

LoGICA Intergovernmental Profile

Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 2023

1. Country description and state of decentralization

Previously a centralized unitary state, Ethiopia, a country located in the Horn of Africa region, has undergone a decentralization process in two phases over the past thirty years. The first phase of decentralization, which began in 1991, culminated when the country became a federal state following the promulgation of the 1995 constitution. The second phase of decentralization, implemented in the early 2000s, started the process of gradually devolving the responsibility for frontline services from the regional states to the local government level. Ethiopia now has a federal system with a federal government and 11 regional states and two federal cities. State constitutions generally provide for a three-tier local governance structure below the regional states. In practice, however, the powers and functions of regional state governments and local governance institutions continue to be substantially intertwined.

Ethiopia is located in the Eastern African region commonly known as the Horn of Africa. It shares borders with Sudan, Kenya, Somalia, Djibouti, and Eritrea. With a 1.1 million square kilometres territorial area, it is the tenth largest country in Africa. It has an estimated population of 115 million which makes the country the second most populous country in the continent next to Nigeria. Ethiopia is among the least urbanized countries in the world with close to 80 percent of its population living in rural areas. Yet, with 4 percent annual urbanization, it is among the countries with the fastest rate of urbanization (World Bank 2021).

For much of its existence as a state, Ethiopia was a very decentralized state with triple layers of authorities at the national, provincial, and local levels and the local authorities had a more prominent significance in the people's lives than the provinces and the central government (Ayele 2014). Local authorities had played an important role in political administration, law enforcement, and justice dispensation while at the same time serving as agents of control for the central government (Abera 2000; Ayele 2011). Ethiopia underwent a gradual process of centralization beginning from the second half of the 19th century which reached its zenith in the 1980s when the country was organized as a centralized unitary state under the rule of a socialist military junta known as the *Derg* (Bahru 2002). A two-phase process of decentralization began in the 1990s after the *Derg* was ousted from power by an armed group – the Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF).¹ The first phase of the decentralization process culminated when the country, as part of its post-conflict transformation, formally became a federal state following the adoption of the 1995 constitution. The second phase, implemented in the early 2000s, led to the transfer of certain competencies to the local government level (Taye and Tegene 2007).

Ethiopia now has a federal system with a federal government and 11 regional states and two federal cities. Local government does not form a part of the federal architecture of the country (Ayele and Fessha 2012). It does not enjoy explicit recognition as an autonomous order of government under the federal constitution. However, state constitutions provide recognition to local government and—to some extent— define its institutional structure

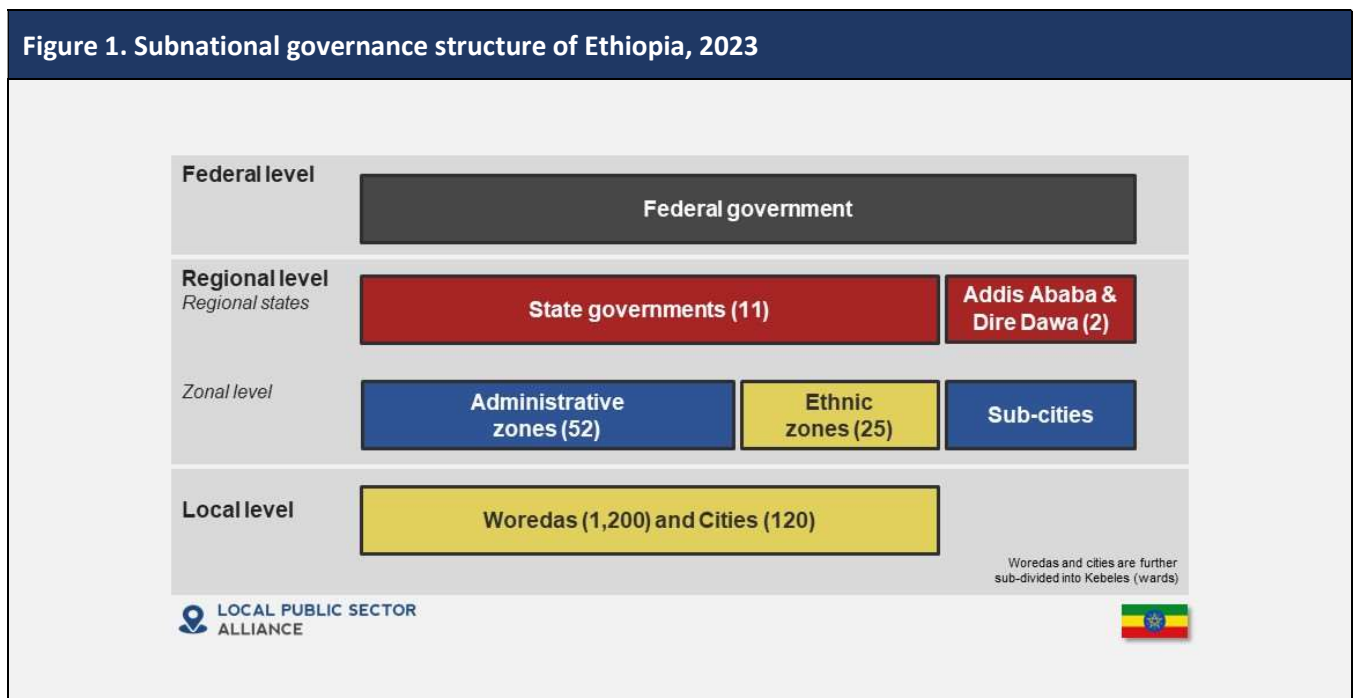
¹ Until 2019, the Ethiopian Peoples' Revolutionary Front (EPRDF), an association of ethnic-based regional parties, with its affiliate parties, was the ruling party of the country. This party was extremely centralized and operated based on the doctrine of democratic centralism. Infights within the party led to its dissolution in 2019 and the formation of the Ethiopian Property Party (PP) which is currently the ruling party both at the federal and state levels.

and functions, and powers. Perhaps reflective of the continued political centralization exercised by the ruling party, the 11 state constitutions have created almost identical local government structures with minor differences depending on the ethnic composition of the population in each state. This Intergovernmental Profile covers the multilevel governance arrangements in Ethiopia including the 11 states, the two federal cities, administrative or ethnic zones, woredas and cities, and *kebeles*.

2. Subnational governance structure of Ethiopia

The 1995 constitution of Ethiopia has created two orders of government - federal and regional (state) governments with a federal city- Addis Ababa. Eleven regional states and two federal cities constitute the primary territorial and administrative sub-division of the Ethiopian federation. The constitution only implicitly envisages that there would be a local government system that would serve the purpose of accommodating intra-state ethnic minorities and provision of basic services. The states, using their constitutions and ordinary statutes, have created three-tiered local governance system, with institutions at the zonal level (administrative and ethnic zones), the woreda (district) and city level, and the kebele (ward) level. Woreda and cities form the most important tier of local government as far as the provision of basic services is concerned.

Ethiopia is a federal country. Its federal system is meant to be an institutional response to decades-long ethnic-based conflicts in the country. It thus aims at managing the ethnic diversity of the people by allowing ethnic communities to exercise self-rule at the sub-national level and to be equitably represented at the federal level (Fessha 2010). To this effect, the constitution has created two orders of government - federal and regional state governments, with Addis Ababa designated as a federal city.² It leaves to the states all matters concerning local government. The regional governments or states, using their constitutions and statutes, have created three-tiered local government systems at zonal, woreda/city, and kebele levels.



² Dire Dawa is legislatively (as opposed to constitutionally) given the status of a federal city since two states, Oromia and Somali, could not agree on which state should exercise jurisdiction over the city.

Regional (state) governments and Federal cities: Nine regional states and a federal city, Addis Ababa, had received recognition as the subnational structure of the Ethiopian federation when the 1995 constitution was adopted. Two more states were created in the past two years based on the constitutional principle allowing an ethnic community or a group of them, to establish their own state (constitution, Article 47) (2) and (3)) increasing the number of states to eleven. Two additional states are currently in the making.

Addis Ababa is not a state but enjoys a semi-state status. It is constitutionally recognized as the capital of the country and the seat of the federal government with the right to self-government while under the overall authority of the federal government (Constitution, Article 49). There is also another city, Dire Dawa, which is legislatively (as opposed to constitutionally) given the status of a federal city since two states, Oromia and Somali, could not agree on which state should exercise jurisdiction over the city (Proclamation 416, 2004).

Zonal and local governance institutions: Below the regional state level, there is a three-tiered local administrative structure at zonal, *woreda/city*, and *kebele* levels. There is a dearth of comprehensive data on the number of local government units at each tier. A look at different states' pieces of legislation, studies, and official documents shows that there are approximately 57 administrative zones, 20 ethnic zones, 1,200 woredas, 120 cities, and 15,000 kebeles.

As noted above, despite the fact that the establishment of local government is a state power (rather than a federal prerogative), there is a high degree of consistency in sub-state structures across states. Table 1 presents an overview of Ethiopia's subnational administrative-territorial or governance structure.

Table 1. Subnational governance institutions, 2023				
	Number of units (approx.)	Complete territorial coverage?	Uniform structure	Territorial Level
Federal government	1	Yes	Yes	Central
Regional governments (plus federal cities)	11+2	Yes	Yes	Regional
Administrative zones / Ethnic zones	77	No	Yes	Regional
Sub-cities (mainly in the two federal cities)	14	No	Yes	Local
Woredas or cities	Approx. 1,320	Yes	Yes	Local
Kebeles	15,000	Yes	Yes	Local

Source: Prepared by author.

Administrative zones and ethnic zones: Six states (Amhara, Tigray, Somali, Oromia, Sidama and Afar) have established administrative zones as the first tier of sub-state governance structure (and thus, the second territorial-administrative division of the public sector). Administrative zones are not devolved governments but rather deconcentrated administrative structures, run by officials appointed by the state governments and whose main purpose is to coordinate the activities of *woredas* and cities within it and to serve as link between the states and *woredas* and cities. Administrative zones are not found in every state. They are not, for instance, found in Gambella, South-West and Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' (SNNP) regions. Larger cities are generally outside of this structure even in the states that have administrative zones.

Four multi-ethnic states (Amhara, SNNP, Gambella, and South West) have established ethnic zones –also known as nationalities zones—as the first tier of sub-state governance.³ The ethnic zones exercise important overall political authority and decide on matters having to do with the protection and promotion of the identities and cultures of the relevant ethnic communities (Ayele 2014).

³ Note that Amhara National Regional Government has both Administrative Zones as well as Ethnic Zones.

In Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa there are sub-cities that form a tier of local governance, which play a similar role as zonal administration. Addis Ababa has eleven sub-cities while Dire Dawa is divided into three sub-cities.

Woreda/cities: Districts or *woredas* (in rural areas) and cities (in urban areas) are the second-level subdivision of each state, and the main tier of local government in Ethiopia. There is no reliable data on the exact number of *woredas* in the country (Vértesy and Teketel 2022). The last population census--reporting on the population by zone and district--was conducted in 2007. It is estimated that there are currently about 800-1,200 *woredas* and 100-120 cities. *Woredas* are created by state constitutions while cities are created by state-level statutes (even though their establishment is envisaged in the state constitutions).

No	Region (state)	Ethnic zones	Administrative zones/sub-city	Woredas	Cities
1	Afar	0	5	31	2
2	Amhara	3	7	157	27
3	Benishangul-Gumuz	3	0	21	1
4	Gambella	3	0	13	1
5	Hareri	0	0	9	1
6	Oromia	0	19	316	30
7	Sidama	0	0	30	6
8	SNNP	12	1	92	11
9	Somali	0	7	95	4
10	South-West	3	0	35	6
11	Tigray	0	7	34	11
Total		24	46	833	100
12	Addis Ababa	0	11	128	
13	Dire Dawa	0	3	0	

Source: National Electoral Board of Ethiopia (2019)

Kebeles: Each *woreda* and city is divided into smaller territorial and administrative units called *kebeles*. These ward-like administrative structures are not corporate entities in their own right and are subordinate to the *woredas* despite having their own elected local council. There are about 15,000 (urban and rural) *kebeles* in Ethiopia.

3. Nature of subnational governance institutions in Ethiopia

Regional states and federal cities could be considered as truly devolved sub-national governments even if they operate within a political context where all levels of government are under a single political party and there is a political culture in which senior levels or tiers of government routinely intervene in the affairs of lower-levels or units of government. Even though notionally autonomous, governance institutions below the regional states are typically beholden to the regional government without clear walls between state and local government powers and functions. In practice, woredas and cities are hybrid local governance institutions, combining features of devolved and deconcentrated governance.

The assessment of the nature of subnational governance institutions in Ethiopia requires recognition of the fact that Ethiopian multilevel government system operates within a political context where there is no political pluralism, elections are less than free and fair, and all levels of government are controlled by a single political

party (Ayele 2021). There is a political culture in which senior levels or tiers of government routinely intervene in the affairs of junior levels or units of government.

Regional (state) governments. Despite this general context of political centralization, it is fair to say that the regional states qualify to be considered as a devolved level of government, both by law and in practice. They are creatures of the federal constitution and are a devolved level of government. They have the power to adopt their own constitutions and define their own political and administrative institutions. They have elected council and parliamentary form of executive even though elections in Ethiopia are less than competitive and representative. The states have significant powers and functions even though some constitutional scholars are of the view that the constitution is stingy in terms of powers it had devolved for the states (Assefa 2007). State governments appoint their own officers, separate from the federal government, and states further have their own public service, independent from the federal civil service.

Even though public budgeting and financial management is overseen and guided by the federal Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, regional states prepare, adopt, and manage their own budgets through their own Bureaus of Finance and Economic Development (BoFED). Yet they have limited revenue-raising power or capacity, as the main public revenue sources are assigned to the federal level. While states are in the main dependent on federal revenue transfers (covering up to 70 percent of their annual budget), the vast majority of intergovernmental fiscal transfers are provided to the state level in the form of unconditional “block grants”, which are allocated at the discretion of state government bodies (Solomon 2006; Bekana 2020). Besides their limited revenue powers, states’ powers to incur liabilities by borrowing are restricted: they cannot borrow from external sources and they can borrow from domestic sources only under the conditions set by the federal government (Constitution, 51(7)).

As already noted, both the federal government and the regional states are under a single political party that has a centralized structure and decision-making process. In the absence of a clear distinction between the party and government, the formally devolved system is compromised in practice. Yet the regional state governments operate as stand-alone institutions and enjoy autonomous decision-making on many social and economic issues, warranting them to be considered fully devolved subnational government institutions. However, this is not the case for subnational governance institutions below the regional state level in Ethiopia.

Even though woredas and ethnic zones are considered to have their own legal status and political leadership, these entities effectively have dual subordination to their own councils as well as to the regional state. For instance, the Amhara National Regional Government has 19 sector bureaus, 12 zones, and 182 woredas, and the regional state budget fully incorporates all the revenues and spending of these budget units. Even though woredas have their own legal status and are said to prepare and approve their budgets and execute the same, woredas manage their finances as part of the regional treasury system and report to the regional finance bureau (BoFED). The Integrated Budget and Expenditures System (IBEX) is used for budget management and financial reporting by all budgetary units at the regional, zonal, and woreda levels. IBEX has budget, accounts, budget adjustment, budget control, disbursement, and accounts modules.

Administrative zones and ethnic zones. Administrative zones are deconcentrated zonal level administrations both by design and in practice. They do not have elected councils but are run by administrators who are appointed by state governments. Their main purpose is to serve as a state structure of oversight over *woredas* and cities within their jurisdiction. They do not have revenue-raising powers and run their financial affairs as part of the state budget. Each state sectoral bureau requests budget with its zonal branches in mind and allocates (“transfers”) revenue to the latter. The office of a state president covers the expenses of a zonal chief administrator. Overall, this reflects a sectoral approach to deconcentration.

Table 3. Subnational governments meet criteria of devolved governments

	Regional (state) government and federal cities	Administrative, sub-cities, and ethnic zones		Woredas	Cities	Kebeles
Corporate status	Created and empowered by the federal constitution. Addis Ababa city has constitutional recognition as a federal city even if its powers are defined in an ordinary federal statute. Dire Dawa does not enjoy constitutional recognition and is a creature of an ordinary federal law	Ethnic zones are created by state constitutions.	Administrative zones, in some states, are mentioned in state constitutions (for instance Oromia constitution) while this is not the case in others. The city governments of Addis and Dire Dawa created sub-cities through ordinary pieces of legislation.	Woredas are created by state constitutions Woredas and cities are considered the primary tier of local government	Cities are creatures of ordinary state statutes even though their establishment is envisaged in the state constitutions.	Rural kebeles are creatures of state constitutions while urban kebeles are created by state statutes
Engages in governance functions	The states exercise extensive governance functions in the areas of agriculture, health, education and the like.	Ethnic zones decide on identity and culture related issues.	Administrative zones exercise oversight on woredas and cities and serve as a link between woredas/cities and the states. They are seldom engaged in service provision.	Provide basic state services within their jurisdiction	Provide basic state and municipal services within their jurisdiction	They are in the main record keepers, enforcing agents and serve as a platform for public engagement.
Own (elected) political leadership	Elected state council and a chief administrator elected by state councils. Addis Ababa and Dire Dawa have city councils and indirectly elected mayors.	Ethnic zones do have elected councils.	An administrative zone has no elected council. Sub-cities have elected councils. However, in practice, they serve as agents of the city government.	They have elected council and administrators elected by the councils	They have elected council and mayors elected by the councils	They have elected council and administrator elected by and from among members of the kebele council

Table 3. Subnational governments meet criteria of devolved governments (Continued)

	Regional (state) government and federal cities	Administrative, sub-cities, and ethnic zones		Woredas	Cities	Kebeles
Own assets and raise funds in own name	Constitutionally provided revenue raising power	Ethnic zones do not have revenue-raising power	Administrative zones do not have revenue-raising power	Yes, even though internal revenue covers less than 30 percent of their budget	Cities fully cover expenses relating to municipal services while they receive grants for their expenses relating to the provision of state services	No, save for some user fees
Prepare, adopt, and manage their budgets	Yes	Ethnic zone adopts its own budget even though it is completely dependent on state revenue transfer	The budget of an administrative zone is part of the regional state budget determined by the states.	Woreda budget is subject to dual subordination; accounts are part of state treasury; supervised by state BoFED.	City budget is subject to dual subordination; accounts are part of state treasury; supervised by state BoFED.	Kebeles do not have their own budget account
Incur liabilities by borrowing on their own account	States can borrow only with federal government approval	No	No	No	No	No
Appoint own officers and staff	Yes	Ethnic zones can do so	No	Yes; albeit subject to intervention from higher-level	Yes; albeit subject to intervention from higher-level	No

On the other hand, the ethnic zones are meant to be the highest political institutions of the ethnic communities to which they are established (Ayele 2014). They have councils with directly or indirectly elected members who make important decisions on the issue of language and culture. They do not have their own revenue-raising power. However, block grants that a state sets aside for woredas and cities within an ethnic zone are first transferred to the ethnic zones which, after deducting a certain percentage of the grant for their own use, would disperse the remaining amount to the woredas and cities within their jurisdiction. Having an ethnic zone often brings (or is perceived to bring) about an improved revenue transfer from the states. Hence ethnic communities without an ethnic zone petition and sometimes violently demand their own ethnic zones. The combination of having a degree of political decision-making autonomy while lacking the ability to manage its own budget (e.g., by holding funds in a commercial bank account) is characteristic of a hybrid subnational governance institution.

Districts (woredas) and cities. Woredas (including the special woredas which are woredas structured along ethnic lines) and cities (other than the two federal cities) are meant to form the primary tier of local governance and the main level responsible for frontline service delivery. Its role in the multilevel governance structure has increased incrementally since the early 2000s, when its competencies were increased as part of the second wave of decentralization reforms (Taye and Tegene 2007).

Politically, the Woreda Council is the highest government organ of the woreda, which is made up of directly elected representatives from each kebele in the woreda. The woreda chief administration is the district's executive organ that encompasses the district administrator, deputy administrator, and the head of the main sectoral executive offices found in the district, which are in principle accountable to the district administrator and district council. Quasi-judicial tasks at the woreda level fall under the responsibility of the Security and Justice administration. In urban areas, city administrations are considered at the same level as woredas. City administrations are led by a mayor whom is elected by members of the city council. As different regional constitutions govern woredas, the names of the bodies may differ (Vértesy and Lemango 2022).

Woredas and cities exercise important decision-making powers on local social and economic matters and are the main governance level for frontline service provision for most key public services (education, health, agriculture extension, and so on). They have the power to raise revenue in the form of certain local taxes and user fees and, notionally at least, prepare and adopt their own budget.

In practice, however, it is hard to draw a line where the regional state budget ends and where the woreda budget begins, as the regional budget is considered to include both regional bureau expenditures as well as woreda-level expenditures. Woreda and city-level finance offices report to their local council as well as the to the regional Bureau of Finance and Economic Development, and the woreda accounts are held as part of the state treasury. As such, woreda own source revenues are deposited in revenue deposit accounts which are swept into the regional treasury on a monthly basis. Municipal revenues are habitually reported as part of the regional state's consolidated budget revenues.

Woredas are further financially dependent on the states which cover up to 70 percent of the woredas' expenditure in the form of conditional and unconditional revenue transfers. While cities receive revenue transfers from the states to cover their expenses in relation to so called state functions (functions that they exercise in their capacity as a woreda), they are expected to use their internal revenue to cover their expenses in relation to their municipal functions (urban specific functions such as garbage collection and streetlights).

A further concern with respect to the nature of local governance institutions in Ethiopia is the state of elected leadership. In principle, woredas and cities have directly elected councils and indirectly elected chief administrators (for woredas) or mayors (for cities). However, local government elections are not held as regularly as state and federal elections and when held, local elections are far from competitive. Opposition parties

habitually boycott local elections, among others, because there are so many local council seats (3.6 million in total) that the parties could not find enough candidates to field.⁴ Besides they do not consider local elections worth the trouble. The last local elections were held in 2013 and the ones which were supposed to be held in 2018 were indefinitely postponed due to the political instability that has prevailed in the country since 2015. The term of members of local councils who were elected in the 2013 local elections was thus indefinitely extended even though it is unclear how many of them are still serving local councils. In any case, if Assefa's (2019) findings in Tigray are any indication, only a fraction of members of a local council, who are members of the various standing committees are actively engaged in legislative and oversight activities.

Similarly, while *woredas* and cities are said to have control over their own officers and staff, in practice, this control is much more tenuous. *Woredas* and cities have the power to define their bureaucratic structure and hire and fire their administrative staff and in general, they exercise their powers in this respect within the rules set by the states. The rules in relation to salaries, benefits, and promotions are determined by the states. States establish and run institutions that train teachers, agriculture extension experts, and nurses and deploy graduates of such institutions to *woredas* and cities. In principle, the deployment should be based on the *woredas'* and cities request. In practice, *woredas* and cities are often compelled to hire teachers, nurses, and agriculture extension experts regardless of their need for such professionals Garcia & Rajkumar (2008). Besides, a *woreda* that requests, for instance, maths teachers might end up receiving English or Amharic teachers. This clearly not only undermines their autonomy but also compromises the implementation of their plans.

Finally, the extent to which elected *woreda* leaders control the administration of their own executive branch is not always clear. A *woreda* chief administrator, as per the state constitutions, is elected by and from among members of the *woreda* council. The state constitutions also envisage a deputy chief administrator who would be in charge of the executive branch of the *woreda* government in the absence of the chief administrator, even though silent on whether the former would be an elected member of the *woreda* council. State presidents often use the vagueness of the state constitutions in this respect to appoint as a *woreda* deputy administrator one who is not a member of a *woreda* council thereby seriously compromising the autonomy of *woredas*. For instance, it is noted that “[s]ometimes the appointment of the *woreda* administrative council like the Chief Administrator, Deputy Chief Administrator and heads of line sector offices can be done through letters of the regional government and even also be made by the regional president. There is a great deal of supervision and control by regional governments over *woredas* affairs.” (Gebre-Egzhiaber and Gebreyes 2014).

Similarly, Besfat (2018) finds that “unclear assignments of powers and functions, executive domination at local level, upward accountabilities, top down planning approach, absence of skilled manpower, limited participatory systems, failure of the *woreda* and kebele councils in holding the executive accountable, lack of adequate budget, low level of revenue mobilization capacity, low sense of responsiveness and accountability in *woreda* and kebele councils to the people” were ongoing challenges that intervened in the process of district-level decentralization.

As such, although *woredas* and cities theoretically meet the textbook characteristics of devolved local governments, the absence of (recently) elected leadership, the extent of vertical ruling party control, the absence

⁴ Local councils were not this large in the past and *woreda* and city council had less than 100 seats and as few as 15 seats, with the total number of local council seats being about 60,000. The decision to increase the number of local council members was made in 2008, centrally by the then-ruling party, the EPRDF. Each state then adopted a law to implement the decision. The official reason for expanding the size of local councils was to enhance the democratic participation of the public in decision-making at the local level. According to Aalen and Tronvoll (2008: 116), the ulterior motive of this measure, which was introduced soon after the 2005 general elections in which opposition parties defeated EPRDF in many urban constituencies, was however to prevent oppositions from gaining foothold at the local level.

of true autonomy in financial affairs and the potential for higher-level interference in local staffing decisions limit the *de facto* institutional autonomy of woredas. These practices are indicative of *de facto* dual subordination.

Kebeles. Kebeles are ward-like jurisdictions, forming the lowest tier of local governance. They are found everywhere in the country except in Addis Ababa where former *kebeles*, without any change to their territorial and population sizes and functional competencies, were renamed *woredas*. Kebeles have elected councils and indirectly elected administrators. *Kebeles* are not meant to be a devolved tier of local government but serve as record keepers and enforcing agents of the *woredas*, by providing a platform for community engagement and oversight at the site of public service delivery. In the absence of political, administrative, and fiscal autonomy from the woreda level, woredas should be understood to be a sub-unit of the woreda level, rather than a separate governance institution in its own right.

4. Assignment of functions and responsibilities in Ethiopia

The 1995 constitution divides functions and powers between the federal and state levels of government. It contains some 22 broadly defined federal functions and leaves residual powers to the states. In turn, local governments are expected to exercise the functions that the states have assigned to them through state constitutions or state legislation. While state constitutions are less than explicit on the specific functions and powers of local government, the latter, specially woredas and cities are engaged in the provision of basic services such as primary health care, primary education, water, and the like. Cities provide additional urban-specific services, such as garbage collection, firefighting, and the like.

The 1995 constitution divides functions and powers between the federal and state levels of government. It contains some 22 broadly defined federal functions (Constitution, Article 51) and leaves residual functions and powers (those that are not in the list of federal functions and powers) to the states (Article 52). The federal government enjoys broad policy-making and standard-setting power, both *de jure* and *de facto*, on all social and economic matters including 'education, science, and technology as well as for the protection and preservation of cultural and historical legacies'. The states also have state-wide policy-making power on social matters, but seldom do they come up with their own original policies. They simply adopt and implement their own plans within their jurisdictions based on federal policies and standards.

The federal constitution does not contain a list of local government functions and powers even though it explicitly requires the states to transfer 'adequate powers' to 'lowest units of government' (Article 50(40)): State functions are left to be defined in state constitutions. The principle requiring the states to devolve adequate powers was inserted in the constitution as a compromise between those who sought the explicit recognition of the local government in the federal constitution and those who insisted that everything about local government should be left to the states (Assefa 2007). In any case, it is up to the states to determine what is 'adequate' when devolving functional competencies for local government.

Federal government functions: The federal government has the power to issue policies and set standards basically on all social, economic, and cultural matters. Moreover, it is involved in direct frontline service provision on numerous matters in addition to the functions that are normally seen as appropriate for a federal government, such as national defense and printing of money, and minting coins. It has established federal police which gives protection to federal infrastructure and institutions throughout the country and enforces federal laws at the national level. The federal government is responsible for and is engaged in constructing infrastructure such as airports, railways, waterways and sea transport, and major roads linking two or more states.

The constitution does not provide specific functions to the federal government in the areas of providing basic services, such as agriculture extension services, health care and education save for the power to set national standards and adopt policies. It does not, for instance, state primary school is a state function and higher education belongs to the federal government. It is silent on these specific issues. As these functions are not in the list of federal competencies, one might argue the responsibility to provide health care (from health post to hospitals) and education (from pre-primary education to tertiary education) belongs to the states. Yet, in practice, this is not indeed the case. In practice, in the area of healthcare, the federal government is responsible for building and running hospitals while in the area of education, it is in charge of establishing and running universities (Garcia & Rajkumar 2008). Yet some states, such as Oromia, and Addis Ababa have their own universities.

Figure 2. De facto assignment of public sector functions and responsibilities in Ethiopia



Source: Prepared by author.

Regional state government functions: The constitution does not contain a list of services that the states are expected to provide. However, as already mentioned, whatever is not in the list of federal functions is assumed to be a state function. Thus, in the area of education primary schools, secondary schools, and tertiary education (excluding university education) vocational training fall within the states' competencies. In the area of public health, states are in charge of providing health services other than constructing and running hospitals. States also implement agriculture extension packages including implementing small and medium-sized irrigation schemes. They also construct roads connecting woredas. The states have devolved specific tasks in the area of education, healthcare, roads, and the like to woredas and cities.

Local government functions: Local government's competencies are dependent on what the states are willing to devolve to the former from among their competencies. The state constitutions do not clearly define the specific functions within the exclusive competence of woredas. They simply provide in general terms that local government can decide on its own affairs. Practice shows that the different tiers of local government exercise different functions as shown below (Ayele 2014).

Administrative zones and ethnic zones: Administrative zones do not exercise specific functions. They simply oversee the woredas and serve as a link between the state governments and woredas. Ethnic zones are also not directly involved in frontline service provisions. Being in charge of promoting the language and culture of the ethnic community for which they are established, ethnic zones decide on the language to be used in primary schools. They are also in charge of translating exercise books into the language of the relevant ethnic community.

Woredas: As mentioned, *woredas* are the primary frontline service provider. They provide specific services in every functional area within the competencies of the states;

- Education - primary education (0-8 grades), secondary education (grades 9-10), adult education. The *woredas* are in charge of building schools and hiring teachers;
- Healthcare – Constructing and running clinics, health posts, health stations, HIV-related services and controlling malaria (especially in low-land areas)
- Water – drilling wells;
- Agriculture -implementing agriculture extension packages, constructing small-scale irrigation schemes, distributing fertilizers, providing veterinary services;
- Roads - Constructing rural roads connecting *kebeles*.

Cities:

- Cities have the status of a *woreda* and they provide services that *woredas* provide. In addition, depending on the resources at their disposal, they provide certain urban-specific services including establishing and running cultural centers, recreational centers, youth centers, museums, housing, sewerage, street, street lighting, solid wastes, fire-fighting, abattoirs, parks, markets, sanitation, liquor licenses, and ambulance services.

Kebeles: The primary responsibility of *kebeles* is record keeping, providing resident IDs, and serving as a site of public engagement.

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