaboration, networking** etc. within the school and between school and community. The data does not allow assessing the effects of these more participatory and collaborative governance systems.

The establishment of **small minimally staffed satellite schools** in remote areas may not be sustainable without **more support** provided to these schools and the staff working there. We found no mention of the incentives said to sometimes be in place in the government stated policy.

The government go-betweens in the field of social re/pro/duction

The dominant impression is that the government go-betweens have a **comparatively small role in the field of social re/pro/duction,** compared to other agents who are more embedded in community and who have, personally or through the institutions that they represent, shaped the nature of the relationship between the community and the government since a long time.

It also seems to be the case that the government go-betweens are more like **one-way, top-down channels** and there is little expectation from the communities that they should relay messages the other way round, from the community upward.

The government go-betweens in the community management field

The role of the kebele manager and its positioning in the field of community governance (and its links with the other fields/agents) was still **unfolding in all six villages**.

The managers carried out a core of **administrative tasks** for the people from the community, similar across all villages and apparently **appreciated** by the kebele leadership.

But with regard to their role of facilitation of the kebele administration and as kebele-wereda link, **local power configurations** and combinations of personalities influenced its definition more than formal terms of reference or job description. The deployment of the managers seemed to have prompted a (subdued but nonetheless well present) **debate about the relative importance of representativeness and embedded-ness vs. formal education and 'professionalism' in handling the kebele affairs**. The professionalism of the DAs', HEWs' and teachers' seemed easier to handle; in contrast, the more diffuse and evolving nature of the role of the kebele manager seemed to be perceived as more of a threat to the power of the kebele leadership.

Commonalities and differences across fields of action

What was **common** across fields of action in the government go-betweens' role and effectiveness:
- Teaching/convincing, campaigning, **top-down change model**
- **Reliance/dependence on kebele structures** for community mobilization, facilitation of campaigns etc.
- **Reporting** quite cumbersome, **mainly upward** orientated, not always meaningful for various reasons
- **Upward accountability** inevitable, whereas local accountability variable and 'blurred'
- Professionals represented on the kebele Cabinet but without necessarily more power; little influence on the 'fundamentals' in the community-government relationship; on the whole, comparatively **not very significant roles in the social re/pro/duction and community governance fields**
- **Lack of inputs** was a hindrance in all sectors, undermining effectiveness and credibility – though more seriously for the DAs and the HEWs
- Reportedly **high workload**
- There seemed to be **little expectation** that **government go-betweens** could have their **own model**, channel **local priorities** upward, and **stand up to top-down pressure,** against inappropriate interventions.

What was **varying** across fields of action:
- **Kebele managers** have **less of a 'change agent' role**, for community members at least[1].
- As (recognized) **change agents, DAs and HEWs** worked **with and through 'relays'** (model farmers/families, health promoters); **educationists** used other forms of 'relays' (e.g. girls' and

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[1] This is not quite the same for the kebele leadership. The kebele manager is there, implicitly at least, to bring a new way of running the kebele administration.

anti-HIV school clubs), which do not rely in the same way on adult members of the communities

- **HEWs** were **using community-initiated institutions most**
- The **kebele** structures and leaders were **most involved in the livelihood field** – kebele leaders have the main role in livelihood-related interventions in which DAs are usually not or marginally involved (youth and women packages, land certification and allocation)
- There was **more competition for power**, hidden most of the time, between the **kebele managers** and the **kebele leaders**, than with the other cadres with a more specific professional background and field of action
- There was **comparatively fewer opinions from community members on the teachers and the kebele managers**, and more on the DAs' and HEWs' usefulness and performance – and in this respect there was a wide range of opinions even within one community.

These findings, triangulated with those on the go-betweens' living and working conditions, prompt a few speculative thoughts.

First, on the whole, **the interactions between community members, and kebele managers and teachers, seemed to be more trivial than with the DAs and the HEWs**. Reasons for this may include the lesser role of change agent of the kebele managers. With regard to **education**, as we noted earlier schooling one's children has become more of a privately-held model. 'Modern education' competes with elements of the local model but an increasing number of parents seemed to think that the external model had valuable elements and so, there could be **negotiation to find ways of accommodating both models** (e.g. continued preference for school shifts). Although in this negotiation parents are at present are on a relatively unfamiliar terrain, the relationship between the school staff and the community is more one of **service provision**.

In contrast, the **HEWs** interact with community members about a number of culturally sensitive topics; the **DAs** interact with farmers who have learned the hard way about locally inadequate livelihood options; and both the DAs and the HEWs promote an **external model** which includes elements that are not only unfamiliar but also **running against people's practices, beliefs and values**. These interactions are bound to be somehow more confrontational. Indeed when it comes to raising a family, taking care of one's household and farming, these are things that today's adult members of the community have learned how to do without the government go-betweens in the first instance. **So why should they listen to them? Why should the external model, competing with the local model, be better**?

This is bound to change over time as the new generations will have heard about e.g. new farming technologies from a much earlier stage in their lives. They will also be more familiar with the world of modern education as more of them will have gone through it for a period of time, so they will be better positioned to throw challenges at the top-down model if it is not satisfactory (this has begun already, with parents concerned about education quality and the lack of post-Grade 10 opportunities). That is, the local model will continue to evolve gradually through time[2], including through interactions with the external models. But at present, it is not surprising that the **interactions** in the development interface space between adult community members and government go-betweens are **less easy** in the **fields of action in which local and external models are most starkly at odds with each other** hence for which it is **less about service delivery and more about (top-down) change promotion.**

Second, on the whole there seemed to be **more resources reaching the schools** than there were for the DAs and FTCs, and the HEWs and health posts. The **direst situation** seemed to be that of the **DAs** – who seemed to have very little resources and deplore most the lack of inputs (dysfunctional FTCs etc.).

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[2] In the WIDE3 research we note that people in rural communities have access to a number of cultural repertoires, including a customary local repertoire and a modern local repertoire. Each member of the community draw on the different repertoires in her/his own way and this also depends on the circumstances in which she/he is. These mixes and their variations underpin the evolution of the local model.

It is striking that **DAs** appeared to **also** be **the least motivated** among the go-betweens. On the other side one should note the possible link between a slightly better situation in terms of resources, and teachers and head masters' higher professional satisfaction, on the whole.

The data also suggests that community members are much aware of this situation and the lack of or irregular supply of needed inputs (from within the sector, or from another sector like the lack of clean water for sanitation) clearly undermines the credibility of the government interventions. Moreover, and importantly, people are well aware that this is not the go-betweens' responsibility.

The government go-betweens and the web of development interventions

Ideally the wereda should plan in an integrated manner, but realistically, it is at the kebele and community levels that the **different development interventions** could best be **deliberately drawn into a web**. However, this would require that the frontline workers in the different sectors are given the **space** to do this, and that at the kebele and community level there are **structures and processes** to organize this. The different groups of actors interviewed had ideas about how interventions should complement each other and how some could undermine each other. However, their responses seemed to be a mix of 'what might be' and actually occurring synergies and anergies.

There were **examples of synergies** reported to occur in practice, and in which the **government go-betweens had a role** – but there were **only a few**:
- In two villages the HEWs and the DAs were working together (sanitation and compost) or promoting complementary activities (diversification of production and nutrition)
- In some (but not all) villages, other government go-betweens were involved in the health field for specific activities (e.g. hygiene education at school); or HEWs would assist in other fields (e.g. checking children's school attendance when visiting homes)
- In some communities, government go-betweens like HEWS and DAs, as kebele Cabinet members, were involved in the UPE campaigning. They otherwise did not seem to be closely involved with the school. In two villages teachers were involved in other developmental activities but this was not reported elsewhere.

The above suggests that the **government go-betweens do not have a very significant role in drawing the web of interventions**. This seems to arise from three combined factors:
- The fact that there is **no government go-betweens in important areas** (more broadly, communities have no say on a number of critically important development interventions)
- The **strength of the vertical sectoral links in the definition of priorities** at/for the local levels (downward targets and quotas or 'expectations' associated with the external top-down models; upward reporting) – which limits the responsiveness of the government go-betweens in one sector, to needs emanating from another sector
- The **relative lack of institutionalisation of community/kebele level horizontal processes and systems**.

With regard to the first point, there are **no assigned government go-betweens** at the community level for **water and roads**. Other infrastructure developments such as **electricity and mobile phone network coverage** are decided at levels well beyond the community or even wereda level. Yet all these are areas of government activity that community members indicated as very important. The absence of clean water was noted as a major obstacle to implementing the HEP in several villages. The acute lack of any water in Geblen was mentioned by almost everyone as the most critical issue for the community. Roads and electricity were credited with the largest number of synergy effects.

With regard to the two other points, there was **no evidence** of a strong practice whereby the kebeles would draw **integrated kebele plans** through **participation** of the whole community. The concept of

cross-sectoral integrated planning did not 'come out' spontaneously in the interviews of community members about the various development interventions[3]. The interviews of the kebele leadership and notables and of the government go-betweens present a relatively patchy picture. As noted in the section above, there was variation across villages in the definition of the role of the kebele manager with regard to the kebele planning and monitoring process. This resonates with other fieldwork-based evidence.

The **structures** which could allow integrated kebele planning **existed in all communities** (kebele Cabinet, committees, sub-kebele structures, development groups[4]). But they usually seemed to be perceived and to operate **more as yet other means to contribute to disseminating the top-down sectoralised model** (community mobilization, facilitating campaign etc.).

Finally, turning to '**community work'** which in principle should be a resource on which the community has more of a say, there was **some evidence of a form of competition between sectors** to get activities included, and to decide which would be 'paid for'. This may well be **indicative of a more general pattern of competition** which would be understandable as the government go-betweens are accountable vertically and for results narrowly confined each in their own sector.

The government go-betweens and change trajectories of rural communities

Looking at the role of the government go-betweens and the communities' trajectories of change, we found that there is **no straightforward association between change and improvement**. Improvement in the community-based livelihoods can be associated with both structural change and structural reproduction.

There is **no straightforward association between the overall thrust of the community's relationship with the government and the type of trajectory** of the community in terms of change/reproduction or in terms of improvement, stasis or decline (e.g. change in Geblen with a relatively 'good' relationship but also in Korodegaga with a more 'selective' relationship; decline in Geblen in spite of 'good' relationship and improvement in Yetmen in spite of 'difficult' relationship).

Even without 'doing' anything by their **presence** the **government go-betweens bring change** in that more community members interact more frequently with people who are 'different'; the importance of this as a change factor varies –it is more important in less integrated communities.

Whatever the thrust of the community-government relationship and the shape of the community trajectory, in **all villages** there were areas in which there was **relative acceptance of the government model, others** in which there was **non cooperation**, and yet **others** in which **complex** sets of interactions were unfolding. Patterns of cooperation, non-cooperation and complexity are village-specific.

The sector in which there is a **more cooperative pattern overall** is **education**, which we link to **ongoing evolution of the local model** allowing a type of relationship between teachers and communities which is more of service delivery compared to their colleagues in other sectors.

Factors that seem to **facilitate change** in which **government go-betweens can play a role** include:

- **Convergence of interests** between the wereda actors bringing the **external model** and the community actors holding the **local model** (e.g. government-promoted agricultural diversification in Yetmen with a tradition of market-oriented crop production), which creates a **space** within which the **go-betweens** can then offer **non-confrontational assistance**;

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[3] There was no protocol specifically about participatory planning and monitoring.

[4] There was some uncertainty about e.g. whether kebele Councils were functional, and about the strength (and 'commitment') of the various structures.

- **Complementarity or non-competition** between the local model and the external model (in Yetmen, irrigated garden production complemented teff production), so that the go-betweens' advice related to the external model is **non-threatening** (also modern education more generally);

- Broader **contextual factors** prompting the **necessity of change** (e.g. urbanisation and sanitation) **or bringing change** with them (e.g. generational effect);

- **Broad change coalitions** within which the **government go-betweens** in one particular sector can successfully 'push' a more specific agenda, if they '**work with the grain'** (Kelsall et al 2010) (i.e. with/ through the locally evolving model) and **ally with the powerful actors** in the change coalition (both individuals and institutions).

The cultural disconnect between external model and local model is inevitable. What seems to matter is whether there can be **space for negotiation** at the development interface, so that a **set of acceptable practices** can emerge. This resonates with Scott's non-conforming practices (Scott 1998) but proposes that non-conformity need not be negative. The **factors** which can **help to create space** for negotiation when initially the disconnect is deep (with the external and local models in contradiction or competition) and cooperation difficult are not many:
- **Time**, generational effects, broad modernisation trends (education, latrines in Dinki)
- **Alliances with powerful local actors** (HEWs and family planning in broader women's rights movement in Girar)
- **Seizing opportunities** offered by the **broader context** (youth loading and unloading co-op in Korodegaga, viable thanks to inward investment in irrigation by other actors).

It seems **very difficult** for the **government go-betweens** working at the community level to **create this space**. When they find that there is some space they still need to be **able and/or willing to use it. Not all do**. The HEWs in Girar found some space created by the broad women's rights coalition and used it to push the family planning agenda. The DAs in Girar did not do the same and so did not work with the women cooperative even though the women were actually following the DAs' advice that the male farmers were rejecting.

So, on the whole the government go-betweens seem to be resigned to **do a lot of translation** (latrines everywhere, OFSP packages in Geblen). When conditions are more conducive there can be **some interpretation** (youth cooperatives in Korodegaga, livelihood diversification in Yetmen). Except in the **education** sector (shift system continued to facilitate attendance, self-contained teaching and automatic promotion stopped under the communities' pressure) there was **no example of successful negotiation** having led to a set of acceptable practices; and the role of the community level government go-betweens in this example of successful negotiation is likely to have been relatively marginal. The story of the OFSP packages failing people yet the kebele leadership and DAs feeling unable to act is an example of **failure/inability to negotiate**.

So, when negotiation is constrained because the top-down model is so prescriptive that it leaves no or too little space for bridging with the *metis* model and prevents the development of less unstable non-conforming (or even acceptable) practices, one key question for the government go-betweens is then: what **balance** should they strike **between persuasion and convincing** that the good governance package says they should use, **and coercion/enforcement** as they also have to meet the expectations of the wereda?

To an extent this **depends on who the government go-betweens are** (how inventive and risk-taking); where their prime loyalty is (something which may evolve over time); how they strike the balance between this loyalty and the fear of sanctions if by being loyal to the community they displease the

wereda. Our data suggests that this '*internal conversation*' is rather skewed from the outset[5]. The government go-betweens are **not incentivised to be attentive to anything else than the government model.**

Their **position in terms of power** also matters in this respect. We do not mean 'power over', but even to exercise '**power with**' an individual has to have a position allowing this. Yet, the analysis above suggests that the **government go-betweens do not have a lot of power**. In the community they are less powerful than the community go-betweens and than long-standing community institutions. In their own organisation they are at the periphery; the internal relations seem to be mainly top-down 'instructions' in the form of targets, quotas and expectations; and we have found that sanctions can be harsh. They have few opportunities to gain power through networking with peers. So, they seem to be street bureaucrats with rather little discretion that they could use 'to good effect' (Rao, no date), little space to behave like *sociological citizens* (Huising and Silbey 2011).

We found that the **ideological divergences between government and donor models** which we thought might complicate the tasks of the government go-betweens were quite anodyne at that level. These divergences, which seem so important 'at the centre', **matter a lot less** than the very practical divergences or **contradictions between the external/top-down model** (be it government or donor) **and the local model(s).** When there is convergence between government and donor models it can help – e.g. donor support helped to build the change coalition for women's rights in Girar, which created space for further change to be negotiated. But there are also instances in which neither the government nor the donors seem able to bring much support to an embattled local model, like in Geblen. There the local government go-betweens, in the system as it stands and with the capacity that they have, can do little else than pushing the top-down model though privately recognising that it does not work.

Finally, it should be noted that communities that are '**independent economies'** have a **wider range of options available** for community members to **make the local model evolve**; more integrated communities are exposed to a **wider range of external models**. This is a very different situation than those of dependent and remoter communities. This has **implications for the government go-betweens, which we believe would need to further be thought through**.

Conclusions: The government go-betweens as 'human resources' and individuals

From a **human resources management** point of view the government go-betweens posted in rural villages are generally **not in an enviable position**. The evidence from the six WIDE3 Stage 1 rural communities could not be compared to evidence from elsewhere in Ethiopia, but we have no reason to believe that in similar communities the government go-betweens' position would be much different. As noted earlier the overall HRM framework for the civil service is under-developed so if better HRM practices are found in some places they are unlikely to be systematic.

Some of the basics are not in place (lack of or unclear career path and no salary increments for the HEWs and kebele managers in particular, unclear leave policy etc.). Those posted in **remote villages** are **worse off** as there is no compensation for their work in more difficult environments, they often are separated from their family, and some of them are very isolated (in particular, single teachers in small

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[5] In her exploration of how both structure and agency matter in cultural change, Margaret Archer (the dean of the critical realist movement which inspires much of WIDE3 thinking) introduces the concept of 'internal conversation', which is the continued process of '*reflexive deliberations through which the social agents spell out and order their ultimate concerns in an existential and personal project to which they commit themselves. Social structures and cultural systems exercise their causal powers by structuring the situation of action through constraints and enablements, but to the extent that the activation of those causal powers depends on the existential projects that the actors forge in foro interno ..., actors can be said to actively mediate their own social and cultural conditionings. As a result the reproduction of society becomes an accomplishment of the agents themselves. Actors are thus indeed determined, but only to the extent that they determine themselves.* (http://www.journaldumauss.net/spip.php?article362)

satellite schools in remote villages). This kind of situation is worse for women professionals. There **is little evidence of the use of rewards or incentives**, and evidence to the contrary especially for the DAs (e.g. posting in remote areas as punishment, preventing people from studying). The government go-betweens can both be transferred against their will and not transferred even when they would like to, after years of service in remote posts.

They generally report a **high workload**, and expanding responsibilities especially for the DAs and the HEWs. **Salaries** may have been fine years ago but as for all civil servants in Ethiopia, the combination of inflation and either no increment or increments too small to compensate makes them **worse off than when they started working**.

A **large majority** of them **want to study further**. Among the **DAs** and the **kebele managers** often this is t**o change profession** – and the DAs also appear to be the least satisfied among the four 'cadres' of government go-betweens. Whereas for the **HEWs and school staff** the goal is usually to upgrade their professional skills and **continue in the sector**. Teachers and headmasters are on the whole more satisfied than the other cadres. The HEWs like their job or find it satisfying, but this is mitigated by discouragement and frustration. There is evidence that the **weredas discourage or even prevent** people from **studying outside of government-organised opportunities**, which apart from relatively disparate short-term training courses, are said to be limited in number.

The **teachers and headmasters** appear to be **somewhat better off** than their colleagues in other sectors, with a relatively more satisfactory HRM framework and practices in the education sector. Their seniority as a 'frontline cadre' also means that there is more experience in the system with 'having people out there', and more of a corporate feeling. These may all be reasons why they are generally the **most satisfied**.

Thus, the evidence tends to lend support to the hypothesis that **job satisfaction and motivation is associated with more humane management practice**. It has not been possible to establish whether this is, in turn, related to better performance. First, our data does not lend itself to this. Second, there is evidence that a number of other factors also influence the government go-betweens' performance. Third, one would need to agree in the first instance on how performance is defined – and this to some extent is encapsulated in the issue of how the government go-betweens play their role of service providers and change agents.

Conclusions: The government go-betweens as service providers and change agents

Overall, the government go-betweens are squeezed between 'disconnected' top-down and local models. However, the 'disconnect' evolves through time and in some areas may become lesser (e.g. in education, or about latrines after the AWD epidemics in Turufe or around women's rights in Girar), so that gradually a service delivery relationship can develop. There are also instances where the top-down model(s) does not threaten the local model or can helpfully enrich it so there can be convergence of interests between external and local actors (e.g. agricultural diversification in Yetmen). In these instances the government go-betweens can be effective in supporting change (e.g. DAs in Yetmen, no reported lack of effectiveness of school staff, HEWs promotion of family planning as part of the women's right movement in Girar). Thus indeed, the **intensity of the 'disconnect' directly influences the balance between service provision and change agent** in the government go-betweens' acted and perceived **role**.

Many signs converge to show that in any instance the government go-betweens' spelled out role in the development interface space, and all incentives, tend to make them align with the top-down model ('teaching' identified as main role of DAs and HEWs by the community members, reporting mainly upward, 'blurred' local accountability). In instances where the 'disconnect' is intense there is **not much evidence** that they and the **wereda/government agents value 'local knowledge'** (education is somewhat an exception, see below). On the side of the **community** members there is **little expectation**

that the government go-betweens could have their own model, channel local priorities upward, and stand up against inappropriate interventions.

Although in general community members seem to realise that the government go-betweens are 'messengers' and not decisionmakers, the **development interface space can be confrontational** in particular for the HEWs and the DAs. It seems to be **least confrontational around education** – thus for teachers and headmasters. We link this to the **ongoing evolution of the local model** in which modern education is increasingly valued by parents and children whilst the top-down model has also been able to somewhat compromise and accommodate 'local knowledge'. From the negotiation a **set of acceptable (for now) practices** have emerged (e.g. continuation of the shift system so children can continue to help at home/ on the farm).

However on the whole, the government go-betweens' role is **mostly about translation**. When some broader contextual factors or change coalitions present opportunities and they are able and willing to seize these there may be **elements of interpretation**. Their **role in negotiation** of the 'disconnect' appears to be **limited**; when there is negotiation they may not be involved directly.

What the above reflects is that: (i) there is a **tension** between the role of the government go-betweens as **service providers** and as **development intervention implementers/ change agents**; (ii) if/as they are expected to 'implement change' there is another tension between trying to effect **change through 'extension'** (of the external model) vs. trying to **facilitate change in complex systems** (such as rural communities), recognising the value of local knowledge and the necessity of interpretation/negotiation between external and local knowledge; (iii) on balance the government go-betweens in Ethiopia are **'extension agents' more than 'complex change agents'** (this is explicit in the name of the Health Extension Workers, and implicit in the name of the agriculture Development Agents considering the government change model).

There appear to be several reasons to this conservative mix of translation, interpretation and negotiation. *First*, as 'political actors in their own rights' (Eaton et al 2010) and as individuals, they are **not powerful within the communities**. We have seen that their role in the social re/pro/duction and community governance fields is not as significant as that of the community go-betweens (kebele leaders and notables) and the community-initiated institutions and organisations in some villages[6].

Second, the government go-betweens posted at community level are **also not powerful in their own organisation**. All the incentives for them point towards <u>not</u> trying to negotiate but complying to reach targets, fill quotas and meet expectations set by the wereda administration. In return they get most often little support from the wereda (lack of inputs, no local budget, paucity of opportunities for feedback, peer learning or learning from better qualified colleagues, mixed picture with regard to supervision) – though this varies across sectors (education is a bit better again) and also across villages. In turn this lack of support emanates at least in part from the weredas' lack of resources and power, constraining their ability of addressing these issues.

Third, the **skill sets** that the government go-betweens are equipped with are quite narrowly focused on the technical aspects of the top-down model that they are in charge of promoting. The lack of 'soft skills', especially for the DAs and the HEWs, is an issue[7]. More fundamentally, we would argue that the frontline workers are all ill-equipped to deal with the inevitably complex situations in which they find

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[6] There is one 'cadre' for which this picture needs to be nuanced. As noted earlier the role of the kebele manager is a bit different and so is its position in the community 'power configuration'. The manager does not have the same role of change agent for the community members. But this position directly threatens the power of the elected and embedded kebele leaders as the managers present themselves as professionals hence better able to run impartially the kebele's affairs. The extent to which this confrontation openly plays out varies across the villages.

[7] Whether it also is an issue for the kebele managers depend on the role that they are expected to play with regard to integrated planning, which we have seen is not clear. For teachers too, the issue is slightly different. Since a few years the policy has shifted toward 'child-centered' approaches but this has not been evaluated.

themselves: **the change model of the government** (teaching, 'convincing' until there is a consensus on the top-down model) **does not prepare them to think about the need or indeed the relevance of negotiating with the local model**.

Fourth, (cross-sector) kebele participatory planning and prioritisation processes are rather weak so community priorities may not be brought up very strongly – and again, incentives to do this are weak if it happens that these priorities diverge from those of the wereda. In other words, **the bottom-up reaction from the community is left inchoate,** which means that it can be quite **effective reactively, but less so proactively**.

This weakness and the strong sectoral upward links also mean that the **government go-betweens do not have much inclination to working as a team** – thus, they miss the possible opportunity of getting more power through allying with each other and in this way being better able to 'push' difficult (community) agendas upward. Instead, all joint work is to better push the top-down model onto the community. And there may be some competition between government go-betweens in different sectors, to get priority for activities in 'their' sector.

Even without 'doing' anything by their **presence** the **government go-betweens bring change** in that more community members interact more frequently with people who are 'different'; it is more important as a change factor in less integrated communities. But the government go-betweens do not, at least not directly, appear to have a role of models. For the educated youngsters in the communities they can see that these are jobs and this matters, but they surely also see the difficulties that the government go-betweens face.