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Decentralizing Education:

The BESO/Tigray Case Study

Marc Sommers, Ph.D.

Support for Analysis and Research in Africa (SARA) Project
Health & Human Resources
Analysis for Africa (HHRAA) Project
U.S. Agency for International Development,
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written for SARA/AED and AID/AFR/SD

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Acronyms

BESO	Basic Education Structural Overhaul
EPRDF	Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front
MOE	Ministry of Education
PDC	pedagogical center
REB	Regional Education Bureau
SPC	school pedagogical centers
TGE	Transitional Government of Ethiopia
TPLF	Tigrayan People's Liberation Front
TTI	teacher training institute
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WEO	<i>woreda</i> education officer
ZEO	zonal education offices

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I. CONTEXT

The context of decentralization is a critical feature in this case study. Context plays a significant role in the formulation of this study's objectives and approach. It also has helped to guide its methodological procedures, data analysis, and recommendations.

The following section contains several important contextual themes that will resurface in subsequent sections, including the place of Tigray in recent and current Ethiopian history, the creation of decentralization concepts from within the context of centralization, the significance of language to regional difference, and the significance of regionalization to the development of decentralization.

A. Tigray in Recent Ethiopian History

In 1889, an Amhara from Shoa, Menelik II, succeeded Yohannes IV, a Tigrayan, as king of the Ethiopian empire. Menelik quickly established a new capital on recently conquered Oromo land. The creation of Addis Ababa immediately alienated not only Oromos, but Tigrayans as well, who (accurately) interpreted this as a signal of their own marginalization.

For the next century, until another Tigrayan, Meles Zenawi, assumed the reins of power in Ethiopia in 1991, Tigray's situation within Ethiopia became increasingly difficult. In 1896, when Menelik led 100,000 soldiers to his famous victory over the Italians at Adwa, located in the heart of Tigray, he left the region devastated. Feeding his enormous army depleted local food supplies and livestock. The first of a sequence of famines in Tigray over the last hundred years followed. In 1943, a peasant revolt in Tigray against feudal rulers and Menelik's eventual successor, Emperor Haile Selassie, led to harsh reprisals. Peasants lost their rights to land ownership while taxation rates climbed dramatically. Money and local capital investment drifted away from Tigray. Peasants had few alternatives to farming on land that had been worked for more than two millennia. In the last 35 years there have been five famines in Tigray, the last of which, in 1984-86, led to as many as one million deaths.

Yet this last and most devastating famine occurred within the context of civil war. The Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF) was formed in early 1975, less than a year after Major Mengistu Haile Mariam assumed power over the coordinating committee (or *Derg*, meaning "a group of equals"), which ruled Ethiopia following the military's overthrow of Haile Selassie. The TPLF quickly evolved into a rural-based organization that fought against Derg forces in what Tigrayans call "The Struggle." While both the Derg and the TPLF espoused Marxist ideology, the TPLF became a popular organization among the Tigrayan peasantry, while the Derg's repressive policies made it increasingly unpopular. The TPLF initiated land reform, peasant participation, and women's rights programs in the rural Tigrayan areas they eventually controlled. Tigray finally fell to the TPLF in 1989, and the remnants of Mengistu's demoralized army were overwhelmed in Addis Ababa in May 1991. The TPLF leader, Meles Zenawi,

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subsequently became the leader of the Transitional Government of Ethiopia (TGE), and recently assumed the role of Prime Minister of a newly elected national government.

B. Regionalization and the Center

One of the ironies of Ethiopia's long and arduous civil war is that the TPLF, which originally had sought to free itself from Ethiopia, now dominates Ethiopia's government. At the same time, Meles has created a national system that delineates ethnic distinctions and emphasizes regional control. In Tigray, this has meant that the TPLF still wields control at the regional level, while Meles heads a national coalition (albeit dominated by the TPLF) called the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) from Ethiopia's capital, Addis Ababa.

The departure from centralized control is far from complete, however. What has been called the "Ethiopian Bureaucratic Empire" began more than a century ago.¹ It established the tradition of centralized authority (as opposed to a more localized feudalism) and an immense bureaucratic structure that fanned out into distant areas of the empire and carried out policies determined by the center. The Derg's "revolutionary" policies were adopted "more because of what they enabled the regime to do or to justify than because of a blind faith in Marxist-Leninist doctrine" (Keller 1988: 245), and their policies always retained the centralizing tendencies of their predecessors.

Many of these centralizing tendencies have been retained by the current government. In many ways, this should not be surprising. Most salaried professionals who populate Ethiopia's bureaucracy learned about bureaucratic function and routine as members of highly centralized systems, regardless of whether they worked under the Derg or an opposition party such as the TPLF. More important, however, is the fact that "political culture in Ethiopia has long rested on asserting a consensus around a predetermined party line rather than on open debate and then compromise" (EIU, Second Quarter, 1995: 6). Regardless of the many changes that have occurred in Ethiopia since 1991, it should be recalled that, during the civil war, the TPLF and the Derg were separated by "language and group loyalty, not ideology" (Kaplan 1988: 97). The locus of power in Ethiopia still rests within a "centralized command structure," which "means that candid debate, dissent or parliamentary opposition to policies are likely to be minimal at both federal and regional levels" (EIU, Second Quarter, 1995: 6).

It is within the context of Ethiopian centralization that the recent national emphasis on decentralization and regionalization should be examined. Regional administrations existed in Ethiopia long before recent movement toward regionalization began. And initiatives designed to decentralize control and authority have begun, even while centralizing tendencies remain strong. Nevertheless, profound shifts have occurred. The regionally based liberation movements against

¹ See Edmond J. Keller's *Revolutionary Ethiopia: From Empire to People's Republic* (1988) for more information.

the Ethiopian center “recognized the oppressiveness of centralized planning” (Hoben 1994: 6), and have inspired a reorganization of Ethiopia that is guided by “the fact that ‘nationality’ is the defining characteristic of regional (or state) boundaries” (World Bank 1995: 2). The major groups that opposed the Derg were ethnically based, and the new government’s policies contain ethnic inflections. Creating Ethiopia as a federation of recently empowered regions is designed to protect minority rights in the future and “defuse ethnic tensions by reducing [previous] inter-regional economic and social disparities” (Mishra 1995: 10).

Yet, because the various ethnic groups within Ethiopia’s new borders differ in size and influence, disparities remain. Tigrayans, for example, constitute less than a tenth of Ethiopia’s population of over 50 million (and may be, after the combined casualties of war and famine are accounted for, no more than 3.5 million), yet *Tigrinya* programs on the national television station share broadcast time with programs in Amharic, Oromo, and English. Tigrayans also dominate the ranks of the national armed forces. And generally, “the [EPRDF’s] stranglehold on power leaves significant and potentially influential segments of society not represented in the new [government] institutions, particularly large swathes of the educated and urban classes” (EIU, Second Quarter, 1995: 5). Still, some of the new system’s inequities arise simply from the way equity is now conceived. Given the center’s drive toward ethnic federalism, and its attendant concerns with equity issues *between* ethnic regions, the equality of regions appears to have a higher priority than problems that disproportionately affect some regions more than others. With regard to the pressing issue of poverty alleviation, for example, Mishra argues that “the reduction of inter-ethnic income differences is likely to take priority over the narrowing of inter-personal income differences” (1995: 11). In principle and in the creation of policy, the central government tends to allocate resources according to fairness between regions. Thus, reforms undertaken by the EPRDF have been sweeping and dramatic, but they have occurred within the context of Ethiopian centralization. The locus of power still remains at the national center even while many specific authorities have been given to the regions. The new system, indeed, has created a hierarchy of “centers,” for regional administrations have attained such preferential treatment that they have effectively become centers themselves. And within the context of the region, the “center” still makes most of the decisions, and the periphery still carries out the center’s policies. In short, the new policies that embrace decentralization and regionalization have sublimated, not eradicated, centralization. The centralizing tendencies of the old regimes live on, albeit within a new context.

C. Education Sector Reforms and Tigray’s Ascendancy

The Significance of Language Policy

Emperor Haile Selassie positioned Amharic as the language of national unity. Learning the language of Imperial Ethiopia became a critical step toward becoming, as Keller explains, “Amharized”:

It was theoretically possible, for example, for an Oromo to be assimilated into the dominant culture. He simply had to become Amharized—to take on the language, religion, customs, and mannerisms of the Amhara (1988: 63).

Keller also notes, however, that in actual practice, “The bulk of the colonized masses had no hope of ever ridding themselves of the colonial bond,” and as a result “mostly latent but ever-present resistance was common among the colonized people of the periphery” (Ibid.). Regardless of the practical benefits of creating one language that all Ethiopians could use to communicate with each other, Amharic also was perceived as the language of the colonial oppressor.

Because both the Derg and the TGE were influenced by Marxist-Leninist theories, they shared the contention that

the people conquered by Amhara rulers fit the [Leninist] model of “nationalities” whose languages and ways of life had been systematically suppressed by the imperial regime, and that they deserved restitution of their languages and a measure of self-affirmation (Hoben 1994: 2).

The Derg and the TGE differed greatly in the method and extent to which they would put this principle into operation. The Derg severely limited the degree of autonomy and power that the conquered peoples could receive, in large part because many of the “nationalities” that they celebrated had taken up arms against them. On the other hand, they did initiate a national (nonformal) literacy campaign, “the first sustained and comprehensive effort to prepare scripts and teaching materials for the majority of the major languages spoken within the country’s borders” (Ibid.: 1).

The TGE dramatically advanced the “nationalities” issue. Led by Tigrinya-speaking leaders from the TPLF, they modeled Ethiopia’s new regional boundaries according to local language distribution and devolved significant amounts of power and responsibility to these new regions. They also closed down the Derg’s 12-year-long nonformal literacy program, and positioned local languages at the forefront of their education reforms. Gaining literacy in one’s local language now would occur in the formal education sector, beginning in the first grade. Accordingly, each region had to develop its own specialized curriculum for students in the region. Ethnic and linguistic difference, the new national policies suggest, should be celebrated and cultivated, and the years of struggle against the center will now yield rewards in the form of recognized regional identity and a measure of regional autonomy. Under the TGE, local languages became the means through which national difference and equity would largely be defined.

Schools and Civil War in Tigray

During my stay in Tigray, there were constant signs of the Tigrayans’ victory in the civil war. “The Struggle” was over now. Those who perished during the war were called Martyrs, and the

monument to them towers over the landscape of Mekelle, the regional capital. Those who worked within the education bureaucracy frequently worked on weekends, which was in line with the philosophy and actions of the acting head of the Tigray Education Bureau, whom I heard declare, "The Martyrs sacrificed for Tigray with their lives. Now, we are only asking that people in the education system sacrifice their leisure time."

In 1977, Dan Bauer wrote that "Tigray[ans] feel that they share the inherited traditions of Aksum with the Amhara" (pp. 15–16). Even at the outset of "The Struggle" period, Bauer could write that Tigrayans "feel that the language they speak, *Tigrinya*, because it is more closely related to the liturgical language *Gi-iz*, is evidence of their greater legitimacy as compared with the Amhara" (1977: 16). Now, in the context of post-war Tigray, I often heard Tigrayans mention Aksum civilization without any reference to the Amhara, an indication of the extent to which Tigray had risen in national prominence. Clearly, Tigrayans are in ascendancy.

During the civil war, the Derg bombed hundreds of villages in Tigray and destroyed thousands of homes and many of the schools. I also learned, however, that a comparatively small number of schools were emptied of their supplies and equipment by local Tigrayans during times of lawlessness or desperation. The school curriculums reflected the ideologies of the civil war. In Derg-controlled areas, the national curriculum was used, while TPLF cadres taught Tigrayans from "The Struggle" curriculum, which they had developed (with input from the Eritrean People's Liberation Front's education curriculum). Both of these curriculums were highly politicized, and were aimed at demonizing the opposing forces and popularizing their own cause before students. Even subjects such as mathematics contained explicit political references. In Tigrayan schools where post-war curriculum materials remain insufficient, "The Struggle" curriculum materials are still being used. In one class I visited, the English teacher copied the following examples on the board from his "Struggle" textbook (the answers to the problems are in parentheses):

Bombing of villages and killing of people is a _____ (barbaric) action.
Long live the alliance of workers and _____ (peasants).
We will _____ (struggle) until we are victorious.
The enemy soldiers _____ (destroy) people's property.

In 1989, when Derg forces fled Mekelle and left the entire region of Tigray in the hands of the TPLF, the formal schools that previously existed in Derg-held areas vanished. For the next two-to-three years, there was no formal education in Tigray. Then in 1991, following the creation of the Transitional Government of Ethiopia (TGE), schools began to reopen. Quite often classes were held outdoors or in "*Das*" classrooms (structures made out of tree branches), because the original school structure had been destroyed.

During this initial reconstruction period, the Tigray Education Bureau began to write a new curriculum and rebuild school structures quickly. The pace at which these initial goals have been addressed has been rapid. By 1993, the first post-war primary school curriculum for grades one through four was distributed to schools. This hastily developed interim curriculum was

developed by depoliticizing and integrating those aspects of both the Derg and "Struggle" curriculums that were deemed useful. All of grades one and five classrooms in Tigray are scheduled to receive the second post-war set of curriculum materials. These materials are designed as a departure from previous curriculums. Separate short training courses, for example, that emphasize practical skills are being developed for those students who will be leaving school after grades four and eight. A new teaching methodology is also being developed. The intention is that classroom learning shift from a "chalk and talk" lecture format to a more student-centered, problem-solving approach. There are also plans to build nearly 100 new primary school classroom blocks a year for the next five years, and accompanying plans anticipate that the new schools will be filled with a new corps of trained teachers and school directors.

Reforming the Woredas

Current reforms about the size, responsibilities and authorities of the *woredas*, or subdistrict, administrative branches are currently being formulated. The following description of the current practice indicates the extent to which the final shape of this process remains undefined: By stressing the importance of the *woreda*, EPRDF officials hope to reduce bureaucracy, presumably both central and regional, and bring the provision of services closer to its beneficiaries. However, it is unclear in practice what new powers *woreda* officials will have. The most drastic change came in Region 1 (Tigray) where the number of *woredas* was cut from 81 to 35 (EIU, Third Quarter, 1995: 10).

The dramatic reduction of the number of *woredas* accompanies plans to greatly expand the size and responsibilities of each *woreda* office. In the education sector for Tigray Region, *woreda* education officers will be assigned greater administrative responsibility for school operations. The final shape and description of these job descriptions, however, has not yet been decided.

The Education Sector Strategy in Tigray

In September 1994, in its "Education Sector Strategy," the Transitional Government of Ethiopia (TGE) announced a dramatic break from the legacy of centralized education:

The administration of elementary and secondary education and training shall be decentralized in line with the ongoing regionalization process. Schools will be strongly linked with the community which will take responsibility in its well-being and upkeep. They will be made to be responsive to the local needs and requirements and shall act as centers for all educational activities of the community. The management of each school will be democratized and run with the participation of the community, the teachers, the students and the relevant government institutions. In as much as possible educational institutions...will be encouraged to run on an autonomous basis. [pp. 16-17]

Behind this bold declaration, however, the details of how a decentralized educational system should become operationalized remain unspecified. Although it is intended to allow for regional differentiation, the ambiguities inherent in the statement also contain the seeds for confusion within regional education systems. The statement combines ideas for regionalized administration with democratized, participatory, even “autonomous” school management. But how should the new regionalized “center” administer to suddenly “autonomous” schools?

The unresolved nature of the declaration is a general theme that can be observed about policies for other government sectors, as well. Hoben has observed that, in general, “many ambiguities remain concerning devolution of decision-making to regions and their component zones, districts [*Woreda*] and towns, as well as fiscal support for their activities” (1994: 7). Regional administrations are supposed to use their newfound powers to make decisions based on the specific conditions that apply to their region. At the same time, the regional systems should allow for local-level participation.

Within Tigray, at least two separate conceptions of a decentralized education system have arisen. One has emphasized a decentralized education system that remains “in line with the ongoing regionalization process.” This conception implies that the system should be operationalized by using recently articulated concepts of regionalized authority as guides. Schools will be accorded some authority, but the regionalized form of decentralization is currently guiding the development of the post-war education system.

Yet outside Mekelle, the capital of Tigray region, some citizens hold a different conception of decentralized education. Policies popularized by the TPLF during the long civil war have enabled ordinary citizens to express their views in open forums. The tradition of “Gem-Gum” not only allows for previously unprecedented public criticism of powerful figures, but it also can encourage direct participation by individuals in making decisions that affect their communities. Accordingly, concepts that hold that schools should be “democratized” and run both “with participation of the community” and “on an autonomous basis” have cultivated a belief among some Tigrayans that communities should have increased input in school management in post-war Tigray.

Thus, although the Transitional Government of Ethiopia’s desire to decentralize education has been popular in Tigray region, it has summoned different conceptions of what a decentralized education system should look like, and then how it should be implemented. And though Tigrayans collectively share a remarkably strong desire to increase access to schools and enhance educational quality, the field research and organized workshops that were conducted for this study have revealed how members of the public, and officials within the educational system, have yet to arrive at a consensus on how responsibility and authority between school communities and the three levels of the newly regionalized education system (regional bureau, zone, *woreda*) should be shared.

This case study will consider the context and contours of this ongoing debate.

II. THE RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

A. Background: Studying How to Decentralize an Education System

Ethiopia is one of the poorest countries in the world. It also has one of the world's most underdeveloped formal education systems. Only about 20 percent of the country's primary school-age children are enrolled in schools (the percentages for Ethiopian girls and students in rural areas are even lower). This rate contrasts dramatically with the average primary participation rate in sub-Saharan Africa of 70 percent. The average years of education for the adult work force is just over one year. Not surprisingly, less than half of all Ethiopian adults are literate.

While many Ethiopian government sectors are being decentralized, the extreme situation that confronts the education system makes the decentralization process an unusually worthy research subject: the educational problems are monumental, and decentralization remains a new concept for Ethiopians. Yet the shift to rapid reform through decentralization already has produced a series of preparatory workshops (conducted mostly by Ethiopians), and studies (conducted mostly by foreigners). Foreign investment in primary education in Ethiopia is also strong, and government budgets have been increased dramatically in post-war Ethiopia.

Even in the current context of decentralizing education systems across Africa and in many other parts of the world, the state of formal education in Ethiopia is so dire that it requires special attention. And it is within this context that an entirely new approach to the study of decentralizing and education system was attempted.

Before launching into a description of this approach, a description of a more standard approach to the study of decentralization, which is currently being conducted in Ethiopia, might serve as a useful contrast.

The UNESCO Research Approach in Ethiopia

UNESCO has developed a research approach to the decentralization of regional education systems in Ethiopia. Its focus on management functions and system tasks makes it a fairly standard research approach to the decentralization problem. Its objectives are to (1) study the current organizational structure of the regional education system; (2) describe the anticipated and actual outcomes, administrative procedures, and information generated and distributed; and (3) estimate the time requirements and levels of education and training that education professionals would need to perform the new work assignments, and how that work should be managed. The study divides the study into three categories of function (Planning, Statistics, and Project Management; Pedagogy; and Administration), which are then split into 12 functions and 315 subfunctions and tasks. The questionnaire that has been developed to interview education professionals is lengthy and remarkably detailed.

This research approach has many potential strengths. It certainly would generate a great deal of data about how the current education system operates. The specificity that the study demands regarding management activities also would create a helpful core of information when retraining and new job functions are considered. Moreover, the study takes the concept of decentralization very seriously, and the function orientation promises to create a decentralized system with a sound internal logic.

But this research approach also contains some weaknesses, the most significant of which concern issues of context and rest within three categories of implicit assumptions that UNESCO's research approach contains. First, it is evident that studying Ethiopian-specific issues such as the shift from civil war to reconstruction, the legacy of famine, and the extreme general deprivation of the populace, the socioeconomic reasons that underlie unusually low levels of school enrollment, and the severely undertrained personnel in the education system² are apparently not part of UNESCO's investigation. UNESCO's research study is actually an "audit" that aims at improving the existing system's efficiency and overall capacity. The study is operating from *within* the existing system (which is not long removed from its highly centralized past), thus limiting its ability to provide room for reconceiving the existing system in a new way. Given this lack of attention to country-specific issues, one is led to assume that UNESCO's functional approach to the problem of decentralization can be applied in any context: decentralizing an education system, the study suggests, will occur once management capacity and system efficiency are improved.

At one level, there is a great deal of merit in this concept. Every education system that is about to become decentralized will require new ways to carry out management functions and system tasks, and will develop new training schemes to prepare personnel for performing tasks in new ways. Yet the educational problems in Ethiopia are so great, and its education personnel (as well as the general public) so used to working within a highly centralized system, that implementing the assumed model for a decentralized education system might be difficult. Undertrained Ethiopian education professionals with little understanding of what decentralization is may not be able to adapt easily to a new system. The lack of focus on inter-relationships *among* the three system levels that are studied (region, zone, *woreda*) also implies that successful decentralizing reforms will take place by emphasizing horizontal changes (within each system level), over vertical changes (between system levels). As a consequence, education officers at the zonal and *woreda* levels may perpetuate those habits learned during the days of strict centralization, which involved carrying out orders received from the next level up.

The second implicit assumption is perhaps more critical. UNESCO's approach assumes that conducting research exclusively with members of the educational system provides a sufficient database for developing a scheme for decentralizing the educational system. In other words,

² This research endeavor discovered that none of the *woreda* education officers—who are about to become the key administrative center in relation to schools—have any training whatsoever.

decentralizing the educational system does not require conducting research at the level where the actual education occurs: the schools. Failing to include the schools as a critical component of the education system (indeed, in many decentralized education systems, it becomes the focal component) assumes that the system, once it is properly reformed, will know how to guide and support its schools. Improving the system's capacity and efficiency will produce this result. Given the Ethiopian context, and the deficient ways in which schools have been administered to in the past, overlooking the schools emulates one of the previous education system's most serious failings.

The third and final implicit assumption concerns the way in which data are gathered and analyzed, and how solutions to the decentralization problem are formulated. The UNESCO research approach appears to carry within it a model of what a decentralized education system should look like. Current problems or possible reforms need not be debated by members working within the education studied; a group of experts can gather and analyze their data, and present their solution.

Furthermore, once the researchers have devised their decentralization model, to whom do they present it? If it is to the "center," which, given the general approach, is a logical conclusion, UNESCO's research approach has the potential to create a centralizing effect on the decentralization process. Information is "centralized" at the level of the researchers. The information, and the decentralization model that arises from it, is then presented to members of the system's "center." This process, which occurs without discussion among members of the education system about how the system should be decentralized, and what, specifically, the system reforms will be designed to accomplish, creates two potential problems. First, prescribing a model for decentralization without first attempting to gain a consensus, by members of local communities and local education professionals alike, supposes that the *process* of installing local participation into an education system does not require local participation. Second, creating a model that only the "center" has approved may require the center to convince, or coerce, system members into accepting it. In other words, UNESCO's strategy implies that the center, together with its experts, not only knows how to decentralize itself, but seeks to devolve authority and responsibility to the lower levels.

B. The Tigray Case: Objectives to Advance the Decentralization Process

The goal of the BESO Decentralization Study was to assist Tigrayans in establishing a decentralized management system that supports their educational objectives.

This general goal of assistance to Tigrayans, however, carried with it two attendant objectives that were stressed emphatically and repeatedly to members of the education system. First, the research project attempted to position the existing situation of the region's primary schools at the center of the decentralization debate. Members of the local education system were constantly reminded that the research team was focusing its work on those issues that directly affected the process of learning in school classrooms. The research team's position held that issues such as

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the education system's efficiency could only be accurately evaluated by considering how their efforts affected the learning process. Students needed to be in schools, and then they needed to become educated. Ultimately, the education system existed to support those students.

Second, the debate over the objectives for and direction of decentralization reforms should incorporate, as much as possible, the concerns and perspectives of those sitting at "the bottom" of the education structure: the *woreda* education officers, the primary school directors and their teaching staffs, and, where possible, the parents, the students, and local school community. This objective arose from the contention that the *process* of decentralizing the education system should be decentralized, because it would promote a debate among those involved in the education of primary school students about how the education system should be reformed. Enlarging the breadth of participation in this process would enlarge the base of support for decentralization reforms and help insure that those reforms were connected directly to the chief concerns of local educators. This broadened support base, in turn, would increase the chances that the reforms would affect the learning process positively in primary school classrooms.

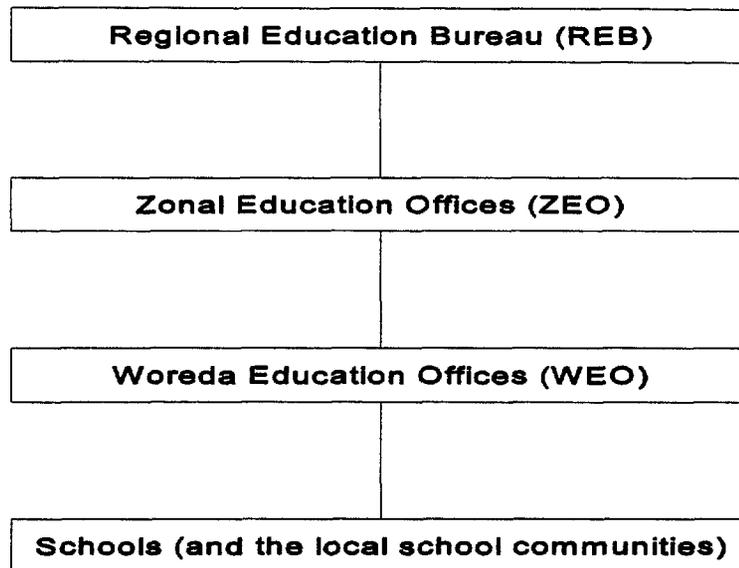
The primary objective of the BESO Decentralization Study for Tigray region, then, was not to produce a report, but to initiate a "research-and-discussion" process that confronted frankly major problems that directly affected the learning process of students, and explored how decentralizing the regional educational system could best address those problems. As we shall see, workshops became a critical feature of the research process, because they revealed how local educators (a) envisioned what a decentralized education system should look like, and (b) understood how this new system facilitated the learning process of students in the system. Findings arising from the passionate workshop discussions invoked by the research-and-discussion process described here are deemed as important as the field research findings also contained in this report.

The objectives of this study contain other important assumptions within them. These assumptions may appear fairly obvious to many; however, because they nonetheless directly inform the procedures and conclusions of this study, they will be mentioned here:

- Decentralizing an education system does not necessarily improve that system.
- People will tend to embrace the idea of decentralization because it is new, especially if they are about to reform a centralized education system that was unpopular.
- Lasting decisions on reforming a local educational system can be made best by members of that system and those local communities that are directly involved with the education process.

- The education system should include the schools themselves. For regional studies in Ethiopia, this means that the following levels need to be included:

Ministry of Education (MOE)³



- Issues and groups that are directly related to the context of decentralization (critical country/region/local themes, local education history, attitudes about education, the state of the education system, etc.) must be taken into consideration when decentralization reforms are addressed.
- Sound local information facilitates informed local decision making.
- Opening up the research process to incorporate local perspectives raises expectations about what the BESO project will accomplish for Tigrayans.

³ Note that the Ministry of Education is not connected by a line with the Regional Education Bureau. This is because, although the Ministry remains the “center” of the education system in Ethiopia, the regions have been awarded sufficient levels of authority and decision making that, for the purposes of *regional* decentralization, they are the “center,” and will be considered as such over the course of this document.

- Because the research process was experimental and would involve local participants directly, predicting the results of this first attempt at research-and-discussion would be nearly impossible.
- Although the education reform process would be constructed to include members from every system level, it is assumed that the education leaders will influence the reform process strongly.

The Decentralization Study Team conducted research and analysis on educational problems to advance the idea that addressing the needs of schools should be the primary purpose of the Tigrayan educational system. It then facilitated movement in that direction. The Study Team also compared perceptions and priorities of problems held by members of each level in the educational system—region, zone, *woreda*, and the school community—and facilitated workshop discussions on the findings to illuminate where the system is united and where it is internally divided. And because these unities and divisions were revealed at workshops, before representatives from every level and geographic zone, workshop discussions then could initiate an ongoing process of open dialogue, between those whose jobs would be directly affected by educational reforms, about: (1) what a viable, and locally understandable, decentralized education structure should look like; (2) what the primary objectives of the system should be; (3) how the four system levels should relate to each other; and (4) what roles, responsibilities, tasks, and authorities should be meted out to each level.

Following from the idea that the research should initiate a process for change, the research process was shared with members of the education system in Tigray almost from the outset. Local education professionals thus received the following set of specific research objectives:

Figure 1: Specific Objectives Handout

1. Articulate the purpose of decentralization.

*How does decentralization help Tigrayans achieve their education objectives?
For example, how do decentralization reforms help achieve: a) increased enrollment, b) improved quality, and c) more relevant education?*

Help obtain a consensus on how a decentralized management structure can contribute to addressing the most important concerns of basic education.

2. Identify existing problems.

*What is the current status of the primary education system, and what are its major problems?
Gather and analyze data on the current status, needs, problems, and priorities of all major participant groups in the Tigray basic education system (regional government officials, regional education bureau, zonal education office, woreda education office, school, community).*

3. Identify solutions to existing problems.

How can we solve the major problems?

Use workshops to facilitate: a) discussion of findings, b) identification of the most pressing concerns, and c) exploration of solutions. The workshops should include representatives of the major participant groups.

4. Outline structures and responsibilities.

How can solutions guide the management system?

Help define decentralized structures and job responsibilities in terms of a) how the proposed solutions can be achieved, and b) how they support education objectives.

C. Rationale: A New Approach to the Decentralization Problem

Problem Solving and System Reform

Given the limitations of more traditional approaches (such as UNESCO's in Ethiopia, discussed in detail above), and the evolving nature of the education system in Tigray, the decision was made at the outset to use an open-ended, problem-solving approach. The approach was designed to facilitate communication among all system levels while critical reforms are being considered, and connect system reforms to solving the system's most pressing problems.

To illuminate areas of general agreement among all members of the education system, as well as to emphasize shared purposes over bureaucratic separations, problem solving became a critical element in the new approach. Problems at the school became the focus of the research, and searching for solutions became the focus of the workshops. In this way, areas of general agreement and fundamental divisions were delineated. Thus, this approach has identified where the strengths and weaknesses in the system lie. More important, it has advanced the idea that decentralizing the education system can generate viable solutions to troubling educational problems and facilitated communication among members of the system on how to construct generally acceptable solutions.

The "Research-and-Discussion" Concept

This case study is significant in part because of the way in which workshops were incorporated into the research process. This was done to open up and directly involve members of the education system in the research process. "Research-and-discussion" as an approach is designed to open up the research endeavor by sharing data with members of the local education system that is being researched. Workshops took place throughout the course of the research process. The research findings that were presented featured information on the major problems that directly affected the learning process. The responses and questions that workshop participants offered became part of the research database. But workshop participants also were asked to consider solutions to pressing problems during workshop discussions. In this way, new proposals of solutions to actual problems were connected to evolving the decentralization process.

In short, the research process about how to decentralize Tigray region's education system was opened up to contain the decentralization process within it. Workshop sessions became research instruments through which local educators provided their reactions to field research findings and deliberated about solutions to specific problems that would incorporate ideas of decentralization reforms. And this process would occur not as closed-door interviews with individuals, but in public, before a carefully selected collection of colleagues from every level of the education system. Data on local educational problems directly informed discussions on how the system should be reformed to address those problems. In this way, the researchers acted as facilitators for, not guides to, the decentralization process. For local educators, decentralization became not a new, imported concept, but a new idea that they could shape to create viable and locally understandable improvements of the existing system.

The difference between this approach and a more typical research approach is striking. Instead of implementing a research process that designed research questionnaires, carried out fieldwork, analyzed field data, and provided a series of solutions for decentralizing an education system, field research was carried out in each of the four main zones that make up the Tigray region, analyzed immediately, and then presented in workshops. Instead of specifying the roles and responsibilities for an educational system, this research approach used findings on critical educational problems, and how they are being addressed currently, to facilitate workshop discussions on how members of the educational system believe their system and its attendant

roles and responsibilities, could be reformed. Instead of focusing on how the educational system *should* operate, this research approach focused on the current situation of the schools, and then asked local educators to suggest reforms to improve the system's support of their schools. Finally, to promote the belief that good local information facilitates good local decision making, instead of writing a final report for a select audience of educationalists, great effort has been made to make the research data, analysis, and reports accessible to local members of the education system by maintaining a simple, direct approach to the study of problems and solutions; distributing translated copies of research data, analysis, and reports across Tigray; and conducting workshop discussions in Tigrinya.⁴

The differences between a more typical research approach to decentralization and the "research-and-discussion" approach might be demonstrated best with the following charts. In a typical decentralization study, the education system personnel could be divided in the following way:

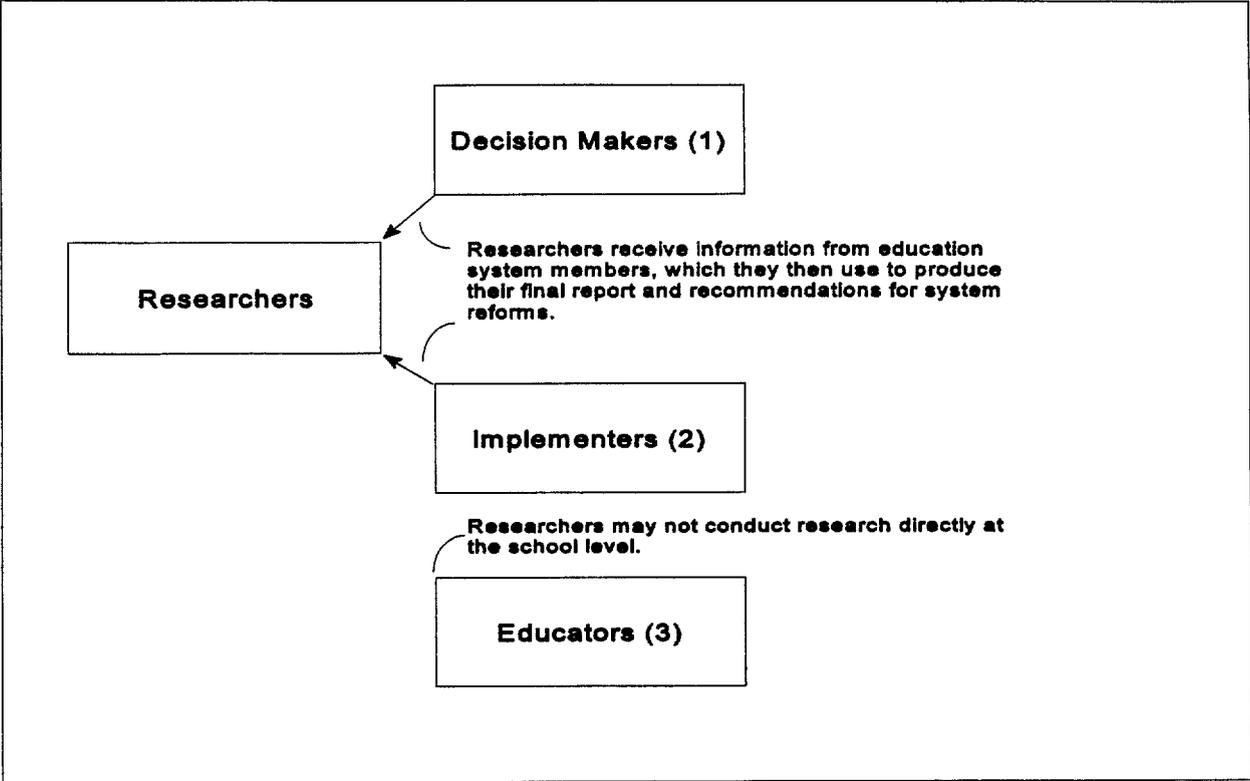
1. Decision makers (leaders of the education system)
2. Implementers (lower-level members of the education system, who carry out decisions made by the system leaders)
3. Educators (school personnel, such as school directors and teachers)

⁴ Arrangements have already been made to translate the final project report into Tigrinya and distribute it locally.

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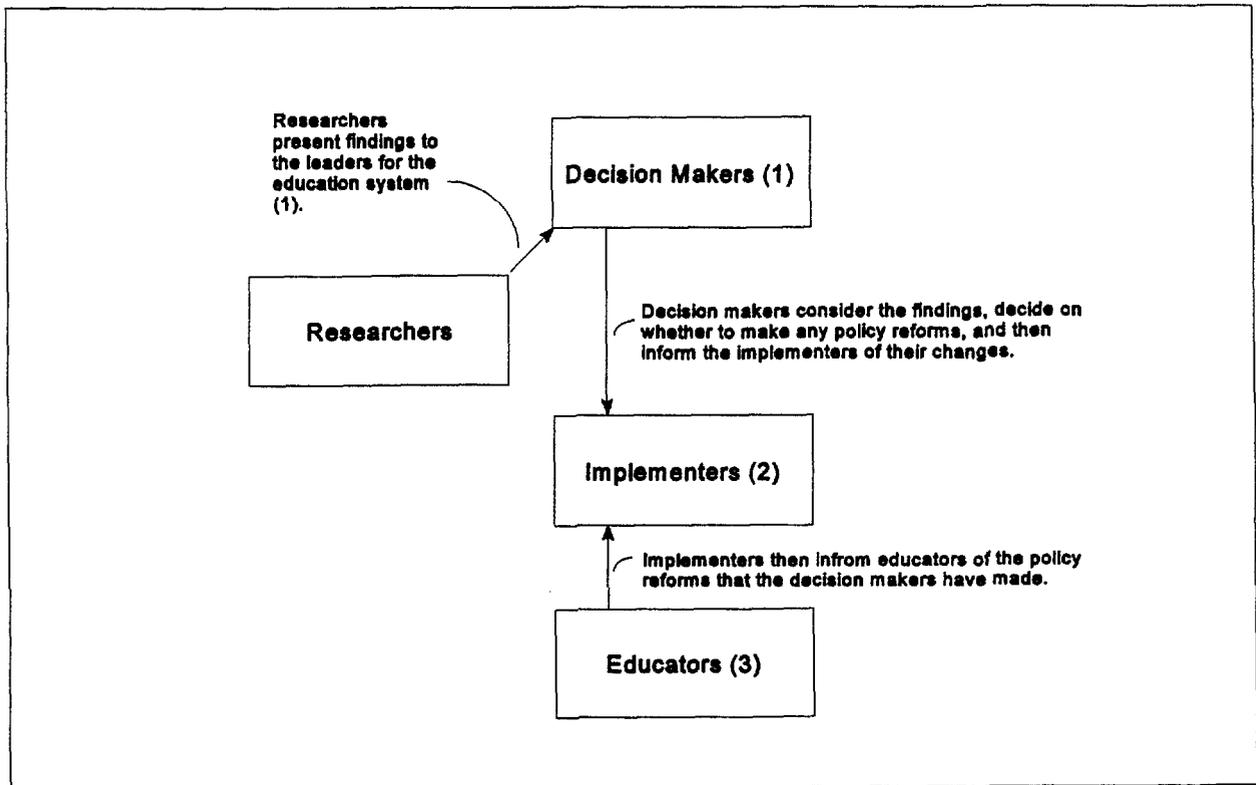
The education researchers typically conduct their research in the following fashion. First, they receive information, particularly on issues relating to management functions and system tasks, from the decision makers (1) and implementers (2) by conducting field research:

Figure 2: Conducting Research: A “Typical” Approach



After receiving their research data from decision makers and implementers, they usually present their findings to the leaders of the education system, or decision makers (1). After receiving the findings, the decision makers are expected to respond to the findings that the researchers have provided. The following diagram illustrates how a decentralization study can become a centralizing activity. Once the research is completed, the findings are fed only to the decision makers. Members of other system levels do not have direct access to what the researchers found or recommended, and this exclusive access strengthens the decision maker's position. In figure form, this process looks like the following:

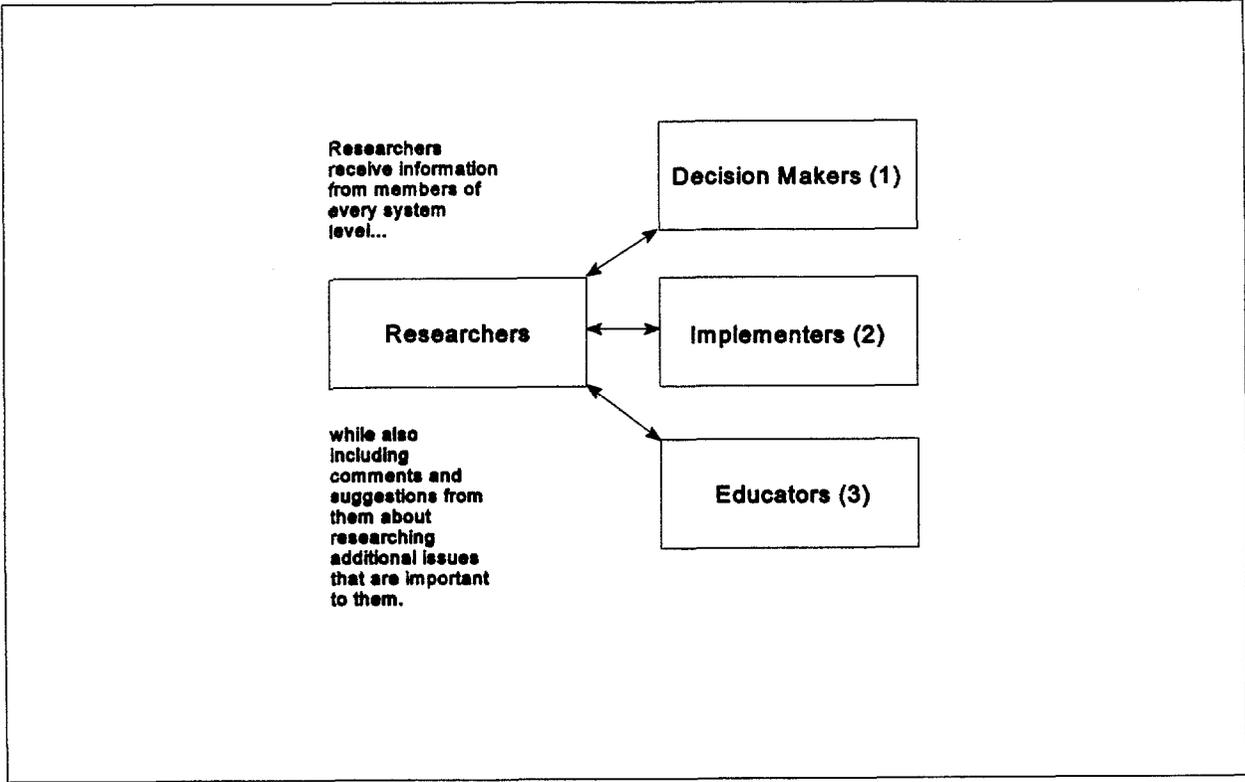
Figure 3: Recommending Reforms: A "Typical" Approach



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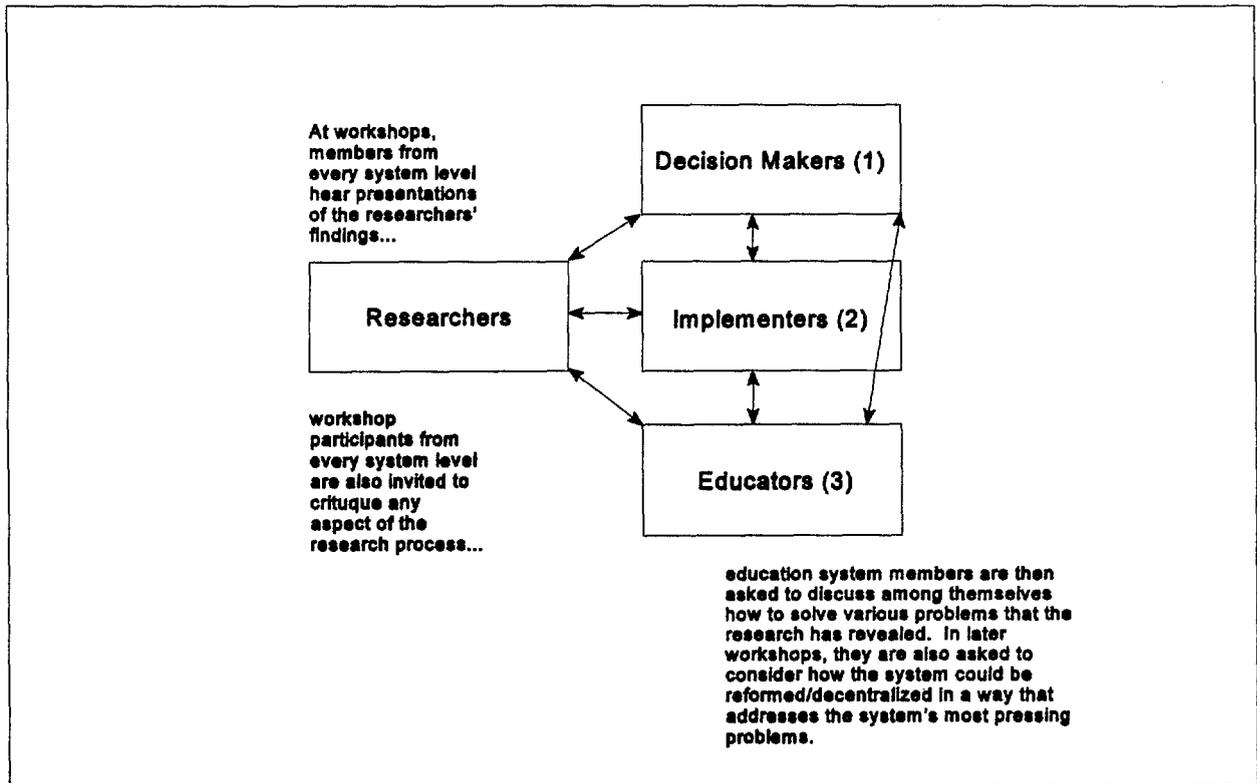
In contrast, the “research-and-discussion” methodology uses a more integrated approach. The researchers conduct their field research with all three levels of education personnel, focusing on existing and perceived problems in the education system. Yet in the following figure, the arrows point in *both* directions, because the researchers are also open to receiving recommendations about issues that education personnel would like to know more about:

Figure 4: Conducting Research: The “Research-and-Discussion” Approach



In this new approach, researchers collect their research in one geographic area, and then immediately present preliminary findings about system problems at a series of workshops. These workshops include representatives from every system level, who are asked to think about specific solutions to the problems the researchers have presented, and more general solutions to how the system should be decentralized to address system problems more effectively. In figure form, then, there are interactions between each system level. This is how the research process effectively becomes decentralized:

Figure 5: Recommending Reforms: The “Research-and-Discussion” Approach



In sum, the “research-and-discussion” approach differs in that it calls for participation by the entire system at the same time: representatives from every system level are interviewed, they receive the information together at workshops, and together they are expected to deliberate about system changes. The real change between the two approaches, then, arises according to which system members receive the researchers’ findings, how the findings are interpreted, and what reforms result from this process.

Finally, the way this research-and-discussion approach has been carried out and written up is intentionally direct and nonacademic. The reason for this is simple: just as the approach itself is designed to advance the decentralization process, the literature that has arisen from it (all

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documents written for workshop presentations, the final report, and this case study) has been designed mainly for practitioners (that is, members of the education system).

Sound local information facilitates informed local decision making. Writing research reports in simple, accessible language facilitates the ability of local people to make use of the information the researchers have gathered. As much as possible, the final report was designed to be distributed not only to project funders, but to Tigrayan educators who participated in the workshop deliberations, and who, through their participation, have become direct contributors to the process that the final report described. Accordingly, arrangements already have been made to have the final report translated into Tigrinya and distributed to every participant at the final workshop.

Bridging to BESO

This research-and-discussion approach took place within the context of BESO. Because of the success of this new approach, it became far more than a research endeavor. Tigrayans in the education system viewed me as the first BESO member in their region. The approach, which required active local participation and received a very positive local response, transformed the endeavor into an actual project activity.

Given the context within which this work was carried out, the differences between our approach and the usual research approach became a significant contributor to the success of the endeavor as well as BESO's reputation with Tigrayans. This was because Tigrayan education officials made it plain that they were tired of "being studied" by foreign researchers. A series of research teams had come to Tigray to carry out studies, the results of which, Tigrayans told me, they never saw. Tigrayans complained that the involved preparations for the BESO project, which included studies as well as a series of delegations to Mekelle for meetings with regional education officials, lent the impression that BESO was "all talk and no action."

While this resentment may appear to be at least somewhat unfair, the context that produced these comments is illuminating. For while Tigrayan educators complained about foreign research teams in general and perceptions of BESO's foot dragging, the comments occurred in the midst of tremendous collective effort aimed at rebuilding a regional education system that lay in ruins four years ago. It was not unusual, for example, to find regional education officials hard at work in their offices throughout the weekends. A host of Tigray's corps of education professionals were either directly involved in "The Struggle" as TPLF fighters or cadres, or were imprisoned or tortured by members of the Derg regime, often simply because they were Tigrayans. Furthermore, Tigrayans not only had endured extraordinary hardship, but they also were among the victors of the war. The TPLF helped destroy the Derg, and now Ethiopia has a Tigrayan president. Tigrayans are justly proud of their achievements, and often expect others to recognize what they have accomplished and the sacrifices they have had to endure. They began to rebuild their region four years ago, and many believe that decentralization began at that time. As a

consequence, Tigrayan education officials could be very explicit about their expectations. They sought active assistance and input; they were not perceived as foreign observers.

III. METHODOLOGIES

One of the prime reasons for writing this case study is that the methodology was both experimental and successful. This section will focus on the experiment itself. Although some of the successes and failings also will be described, many of the study's successful aspects will be considered in subsequent sections.

A. Guiding Principles

Much of the research-and-discussion process had to be developed as issues and concerns unfolded over the course of the study period. Afterward, of course, the process can be fashioned into a well-organized method. Yet, even in retrospect it remains clear that most of the essential principles listed below came together during the early stages of the endeavor. They served as guides when I had to make a series of major decisions as the research progressed. Sticking to the principles that were developed during the early stages of the research insured that the process retained an acceptable level of cohesion.

Here are brief descriptions of the guiding principles, together (where relevant) with examples of how principles were put into operation. Many of the principles overlap others. However, I felt drawing out and creating separate concepts for interrelated principles would provide the reader with the clearest means for understanding the process and how decisions were made.

"Research-and-Discussion" Was an Experiment

This methodology had never been tried before. Experimentation thus became a theme that informed the research methodology. Although this meant that it was difficult to predict the results of the process, it also meant that I was free to experiment by trying different methods to see what would occur, and especially, how people would respond to planned surprises.

One of the most successful experimentation examples came at the workshop held in Axum, the capital of Tigray's Central Zone. Having spent the first three workshops deliberating over how to improve the distribution of books and other educational materials to schools, workshop participants were prepared to discuss another problem that the system need to address. However, I decided to surprise workshop participants by asking them a more general question about education system operations: "How are decisions made?" The question drew strong reactions from regional department heads from Mekelle.

I wanted to experiment with a different, more general, discussion theme in Axum for two reasons. First, I knew that the final workshop would be long (three days) and would consider general themes at length. I wanted to learn first what the reaction to a more challenging and



general question would be at a small workshop prior to the much larger and more involved final workshop.

Second, I wanted to use the process to identify and recruit education officials who articulated their positions well. I then sought to ask them to write a "basic vision" of a decentralized education system, which could be presented and discussed at the final workshop.

Emphasize That Decentralization Has Many Definitions

One finding that the process quickly revealed is that leaders of an education system can maintain control of the decentralization process in large part if they can: (1) control the debate over how decentralization can be defined, and thus what the nature of specific reforms should be, and (2) control who can participate in defining decentralization.

By realizing quickly that this centralization of decision-making powers over how decentralization should be defined and carried out would preempt a larger discussion about this issue, reminders had to be inserted consistently into the workshop program that emphasized how decentralization is simply a concept that can lead to a variety of policy approaches. Keeping the debate over decentralization's definition open, and thus allowing people working at lower levels of the education system to enter the debate, became a critical aspect of the research team's role during workshops.

I followed this principle by keeping the debate on its definition open during workshop presentations and discussions. The primary way was to feature two different "Basic Visions" of a decentralized education system for Tigray region from system members at the final workshop. Another way was to review periodically findings on the various ways that decentralization had been defined by education system members.⁵

Emphasize Delegation as a Practical Benefit of Decentralization

One effective principle arose as a helpful selling point for decentralization. Decentralization reforms can be made to make people's jobs easier and more satisfying. The existing education system still operates under the influence of centralization, where most decisions—no matter how small—can be made only by the heads of bureau departments or zones. Decentralization reforms, I would frequently state, can be made to delegate the smaller decisions to lower-level personnel. This would allow the heads to focus on critical issues that demand their attention.

Delegating responsibility and authority to lower system levels is an effective way of dramatizing the operational difference between centralization and decentralization. Because this difference

⁵ Both of these methods will be discussed in detail in later sections. Consideration of the "Basic Visions" will arise later in this section and in the Findings section that follows. Consideration of how decentralization has been conceived will be detailed in the Findings section as well.

relates directly to upper-level concerns about maintaining control (and power) over the system, it must be made clear that the delegation process does not have to result in chaos.

Decentralize the Decentralization Process (Keep It Inclusive)

This principle contains an essential general theme that informs many of the other more specific principles in this list. It was very important that workshop participants from every geographic zone in Tigray and every system level were reminded constantly of the role they had to play in the research-and-discussion process. This process was designed to involve every system level in deliberations about the definition of decentralization and the shape of decentralization reforms. Without this principle, the researchers could be seen as advocating decentralization while carrying out a process that supported the desires and wishes of the “center” (in this case, the regional education bureau).

On the surface, this principle was fairly easy to put into operation. Members of every system level attended the workshops, and all were invited to contribute. Unfortunately, it was difficult to insure equal participation in workshop discussions. Representatives from the *woredas* and schools tended to shy away from participating, and it became clear that changing the habits of decades of centralization (where members of the center made decisions without consulting lower level bureaucrats) would take time. Nonetheless, *woreda* education officers, school directors, and teachers never before listened to how decisions were made, and what the education leaders argued over. At the same time, some of the views and concerns of participants from the schools and *woredas* could be inserted into the discussions, because a key element in the research findings presentations was the concerns and perspectives of school and *woreda* officials.

Maintain (Tactful) Communication with the Education Leaders

One of the study’s principal findings is that decentralization has been defined as regionalization by many education professionals in Tigray’s education system. This is particularly true for members of the regional education bureau in Mekelle.

Because of this, it was important to maintain good relations with the acting head, as well as with the most prominent department heads (such as Planning, Supervision, Finance & Administration, Media, and Building & Materials). Consistent communication became a key factor fueling the workshops’ success. The bureau heads had to know that the research team was not out to threaten or reduce their role as decision makers and system leaders. On the other hand, the communication had to remain balanced—I could not be seen as being “in the pocket” of the bureau heads. As a result, I tried to maintain a fine line between tactful and respectful communication with bureau heads and the distance that the research team needed to remain independent of the system’s leaders.

Always Control the Process (But Not the Information)

The distinction between *process* and *information* is critical. The research-and-dialogue process must be driven solely by the researchers themselves. Although it is important to consult regularly with system officials, it is also important to remind them that the process itself would remain in the hands of the researchers. Their ideas would be considered, but final decisions had to be kept independent of them. Maintaining control over the process is very important, because there is always a danger that workshop participants from the lower levels will perceive the researchers as somehow aligned with upper-level officials. Such a perception would undercut the researchers' ability to decentralize the decentralization process.

On the other hand, the products of this process (that is, the information or findings produced) should be distributed, at least in edited form, to interested members of the education system. Providing the information openly supports the research-and-discussion process in two significant ways. First, it supports our contention that good (and available) local information facilitates the process of good local decision making. Second, it supports the sense of openness in the decentralization process that the research is designed to promote. It should be remembered that those who control centralized education systems typically control information flows as well as decision-making authority.

Opening up the possibility of enlarging the level of participation requires that everyone receive the same information. This principle also made the distribution of the same final report to workshop participants at every system level essential.

Introduce a New Definition of the Purpose of an Education System

One way to influence the decentralization process quietly is to remind education officials repeatedly where principles guiding the research differ from those that are guiding the existing educational system.

The central difference was this: the researcher team evaluated the education system by focusing on what is going on in the schools (and what conditions are affecting the learning process directly). The purpose of emphasizing this difference was to counteract the clear tendency of the education system to function according to system, not school, priorities.

The Schools (and the Woredas) Are "On Top"

Another critical difference that separated the research approach from the education system's operations arose from the legacy of centralization. The system is organized according to an established hierarchy of power: the regional education bureau is at the top, followed by the zones and the *woredas*. The schools themselves are at the bottom of the education structure.

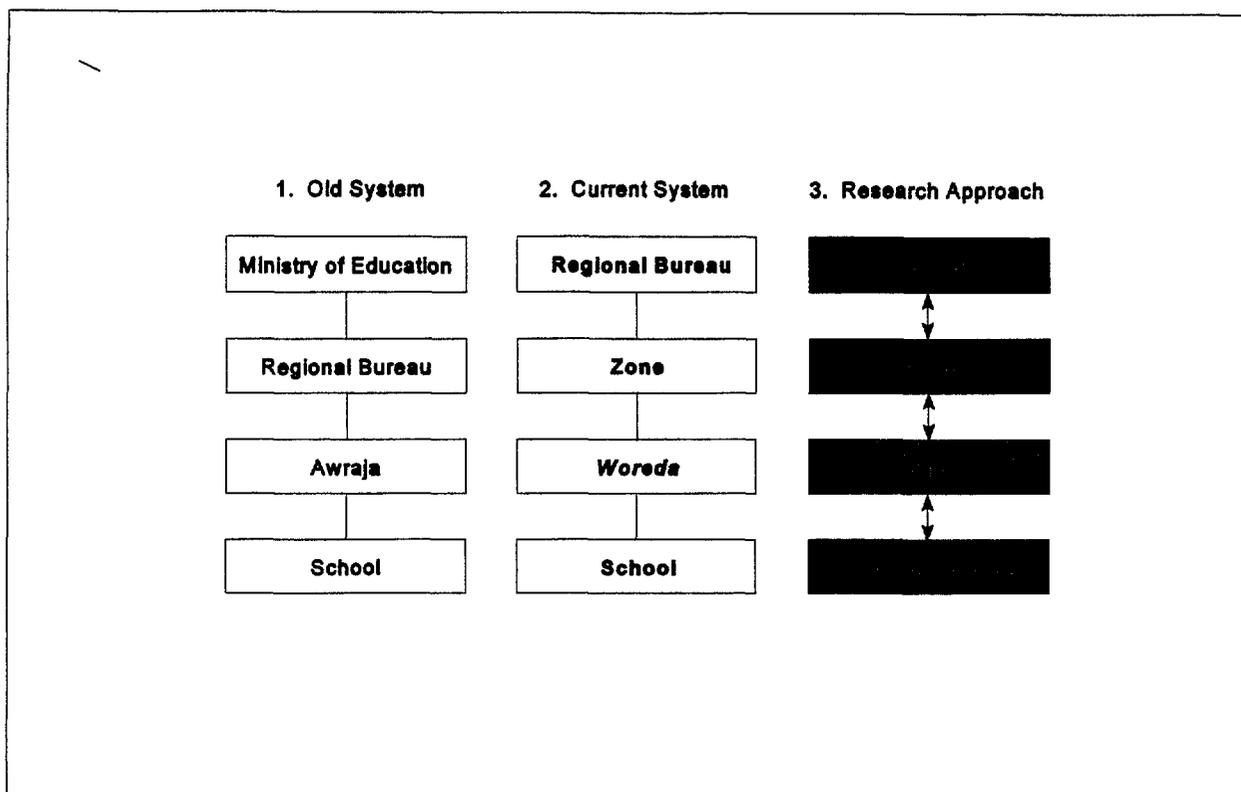
For the research approach, however, the hierarchy was reversed. The school was "on top," followed by the *woredas*, zones, and, at the bottom, the regional bureau. The main job of the entire education system, I argued, was to support the learning process. Putting the schools at the top of the structure was a mechanism for reminding the system of our research philosophy and approach, and how it differed from the way the existing system currently operated.

The *woreda* level was also highlighted in the research approach, for two reasons. First, the research was occurring while the regional heads were considering how to reform the *woredas*. *Woreda* education offices were going to assume many of the administrative responsibilities for the schools. Therefore, I felt it would be important to supply the system with good information about the *woredas'* current situation. Second, it became clear that a class division was present between members of the upper system levels (region and zone) and the two lower levels (*woreda* and school). As a consequence, it became evident that, for example, some regional heads felt uncomfortable dealing directly with *woreda* education heads. For their part, *woreda* education officials usually were timid in the presence of regional officials. The research also revealed that *woreda* officials lacked training for their jobs. I thus felt that attention had to be focused on the needs and situation of the *woredas*, especially because they were about to assume increased levels of responsibility.

In every workshop introduction, I mentioned how the research approach positioned the schools at the top of the system, followed by the *woredas* and the zones. The regional bureau rested at the bottom of the system.

Included in my explanations was a conscious decision not to isolate or offend members of the regional bureau. Accordingly, I always described how the bureau was not simply at the bottom of the system, but served instead as the foundation that supported the education system levels listed above it. I also had to remind education officials that reversing the structure was not to suggest that the system should be reversed, but that putting the school "on top" kept the emphasis of our research on the conditions and requirements of the schools. The chart in Figure 6 was used at workshops to illustrate how the research approach differed from the organization of the old (Derg) and current education systems.

Figure 6: Conceptualizing Decentralization: “The Four Boxes”



Emphasize the Researchers' Role as Facilitator and Advocate

The research was designed to facilitate the decentralization process in the Tigrayan education system. At the same time, researchers had to advocate for the needs of schools and those policies that directly affected the learning process. This was particularly important in Tigray because the situation of schools had been neglected so often, in part because educational quality and equity had not been emphasized adequately in the past.

I tried to facilitate workshop discussions in as fair and judicious a way as I could, to minimize the ability of powerful members of the system to dominate them. And all of the researchers had to advocate for the concerns and perspectives of school personnel and *woreda* education officers, because they were rarely able to assert themselves into workshop discussions.

Limit the Researchers' Role as Recommender

During workshop discussions, participants frequently asked researchers for their recommendations. I maintained that researchers could influence the course of discussion if their opinions entered directly. Instead, other indirect means, which will be discussed below, were used to guide and influence the decentralization process.

I had asked all members of the research team to refrain from offering their recommendations, so that they would not influence the decentralization process inappropriately. I felt that highlighting the significance of school problems during workshop presentations of the findings and controlling the workshop program were better means of suggesting our recommendations. As a result, I repeatedly informed workshop participants that the Study Team's recommendations would come at the end of the research endeavor, as part of the final report.

Highlight the Importance of Educational Quality and Equity

Interviews with system officials revealed a high degree of uncertainty about how the education system could improve the quality and equity of education in Tigray. On the other hand, system officials were certain about how to increase access to schools, and were working hard at building more schools and enlarging enrollments. As a result, I frequently raised the question of how the system's strong emphasis on access might affect efforts to improve educational quality and equity in Tigrayan schools. I also reminded workshop participants that BESO was far more interested in improving educational quality and equity than access.

Because of the system's focus on access, I chose textbook distribution as the first problem that workshop participants should address. This issue addressed the problems of system inefficiency, very low educational quality, and inequity (in terms of unequal distribution to schools). Using simple but direct discussion questions such as, "Why is it easier to get a cement bag to a school than a book?" I tried to get people to examine why solutions for delivering building materials to schools had succeeded, while textbook delivery retained a low priority. Most of the new schools I visited contained very few textbooks.

Maintain a Problem-solving Orientation

Conducting research on educational problems (particularly at the school level), and then presenting findings on critical problems at workshops was a critical element in facilitating the decentralization process. It was important because most workshop discussions were designed to consider how specific problems might be solved. All suggested solutions were offered within the framework of decentralization, making the problem-solving orientation critical to the decentralization process that the research was trying to advance.

Again, addressing the problem of textbook distribution enabled workshop participants to engage collectively with an issue that related to decentralization, solving a problem, and the low educational quality in the schools. The two solutions workshop participants proposed and debated contained solutions that effectively decentralized the way in which the problem was solved.

Keep It Simple

Simplicity was a critical element in the research process for three important reasons. First, creating a simple and direct set of questionnaires allowed the research team to analyze the data rapidly. This was essential, because the research team had to prepare workshop presentations of its findings within a very limited time frame.

Second, asking simple questions facilitated the presentation of simply worded, uncomplicated, and direct reports of data findings. It also facilitated the research team's ability to use basic concepts and simple descriptions of problems, so that every workshop participant could understand and use the data we provided, regardless of his or her educational background.

Finally, maintaining a simple methodology and mode of presentation supported our intention to simplify the ways in which solutions and system reforms were deliberated. Again, this focus kept discussions about problems, solutions, and reforms at a level that invited participation from officials from every system level.

Keep It Accessible

The products of the research—the workshop presentations and handouts and the final report—had to be presented with simplicity and directness, and be made available to education officials from every system level. This feature of the methodology supported our desire to decentralize the decentralization process.

Seek Local Input

The research process not only had to be accessible, it also had to be involving. Local education officials had to be asked for their views about solutions and reforms, and how the research process could better serve their concerns. Accordingly, the research methodology was kept flexible and was prepared, within reason, to incorporate alterations or additions that addressed the central concerns of local officials. This was a way to insure that local officials realized how the research process could serve their situation and concerns. The research could be successful only if most local officials felt that it was helpful.

One important example of local input in the research endeavor was my incorporation of a concern about our comparative methodology. One of the key categories for understanding educational problems related to equity was differences according to rural and urban location. However, zonal education officials in the Eastern and Western Zones argued that a more pertinent equity category was whether a school was located near a main road or far from one. Proximity to a main road, they contended, had a more significant effect on equity issues than whether a school was located in an urban or rural area—a school located in a rural area but near a road would not be put at a disadvantage. A school in a remote rural area, however, generally

suffered from comparatively severe shortages of educational materials, facilities, and even teachers.

As a consequence, I incorporated this equity category (schools located near a main road and far from a main road) into the Study Team's research instruments, so that we could test the significance of this new equity category.

Local Information Matters

As much as possible, the strategies for data analysis sought to present findings that revealed differences among localities. Merely presenting findings about the educational situation in Tigray as whole, without highlighting local differences, would conflict with our intention to facilitate the decentralization process. One of the Study Team's contentions was that good local information facilitates the process of making good local decisions—a key feature of most decentralized systems.

As a consequence, field research was conducted by zone for approximately one week per zone. Findings then would be compared by zone, to illuminate significant differences among them.

Analyze and Present Data Soon After It Is Collected

The research team conducted fieldwork one zone at a time. After gathering data in each one, the researchers immediately analyzed their data by comparing findings among zones. On two occasions, the researchers had to prepare preliminary findings overnight, because two of the workshops were held in the zonal capitals we were visiting.

The presentation of recently collected data at workshops consistently received a positive response. Education officials didn't have to wait for the final report before learning about what the research team had found. This factor was particularly critical in Tigray, because decisions were in the process of being made about the future of the *woredas* while the research team was in Tigray. In addition, presentation of our findings at workshops were designed to stimulate discussion about issues that directly affected educational quality and equity and system efficiency. The researchers delivered on their promise to supply Tigrayan educators with information about educational problems, which thus set the stage for workshop discussions on the solutions.

Make the Workshop Process Critical

The workshops drew a great deal of attention, and this alone constituted a significant accomplishment of the research process. The object was to position the workshops within the decentralization process, and thus open up the deliberations on reforms to include system-level members who had never been a part of education reforms before (*woreda* education officers and

school officials). The workshops thus became a focal element not only in the research process, but in the system reform process as well.

The Final Report Should Be Written for the Local Audience

This principle supported the importance of accessibility. The final report grew into an important document, in part because it contained the printed products of the workshops. Translating the final report and distributing it widely in Tigray would make it more difficult for subsequent deliberations on education reform to overlook the research findings and workshop accomplishments that the research-and-discussion process had achieved. Distribution of the final report thus became an important means of insuring that the research process would be able to advance the decentralization process and keep lower-level officials, if only in a limited way, a part of the decentralization process.

In addition, the final report was designed to contain a series of additional final reports in the annex section. Although I wrote the final report, and reviewed the Study Team’s findings within it, each analytical team—the Project Researcher, the Field Interviewer/Enumerator team that analyzed quality-based quantitative data, the Field Interviewer/Enumerator team that analyzed equity and access-based data, and the Project Expert from the Regional Education Bureau—all wrote final reports of their findings and recommendations, which were included in separate annexes. The final report thus also contained a substantial body of important current data on the status of the education system.

Figure 7 lists the 19 principles described above, and briefly cites how they were operationalized:

Figure 7: The 19 Guiding Principles and How They Were Operationalized

Guiding Principle	How They Were Operationalized
<i>“Research-and-discussion” was an experiment.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Experimented with methods as a tool for discovering what would be most effective for Tigray region’s system. ■ Inserted surprising topics into workshop discussions, because responses added to the research database and helped gauge how the system was adapting to prospects for change.
<i>Emphasize that decentralization has many definitions.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Included interview questions asking how the respondent defined/conceived of decentralization. ■ Used this information to keep debate open during workshop presentations and discussions.
<i>Emphasize delegation as a practical benefit of decentralization.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Tried to sell idea that one benefit of decentralization for education leaders was that delegating some responsibility and authority could make their jobs easier and more satisfying.

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Guiding Principle	How They Were Operationalized
<i>Decentralize the decentralization process (keep it inclusive).</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Workshop participants needed to include representatives from every geographic zone and every system level.
<i>Maintain (tactful) communication with the education leaders.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Success of workshops required consistent and cordial communication with education system leaders. ■ Needed to maintain a fine line between tactful communication and sufficient distance to maintain the independence of the research team.
<i>Always control the process (but not the information).</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The research-and-dialogue process must be driven solely by the researchers. ■ The products of the process (information or findings produced) were distributed in edited form to interested members of the education system.
<i>Introduce a new definition of the purpose of an education system.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Repeatedly reminded education officials where the principles of the research differed from those guiding the education system. ■ The central difference: the research team would focus research on activities & problems at schools to facilitate reorientation of system to school, and not system, priorities.
<i>The schools (and the woredas) are “on top.”</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Used “four boxes” to illustrate how the school (and the <i>woreda</i> education offices) were “on top” of the research team’s priorities, and that evaluating factors relating to the learning process at schools was the central purpose of the research.
<i>Emphasize the researchers’ role as facilitator and advocate.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Researchers had to facilitate workshop discussions as fairly and judiciously as possible, so that no one could dominate them. ■ Researchers had to advocate for consideration of the concerns of teachers, parents, school directors, and even <i>woreda</i> education officers at workshops because they were too shy or afraid to participate in workshop discussions.
<i>Limit the researchers’ role as recommender.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Setting forth researcher recommendations during workshops was avoided, because they could influence workshop discussions. ■ Recommendations appeared only in the final report.
<i>Highlight the importance of educational quality and equity.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Emphasized how the system’s strong accent on access would affect efforts to address problems of equity and access. ■ Chose to raise problem of poor textbook distribution to address issue directly related to quality, equity, and efficiency.
<i>Maintain a problem-solving orientation.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Use problem-oriented field research to focus workshop discussions on how to solve critical problems, in specific terms (book distribution) and in more general terms (basic vision of decentralization).

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Guiding Principle	How They Were Operationalized
<i>Keep it simple.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Simple and direct question sets facilitated rapid data analysis. ▪ Asking simple research questions facilitated preparation of simply worded, uncomplicated, and direct reports. This enabled even the lesser educated workshop participants to receive and understand our findings. ▪ Simple research presentations supported the ability of system members to simplify the way in which solutions and reforms were deliberated.
<i>Keep it accessible.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Keeping it simple helped keep the workshop presentations and research reports accessible to all participants. ▪ Within the constraints of time and budget, written reports and workshop “products” (those documents drawn up by workshop participants) were translated into the local language and distributed widely.
<i>Seek local input.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The research methodology was kept flexible, and was prepared, within reason, to incorporate alterations or additions that better addressed the central concerns of local officials.
<i>Local information matters.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Strategies of analysis depended on simple, comparative methodology—comparing findings among localities (zones).
<i>Analyze and present data soon after it is collected.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Using simplified comparative analytical strategies facilitated the ability to present preliminary research findings very soon after they were collected.
<i>Make the workshop process critical.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The research tried to position the sponsored workshops within the decentralization reform process by promoting their importance.
<i>The final report should be written for the local audience.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Translating and distributing the final report to education officials across Tigray hopefully made it more difficult to overlook the research findings and workshop accomplishments when subsequent reforms came under consideration.

B. Key Components

Getting Started

The research study began on July 6, 1995, and extended through the second week of October, a total of about 15 weeks. For the initial week in Ethiopia, Joseph DeStefano of AFR/ARTS/HHR

in USAID joined me in developing the central research ideas and initial research documents.⁶ This included a first trip to Mekelle, the capital of Tigray region.

This trip was intended to discuss the intended research objectives and approach⁷ with members of the Tigray Education Bureau. Our discussions allowed us to learn how the Bureau categorizes educational problems and priorities according to three concepts: access, quality, and equity. The subsequent development of the research design used these concepts as the central categories for organizing the qualitative data and orienting workshop discussions. Accordingly, DeStefano and I developed the following handout. I later distributed it to Study Team members and education officials.

Figure 8: Methodological Overview Handout (abridged):

METHODOLOGICAL OVERVIEW:

The Guiding Methodological Theme:
How can the education system emphasize its *support* of schools (instead of *administering* the schools)?

The Decentralization Study Team needs to answer two questions:

1. What do the schools need?

A. ACCESS

- i) Enrollment
 - *who enrolls and who does not enroll, what is the process of enrollment, and what is the relationship between the school and the community?*
- ii) Retention
 - *who repeats, who drops out, and why?*

⁶ Prior to arriving in Ethiopia, Dr. Elizabeth Leu of the Academy for Educational Development also made important contributions to the development of the research approach.

⁷ As described in "Section II: The Research Objective."

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B. QUALITY

i) Teachers

- *how much of the curriculum is being taught in the schools?*
- *what needs/concerns do the teachers have?*

ii) Materials

- *what materials are in the schools, how are they used, and how has it affected learning?*

iii) Curriculum ("Relevance")

- *what are the skills at the school support levels (Woreda education office, zonal education office, and the regional education bureau) that can support curriculum issues at the school level (that is, making sure teachers are introduced to and understand the curriculum [i.e., training]; materials to support curriculum issues; evaluation of its support)?*

C. EQUITY

what kind of differences are there between:

- boy and girl students?*
- students in rural and urban areas?*
- students who are very poor, and less poor?*

2. What is the existing administrative capacity?

What do they do?

How do they do it?

What resources does each level have?

With educational needs (in terms of access, quality, and equity) and system capacities set at the forefront of the field research strategy, the data had to be connected to the planned decentralization workshops. Again, the process had to be clear and straight-forward, so that education officials would grasp easily what the research team was planning to do. This issue was critical, because we expected education officials to understand their roles within the research strategy. At the workshops, invited participants from the education system would be asked to deliberate over specific solutions to pressing problems and general reform ideas that advanced the decentralization process. The chart in Figure 9 was developed to draw attention to how the field research would be connected to the workshops:

Figure 9: The Research Process Chart

Step I: Data	Step II: Analysis	Step III: Dialogue
1A. What do the schools need?	2A. What are the problems and priorities?	3A. How do we accomplish the priorities?
School Level: Access Equity Quality	Describe the biggest problems at schools, the major concerns, etc.	What can the schools do? What can the system do to support the schools?
1B. What are the existing administrative capacities: Responsibilities Activities Systems Roles, etc.	2B. Describe: What do they do? How do they do it? What resources does each level have?	3B. What is the basic vision of the system?
		3C. What steps do we take to get the basic vision?

The Decentralization Study Team would research the educational needs and system capacities in Tigray. The analysis would describe the educational problems and the activities and concerns of educators and officials, particularly those at “the bottom” of the system (schools and *woredas*). This information then would be presented in workshops to advance discussions about solutions to pressing problems that the research team had uncovered. Later, workshop discussions would consider what a “basic vision” of a decentralized system might look like and recommend steps education officials might take to help make the vision a reality.

Assembling the Study Team

In the second week of this research activity, the Project Researcher position had to be filled. It was decided that the Study Team would need a counterpart who was experienced in research and at workshops. This person also would need to speak Tigrinya, because he or she would be leading the workshop discussions in that language. It also would be useful if the counterpart was not linked directly to the education system. Subsequently, Ato Amare Asgedom of Addis Ababa University was hired.

The third week of research began by shifting all activities to Mekelle. An institutional arrangement was made with the Mekelle Business College to hire researchers for the project. We wanted to fill four positions: two field interviewers and two enumerators. One field interviewer

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and one enumerator would form one research team, which would carry out and then analyze questionnaire research in the field. Interviews were arranged quickly, and four candidates were hired.

In addition, the Regional Education Bureau seconded its member of their staff as a part-time Study Team member. This person participated in data collection, workshop presentation, and report writing activities and was asked to handle most of the logistical and financial arrangements for hosting the workshops. Following a brief but intensive training period, the new Study Team alternated periods of field research in one of the four geographical and administrative zones (first Eastern, followed by Western, Southern, and Central) with time in Mekelle to compile, analyze, and prepare presentations and reports of our findings. After deliberating over whom to appoint, the Management Committee of the Regional Education Bureau appointed the Bureau's Project Expert (Askale Gebre Egziabher). After hiring a typist and translator, the Decentralization Study Team was completely staffed.

Baseline Data

Initial interviews with regional education bureau heads strongly suggested that the system's chief decision makers had flawed or seriously incomplete information about the general shape and condition of basic education in Tigray region, and the actual activities of two key groups of administrators: school directors and *woreda* education officers. This situation was particularly significant for the latter group, because their roles in the education system were in the process of being enlarged. Guided by ideas outlined in Figures 8 and 9 above, the Project Researcher (Ato Amare Asgedom) helped me design research instruments that, in part, would begin to address the information gaps discovered in these initial discussions.

The bulk of the research data would be gathered through a series of questionnaires. These questionnaires gathered largely quantitative baseline data about the educational environment in schools and the concerns, relevant capacities and activities of parents, teachers, school directors, and *woreda* education officers. For example, parents were interviewed mainly about relevant issues related to access and equity, such as how many of their children enrolled in school and why, whether they preferred boys' or girls' access to school and why, and what they think is the utility of their children gaining an education. Teachers were questioned about their training background, living and work conditions, and topics such as inspections and teacher aids. Particular attention was paid to charting the activities of education administrators at "the bottom" of the education system (school directors and *woreda* education officers). There was also a series of questions about work expectations for *woreda* education officers, from school directors as well as their superiors at the zonal and regional levels. In addition, I inserted the same set of questions about perceptions of educational problems and solutions at the end of each questionnaire set so that they could be compared.

For different reasons, the Project Researcher and I drew up two additional questionnaires after the research process was already underway. The emphasis on trying to draw attention to the

problems of educational quality in Tigray region led us to decide that the appalling state of the system's pedagogical centers required special attention. Accordingly, we drew up a questionnaire to record the physical state of the centers. In addition, we devised a classroom observation form. This form could not be used until the final field research trip, as that was the only time the Study Team could conduct its research while school was actually in session. The observation form recorded the activities and material conditions of actual classrooms. The field interviewers and enumerators, all of whom were experienced teachers, also recorded their observations about the learning process in the classrooms.⁸

One significant methodological contribution came from zonal education officers. In both the Eastern and Western zones, the officers mentioned the unequal distribution of materials and a difference in teacher morale between accessible and fairly inaccessible schools. Accordingly, the research team incorporated a new category of comparison into the research: on-the-road vs. off-the-road schools. We altered our selection of schools to include differences between schools according to their proximity to a "main road," which we defined as an all-weather road that connected *woreda* capitals. Those within 30 minutes of a main road were considered "on-the-road" while those located beyond that limit—and usually at least three or four times as far—were considered "off-the-road." The research teams limited their off-road walks to two hours, as it was logistically impossible to walk to a school, complete all questionnaires, and return to the main road in a day if the schools were located beyond that walking distance.

Finally, it should be noted that all the interview questions were written in a straightforward way, so that they could be understood readily by those the Study Team interviewed, as well as translated clearly and accurately into the local language, Tigrinya. Interviews were carried out entirely in Tigrinya, although the questionnaires were written in both English and Tigrinya. The field interviewers and enumerators translated every questionnaire from Tigrinya into English after leaving the field. This insured that their information would be accessible to interested researchers, and officials from USAID, AED, and so forth.⁹

Description of Process and Special Projects

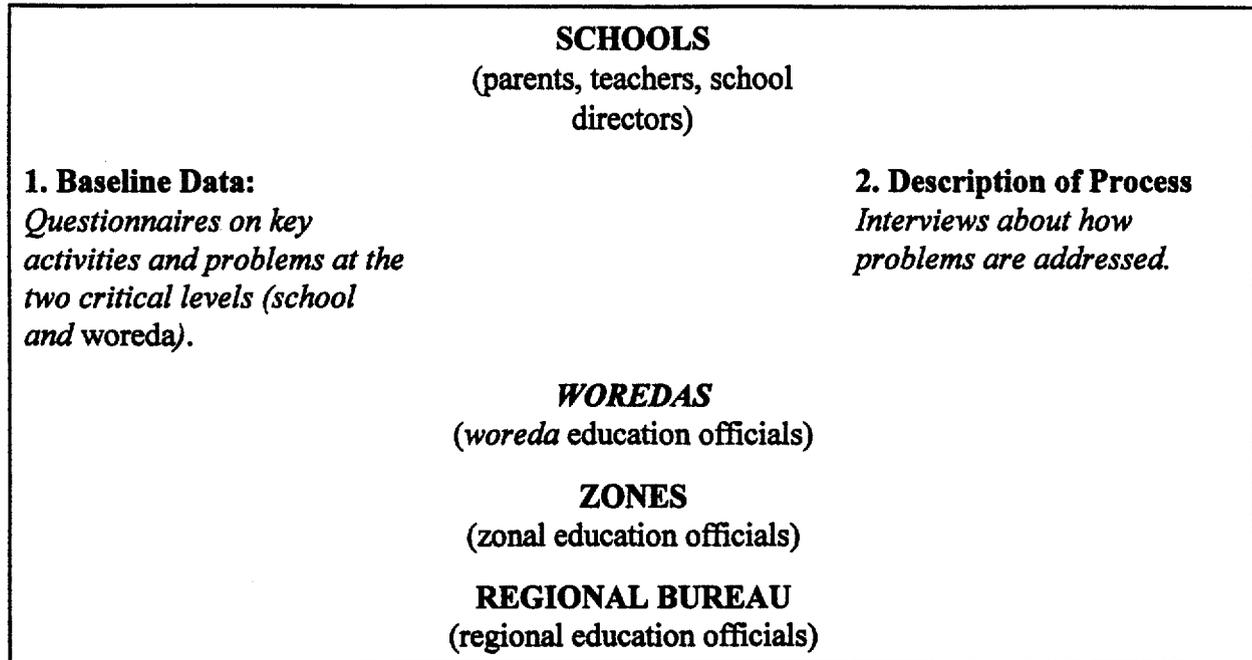
While the questionnaires were designed mainly to provide detailed baseline data, a research agenda that investigated the process by which officials made decisions about educational problems and recorded officials' perceptions of how the system levels interacted was configured in more general terms. I designed this agenda as a loosely structured set of questions that focused on interactions among all four system levels (the baseline research, on the other hand, gathered information at the school and *woreda* levels only). I drew this methodological strategy as a chart

⁸ Problems related to the timing of the research in connection to Tigray's school calendar are described in "Constraints."

⁹ All questionnaires that were developed can be found in Annex B.

(in simplified form), shown in Figure 10, and used it to help explain the research process to workshop participants:

Figure 10: Baseline Data and Description of Process



When I conducted interviews with education officials at the Regional Bureau, zonal, *woreda*, and school levels (as well as primary school students and their parents),¹⁰ I asked questions designed to generate a picture of how the system worked, and how officials working within the system thought it could be improved. Among the questions that I asked were:

- How do system officials learn about educational problems, and how are they put in priority order?
- How are education decisions made, and how are they carried out?
- What do officials at each level know about what officials at other system levels are doing?
- How do they communicate with the other levels?
- In their view, what issue/problem are they primarily concerned/worried about?
- What are the most important activities they perform, and how much of their time is spent on those activities?
- What do you think decentralization is (i.e., their definition of decentralization)?

¹⁰ Where appropriate, I used a translator during interview sessions.

To spur conversations about system processes as they relate to specific educational problems, I would ask the officials I interviewed to talk about their views about a specific problem (such as textbook distribution), such as:

- How is the problem currently being addressed?
- What does the official know about how his or her role in addressing the problem is supported by officials at other system levels?
- How could the problem be addressed better?

On every field research trip, I always started my research at the Zonal Education Office in the zone where the Study Team would be working that week. I conducted long interviews with education officers there, and, with the assistance of the Project Researcher and zonal officials, selected those *woredas* and schools that the Study Team would be visiting in the zone.¹¹ I then visited a series of schools and *woredas* in the zone, as well as the homes and fields of parents and their primary school-age children. During those weeks that the Study Team was working in their office in the Regional Education Bureau, I interviewed regional officials on a regular basis. Finally, I observed a series of classrooms during our final week of fieldwork because it was the only week that coincided with the school calendar.

While in the field, the Project Researcher served as the primary supervisor of the two field interviewer/enumerator teams, accompanying each team half the time, and conducting process-related interviews with *woreda* education officials as well. These interviews generally followed the line of questions outlined above. But they also were designed to gather a detailed picture of the perspectives and concerns of the WEOs. In addition, the Project Researcher carried out special research projects, the most significant of which arose in part because the Project Researcher, Ato Amare Asgedom, was an expert on media education. This was an aspect of the education process that was suffering from severe logistical, material, and curriculum-related problems. I thus worked with Ato Amare to design a research strategy on the state of radio education at the primary schools.

The Regional Education Bureau's Project Expert, who was seconded to the Study Team as a part-time researcher and coordinator of logistical arrangements for the workshops, always joined us in the field. The Project Expert assisted as a translator and carried out questionnaire-based and long interviews with education officials. But she also conducted a special research project of her own. We discovered that the system's pedagogical centers (PDCs), where all kinds of teaching aids were supposed to be stored (many of which were made by teachers and their students), were in a state of remarkable disrepair or neglect. I thought that if workshop participants received information about such a potentially significant support to the learning process from one of their colleagues, it would help draw attention to the problem. Accordingly, we devised questionnaires

¹¹ The selection process will be described in detail in the section "Putting It Together: The Research Process."

for the Project Expert to fill out at selected schools and a general set of questions that she could ask of education officials at all system levels.

Strategy for Data Analysis

The analytical strategy contained two primary objectives: to describe the current state of primary education in the region and compare relevant differences among education officials and geographic zones. These objectives broke down into the following five categories of analysis:

- **To produce accurate, substantial, and relevant baseline data on the current situation of primary education in Tigray region.** Descriptions of important information about issues such as enrollment ratios by gender, school location, and student-to-teacher categories, educational materials, and general school conditions.
- **To compare key findings among zones and by equity categories.** This was intended to reveal local differences that would help facilitate the decentralization process. Data that were compared ranged from key equity, quality, and access categories by zone (such as school enrollments by grade and gender, student-to-textbook ratios by school), and comparisons according to key equity categories (such as on-the-road vs. off-the-road schools).
- **To describe and contrast the perspectives of the main problems and concerns that parents and education officials held about their education system.** This included comparative analysis of perceptions of educational problems and solutions by zone and by region, as well as the various ways decentralization was defined.
- **To compare differences between how the system worked in principle and in reality.** The featured comparison addressed problems related to textbook distribution.
- **To provide in-depth descriptions and analysis about important topics.** Members of the Study Team contributed analyses about the educational material distribution process, classroom activities and the status of media education and pedagogical center programs.

The organizational framework for developing presentations and reports from the analysis was to highlight what appeared to be the most significant educational problems at the school level (such as the condition and availability of essential classroom materials and teaching methods employed) and within the education system (such as significant equity disparities and how responsibilities were divided by system level). Of particular interest were those problems that directly involved the two (such as the priority placed on, and the delivery system developed for, textbook distribution).

I divided the Study Team into the following “analytical teams.” One field interviewer/enumerator team analyzed quality-based quantitative data; the other field

interviewer/enumerator team analyzed equity and access-based data. The Project Expert drew up separate reports on general impressions and on the state of pedagogical centers. The Project Researcher wrote a series of reports, including overviews of the quantitative analysis, regular reports that compared how members of each system level prioritized problems by zone, a review of the activities of *woreda* education officers, and two reports on the state of media education. Every member of the research team contributed to final reports on his or her areas of analysis, which were included in separate annexes.

On two occasions, the teams had to prepare their comparative analyses (in preliminary terms) overnight, because we had scheduled workshops in the capitals of the zones where we had been conducting field research that week. Initiating analysis in the field—where electrical supplies were usually sporadic at best—necessitated the use of simple calculations and comparisons (done with calculators), which nevertheless revealed consistently significant results.

The use of calculators instead of computers to conduct our data analysis, and breaking down data into simple, easily quantifiable analytical categories was necessary because of the Study Team's generally limited computer skills (exempting my own), and because simple analytical strategies facilitated our ability to produce useful, accessible, and reliable data quickly.

C. Using Workshops as a Research Method

The central focus of the research methodology was the workshop. Field research, in large part, was intended to direct and then facilitate workshop discussions about how the system could best address pressing educational problems. These discussions, and the documents the workshop participants produced, generated the primary method for achieving the goal of the BESO Decentralization Study—to assist Tigrayans in establishing a decentralized management system that supports their educational objectives.

To achieve this goal, workshops had to be organized to enable the education system to “think out loud.” For this to occur, people working at every level of the system had to participate in the workshop discussions. The system's workers had to deliberate over how their system should become decentralized. The methodology was designed to present selected participants with details about problems that impeded the learning process in classrooms, so that workshop deliberations over the shape of decentralization would keep the learning process as the central rationale for reforming the education system.

The workshops provided two kinds of important data for the research endeavor. Workshop debates revealed divisions among various parties (such as system level, individual, and geographic region) over how education reforms should proceed, in specific and general terms. It also produced a series of documents or “outputs,” which were written either by particularly innovative or outspoken participants or drawn up as workshop agreements that participants had voted on. Together, they provided a concrete basis for continuing the process of decentralizing Tigray's education system.

Workshops and the Decentralization Specialist

Setting the stage for productive workshop discussions required that I micromanage the overall workshop process. As decentralization specialist, I was the head of the research team. I was also perceived as the sponsor of the decentralization workshops, and in this role I became, for a short time, an important figure in Tigray region's process of decentralizing the education system. Yet, to assume this role successfully, I had to persuade education leaders at the regional level to let unusually open discussions about policy take place at the workshops. This required me to invite their contributions and opinions about the workshops without allowing education leaders to control them. In short, my primary task was to win the education leaders' trust, and have them understand that I was out to assist, not impede or undermine, their efforts to reform their education system. The workshops needed to be seen as a resource for them, even if they could not control entirely what occurred there.¹²

Before the first workshop, and together with the Project Researcher, an experienced workshop leader, we devised a framework for the workshops. They always began with a review of the purpose of the research, and participants were reminded of the critical role they played in the research process. Presentations by members of the Study Team followed, which always included issues pertaining to baseline data analysis of issues of educational quality, access, and equity, and contained presentations on a variety of other subjects. An entire section (1.5–2 hours) was reserved for discussion and questions about the findings the Study Team had just presented. Then, after lunch, the workshop discussion topic was introduced. The first three workshops focused on the problem of book distribution until the participants had arrived at a decision about how they were going to reform this function. The fourth workshop floated the idea of a "Basic Vision" for the first time, and had a fairly contentious debate over the discussion question, "How are decisions made?" to gauge responses to the surprise subject. This allowed for more precise planning of the final, three-day workshop.

Two main rules guided workshop discussions. First, because the Project Researcher spoke Tigrinya and was an experienced workshop leader, he assumed the chair from the decentralization specialist and urged people to speak in the local language. This symbolically returned the workshop from the researchers to the participants, and facilitated the participation of everyone present (had the discussions been conducted in English, few participants from the lower levels would have felt a part of the proceedings). Second, those problems that were discussed also were not supposed to be personalized—the intention was to focus on solutions to problems and how decentralization can facilitate that process, and not allow divisive back-and-forth that would have ensued had personal critiques of work performance been permitted.

The following are some general methods that I employed in preparing for and carrying out all five decentralization workshops:

¹² As the findings will detail, education leaders employed several tactics for influencing workshop discussions.

- The workshops were organized to contain not just representatives from every level and geographic zone of the region. Participants also were invited if, when a researcher interviewed them, they were seen to have particularly interesting, unusual, or creative approaches to problems in their zone, *woreda*, or school. In addition, a comparatively large selection of participants was always invited from those zones we had just visited, in the interest of disseminating good local information to facilitate good local decision making.
- A budget had been developed to include coffee and sodas twice a day, as well as a lunch. These organized social events were designed to facilitate communication and extend workshop conversations throughout the day. They were also designed to insure that the workshop participants stayed together the entire time, to further the process that the workshops were designed to advance.
- I always had to make sure that the education leaders felt they were part of the process, even as I maintained control over it. Before each workshop, for example, Study Team members would help me draw up an agenda. I would distribute only a handful of copies, and would distribute them just before the workshops began. I employed this tactic to limit any preparations for directing workshop discussions that education leaders may have been planning. This also meant that I had to maintain control over the agenda once the workshops had begun. At the same time, pre-workshop negotiations were sometimes necessary. Although I retained the details of the workshop proceedings, I emphasized to education leaders in workshops that I didn't want them to be surprised, and thus alienated, by the workshop process.¹³ The Project Researcher always teamed with me at these meetings to strengthen his stature as the workshop discussion leader (I also relied on his advice and experience in making decisions).
- For each workshop presentation of findings—a summary report (as well as special reports) from the Project Researcher; one on quality and another on access and equity from the two field interviewer/enumerator teams; and a report of findings from the Project Expert—the researchers prepared one-page handouts. The Study Team selected data from their presentations that highlighted the most pressing educational problems revealed. The one-page limit was designed to alert education officials of significant findings without burdening them with too much information.
- I did not often issue formal reports at workshops. Instead, I would chair the initial presentation of findings session, and follow each presentation with commentary on why the findings were important. For these commentaries, as well as for introductions that I

¹³ Nevertheless, I decided to surprise them at the fourth workshop with a discussion topic that many regional bureau heads did not appreciate. Reasons for this will be discussed shortly.

gave at the beginning of each workshop discussion, I incorporated many of my most important findings into my presentations.

- The role of the Project Expert of the Regional Education Bureau, but also a member of the Study Team, had operational and symbolic importance. Besides handling most of the logistical details of managing a workshop (food, per diems, transportation, inviting selected participants, etc.), the Project Expert always presented a report of her findings at the workshop. Her role as a presenter was important, and not just because the reports contained important information. As an education system member who was openly describing various education-related problems, she enhanced the credibility of the research work because she stood before her peers identifying problems that she and her colleagues needed to address.
- As time went on, I became more and more comfortable asking discussion questions that were designed to invoke responses from discussants. Questions such as, "How can you learn to read a book if you don't have a book to read?" and "Why is it easier to get a bag of cement than a book to a school?" were designed to focus all participants and push the discussion ahead.
- To enhance closure of each workshop, demonstrate its significance, and produce concrete results from the participants themselves, the Project Researcher and I tried to get the workshop participants to vote on a written consensus at the end of nearly every session.

The Five Workshops

The following list contains specific methods that I employed to respond to specific circumstances. They are listed in chronological order, starting with the first workshop in Shire Indaselassie, capital of the Western Zone, and extending to the final, three-day event in Mekelle, capital of Tigray region:

The first workshop was the only one where the Regional Education Bureau was not represented (its annual "Gem-Gum" evaluations had been extended). It was also not coincidental that this was the only workshop where a consensus was arrived at quickly. The workshop agenda introduced the problem of textbook distribution to participants and asked them to consider how to address the problem more successfully.

This problem was chosen partly because distribution had been addressed successfully for building materials. An entirely different, and older, system was implemented for distributing educational materials. I distributed maps of Tigray region, and described how books were distributed according to the "four boxes" (region to zone to *woreda* to school), regardless of the location of the zone and the *woreda* or school. Indeed, in every zone, the region's trucks passed

many schools and *woredas* en route to delivering books to the zonal office. Should this procedure continue, I asked.¹⁴

The second workshop ended with an agreement to vote on two proposals that were presented by participants during the discussion period. I moved to delay the vote on these proposals for two reasons. First, the most popular proposal—the one that was initially advanced in the consensus from the first workshop—did not address adequately the transportation problem raised by its opponents, most of whom were regional department heads. Second, I thought that the process we had begun would benefit from getting workshop participants involved in documenting their views. Thus, I asked the most vigorous proponents of each proposal to write their ideas up, so that the research team could type and distribute copies to all participants at the subsequent workshop.

Sensing resentment of the workshop process from some of the Regional Bureau's heads, I also arranged a meeting with the acting head of the Bureau and the head in charge of educational material distribution. Joined by the Project Researcher, we met the day before the third workshop. The two heads got to air their concerns about the more popular material distribution proposal, which they both opposed. This allowed the Project Researcher and me to understand better the nature of their opposition, and remind them that we only sought viable changes (as they did).

At the third workshop, workshop participants gave their own presentations and answered questions for the first time. The authors of the two book distribution proposals joined the Project Researcher and me at the head table during the workshop and took turns trying to persuade their colleagues to support their proposals. Following these presentations and additional discussion, the participants voted on which proposal they preferred.

In the fourth workshop, I introduced a surprise into the workshop discussion. The participants were expecting me to pose another educational problem that they should seek a better solution for. Instead, I chose a discussion topic that they had not anticipated. The subject was, "How are decisions made?" and the open-ended nature of the subject meant that this was the only workshop that ended without deliberating over a specific decision.¹⁵

For the Final Workshop, a three-day affair, a detailed agenda was prepared (see Annex D), and the normal number of workshop participants was more than doubled (from 30–35 to 65–70).

The first day began with opening speeches from important education figures. Next, I introduced the research objective and approach to the participants. Final data reports from Study Team

¹⁴ Additional information about this choice can be found in "Highlight the Importance of Educational Quality and Equity," above.

¹⁵ This issue was discussed earlier under "Research-and-Discussion Was an Experiment."

members (including myself) were then presented. Following the question-and-answer session about these findings, a special presentation on the trade-offs contained in selecting different decentralization frameworks was given by Dr. James Williams from USAID's Africa Bureau. A general discussion on the pros and cons of three decentralization models ensued.

The second day opened with findings and discussion about "the bottom" of Tigray's education system: the schools and the *woredas*. Following this, a representative from the Management Committee gave a report on deliberations over how to reform the *woreda* education offices. I inserted this into the program agenda to include the education leaders in the final workshop deliberations. In addition, the subject matter was highly significant: the *woreda* reforms were going to affect the decentralization process directly, so the workshop should become a part of the Management Committee's deliberations as much as possible. The second day ended after the Management Committee representative answered participants' questions.

On the last day of the final workshop, the two "Basic Vision" documents were presented and vigorously defended during the question-and-answer session by their authors. Then there was a workshop session designed to arrive at a final resolution on the two "Basic Vision" documents. By the end of this process, the participants had taken over the proceedings and were determining what they were going to produce as a "product" of the workshop. This development was one of the main reasons the Final Workshop was later judged a success—by the end of the research process, the system was not only "thinking out loud" at workshops, it was also doing so on its own.

D. Constraints

There were several methodological constraints; among them was lack of computer skills by any member of the Study Team below the Decentralization Specialist. This fact hampered the ability of the research to analyze the data more comprehensively. Two others are related to the timing of the study.

The Rainy Season

One of the study's objectives was to include in the study those schools in the more remote areas of Tigray. The rainy season made that difficult to achieve, representing a significant constraint on the ability of the research team to collect extensive data from the most disadvantaged schools in the region.

This is especially true for the Humara area of the Western Zone. Located in the western-most corner of Tigray, the rainy season made the Tekeze River, which lies between Humara and the Zonal capital, Shire Indaselassie, impassable. And since it remains impassable for months every year, the Humara area may be the most seriously disadvantaged area in the regional education system.

The School Calendar

While this research endeavor started in July, school did not start its new year until mid-September. This imposed two types of constraints on the methodology. First, it made the collection of data from teachers more time consuming, because teachers were located in nearby towns and not near the schools. Second, the research methodology had to be modified to accommodate the timing of school activities. Questionnaires involving interviews with *woreda* education officials, school directors, teachers, and parents of primary school children were the focus of field research for our initial weeks in the Eastern, Western, and Southern Zones. It was only during our final period in the field, during the week of September 18–23 in the Central Zone, that the Study Team was able to observe school operations while they were in session. Thus, classroom observations only became a part of the research work during that fieldwork period.

It also should be noted, however, that there was one important asset to the timing of this study. Because colleges and universities generally have the same school break time as primary schools, the positions of Project Researcher, field interviewer (two), and enumerator (two) could be filled by a group of qualified (and highly motivated) college and university teachers, who were able to work on the Study Team because school was not in session.

In addition, the incorporation of workshops as a central feature of the research approach meant that significant time had to be invested in preparation for, and subsequent follow-up after, workshops. This meant that, as Decentralization Specialist and the head of the Study Team, I often wanted to spend more time directly supervising research activities and analyzing data than I was able to.¹⁶ In addition, because the final workshop was a large, three-day event, the Study Team had a limited amount of time to prepare for the final report and to complete an array of other activities related to completing the final workshop.

E. Putting It Together: The Research Process

The two field interviewer/enumerator teams that carried out the questionnaire research each went to two *woredas* in a zone and two schools per *woreda*. They were expected to complete questionnaires with two *woreda* education heads, four school directors, 16 teachers, and 48 parents, and conduct school observation sheets for each of the four schools visited. Taken together with the process-oriented (long interview) research carried out by the other members of the team, the Study Team interviewed a total of 329 parents, 115 teachers, 29 school directors, and education officials from 28 different *woredas* (more than one-third of the current number of

¹⁶ Contributions made by Dr. James Williams, Jr., AAAS Fellow with USAID/AFR/SD/HRD, near the end of the project, helped fill this gap. I remain grateful for his input, support, and general assistance.

woreda offices in Tigray). Then, in the last week of field research—the only research week that took place when school was in session—teaching was observed in 27 classrooms.

Woredas, and schools located within *woredas*, were chosen according to two objectives. First, there was a desire to visit schools in every geographic section of each zone. Second, the teams carrying out the baseline data research (with questionnaires) were assigned to test an analytical category that members of the zonal education offices had called to our attention consistently. In terms of equity, the rural/urban distinction, they argued, did not matter nearly as much as whether a school was located on a main road or not (main road being defined as an all-weather road that connected two *woreda* towns). Thus, we tried to select *woredas* from different geographic sections of each zone that contained schools that were located in urban areas, in rural areas, and, in other *woredas*. Rural schools were chosen if there was one located near a main road, and another located between one and two hours' walk from a main road (walking more than four hours per day was considered the outside limit, because the field researchers had to have enough time to carry out a series of interviews after they arrived at the schools). In order to cover all zonal areas, data was also gathered at Mekelle (urban) sub-zone.¹⁷

In support of the contention that good local information facilitates good local decision making, workshop handouts were developed by every team according to specific categories or topics (quality, equity, access, pedagogical centers, etc.). The handouts were limited to highlighting particularly illuminating analyses. And, because they were designed mainly to stimulate interest and focus their attention on specific issues, the statistical handouts were limited to one page per presentation.

The Project Researcher carried out extensive interviews with *woreda* education heads across three of the four zones, examined the problems of radio education in the Central Zone, and supervised the activities of the baseline data teams. The Regional Education Bureau representative assisted in carrying out baseline data, as well as developing a special research project on the state and problems of pedagogical centers in the Southern and Central Zones. And as the Decentralization Specialist, I visited geographical areas and *woredas* not visited by the other Study Team members, using a process-oriented method of selection. In the Eastern Zone, for example, I compared, in part, differences in activities that were conducted by *woreda* education officials in the *woreda* containing the most schools in the region (22), against another *woreda* containing one of the least (only two). Then, in the Western Zone, I interviewed five *woreda* heads who were located along the road to Sheraro, in the far northeastern corner of the region, to cover that geographic area of the zone and examine differences in activities and perspectives between *woreda* education offices with similar characteristics (all had two to three schools, and were located on a main road). I also was not in Tigray region for the fieldwork, and the accompanying analysis, for the Southern Zone. The Project Researcher supervised the research team's activities (admirably) during my two-week absence.

¹⁷ The list of *woredas* and schools visited by the baseline data teams can be found in Annex B.

Finally, because the research-and-discussion approach to decentralizing an education system had never been tried before, the Study Team's activities had to develop a rhythm for how to proceed, particularly when the process was still being created. Briefly, the rhythm developed into the following form. Preliminary research findings were presented regularly at organized workshops soon after their collection, in zonal capitals as well as in the regional capital, a critical feature of this research endeavor. Members of the education system could then consider, and debate over, the Study Team's findings. This laid the foundation for the guided workshop discussions that followed. Some of the invited workshop participants were also asked to prepare solutions to pressing problems or "Basic Visions" for a decentralized education system in Tigray. These were typed in both English and Tigrinya, circulated at workshop gatherings, and became the basis for passionate discussion. The final workshop, a three-day event that received national and regional press coverage, occurred in the 14th week of the research calendar.¹⁸ The final report was submitted in the final week of the research (week 15).

IV. FINDINGS

A. Tradition and Change: Four Key Themes

From field interviews and workshop discussions with members of Tigray's education system, several general themes emerged. Collectively, these themes revealed the logic of the system, which shapes how officials thought about decentralization and how they perceived educational problems and their solutions.

Often the system's logic seemed contradictory. The logic of making school reconstruction the paramount priority remained uncontested because most of the region's schools had been damaged or destroyed during the civil war. It was logical to Tigrayan educators that access should come first—they frequently mentioned how "our students" are exposed to sun, rain, wind, and dust at school. As one *woreda* education officer told me: "Once the schools are built, we can worry about quality and equity." At the same time, it seemed logical that the centralized way in which system tasks had long been carried out—making decisions at the center that were obeyed at the lower levels—should remain intact.

The following general themes examine how change is being accommodated by a system that remains tied to the past. Decentralization reforms are conceived as refinements of the existing, regionally centered structure, tying authority to the regional center and responsibility to the

¹⁸ Please refer to Annex C for more information. Note, however, that the schedule (which was developed both in the Gregorian as well as Ethiopian calendars) does NOT include the initial two weeks of the research endeavor. The schedule was designed for circulation to members of the Tigrayan education system, and only included those weeks when the study was based in their region. Thus, the twelfth week in the schedule was actually the fourteenth week of the entire research activity.

lower system levels. Access issues dominate the system's prioritization of problems while structural issues (social and educational) impede advances toward lasting solutions.

Evidence of these tendencies points to the conclusion that although change is making its way through the system, traditions that inform the system's behavior remain as barriers to dramatic reform. The workshop discussions only dramatized how challenges to the system's status quo met with strong resistance.

Conceptions of Decentralization

Regionalization dominates the decentralization agenda. The Regional Education Bureau has, in many ways, assumed the role of the former center, the Ministry of Education in Addis Ababa. The bureau dominates decision-making and personnel decisions, controls finances, and assigns responsibilities to system levels below it. At the same time, TPLF traditions allow for a measure of criticism and flow of information that was inconceivable under previous regimes. Regional education bureau heads contended that decentralization had already occurred and any further reforms should arise mainly to increase system efficiency.

The result is a gap between decentralization as an ideal and actual bureaucratic function. Veteran education professionals in Tigray worked within a centralized education system for most of their careers. Despite dramatic reforms that have been enacted in post-war Tigray, centralization constitutes the predominant model for everyday bureaucratic activity.

The influence of the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF) on the education system has been significant, but it has not significantly affected how tasks are achieved. Instead, it has influenced how the system evaluates itself. The TPLF tradition of the "Gem-Gum" meetings, where all are invited to express their critiques of community leaders, politicians, and heads of bureaucracies, has been incorporated as an evaluation method. For example, for more than a week during this research period, department heads from the Regional Bureau and the heads of the zonal education offices, were forced to weather frank criticisms of their work performance by their peers at the annual work "evaluations."

Despite the benefits of "Gem-Gum," it is not part of day-to-day bureaucratic operations. Thus, these two divergent traditions—centralized bureaucracies and "Gem-Gum"—are working to influence local perceptions of decentralization. From this context, three local perceptions of decentralization have emerged:

- Regionalization is a form of decentralization. This perception is affected by whether the policy-making "center" makes decisions in an open, well-informed fashion. A regional system, because it is closer to the schools and communities, can thus become decentralized. On the other hand, an education system that is based in the capital, because it is so far from local communities and schools, cannot.

- Decentralized systems are efficient. This issue entered interview discussions as a way to explain why building materials could reach rural communities relatively easily, but delivering books and other educational material distribution to schools was more difficult to achieve. In this context, the distribution system for building materials was thought to be efficient and thus “decentralized,” while the book distribution was inefficient because it was still “centralized.”
- TPLF ideas and traditions are guidelines for decentralization. This idea was raised indirectly often. TPLF traditions were seen to be successful and empowering of local communities. And because the TPLF opposed the former Derg government, and the Derg’s style of government was perceived as centralized, a TPLF-inspired model would be perceived as decentralized.

Locating Authority and Responsibility

Decision-making authority, even over relatively small concerns, is centered at the upper levels of the system (region and zone). This leaves administrators at the lower end of the system (*woreda* and school) with the task of “carrying out their responsibilities.”

At the final workshop I described how this division of labor promoted a “religion of education” for school and *woreda* officials. The primary method for a school or *woreda* to request assistance was to have *woreda* officials send their request to their immediate supervisor at the zonal level. Then they would “hope” that the requests are: (1) duly noted by their supervisor; (2) relayed by the zonal official to the proper authority at the regional level; (3) given a response from regional officials; (4) receive the answer the *woreda*/school was waiting for. This elaborate process could take months to complete, and sometimes responses were never received. Yet it was inappropriate for *woreda* or school officials to inquire about the status of their request. They could only wait and “hope” for a reply. As one *woreda* official related: “Our responsibility is very high, but our authority is very low.”

The region and the zones are overloaded with details. Appeals were made at workshops, and during conversations prior to workshops, to consider decentralization as a method not only to enhance system efficiency and effective responses to educational needs, but also to remove some of the authority from the desks of regional and zonal officers, as well. This could make their jobs easier and more enjoyable. In response, one Bureau official voiced a concern shared by many of his colleagues: that giving too much authority to the schools would mean that they would become too “free,” and thus difficult to “control.” The result, he said, would be “chaos,” which definitely had to be avoided.

Prioritizing Educational Problems

One of the most impressive achievements of the Tigrayan education system since the end of the war in 1991 has been its reconstruction of school facilities. The level of the system’s

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determination to continue this trend is equally remarkable: the five-year plan aims to more than double the current number of primary schools in Tigray, to nearly 1,200.

Although this effort is admirable, the impact of rapid growth in the number of schools, students, and teachers on educational quality and equity has not been assessed carefully. It is also apparent that quality and equity issues historically have been secondary concerns.

While Regional Education Bureau officials continued to consider access to be the most pressing educational problem in Tigray, our research revealed that parents and teachers had developed a different set of priorities. Teachers cited the shortage of books and teaching materials as the most pressing educational problem for them. Parents, on the other hand, usually professed an inability to set educational priorities. Their response seems to indicate that parents see their role simply as getting their children into schools, and that their generally limited level of school experience has left them with a limited knowledge of what occurs, or should occur, in school.

Barriers to Creating Solutions

Many regional heads are uncomfortable with the idea of dealing directly with *woreda* education officers. It strikes them as socially and functionally inappropriate. Regional heads were all well-educated and articulate members of the upper class, while *woreda* officials had generally attained a lower educational level and occupied a lower social rank. In their view, the region should deal only with the zones, the zones should then communicate with the *woredas*, and the *woredas* should deal directly with the schools. This rigid structure constitutes an enormous barrier to advancing the decentralization process beyond its existing regionalized form.

The existing approach to system operations might be called "seeing through boxes," and it helps explain why a *woreda* education officer told me: "I'm not sure how [the education system] works. I only understand that it works like a chain: region to zone, zone to *woreda*, *woreda* to school."

The following issues are related to, or arise from, this situation:

- Decentralization reforms have yet to affect school management significantly. Veteran school administrators described how their interactions with the education system are much the same now—*after* the overthrow of the Derg and the institution of post-war reforms—as before, when they worked under the Derg's centralized management system.
- There is a strong tendency to think about educational reform as a method for improving each system level. This approach supports the existing "four box" structure because interaction among system levels has a low priority.

B. Primary Education in Tigray

Four years into post-war reconstruction, in one of the world's poorest nations, it was not surprising to find difficult problems confronting the educational system of Tigray. Several problems were common across the region. For example, none of the teachers or *woreda* education officers in our sample had received any in-service training, and most Tigrayan primary students are forced to use stones as chairs and their knees as desks.

Yet our research also found a high degree of differentiation. Comparisons among zones indicated that the state of primary education in the Eastern Zone is particularly serious. The Eastern Zone had the highest gender inequity and drop-out rates and the worst textbook- and teacher-to-student ratios. A school's proximity to a main road could also have a significant impact on conditions.

This section describes the current state of primary education in Tigray region.

Access and Equity

The following discussion of data related to access and equity provides a picture of those attending primary school in Tigray region and helps to explain why many school-age children are not in school. The Study Team evaluated access by analyzing enrollment and drop-out ratios. We also analyzed differentiations according to gender and geographic location—two equity issues related to access.

The following five concepts are important to this and many subsequent discussions in this report. Here are their definitions:

Female participation—females as a percentage of total enrollment.

Main road—An all-weather road that connects *woreda* towns.

On-the-road schools—schools found within 3 km of a main road.

Off-the-road schools—schools found 3 or more km away from a main road.

Drop-out—students who leave school before the end of the academic year.

Enrollment Issues

Of the 30 schools in the research sample, the female participation rate descended from 50 percent for grade one to 36 and 42 percent for the two upper grades (five and six, respectively). Overall, the rate stood at 45 percent of total enrollment.

Table 1: Total Enrollment in the Four Zones of Tigray and the Makalle Sub-zone

Grade Level	Female	Male	Total	Percentage	
				Female	Male
1	3,681	3,661	7,342	50	50
2	2,531	2,844	5,375	47	53
3	2,380	2,903	5,283	45	55
4	1,988	2,958	4,946	40	60
5	707	1,281	1,988	36	64
6	543	756	1,299	42	58
TOTAL	11,830	14,403	26,233	45	55

While Table 1 indicates that Tigrayan boys tend to receive more years of primary education than Tigrayan girls, comparisons by geographic zone tell a different story. Although the steady decline in the female participation rate by grade remained constant in all zones, comparisons among zones (tables 2–6) demonstrate how the number of girls in a classroom varied widely. In the Eastern Zone grade one classrooms were 40 percent female. In the Western Zone they were the majority: 55 percent. In the Southern Zone girls formed half of grade one’s enrollment, but dropped to only 29 percent of grade six’s enrollment. In the Central Zone surprisingly, our findings indicate that more boys left school just before graduation (between grades five and six) than girls. And Table 6 shows that more girls were being educated than boys in the region’s capital city.

Table 2: Enrollment in Five Observed Schools, 1994-95 School Year, Eastern Zone

Grade Level	Female	Male	Total	Percentage	
				Female	Male
1	642	945	1,587	40	60
2	434	696	1,130	38	62
3	369	622	991	37	63
4	270	666	936	29	71
5	67	166	233	29	71
6	38	84	122	31	69
TOTAL	1,820	3,179	4,999	36	64

Table 3: Enrollment in Eight Observed Schools, 1994-95 School Year, Western Zone

Grade Level	Female	Male	Total	Percentage	
				Female	Male
1	1,523	1,257	2,780	55	45
2	1,101	1,000	2,101	52	48
3	921	1,049	1,970	47	53
4	765	1,032	1,797	43	57
5	249	458	707	35	65
6	228	313	541	42	58
TOTAL	4,787	5,109	9,896	48	52

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Table 4: Enrollment in Eight Observed Schools, 1994-95 School Year, Southern Zone

Grade Level	Female	Male	Total	Percentage	
				Female	Male
1	503	509	1,012	50	50
2	406	447	853	48	52
3	312	338	650	48	52
4	215	262	477	45	55
5	96	148	244	39	61
6	39	97	136	29	71
TOTAL	1,571	1,801	3,372	47	53

Table 5: Enrollment in Seven Observed Schools, 1994-95 School Year, Central Zone

Grade Level	Female	Male	Total	Percentage	
				Female	Male
1	899	849	1,748	51	49
2	496	601	1,097	45	55
3	689	785	1,474	47	53
4	572	887	1,459	39	61
5	161	383	544	30	70
6	125	162	287	44	56
TOTAL	2,942	3,667	6,609	45	55

Table 6: Enrollment in Two Observed Schools, 1994–95 School Year, Mekelle Sub-zone

Grade Level	Female	Male	Total	Percentage	
				Female	Male
1	114	101	215	53	47
2	94	100	194	48	52
3	89	109	198	45	55
4	166	111	277	60	40
5	134	126	260	52	48
6	113	100	213	53	47
TOTAL	710	647	1,357	52	48

Why would the enrollment ratios of girls and boys vary so dramatically according to geographic zone? Why, for example, would so many more parents in the Western Zone value education for their daughters than those in the Eastern Zone? Table 7 suggests that there is a negative correlation between enrollment ratios (that is, the percentage of primary school-age children who attend school) and female participation. In other words, as the percentage of eligible children enrolled in school increases, female participation decreases. This may indicate that as education becomes widely available, parents believe that it is more economically and/or socially worthwhile to have their sons educated. Thus, as the regional bureau expands access to primary education, it may well result in a decline in the female participation rate.

Table 7: Enrollment Ratios and Female Participation (Adopted from the *Five-Year Educational Plan of Tigray*)

Zone	Enrollment Ratio (%)	Female Participation (%)
Eastern	72.9	37.5
Central	55.1	41.8
Western	35.4	44.7
Southern	29.1	45.0

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Drop-out Issues

Table 8 again demonstrates how statistics about the entire region differ greatly when statistics between zones are compared. Although the drop-out rate for Tigray region is equal for boys and girls (13 percent), the differences between zones are dramatic. The female drop-out rate is nearly twice that of males in the Eastern Zone, while the other zones show a fairly even distribution.

Table 8: Drop-out Percentages by Zone and Sex

Zone	Percentage of Drop-out		
	Female	Male	Aggregate
Eastern	19	10	19
Western	16	15	15
Southern	8	9	8
Central	12	10	11
Makalle	3	2	3
AGGREGATE	13	13	13

The above statistics support our contention that the Eastern Zone has by far the most serious gender inequity problem in Tigray. Even though it has the highest percentage of eligible students in primary school, the female drop-out and participation rates are the lowest. At the other end of the spectrum is the Western Zone, where gender inequity is not a serious problem.

Further research would have to be conducted to explain fully the variation among zones; however, it is possible to speculate on reasons for the variation. The Western Zone constitutes the most remote section of Tigray. Transportation between Shire Indasselassie, the zonal capital, and Humara, the largest town in the western part of the zone, is always difficult. In most years Humara is cut off from the capital for months at a time. The area is economically underdeveloped, and health facilities are unusually poor. The Eastern Zone, on the other hand, has comparatively good roads. Its capital, Adigrat, is situated on a major trade road between Addis Ababa and Mekelle to the south and Asmara, the capital of Eritrea, to the north. Post-war economic investment in the Adigrat area has created burgeoning growth. It is thus probable that parents want to send their sons to school because an education may allow them to find work in the expanding local economy.

Another reason may help explain the differences in female participation between Tigray's Eastern and Western zones. "The [TPLF] Struggle" started in the Western Zone, whose residents suffered through years of warfare between the TPLF and the Derg on their land. But the extended presence of the TPLF also meant that many people participated in TPLF programs, such as the women's societies and schools that used the "Struggle" curriculum. They also saw how women fought alongside men in battle and advanced in the TPLF's military and political systems. It is probable that more parents in the Western Zone have set a high value on education for their daughters than parents in the Eastern Zone.

Differences between the Eastern and Western zones are also significant for drop-out rates in on-the-road vs. off-the-road schools (Table 9). The drop-out rate is higher in off-the-road schools by a significant margin in the Eastern Zone. The difference in rates is even higher in the Central Zone, where the drop-out rate is nearly three times higher in off-the-road schools. Statistics for the Southern Zone indicate that the location of a primary school does not affect the student drop-out rate. Yet the Western Zone is the only geographic area in Tigray where the drop-out rate is higher at schools located near a main road. Further study is needed to understand why the Western Zone differs from the regional average (aggregate).

Table 9: Drop-out in On-the-road and Off-the-road Schools (%)

Zone	Drop-out Percentage	
	Off-the-road schools	On-the-road schools
Eastern	22	14
Central	17	6
Southern	8	9
Western	16	19
AGGREGATE	17	10

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What causes Tigrayan students to drop out of primary school? Parents in different zones tend to cite different reasons:

Table 10: Ranking of Reasons for Drop-outs by Zones

REASONS	Eastern	Central	Western	Southern
Economic and Household Problems	2	2	1	1
Out-migration and Daily Labor	1	1	2	3
Marriage	3	3	4	2

(N.B. In the Western Zone, health problems are ranked third.)

Table 10 shows that more parents in the Central and Eastern zones mentioned out-migration, usually to Eritrea, and daily laboring as the main reason why their children had to leave school. In these two densely populated zones, cash is needed for the household economy. Parents in the more lightly populated Western and Southern zones, where economic opportunities are comparatively limited, more often need their children to leave school and work for their families full-time.

Quality and Equity

The Study Team measured educational quality in largely material terms.¹⁹ We designed our findings to describe the general state of educational materials in Tigray's primary schools and to determine distribution differences among schools and zones. Comparisons between zones and on-the-road vs. off-the-road schools became the primary means to analyze equity issues.

Educational Materials

School textbooks were the featured item of analysis. We chose this item partly out of necessity (it is practically the only educational material that one could expect to find at every primary

¹⁹ It should be recalled that the Study Team had to develop a research methodology that accommodated our most significant methodological constraint: we conducted most of our research when school was not in session. As a result, we measured aspects of educational quality that facilitate learning throughout the research period, and examined those that take place in classrooms under the category of classroom observation. Findings arising from our only week of research during the school year are described in "The Classroom Environment."

school), and partly because focusing on Tigray's textbook shortage provided a stark contrast to the system's drive to enlarge access rapidly.

The Study Team found a shortage of textbooks throughout the region (Table 11). The average textbook-to-student ratio in the observed Tigrayan schools was 1:2. Yet the differences among zones and grades were also significant. Similar to findings described under "Access and Equity" above, the situation in the Eastern Zone differed greatly from the other zones. The aggregate textbook-to-student ratio (1:5) was nearly twice the zone with the second-worst ranking (Mekelle, with a 1:3 ratio).

The Study Team also found that the textbook-to-student ratios for grades one and two were far better than the ratios for the upper grades. Again, the Eastern Zone's situation is the most serious: we found *no textbooks at all* for grades four through six in the Eastern Zone primary schools we visited. In addition, our findings challenged the assumption that urban schools are better equipped than rural schools. The Mekelle sub-zone, whose schools are located in the same city as the Regional Education Bureau, has a textbook-to-student ratio (1:3) that is significantly worse than the ratio for schools in the Western Zone (2:3), which is the most geographically remote area in Tigray.²⁰

Table 11: Textbook-to-student Ratio in Selected Schools

Grades/zones	1	2	3	4	5	6	Aggregate ratio by zone
Eastern	1:3	1:3	1:5	0	0	0	1:5
Western	3:4	1:1	1:2	1:3	1:4	1:4	2:3
Southern	7:6	4:5	3:10	1:10	1:5	2:7	2:3
Central	5:6	1:2	9:29	1:5	1:6	1:4	3:7
Mekelle	6:13	4:9	1:3	6:25	4:7	2:9	1:3
Aggregate ratio by grade level	9:10	3:7	1:3	1:5	1:4	1:4	1:2

²⁰ While this finding is certainly significant, we were not able to visit the remotest section of the entire region (the Humara area of the Western Zone, located west of the Tekeze River). Indications are that the material conditions of the schools in that area may be the worst in the entire region.

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Table 12 demonstrates that within each zone textbooks are unevenly distributed.

Table 12: Average, Highest, and Lowest Textbook-student Ratios Observed within Each Zone

Zone	School Average	Highest School Ratio	Lowest School Ratio
Eastern	1:5	1:3	7:100
Southern	2:3	10:11	7:25
Western	2:3	4:3	0
Central	3:7	14:15	3:16
Mekelle	1:3	1:2	2:11

Tables 13 and 14 indicate that the textbook-to-student ratio is greater in on-the-road schools than the off-the-road schools in Tigray. The on-the-road average is substantially less than 1:2 (8:13), while the off-the-road average is more than 1:2 (3:7).

Given the remoteness of many off-the-road schools, this differentiation may not appear unusually dire. Examining textbook distribution by grade level, however, shows a different picture. While some textbooks are being delivered to remote schools, they are largely for students in grades one through three, and particularly for grade one. Nearly half of the off-the-road schools surveyed (five of 11) have no textbooks at all beyond grade three. Another school has one textbook for 102 students in grade four, and the best ratio for grade four is only 1:10. The textbook situation for on-the-road schools is comparatively better for the upper grades, with the exception of Emba Danso, which has one student textbook for the entire school, and another, Dinglet, which has no student textbooks for grades two through six.

Table 13: Distribution of Textbooks in On-the-road Schools²¹

Grades Schools	1	2	3	4	5	6	Aggregate Ratio
Adi Shihu	5:3	3:2	1:3	1:8	4:15	1:3	10:11
Mai-Mekden	1:2	1:3	1:5	1:13	0	2:15	7:25
Tesfay Ferede	8:9	3:5	1:4	3:16	1:8	0	4:9
Fana Weyene	1:1	3:5	3:5	1:20	---	---	5:8
Adi-Abeto	7:9	3:5	1:4	2:15	3:8	7:30	3:7
Mai-Gua	1:1	25:17	1:2	1:6	1:7	---	14:15
Mai Tsebri	1:2	2:3	11:50	1:5	---	---	2:5
Emba Danso	1:100	0	0	0	0	0	0
Endaba Guna	1:1	2:3	1:2	0	2:3	1:3	1:2
Selekleka	5:2	1:1	1:2	1:3	1:2	3:8	4:3
Dinglet	1:7	1:7	0	0	0	0	7:100
Aggregate Ratio	15:14	1:1	3:8	1:5	2:7	1:5	8:13

²¹ Please note that the “---” symbol listed for grades five and six in some schools indicates that school does not offer classes for those grades.

Table 14: Distribution of Textbooks in Off-the-road Schools

Grades Schools	1	2	3	4	5	6	Aggregate Ratio
Debri	1:1	1:3	7:15	1:10	---	---	14:25
Egri Albe	3:5	5:13	0	0	---	---	3:10
Adi-Arbaete	3:2	2:5	1:3	1:18	---	---	27:50
Aebo	7:10	2:5	1:22	---	---	---	1:2
Mai Daero	10:9	5:4	3:13	1:15	5:33	2:15	5:8
Mai Misham	7:9	1:5	1:56	1:102	---	---	3:16
Mahbere Degue	8:15	1:2	1:2	3:17	2:45	5:14	4:11
Adi Abezut	1:1	1:2	3:20	0	0	---	2:5
Wukar Duba	2:3	1:3	1:6	0	---	---	1:2
Mai-Kado	1:2	1:3	1:6	0	0	0	1:3
Adi-Beles	1:2	1:2	1:4	0	0	0	1:3
Aggregate Ratio	4:5	5:9	2:7	1:10	3:50	8:7	3:7

When other supplementary educational materials can be found at schools, they are usually in poor condition. Most schools have very few teachers' guides, and some have none. Very few schools have supplementary reading materials for students. And a survey in the Central and Southern zones of school pedagogical centers (SPCs), where teachers store teaching aids that usually made with available materials, found that they are severely underfunded. The average annual budget allotted by those surveyed schools that have teaching aids was \$82.54 (with a range between \$23.80 and \$238).

Supplementary primary school courses continue to be developed at the Regional Education Bureau in Mekelle and broadcast across Tigray. The programs that are developed for the major curriculum subjects are designed to complement teacher activities in school classrooms.

Radio Education

Many of the myriad problems that afflict Tigray's media education efforts emanate in large part from how the existing regional curriculum system has developed. Media Educational Services designs educational curriculums for its radio programs, but it is not part of the Bureau's Curriculum Department. Instead, it is in the same Bureau division that is responsible for school construction and procurement and distribution of educational materials. Bureau officials explained that media education belongs there because the radios themselves are educational materials.

The consequences of this bureaucratic arrangement serve as a disincentive for teachers to use the radio education supplements even when they are available. Even though the two units are located near each other in Mekelle, coordination between them is extremely poor. Few teachers in Tigray ever receive teachers' guides or a schedule for when the relevant radio programs are broadcast. Students and teachers find that, because the radio curriculum differs from their classroom curriculums, the radio programs often confuse students. In addition, the English language broadcasts are difficult for students to understand. As a result, our surveys found that only 52 percent of those teachers with access to radios bothered to use them.

Although Media Education Services has a staff of more than 30 professionals and access to the recently improved radio transmitter, Table 15 shows that only half of the primary schools surveyed have even one radio at their disposal. Once again, results from the Eastern Zone stand out, because none of the schools the Study Team visited had any radios at all. At the other end of the spectrum, 90 percent of Western Zone schools were equipped with radios.

Table 15: Availability of Radios in the Observed Schools

Zone	Number of schools visited	Schools with radios	Percent of schools with radios
Eastern	6	0	0
Southern	8	1	12.5
Western	10	9	90
Central	8	6	75
Aggregate	32	16	50

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Teaching Issues

In the Tigrayan education system teachers are evaluated in three ways. Every teacher prepares yearly, weekly, and daily lesson plans, all of which are supposed to be checked by school directors. These lesson plans are usually developed with great care and can be remarkably detailed, but the Study Team found that teachers rarely refer to them in class. The primary purpose of lesson plans seems to be bureaucratic: they satisfy system requirements.

All three system levels above the school—region, zone, and *woreda*—conduct school inspections, but our research suggests that they are poorly coordinated. They place a high value on the quality of lesson plans, despite the fact that teachers do not often refer to them. The regional inspection division may visit schools in a particular zone or *woreda* but may not send their report to the corresponding official. On average, we found that teachers are inspected three times a year (see Table 16).

Table 16: Average Number of Classroom Inspections per Year (1991-92–1994-95)

Name of zone	Average number of inspections/year
Eastern Zone	2
Western Zone	2
Southern Zone	3
Makalle Sub-zone	4
Central Zone	2
Aggregate	3

The most consistent feedback that teachers receive is from their students. Students are supposed to evaluate teachers once a week. Homeroom teachers also evaluate students every week. In addition, teachers meet as a group each month to discuss the students', and their own, recommendations. Directors regularly prepare performance evaluations of teachers, using students' evaluations, teachers' comments, and the results of inspection visits.

The Classroom Environment

This section will describe some of the conditions that impede or contribute to the learning process in Tigray's primary school classrooms.

Physical Conditions

In addition to the generally severe shortage of educational materials in school classrooms, the physical state of classrooms is an obstacle to learning. *Das* shelters are commonplace across the region. Even schools with classrooms made with permanent materials (cement walls, metal roofs) usually have other classrooms made in the *das* style (walls and roofs made from tree branches). Some classes continue to take place without any shelter whatsoever.

Most Tigrayan primary students sit on small stones. Many new classrooms lack desks and chairs; fewer still have doors or windows. The following excerpt, taken from the *Final Report on Educational Quality* (written by Study Team members Kinfe Abraha and Fesseha Abadi), provides a compelling description of conditions that confront Tigrayan students:

Students studying in *das* shelters and sitting on stones are likely to suffer from wind, dust, rain, and sun. Some teachers explained that students studying in *das* perform less well than students in regular classrooms.

Snakes are the probably the greatest danger to students in *das* classrooms. Teachers told us that disturbances were caused by snakes that students found creeping around their stone seats.

Moreover, a great number of elementary school buildings in Tigray do not have enough desks and chairs and tables for students. Dingleton Elementary School (Eastern Zone), for instance, has only 15 chairs and desks in each of its classes, each of which has 80–90 students. In addition, many of the benches, chairs, and tables that do exist are too old, broken, and rough to be useful for sitting or writing.

Most of the chalkboards we observed were rough, broken, old, small, and corrugated, with no level surfaces. It is neither easy for the teacher to write on the such chalkboards nor simple for students to copy from them. Many chalkboards are not hung on the walls. In Adi-Beles Elementary School (Eastern Zone), for example, chalkboards are placed on platforms built by students. Such chalkboards pose problems for both teachers and students as the chalkboards move when a teacher writes on them. Finally, there were an insufficient number of chalkboards, particularly in the Central Zone.

Teachers and Students

Interviews with 97 teachers revealed a series of problems that affect the quality of primary education. Although 87 percent of the teachers were graduates of teacher training institutes (TTIs), none had received any in-service training since graduation. Forty-seven percent speak all three languages of instruction at primary schools (Tigrinya, Amharic, and English), but more than a third of those who can barely communicate in English are English teachers.

The Study Team found that, on average, teachers are responsible for three subjects and 25 40-minute periods a week. Similar to our findings about textbook distribution, our statistics indicate that teachers are not distributed among zones and schools according to enrollment. And like many educational measures listed above, the Eastern Zone had the worst average teacher-student ratios: 1:68. Classrooms in the Western, Central and Southern zones all averaged 1:50.

Table 17: Observed Teacher-to-Student Ratios in the Different Zones of Tigray

Zone	Average Ratio	Highest Ratio	Lowest Ratio	High:Low
Central	1:50	1:60	1:27	2:2
Southern	1:50	1:73	1:26	2:8
Western	1:50	1:82	1:27	3:0
Eastern	1:68	1:74	1:52	1:4
High:Low	1:4	1:4	2:0	2:1

Class sizes ranged from 10 to 165. Although, the largest class was in the Eastern Zone, many classrooms across the region had more than 100 students in a class.

Tigrayan primary school students import a variety of economically related problems from their homes that affect their ability to learn. Students may miss substantial periods of the school year because parents lack sufficient funds to pay registration fees, and many students arrive at school without the required stationery supplies. Most students remain at school all day without food, or, frequently, water: Table 18 reveals that 62 percent of the surveyed schools lacked water and latrine facilities. Less than 10 percent had both.

Table 18: Presence and Absence of Water and Latrine in Observed Schools

Total number of schools surveyed	Schools with both latrine and water	Schools with water but without latrine	Schools with latrine but without water	Schools without either latrine or water
32	9.4%	9.4%	19.2%	62.0%

Another impediment to the students' ability to learn is the distances that students must walk, usually across rugged terrain, to get to school. Because rural students travel, on average, 5.25 kilometers between their homes and school, many arrive at school tired. Some students walk up to 25 miles (40 km) a day.

Table 19: Maximum and Average Distances Traveled by Rural Students from Home to School (One Way)

Zone	Distance traveled by students	
	Maximum	Average
Eastern	20 km	6 km
Southern	20 km	5 km
Western	25 km	4 km
Central	25 km	6 km
Average	5.25 km	

Classrooms

The Study Team's classroom observations included the following:

- The central classroom activity in every classroom visited is this: the teacher writes on the chalkboard while students copy their writings into exercise books.
- It may be assumed that teachers spend so much time copying from textbooks onto the board because they rarely teach in a classroom where more than a third of their students



have their own textbooks. We also found that few teachers used any teaching aids even when they were available. Given the fact that none of the teachers surveyed had ever received any in-service training, it may be difficult for many teachers to resist copying on the board even if their students all had textbooks.

- It is far more difficult to learn while sitting on a stone than at a school desk. Most students in Tigray sit on stones.
- There is a widespread belief that students do not sufficiently “respect” school materials. Across Tigray, we heard education officials and administrators, as well as teachers, complain that students “ruin” the few school materials they receive. Consequently, many school directors who receive desks, chairs, and textbooks for their students keep most of them in storage. They know that new materials rarely arrive at their schools, and believe that it is better to keep most of them in good condition than to allow students to “ruin” them all at once. Some go so far as to levy fines for damaging textbooks that may equal three or four times the original textbook price. This has created conflicts among parents, because only one family is required to pay a fine for damaging a textbook that several students may share. Often the family cannot afford to pay the fine and the student must drop out of school.

The Activities of Woreda Education Officers

Interviews with education officials at the regional level revealed that most know little about the activities of *woreda* education officers. Yet the Management Committee, composed exclusively of regional heads, was in the process of dramatically enlarging the administrative duties of the newly realigned *woreda* education offices. The Study Team thus included documentation of the current activities of *woreda* education officers as part of its research.

Each *woreda* office was responsible for anywhere from two to 24 primary schools. The range of difference in activities performed by the sampled *woreda* education heads is significant. While *woreda* heads in the Western Zone were found to be involved primarily in adult and community education activities and conducting inspections, *woreda* heads in the Southern Zone invested far more time in making inspections than in any other activity.

One key factor contributing to this range of variation is the fact that, beyond an initial two-day orientation, there has been virtually no training for any education officers at the *woreda* level, including *woreda* heads, in Tigray region. The following statistics help to fill out the general profile of Tigray’s *woreda* education heads:

- The average age of the *woreda* heads in the sample was 40.6 years.

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- All *woreda* heads were males.
- Their years of service in the education system varied from a minimum of nine to a maximum of 30.
- Six of the 14 in the sample (43 percent) were graduates of teacher training institutes, while only one had studied at Addis Ababa University.

Woreda heads devoted 61 percent of their work on six activities. They are ranked here according to the amount of time invested in each activity:

- Inspection (including auditing, property inspections, and instructional inspections)
- Adult and community education activities
- Performance evaluations (evaluations of schools, school directors, the *woreda* staff itself, etc.)
- Distribution of textbooks and other educational materials²²
- Teacher placement, transfer, discipline promotions, recommendations, etc.
- Examinations (supervision of regional or national student examinations)

C. The Workshop Dramas

The Decentralization Study Team's decentralization workshops helped advance Tigray's education reform process. They enlarged the realm of discussion on critical issues, in terms of subject matter and level of participation, to connect pressing problems at the school level with policy reforms for the entire system. Positioning schools and the *woredas*, as well as issues directly related to educational quality, at the forefront of the decentralization debate were significant procedural advances.

The research-and-discussion approach also addressed the two most prominent complaints about the research from regional education leaders. Responding to the statement that the researchers were four years late in addressing the decentralization problem, the workshops revealed that the decentralization debate was far more unsettled than education leaders had led us to believe. And in response to the complaint, "we already know the problems, we need help with the solutions," the workshops were configured as opportunities for the entire system to participate in solving educational problems.

²² None of the respondents from the Eastern Zone distributed textbooks or other educational materials to primary schools.

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Gauging from comments received about the workshops, the opportunity for people at the lower levels of the system to participate in discussions about shaping a new educational system was something of a revelation. Although most of the workshop participants from the school and *woreda* levels shied away from active participation, discussions about fundamental policy concerns had, in effect, become “decentralized.” The perspectives, concerns, and prerogatives of the policy makers from the upper levels of the system came into clear view. Fundamental philosophical differences *among* colleagues from these upper levels revealed how decentralization issues could inspire passionate and divisive debate. All workshop participants witnessed how their system grappled with the problem of decentralization, and were invited to enter the debate. Suddenly, the education system was “thinking out loud.”

At every workshop participants received specific figures and descriptions of educational problems that most education leaders had known as generalities. Detailing school-level issues ensured that impediments that hinder the learning process in Tigray’s schools could not be avoided. Problems had to be prioritized, and a variety of views had to be considered before decisions were made. Suddenly, the processes of decentralizing the education system and solving educational problems converged. The workshops demonstrated how problem-solving and decentralization reforms could be done together.

The workshop discussions revealed the following general tendencies that affect how the Tigrayan education system makes decisions:

- Regional officials are largely unsure about how to proceed with system reform and are eager to consider suggestions from others.
- The Tigrayan education system is able to criticize itself. Even those individuals who occasionally voiced their discomfort about the workshop process gradually accepted its usefulness.
- The workshop products indicated that the education system is able to negotiate setting priorities for the decentralization process.
- The zonal education heads were critical in moving workshop debates toward a conclusion. They communicated directly with regional heads and the *woreda* education officers, two system levels that rarely communicate with each other. The zonal heads also did not hesitate to oppose arguments presented by regional officials that they disagreed with. Few other zonal, *woreda*, or school officials ever did so.
- Ultimately, education leaders allowed discussions about important issues, but they also expected a high degree of discipline from education officers in the system.

Catalysts in the Workshop Debates

Two figures in the workshop dramas became primary shapers of the policy debates. They were worthy adversaries, who consistently became central figures in workshop discussions, and who will be referred to as Kiros and Solomon.

The influence of Kiros and Solomon over the direction of workshop discussions was often profound. Despite their starkly different points of view, they had much in common. Both were fearless orators and equally committed to improving the education system. As devoted TPLF professionals and veteran education system bureaucrats, their standing among peers remained high regardless of whether their arguments prevailed when decisions were voted on. Yet Kiros consistently challenged the fundamental policies and rationales that informed the existing system, while Solomon stood steadfast against change.

Solomon was all business. He was also a powerful division head in the regional bureau. A diminutive, extremely serious man, Solomon had a direct, no-nonsense demeanor that set him apart from many of his more genial and sociable colleagues. His principles did not allow him to accept the standard honoraria that every other participant accepted. Loyalty to TPLF principles led Solomon to disapprove of the payments that Ethiopians received for attending events sponsored by foreign agencies. He strongly believed that people receive a salary to work, so he did not require additional payments simply to attend a workshop. To Solomon, Tigrayans had already begun to forget what the TPLF had done for them.

Kiros was Solomon's junior, and worked in the Western Zone's education office. He was easily the most charismatic speaker of all workshop participants. A tall, wiry man, his quiet demeanor in social situations belied a remarkable gift for speechmaking. Participants marveled at the poetic language and unusual ideas that he incorporated into his orations. His sharp criticisms of existing policies and his direct challenges to education leaders demonstrated his boldness and passion. When Kiros spoke, the workshop room became silent. The other participants sat up and listened, and many broke into grins following a particularly eloquent or direct comment.

Workshop Issue #1: Moving from Problem to Solution

I chose to center the initial workshops on problems related to textbook distribution for the following reasons:

- During interview sessions education system members consistently expressed their frustration with the current distribution system, and drew attention to the following two issues:

1. The region mandated that the "four box" approach (region-zone-*woreda*-school) be followed for distributing textbooks. Regardless of which zonal capital the region's truck was headed to, it would pass a series of *woredas* and schools along the way but could not stop to deliver books that were earmarked for them. This was particularly frustrating to the many *woreda* and school officials whose offices were on main roads.

2. Books delivered to the zones usually remained there for months.

- Book distribution was directly related to system efficiency (distributing books according to system structure) and quality (the textbook shortage).
- The education system had already developed a model for distributing building materials to schools more efficiently. This system positioned several storage warehouses in areas that were far from the zonal capital. The "four box" structure still applied to this function, because the zones were responsible for the materials they received from the region, but the warehouses were located closer to many remote schools and *woredas*.

The first workshop contained the fewest number of participants. It took place in Shire Indasselassie, the capital of the Western Zone, and most of the participants came from that zone. It was not a coincidence that the only workshop where the Regional Education Bureau was not represented became the only workshop where a consensus was arrived at quickly.

I prompted the discussion session by handing out maps of Tigray to participants to illustrate system inefficiency in geographic terms (books being delivered from Mekelle to a zonal capital and then to a *woreda* office located near Mekelle). I also mentioned that this system is not used for distributing building materials to schools.

After a number of participants characterized building material distribution as "efficient" and thus "decentralized," and textbook distribution as "inefficient" and thus "centralized," Kiros dramatized the difference. "Humara is the remotest part of Tigray," he said. "Often we cannot deliver books there for months at a time because the rains make the Tekeze River impassable. But building materials arrive there without delay because they come directly from Addis Ababa through Gonder [in another region]."

Kiros's critique went beyond distribution issues. His call for the regional bureau to set up its own printing facilities for textbook production (this was being contracted out to a press in Addis Ababa) prompted two other participants to ask why the region could not set up an entire department for producing educational materials.

Despite the collective belief that the existing textbook distribution system should be reformed to become more “efficient” and “decentralized,” the consensus document was phrased in a carefully worded, nonconfrontational style. Participants selected Kiros to dictate the following consensus:

Workshop members unanimously express the following views:	
1.	Direct transport of books from region to <i>woreda</i> , or even from the region directly to the school, is both possible and efficient.
2.	Enacting the direct transport of books from the region to the <i>woreda</i> or school would require a reform of the existing structure, and the creation of conditions that would be favorable for reform.

The consensus is gently suggestive and does not challenge the regional bureau’s authority directly. The first workshop indicated that complaints about the existing system were widespread. But it also demonstrated that Bureau officials were highly respected, and perhaps even feared.

I had sought a meeting with the Bureau head prior to the second workshop to brief him on the proceedings of the first workshop. At our meeting, the Bureau head expressed his desire to enhance system efficiency. He suggested that the current system for distributing building materials could be used to distribute textbooks. He also emphasized that the current “four box” system ensured accountability. “The zones are accountable to us,” he explained. They are charged with signing the Bureau’s “modal”, a receipt confirming that the zones had received, and became entirely responsible for, the supplies that the Bureau had delivered. Clearly, accountability was to be a key issue in the subsequent discussions.

The Bureau head had made two other important comments. All materials were shared equally among the zones, he insisted. My subsequent investigations could not confirm this (and several officials denied it), but I continued to suspect that the equal sharing he referred to meant that the Bureau gave each zone the same number of supplies. Dividing supplies according to the number of zones instead of the number of students in each zone could explain why the textbook-to-student ratio was generally higher in the Eastern Zone than the Western Zone. The Eastern Zone had more students than the Western Zone. The Bureau head also complained that students did not take care of new textbooks when they arrive at schools.

The second workshop had more participants than the first workshop (20–30) and took place in the Bureau’s conference room in Mekelle. There were now representatives from every zone and a host of Bureau officials. During the discussion session, it became clear that the consensus from the first workshop had struck a nerve with many Bureau officials. They asked that the photocopies of the consensus not be distributed until the workshop discussions were underway. The discussions began with a series of speeches by Bureau officials that defended the existing system. Decentralization

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doesn't always mean efficiency, said one. There had already been a lot of change since the end of "The Struggle." Further reforms were not necessary, another insisted.

Solomon remained in the shadows. Although his division was responsible for textbook procurement and distribution, Solomon had his deputy attend, and briefly entered the room only twice during discussion sessions to listen. Solomon's deputy, who was directly responsible for the textbook deliveries, led the charge in defense of the existing system. He repeatedly interrupted other speakers to insist that reforming the book distribution system was not feasible. Breaking the "four-box" chain would mean breaking the established system of accountability. It would also create transport problems.

Kiros repeatedly took center stage to point out the need for system reform. The zones don't need the books, he argued, but the existing system needlessly revolves around them. Problems that are related to accountability and transport should be resolved to support an improved system. *Woreda* offices should rise to the forefront. Kiros feared that if another proposal, in which the Bureau would distribute textbooks only to selected accessible *woreda* offices (which would then redirect books to less accessible *woreda* offices), a new "sub-zone" structure would enter the bureaucracy.

In the end, the first workshop consensus (led by Kiros), which had called for the region to circumvent the zones and deliver directly to *woredas* and schools, became the most popular proposal with workshop participants. A small number of members of the Bureau, and some zonal members, voiced strong opposition to the proposal, largely because it would be "inefficient" for the region's one truck to make all deliveries, especially when each zonal office had already been given its own trucks to make deliveries themselves. Their proposal essentially consisted of sending the zone's trucks to the Regional Bureau to pick up textbooks instead of the other way around. This would preserve the existing relationship of the zones operating between regional and *woreda* officers.

The majority of workshop participants, comprised almost entirely of zonal, *woreda*, and school officials, wanted to vote on the two positions. However, I moved to delay the vote until the next workshop for two major reasons. The majority's position (which constituted perhaps 25 of the 30 participants) had not incorporated solutions to the transport and accountability concerns into its proposal. This could create a situation where upper-level education officials would be faced with unrealistic demands for change from lower-level officials. In addition, Solomon's absence may have been a tactic for challenging the popular proposal, for how could his division be reformed without his consultation?

To maintain the momentum and credibility of the workshop proceedings, I recommended that each side select representatives to write up the two opposing positions. Kiros joined a zonal education head (who will be called Berhane) in drawing up the most popular position. Those Bureau officials

who supported the more moderate proposal selected a zonal education head (who will be called Zerai), a passionate, effective speaker, to write their side. My motion passed, and the workshop adjourned. The proposals would be distributed to participants before the third workshop, which would conclude with a vote on the two proposals.

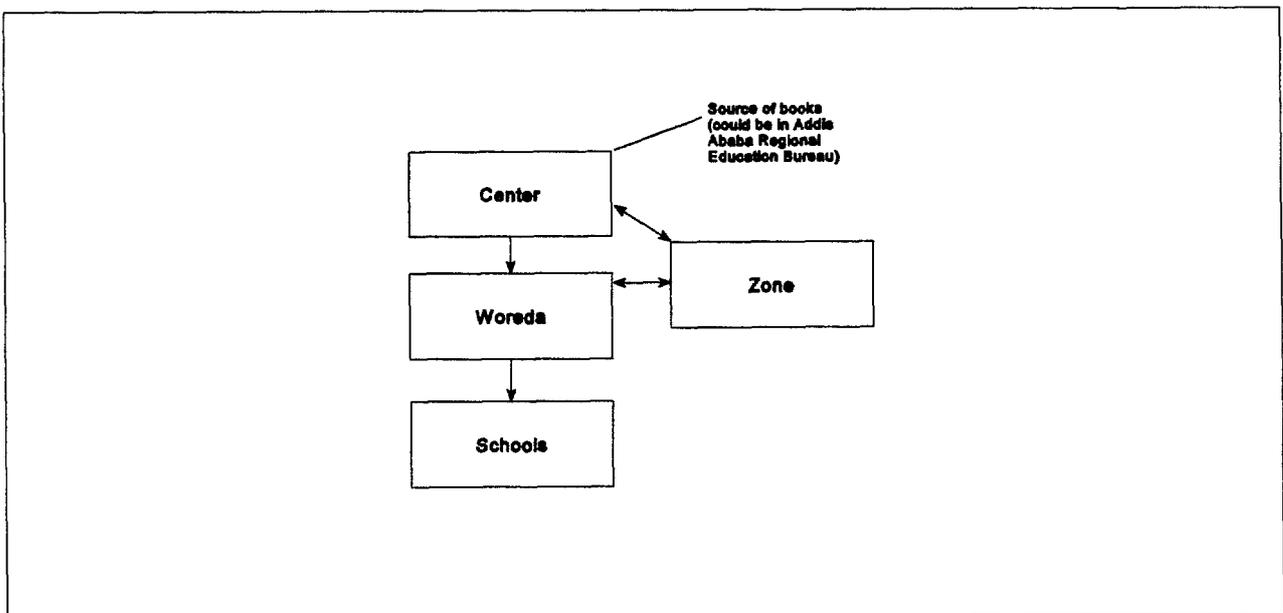
I again met with the Bureau head before the next workshop, and this time Solomon agreed to attend as well. The head was open to reform, provided his concerns about transport and accountability were properly addressed. Solomon was mostly evasive, but seemed uncomfortable with every suggested reform.

The third workshop, which was also held in the Bureau's conference room, revealed a dramatic turn of events. Through the course of the day it became clear that Zerai, together with Solomon and other Bureau officials, were maneuvering to make sure that their proposal would win the workshop vote. I assumed that many workshop participants from the lower levels were beginning to feel pressure to fall into line. In support of their position, Zerai had produced an effective document. The following is excerpted from his original:

Procedure (Consideration)

- Responsible bodies should receive and give out materials to the already set of means of control in order to fight the deeply rooted misuse of money—(corruption) and exactly know who receives what and how many.

Mechanism of Distribution



1. Zonal representatives can come to the region and make, together with the region, arrangements for effective means of distribution.
2. If the Woredas come to the region for receiving books their (Woreda Education Officer's) other important duties such as transporting building materials brought by the *woreda* to the building sites, making salary payments, reporting, etc. will be negatively affected.
3. So the zonal representatives receive the books from the "Central Store", register the type and number of books for each Woreda in separate models, and distribute the books to each Woreda. This method can reduce time and increase efficiency. By doing so, accountability and control can be maintained.

Zerai's proposal emphasized the importance of accountability to prevent corruption, and argued that the zones should now travel to the region instead of the other way around. His document also conceded that the region may have direct interactions with *woredas*. However, #2 quietly threatens that *woreda* officers who choose to circumvent the zones "will be negatively affected."

The (excerpted) document that follows, penned by Kiros and Berhane, claims to represent the views of the majority:

As mentioned in the [previous] workshop, the [existing] system of book distribution has led to the misuse of money, manpower and time and the depreciation and destruction of many books. Storing textbooks for a long time in the zones has been an additional problem.

It is time to formulate a new and progressive textbook distribution approach to change the old system.

The participants of the workshop have proposed the following idea to solve the existing problem:

1. The Regional Education Bureau (REB) should send the textbooks directly to the Woredas, not to the zones. In doing so, the REB has to allocate all the necessary budget, manpower and means of transportation. The textbooks should be sent from the region directly to the *woredas*, even though it might mean an additional workload for the REB.
2. With regard to responsibility, the Woreda, after receiving the materials, should inform the zone that they have received the textbooks. And the REB, which is distributing materials to the different Woredas, should also inform the zone that they have distributed the textbooks.
3. The zone has to inform the region of the quantity and type of textbooks [that schools] need and whether the textbooks have reached the schools safely and in a timely fashion.

According to this proposal, the zones would remain in the loop by being apprised of activities between the region and the *woredas*. Yet the challenge to the REB to ultimately solve the problem remains. Note that mention of direct interactions between schools and the REB has been taken out, while both proposals highlight the problem of corruption.

Zerai and several of the Bureau heads led the third workshop discussion; however, Solomon dominated the discussion. I had already learned that his division was responsible for more activities than any other in the Bureau. Solomon clearly envisioned that Kiros and Berhane's proposal could complicate the task of distributing books. He vehemently argued for Zerai's proposal. Solomon also chastised the zones for their inefficiency and the discussion chair (the Study Team's project researcher) for attempting (and usually failing) to limit his speeches.

Yet Solomon's thundering was not necessarily consistent. At times he argued against reforming the system at all. The Bureau head tried to correct this turn by endorsing system reform, declaring: "We know the problems. We are saying that books should directly reach the *woredas* [from the REB]. We accept this. Let us now see how to make it possible." Still, Solomon persisted. Finally, after stating that although he supported Zerai but continued to oppose further reform, the most senior official in the room, the Regional Council official, interrupted Solomon to call for a vote.

Zerai's proposal, which combined modest reforms with a threat against attempts at further reform, carried the day. Support for Kiros's ideas had evaporated, and what would have been an overwhelming victory at the end of the second workshop ended up as a resounding defeat. Zerai's proposal won, 21 votes to six. One vote was unanimous—to apply Zerai's book distribution solution to all education materials (such as radios and teacher's guides).

The textbook distribution debate that took place during the first three workshops revealed that:

- The views held by Bureau officials do not necessarily represent those held by other system members.
- Most Bureau officials opposed modifications to the existing "four-box" system, and their concerns for accountability promise to influence the reform process strongly.
- The legacy of obedience to the center continued to influence Tigray's education officials. Kiros and Berhane's proposal had expected the regional leaders (who largely opposed the changes they recommended) to work out the mechanisms for enacting their reforms. This signaled the degree to which members of the education system continued to rely on the system's leadership. Kiros's proposal contained an implied threat against *woreda* officials

who attempted to alter the system, an indication of the degree of power education leaders maintained.

- Although TPLF traditions had enlarged the realm of criticism of the status quo, the center will not necessarily be swayed to support reform proposals even when they are supported by a majority of system officials.
- The education system had addressed the textbook distribution problem according to the specific characteristics of that problem. System members could have simply applied the new building materials reforms to textbooks (which the bureau head had recommended). Yet the writers of both book distribution proposals chose not to. Textbooks are lighter and smaller than bags of cement and metal roofing sheets, and books need to be distributed to every school. Kiros and Berhane thus relied on the building materials reform only as a precedent that supported their call for further reform.

On the other hand, many *woreda* and school officials privately related that the participation of so many lower-level education officials in discussions on system operations was unprecedented. Zerai and the Bureau had won the vote, but the views of Kiros, Berhane, and other reformers had been heard and debated. This fact alone allowed the third workshop to end on an upbeat note. Regardless of who had won, open debate had moved the decentralization process forward.

Workshop Issue #2: Visualizing Decentralization

At the fourth workshop, held in historic Axum, the capital of the Central Zone, the subject of the discussion was kept secret from those invited. The subject was, "How are decisions made?," and the open-ended nature of the subject meant that this was the only workshop that ended without any voting on a specific decision.

The discussion was dominated by representatives from the Regional Bureau. Many had assumed that they would be debating proposed solutions for a second educational problem. Instead, they were confronted with findings about rural school directors who sought more decision-making authority. These included the desire to offer grades seven and eight at rural schools and permit the double shift system to apply to small rural schools (both of these policies commonly pertain to urban schools in Tigray).

Solomon wanted to identify those who had caused problems that our research had identified. My (mostly failed) attempts to involve *woreda* and school officials in the discussion led another Bureau head to declare that *woreda* and school officials in attendance "must be *told* to participate!" This led to expressions of support for the Bureau's position from two nervous *woreda* officials and

one school director. The authoritarian tendencies that remained in the system had been brought directly into the workshop discussion.

Bureau officials repeatedly explained that the way in which decisions were made had already become policy. The Bureau head added that this policy had already been considered and discussed "at various levels," and voted on. The implication was that it was inappropriate to discuss policy decisions at this time.

It seemed to me and my colleagues that Bureau officials were trying to take over the workshop discussions completely. Many workshop participants were intimidated by the impassioned speeches of the Bureau heads, but not everyone. Kiros, as well as Berhane and a few other participants, would not be silenced. Kiros relied on the national education sector declaration to argue that people needed to discuss future changes, and the workshops provided a good setting for this process.

Despite the strength of the Bureau officials' discontent, opening the workshop discussion with a general question instead of asking participants to consider a specific problem yielded promising results. Perhaps most important, the Axum workshop offered me the opportunity to again include workshop participants as discussion leaders. I had asked participants to think about what their "basic vision" of a decentralized education system for Tigray would look like. I then approached individuals about writing up their visions. None of the regional heads wanted to participate, but the same trio who had written the book distribution proposals (Zenai, Berhane, and Kiros) agreed to write basic vision documents for the final workshop. When I announced that they had accepted, the regional heads were relieved. Because their colleagues from the zones would prepare workshop proposals again, discussing further decentralization reforms in general terms was no longer so threatening.

Incorporating education officials into the workshop process became an important theme for the three-day final workshop. The first day's discussions followed a presentation of three different approaches to decentralizing an education system by Dr. James Williams of the USAID African Bureau. This elicited a fairly gentle discussion session about the positive and negative aspects of each approach.

The workshop discussion for the second day featured a presentation from one Bureau head who was a member of the Management Committee. He provided an update, in very general terms, on the reform process for the *woreda* education offices, and then fielded questions from workshop participants. His answers revealed how the Management Committee approached the task of enlarging the administrative responsibilities for each *woreda* by first negotiating with the Regional Council about staff size. The Management Committee, the Bureau head explained, would devise the specific tasks only after that had been established: "Having this new structure and enough



manpower, we can say the activities will be wider, broader, and deeper... More will be nearer to the lives of the people." His vague answers to discussant questions included the following: "We don't know what [the *woreda* education offices] will look like, but we just have to start." Evidently, Tigray's education leaders were unsure about how to continue reforming their system.

The third day's proceedings we hoped would provide some new ideas. The floor of the workshop was now held by Zerai, Berhane, and Kiros. They opened with lengthy presentations of their basic vision proposals and then fielded questions about their proposals from workshop participants.

The two visions contained significant differences. While Zerai's proposal envisioned a decentralized education system as one in which the regional bureau retained the lion's share of decision-making authority but enhanced its ability to receive information and views about decisions from the levels below it, Kiros and Berhane's proposal increased the decision-making authority of the lower levels, and decreased the influence of the regional Bureau. Their vision emphasized new job descriptions for each system level over improving information flows between levels.

Here is an abridged version of Zerai's proposal:

1. Background.

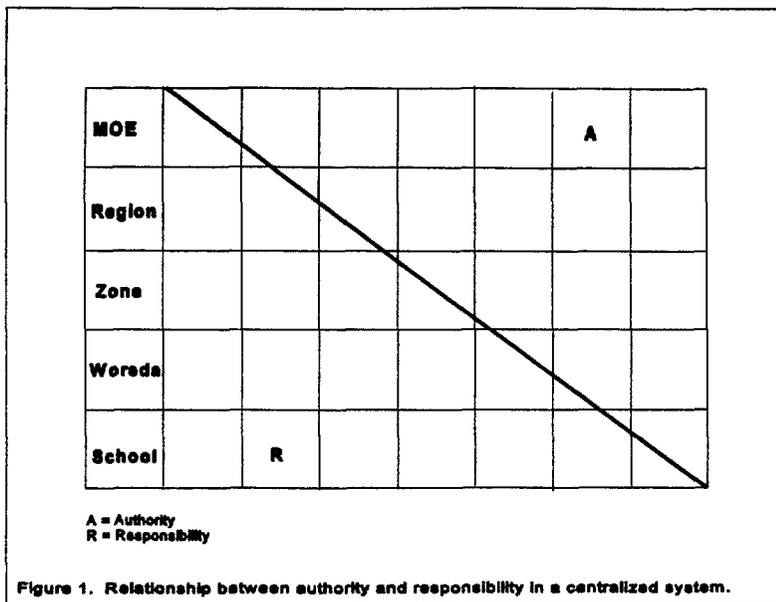
This short article tries to assess the need for mutual cooperation and understanding between policy formulators or decision makers and policy implementors. It is argued here that even though too much of the responsibility for implementation is left for the lower level of the management system, authority and responsibility should be balanced in the light of decentralization of basic education. In this article, the terms "policy formulators" and "decision makers" are interchangeable.

2. Balanced Authority and Responsibility:

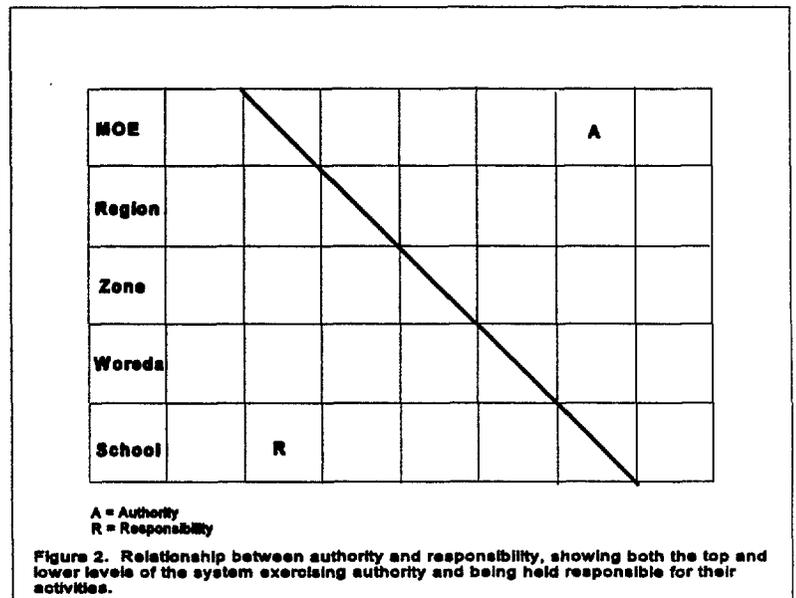
A Balanced Diet for Efficiency of Work and Development.

In a centralized system, policies are formulated at the top level of the management system because the top level management is endowed with all the authority necessary to make decisions. What has been decided at the top is thrown down to the lower level or grass root level for implementation. It is the lower level that is held responsible for implementing what has been decided at the top. The implementing body does not have a say whatsoever in the making of the decision.

In this situation, implementors develop negative attitudes towards the new tasks. This eventually develops into chaos. The relationship between authority and responsibility in such a system can be shown as follows:



In a decentralized system, however, the ratio between authority and responsibility is either semi-balanced or fully balanced depending on the nature and stage of development of the new system. Here, both the top and lower levels of the system exercise authority and responsibility in order to achieve real change and development. The relationship of A and R can be shown as follows:



3. Decentralized Decision-making and Implementation.

Since we have been working under centralized systems of management for decades, the notion of a decentralized system is a new phenomenon for us in both concept and practical operation. It has been four years now since we started introducing ourselves to the new model, though still we may lack the means and expertise to fully exercise it.

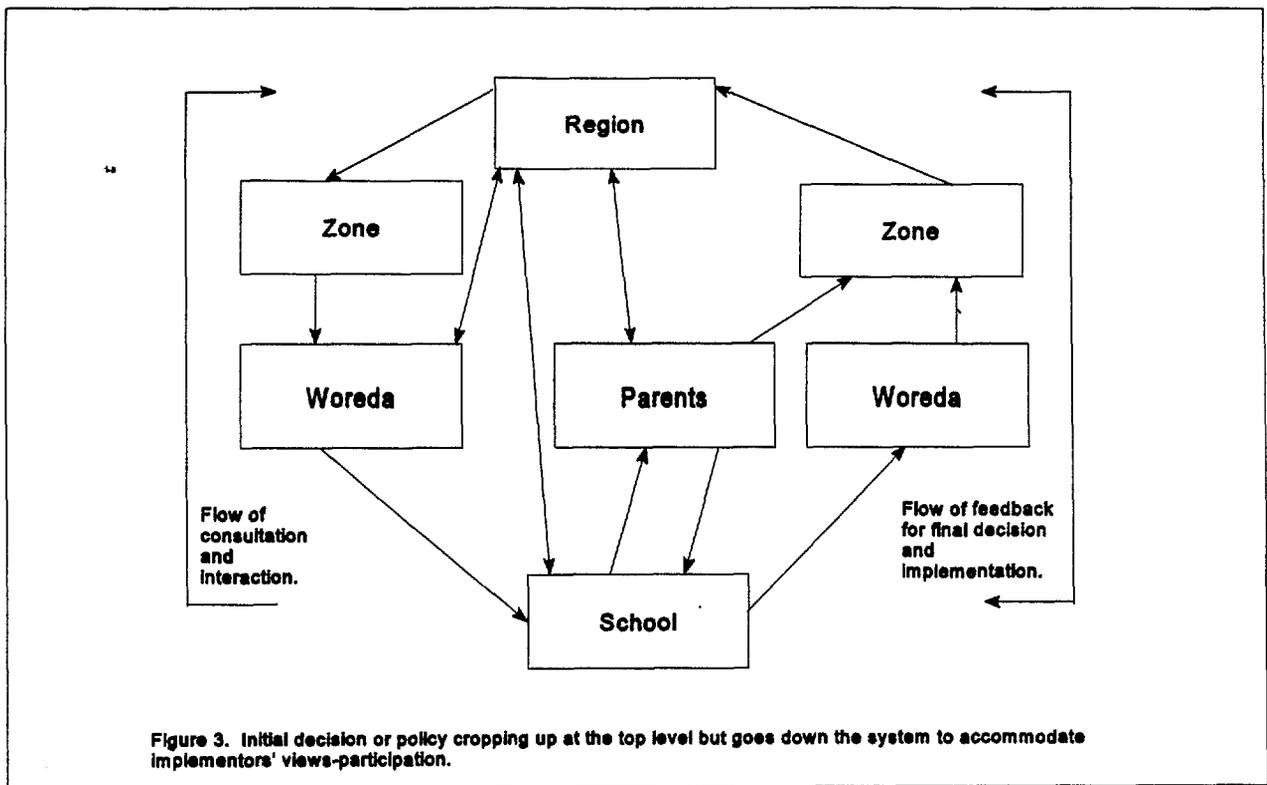
However, in such a system both authority and responsibility are somehow balanced in the different levels of management. Even though decisions or policy formulations are ideally made at the top level management, it seems to me that the inherent nature of the system provides several channels for decision makers and implementors to consult each other and cooperate in the making of the decisions and in implementing them.

3.1. Decision made at the top level management.

Here we can observe two ways of decision-making. One may crop up at the top level, and the other can be that ideas emanate from the lower or grass-root level which might be adopted by the top level for making decisions.

The need for formulating educational policy that suits the new system might crop up at the top level of the management system. But prior to its implementation, the lower level of management, the implementors and other sections of the society who might be affected when the decision is implemented, must be consulted. The decision makers must reach out the appropriate sections of the society down the ladder of the system, including the implementors, of course; and discuss with them about the nature of the decision or policy, its implementation mechanisms, and the resultant effect for development sought after its implementation, and other related issues.

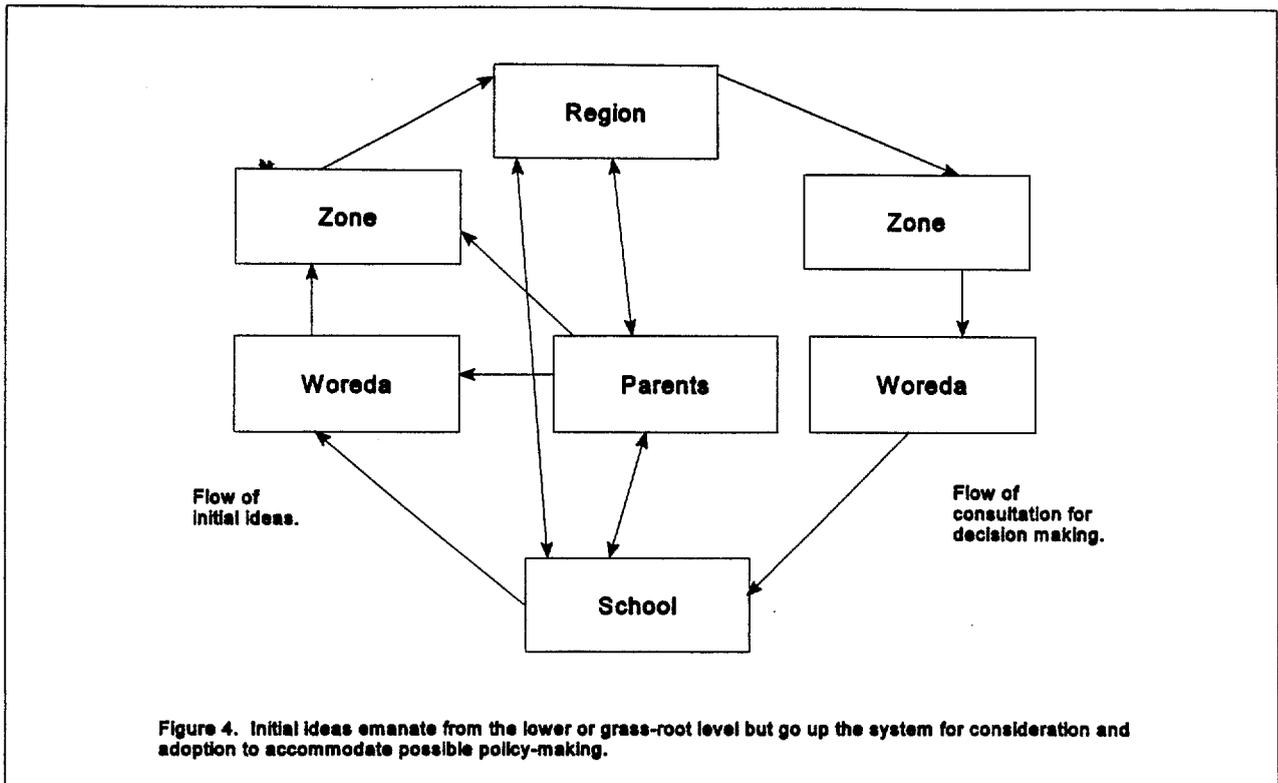
This means that policy formulators should not impose decisions upon implementors but rather they should influence and convince policy implementors and other concerned segments of the society about the necessity and crucial nature of the policy. In this way policy implementors and others will feel contented that they have been consulted and heard by the top level management. And eventually they will accept the change and show readiness to put the new policy into operation. The outcome of such consultancy and acceptance can bring about the desired and tangible changes and development. This cycle can be shown as follows:



3.2. New ideas for decision-making develop at the lower level.

As a consequence of encountering problems that are found, new ideas or recommendations for possible changes of policy can emanate from schools, *woredas*, zones or even parents. These ideas can be put into action after local consultation and approval or they can be sent up to the higher authorities of the system for consideration. The higher authorities in turn can carry out further research work at the grass-root level whose findings might necessitate the formulation of a new policy. This cycle of consultation can be shown as follows:

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Together, the two views of decision-making suggest the same mechanism for decision-making and implementation. That is, in the process of making decisions or formulating policies, there should exist consultations, cooperation and participation by both the top and lower levels of the management system as well as the policy implementors. The interaction of the concerned bodies (or levels) create comprehensive dimensions for continuous change and development in a spiral form.

Zerai's elaborate figures and inspired descriptions attest to how seriously he carried out his assignment. His figures illustrate the limitations of his ideas. The difference between figures 1 and 2 is minimal. The higher levels should only make modest changes to their control over authority. The next two figures indicate his desire to increase the levels of interaction between system levels.

Yet Zerai is clearly worried about going too far with reforms. In the most telling passage, he worries that policy formulators (who are largely regional heads) "should not impose decisions" on implementors (lower-level officials). Instead, "they should influence and convince [the] policy implementors." He goes on to imply that when the region goes out of its way to persuade zonal,

woreda, and school-level officials to follow a new policy, it has actually “consulted and heard” them. Zerai calls this process “consultancy and acceptance.”

It should be made clear that zonal¹ education heads, including Zerai, figure heavily in developing new policies and supervising their implementation. Zonal heads are the Bureau’s link to the lower levels of the system. Given this background, and the authoritarian legacy the education leadership inherited from previous regimes, what may appear as a description of simple intimidation can actually be seen as a step forward. Zerai’s call for leaders to “influence and convince” their inferiors is actually a new idea. While Bureau and zonal heads have never been required even to inform lower-level officials of their intentions, Zerai envisions a great deal of communication between system levels. If enacted, this would constitute a significant advance in the decentralization process.

Zerai’s focus on enhancing communication is nonetheless modest when compared with Kiros and Berhane’s proposal. Their proposal calls for far more extensive reforms and concentrates on refining the job descriptions for each system level. Here is an abridged version:

An organization is said to be centralized if authority is concentrated with top management, and decentralized if authority is widely delegated to lower levels of managers. Decentralization refers to the process of delegating central government functions to local or regional structures within the governmental structure. However, no organization is completely centralized or decentralized.

The democratization and decentralization process is not a one-shot affair. It needs time and persistent effort to take root in the fabrics of society to bring about profound change for the better.

BASIC PRINCIPLES OF DECENTRALIZATION

1. ***Role of top management should be defined***
Top management (region, zone and *woreda*) must concentrate on determining the objective for the whole organization; developing strategies, long and short-term plans, based on the policy formulated.
2. ***Centralized controls and management should be established***
3. ***Authority of regional, zonal and woreda should be clarified***
Operating relationships of authority should be clearly spelled out.
4. ***Balance should be maintained between Centralization and decentralization***
Decentralization has its own limitations, such as:
 - Greater variety
 - Different standards
 - Increased complexity of coordination
 - Loss of control by the upper level of management
 - A limited availability of qualified managers
 - Considerable expenses required for training managers, etc.

SUGGESTED JOBS (VISION) FOR THE SCHOOL, *WOREDA*, ZONAL, AND REGIONAL LEVELS OF THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM OF TIGRAY

For effective and efficient management of education, each level of the system has to have specified, clarified, and defined jobs or responsibilities.

- I. **JOBS RELATED TO THE SCHOOL**
 1. **Limits on the number of students and class size**
 2. **Prepares short- and long-range plans based on the policy and strategies and educational objectives, with the necessary resources (inputs) needed and implements when approved by the *woreda*.**
 3. **Conducts research on cases of educational problems in collaboration with the teachers and community.**
 4. **Evaluates the educational programs, syllabus, texts, and performances of the personnel, etc.**
 5. **Perform supervisory activities, peer teaching, observation (class), exchange of experiences among the teachers.**
 6. **Construction and maintenance of buildings (classrooms) and furniture in collaborations with the community, government and non-governmental organizations.**
 7. **Requests teaching materials, including textbooks, bridges, manpower to the *woreda* on time and distributes.**

<p>II. JOBS RELATED TO THE WOREDA EDUCATION OFFICE</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Prepares short- and long-range plans based on the school plans. 2. Depending on the resources the <i>woreda</i> approves the expansion of schools horizontally and vertically. 3. Requests and distributes the teaching materials, including textbooks to the schools on time. 4. Performs supervisory activities along with workshops, seminars and short training. 5. Selects best candidates of teachers in collaboration with the schools nearby. 6. Opens new schools when approved by the zone. 7. Evaluates the educational planned programs, syllabus, texts, and other educational materials, as well as performance of staff personnel. 8. Controls and audits the system (school) and local funds, as well as the materials.
<p>III. JOBS RELATED TO THE ZONES</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Prepares short- and long-range plans, based on the plans of the schools and <i>woredas</i>, as well as with information (problems) of the zone, with all necessary inputs. 2. Approves the demand of the <i>woreda</i> on opening new schools and upgrading to the second level of the primary school. 3. Performs promotion, assignment, and transfer of teachers and other personnel. 4. Evaluates the educational program sand plans of the zone, and performance of the staff personnel, syllabus, teaching materials, textbooks, etc. 5. Should delegate responsibilities and authorities to <i>woredas</i>, depending on the input it has and the competence, effectiveness, and efficiency.
<p>IV. JOBS (TASKS) RELATED TO THE REGION</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Prepares short- and long-term plans of the overall educational system with the necessary requisitions for resources. 2. Prepares curriculum and syllabus, as well as national examinations. 3. Evaluation of activities of the educational programs and performance tasks of those personnel accounted to it. 4. Perform supervisory activities and technical support accompanied with workshops, seminars, and training (short and in-service). 5. Coordinates and controls the educational programs and plans. 6. Designs the jobs (tasks) of the lower management levels. 7. Delegates more responsibilities depending on the strengths, competence, and resources available. 8. Prepares guidelines to the lower levels of management. 9. Produces the necessary teaching materials, including texts, and distributes them to the respective areas.

In Kiros and Berhane's document, decentralization should be achieved mainly by delegating authority until a balance has been achieved between "centralization and decentralization." Schools

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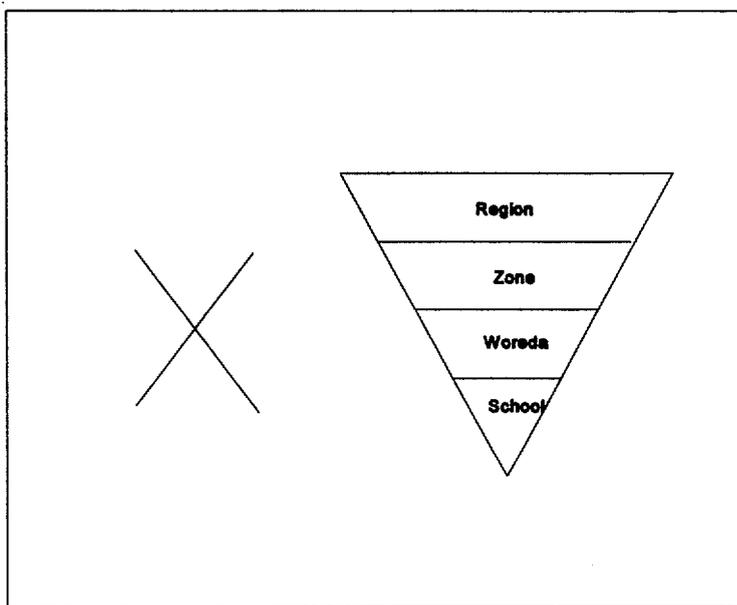
should develop plans and select teachers with the *woreda*. The region and zones should delegate, but only according to the competence of those below them. The region's tasks, in fact, do not appear to differ from their current tasks. What Kiros and Berhane seem to be proposing is that the region should delegate some of its current load of responsibilities and authorities. Their proposal for change extends beyond Zerai's vision, but the changes they recommend are decidedly moderate.

The authors defended and elaborated upon their proposals during the discussion period that followed their presentations. They concentrated on the relationship between authority and responsibility (a theme I had recommended they use while developing their basic visions), but their views differed. Kiros was especially concerned with the plight of the *woreda*, declaring that "*Woredas* suffer from having a lot of responsibility but little authority. They are without any guidelines. I think this was the duty of the regional bureau. But they failed. Such problems are our [the zones'] headache." Zerai defended his call for reform by recalling an endemic system failure: "We [the zones and Regional Bureau] have to make decisions for the lower levels [*woredas* and schools] which they are unable to decide upon. This shows us a lack of [sufficient] authority at the lower levels." He then offered examples where the region had created policies that lower-level officials found difficult to enact. This might have been avoided if regional officials had consulted with lower levels beforehand.

Eventually, Berhane critiqued Zerai's proposal while Kiros drew the following diagram to illustrate his point. Zerai's illustrations of the system's division of authority and responsibility (Figures 1 and 2) were misleading because the current authority structure resembled an inverted triangle more than a rectangle:

Kiros wrote an "X" beside the inverted triangle to signal his disapproval of the upper levels controlling division of authority. He then drew the battlelines for the ensuing debate by declaring that the lower levels lack sufficient authority to carry out their responsibilities.

In the long discussion that followed, during which participants explained why they favored one proposal over the other, there was a general call for the three authors to develop a compromise document. But Solomon



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strongly opposed this. "We don't have to talk about decentralization now," he lectured. "The system is already decentralized."

Solomon's arguments effectively ended the move to develop a compromise document. The participants then elected Solomon and Kiros to head a committee that would draft a resolution of commonly shared principles for decentralization reforms. They were asking Solomon and Kiros, leaders of the most conservative and radical viewpoints, to settle their differences and come to some sort of accommodation.

But Solomon refused. The two proposals may be useful guidelines for further reforms, he argued, but they cannot simply be enacted now. Again, in response to Solomon's objections, the participants searched for a third means of developing a resolution. The Study Team's project researcher, who served as the discussion chair, then asked for resolutions from the participants. Those that passed formed the following resolution:

Resolution which the participants have come up with:

1. In order to make decentralization operational, in-service training should be encouraged down to the school level.
2. Directives which facilitate access, equity, and quality, with defined authorities and responsibilities, should be drafted as soon as possible. People from all levels of the system should participate in this process.
3. An appropriate manpower scheme and structure, which are believed to facilitate access, equity, and quality, should be assigned and established at the schools, *woreda*, and zonal levels.
4. We believe that we can overcome the very problems of education seen during the workshop. We need help from different supporting organizations. Thus, we call upon USAID and other NGOs to contribute their support.
5. We urge the concerned organs of the system, the State, and NGOs to make necessary arrangements for the continuation of this kind of research, for it is a key to point out the [system's] hindrances and then find solutions for them.

The final workshop's ending resolution called for increased outside support to help correct systemic problems. It strongly supported continuing the kind of research that we had begun. The call for increasing in-service training opportunities for officials throughout the system signaled a general awareness that training would enhance the system's ability to adapt to reforms and address problems more effectively. Finally, advocating increased participation for enhancing access, equity, and quality indicated that the system sought to make the decentralization process more inclusive. The resolution demonstrated that our research-and-discussion approach had helped to advance the decentralization process.

The fourth and fifth workshops also revealed that:

- The leaders of Tigray's education system would allow dissenting views to be heard. Solomon's outbursts, however, signaled the limits of their leniency. Still, the workshop process seemed to soften the leadership's reputation as conservative, generally authoritarian managers.
- The final workshop discussion sessions exposed a rift between education officials in Tigray. Zerai's basic vision of decentralization focused on information flows that *connected* the system levels, and suggested minor modifications to the existing structure. Kiros and Berhane's document, on the other hand, emphasized how authorities and responsibilities should be *separated* between system levels. The changes their job task list implied would have meant more significant changes for the existing system.
- Kiros and Solomon's bold, impassioned exchanges effectively exposed the differences that divided the education system's membership into two groups. Solomon was easily the most conservative and outspoken education leader. He consistently linked concepts of regionalization and decentralization together. Kiros symbolized the most dissenting point of view, which attempted to connect decentralization with a moderate degree of local-level authority.

D. Learning About a New Methodology

Developing and testing the research-and-discussion methodology occurred at the same time. Research instruments were revised continually. Evidence of apparent trends from the early weeks of research had to be reexamined as our fieldwork extended further into Tigray. It was also impossible to predict, and sometimes difficult to manage, the workshop discussions.

The research-and-discussion experiment yielded a series of accomplishments. We succeeded in advancing the idea that the ultimate purpose of decentralization is to improve the learning process in classrooms. Our process of linking decentralization reforms to solutions for educational problems yielded positive results as well. The workshops certainly enlarged the degree of participation in discussions about further reform. They also produced documents written by education officials that we hope will become useful tools for extending the decentralization process.

But there were limits to the success of the experiment. Our desire to include representatives from every system level in open discussions proved largely unattainable. The imbalance of power in the

Tigrayan education system did not allow it. Expending so much energy in organizing and conducting workshops, and ensuring that our findings were widely accessible, also limited our ability to produce more extensive analyses of our data. Workshops meant setting a series of deadlines for completing analytical procedures and preparing reports. Having to translate and distribute our findings in two languages created another drain on time that could have been invested in data analysis.

The following list details some of the specific accomplishments and limitations that arose from using the research-and-discussion approach:

Accomplishments:

- ***The system as an organism:*** This method revealed how the system thinks, behaves, and responds to expected and unexpected situations. It illuminated a rift between conservative and more radical reformers and revealed how the system develops solutions to problems and conceives of decentralization.
- ***Thick description of the current state of education:*** The field research generated accessible and useful findings about the state of primary education in Tigray. Comparing findings among zones proved especially useful.
- ***Advocated for putting concerns of school first:*** Positioning schools at the top of our research agenda enhanced awareness about problems related to the learning process in schools. It confronted the more traditional positioning of schools at the bottom of the “four-box” system.
- ***Raised expectations for system officials and project implementers.*** Opening up the research process to local officials, generating regular updates on our findings, and enlarging participation in the process of system reform increased expectations for moving the decentralization process ahead. This could translate into added pressure on education leaders and the incoming USAID/BESO project team to produce substantive results soon.
- ***The research-and-discussion process empowered lower-level officials.*** The success of the workshops far exceeded our expectations. Education leaders allowed for debate and critiques over issues that had previously been their private domain. The concerns of lower-level officials were heard, sometimes directly but more frequently when (a) we reported their concerns in field reports, and (b) higher-level speakers who shared similar viewpoints (Kiros and Berhane in particular) presented their perspective.

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- *Left behind a process for furthering system reform.* The final resolutions contained a call for continuing the research-and-discussion process that we began in Tigray. Even if this does not occur, it is clear that our approach has raised awareness about systemic problems relating to educational quality and equity, and has significantly increased the participation level for setting a reform agenda.

Limitations:

- *We cannot effect change after we leave.* We can inject the makings of a new process into a system, but the aid program implementers and local officials have to see that it continues. If they lack commitment to the process, it can be railroaded.
- *We could only minimize the domination of the education system's leadership over workshop discussions.* Our best response to this was to become a mouthpiece for the concerns of those participants from the *woredas* and schools that shied away from direct participation in discussions.
- *The methodology did not change the plans for the system.* Implementing a new research methodology cannot change the relations of power among the four system levels. It is thus quite likely that the education leadership for further reforms will prevail. Nevertheless, the process did set the region's views up for open debate. It also enhanced the awareness and expectations of officials across the system of what decentralization could become. The regional leaders have retained their authority, but they also know that other system officials may examine their actions more carefully in the future.
- *There were constraints on our ability to attain all our goals.* Time constraints did not allow the Study Team to prepare profiles of the characteristics of each zone for workshop presentations. This would have been very useful to education and BESO officials. We had also originally planned to conclude the workshop process by developing a chart that identified key system objectives and then assigned tasks to each system level accordingly. Time constraints did not allow us to attempt this. Regional officials might have taken it as a public challenge to their authority over specific system reforms, however, and the attempt may have proved counterproductive.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Is "Research-and-Discussion" Portable? Recommendations for Adaptation

Applying the research-and-discussion approach to other contexts should prove successful. The process will need to be adapted to local contexts, but most of the basic principles and methods appear to be portable.

Conducting research-and-discussion as an experiment in the Tigray region of Ethiopia enabled us to take advantage of at least three important local assets.

First, it might be said that Tigrayans have developed a workshop tradition. The TPLF has used workshops to enlarge participation in community and government affairs for years. Fiery exchanges and direct criticisms taking place during workshops seem to be commonplace, as well. Despite the level of control that Tigrayan education leaders exerted over the decentralization workshops, they did allow a great deal of latitude during discussions. Trying to adapt research-and-discussion in a country where the government has a reputation for stifling dissent would certainly limit expectations for success. Inability of local governments to tolerate differences of opinion probably constitutes the most significant potential impediment to importing research-and-discussion into another country successfully.

Second, Tigrayans fought and won their war with limited outside assistance. This has created a feeling of confidence and tolerance in the region. Change is in the air, and most people seem upbeat about their future. Tigrayans also seemed very confident in their ability to generate solutions to local problems on their own. Few felt that they necessarily needed outside expertise to succeed. I never sensed that Tigrayans wanted me to help reinvent their education system. Research-and-discussion was designed to spur the decentralization process, not to change those reforms that already existed. Tigrayan optimism, spirit, and confidence, in short, provided an excellent setting for trying out the research-and-discussion methodology. These indigenous assets may not necessarily exist in other locations; therefore, such local differences would have to be accounted for.

Third, zonal education officers played a critically important role in moving the decentralization process along. They were part of the system's leadership sector yet were directly connected to lower-level system officials, particularly *woreda* officers. They had sufficient knowledge about problems that afflicted the lower system levels, and enough credibility with regional authorities to expand on their ideas openly. It may be that education officials working at the second tier in other systems could play the same role that zonal officers played. Those intending to use research-and-discussion in other settings should examine this possibility carefully.

Below is a list of other recommendations, drawn from lessons learned during the initial Tigrayan experiment, that should be considered before research-and-discussion is applied elsewhere:

- *Plan ahead.* If a project team is supposed to follow on the heels of the research endeavor, the team's members should be briefed about how research-and-discussion differs from more typical decentralization studies. We found that employing research-and-discussion raised local expectations about what incoming project personnel should achieve. At the same time, attending the final workshop would provide foreign experts with an extraordinary opportunity to learn about the local personalities and issues that they would be involved with. It might also be helpful to brief local education leaders about what the process is intended to accomplish. Carefully selected excerpts from this case could be used as a tool for convincing skeptics that employing the process is worthwhile.
- *Remember the accessibility issue.* The significance of language translation is symbolically as well as practically significant. Ensuring that key documents about the approach, data analysis, and final reports are phrased simply and directly; translated into the local language, and then disseminated widely is essential for promoting participation by officials throughout the system. Workshop discussions should be conducted in the local language for the same reason.
- *Modify the approach to suit local objectives and constraints.* It will obviously be important to make adjustments to address important local problems and system issues, and to address the particular constraints that present themselves.

B. Recommendations for Tigray Region

Furthering the Decentralization Process

The most important recommendation for Tigray is to keep the decentralization process that our research advanced moving forward. Research-and-discussion has established a method for solving problems and thinking of ways to initiate further reforms. With this in mind, the first set of recommendations addresses further research and workshop agendas that BESO personnel in Tigray could undertake, together with the approval and involvement of their local counterparts:

- *Distribute the final report and documents produced from workshop discussions.* Although this has been achieved in Tigray, I list this here to stress its importance to furthering the decentralization process. Making sure that workshop participants have copies of what the field research and workshops produced ensures that the progress our research made cannot be easily forgotten or overlooked.

- ***Schedule follow-up workshops.*** It might be useful to conduct one to two workshops with a selection of veteran participants to examine what has occurred since the final workshops. Has the solution that the first three workshops generated to address textbook distribution succeeded? Why or why not? It would also be a good time to review a series of general issues that the first workshops initiated, such as the implications of dramatically increasing access on educational quality and equity, the link between responsibility and authority along the “four-box” chain, the viability and appropriateness of having more rural schools extend into grades seven and eight and allow for double shifting, and why officials seem to have developed such a sharp attitude toward the way students use materials and facilities. Addressing problems related to other system bottlenecks could also be addressed.
- ***Conduct specific research and workshops in the Western and Eastern zones.*** Our findings clearly indicate that the state of education in the Eastern Zone is far and away the most serious, and should be accorded the requisite share of attention. It would thus be useful to conduct a short research and workshop project in these two zones. At the same time, the situation in the Western Zone (east of the Tekeze River) is comparatively better off. We hope the suggested research could incorporate the Humara area into the fieldwork. Workshops should include representatives from all system levels, as well as parents, to investigate why so many educational indicators differ so dramatically between the two zones. For example, are girls treated differently in the different zones by parents or school officials? This might help account for the dramatic differences in gender ratios between the two zones. Special attention should also be paid to the problems of Humara.
- ***Organize parent workshops.*** Awareness of the concerns and difficulties that parents face could be enhanced by sponsoring local workshops. Gathering information about their views might enable BESO and local educators to develop parent-oriented materials for school officials. School directors could be instructed to organize parent meetings that reviewed the significance of keeping at least some of their children in school. Particular attention should be paid to the plight of their daughters. It should be made clear to them that the new curriculum offers a vocationally oriented set of courses for those who leave the system after grade four.

Job Descriptions and the Woreda Reforms

It might also prove useful if BESO personnel assisted the Regional Education Bureau’s Management Committee with its crucial task of reorganizing the *woreda* education offices. BESO personnel could help regional personnel understand how changes at one level of the education system affect the others.

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BESO and regional officials could also consider expanding the *woreda* reforms into a joint study that maps out the job descriptions for each system level. This research project would contain an agenda for developing specific job descriptions and tasks. Then BESO and the regional bureau could jointly sponsor a workshop (or set of workshops) to present their proposal to representatives from every system level. The workshop agenda could consider how changes for the new *woreda* education offices might affect the responsibilities and authorities of the other three levels of the system. What will/should the authorities and responsibilities of each level become? How is this process related to those principles raised at the previous five BESO decentralization workshops (system efficiency, good local information helps make good local decisions, putting the school on top, system responsiveness, quality of education, etc.)? Such a jointly sponsored workshop might yield promising results.

Once *woreda* education office responsibilities have been created, the *woreda* education officers would need to be trained to perform their new jobs. It is very important to remember that these officers, who will be expected to handle a significant proportion of the direct administrative duties in support of schools, comprise an almost entirely untrained workforce.

Recommendations for Addressing Other Specific Problems

Based on our findings about educational problems in Tigray, the following issues should be considered by BESO and regional personnel:

1. *Teachers need to be trained.* To improve the learning process for Tigrayan students, teachers need a great deal of attention. Although this need is being addressed by BESO, the Regional Bureau, and other NGOs, it may be useful to remember that specific techniques probably need to be taught to teachers regarding (a) how to teach students when teaching aids and educational materials are available, and (b) how to teach when they are not.
2. *Evaluate how distribution formulas have been developed.* Our findings clearly indicated that educational materials are being distributed in an uneven and irregular fashion. Developing simple formulas according to enrollment might greatly facilitate the even and fair distribution of educational materials to all schools.
3. *Examine support for media education and school pedagogical centers (SPCs).* These two areas of the educational system in Tigray are so undersupported that it would probably be useful to reassess their purpose and utility. If radio teachers guides, much less radios, are absent from classrooms so often, and if the broadcast schedule cannot be coordinated with class schedules, perhaps radio's overall utility and expense should be reconsidered.

On the other hand, transferring media education to the Curriculum Department might immediately address many of the curriculum, scheduling, coordination, and production problems that currently afflict media education operations.

It might also be useful to reflect on the existing state of SPCs. Few elementary schools currently appear to have developed a particularly useful core of teaching aids in their SPCs. Furthermore, when they are present, the Study Team found that teachers do not often take advantage of them. Finally, the Study Team found very little tangible evidence that would suggest that the education system has made supporting these centers a priority. As a consequence, it appears that a reassessment of the issue of teaching materials—how they are developed, supported, and used—should be examined carefully.

4. *The problem of maps.* At first glance, this issue may appear to be connected only distantly to the problem of decentralization. But if the emphasis on “visualizing” decentralization is recalled as a feature of this approach, it may be useful to note that the Tigrayan education system lacks any accurate maps of its region.²³ It is thus more difficult for people in the system, and particularly at the level of the Bureau, to keep the problems of distant and remote areas at the forefront of their concerns.

²³ This fact also explains why a map does not accompany this report.

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ANNEX A: WORK SCHEDULE

USAID/BESO DECENTRALIZATION STUDY for BASIC EDUCATION, TIGRAY REGION

– *Research Schedule IN THE GREGORIAN CALENDAR (G.C.)*

Date & Location	Sun.	Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thurs.	Fri.	Sat.	Week No.
JULY Addis/ Mekelle	16	17 Hire proj. researcher	18 Q's & meet w/ SaveUS	19 Contract proj. res.	20 <i>Dr. Marc</i> to <i>Mekelle</i>	21 Plan study/ meeting	22 Plan Q.'s	1
Mekelle	23	24 <i>Ato Amare</i> <i>arrives</i>	25 Ques. & trg. program	26 Plan trg	27 Plan trg. and quest.	28 Start staff training	29 Refine Q.'s	2
JULY/ AUG. <i>Mekelle/ Adigrat</i>	30	31 Meeting at Reg. Ed. Bur.	1 Trg. & plan 1st trips	2 Trg. & plan 1st trips	3 1st field- work	4 1st field- work	5 1st field- work	3
Mekelle	6	7 Staff meeting	8 Translate data	9 Translate data	10 Analyze data	11 Analyze data	12 Finish analysis & report	4
Field: Inda- Selass.	13	14 2nd field- work	15 2nd field- work	16 2nd field- work	17 2nd field- work	18 2nd field- work	19 <i>1st work- shop</i>	5
Mekelle	20	21 Translate data	22 Translate data	23 Analyze data	24 Prepare findings for wkshp	25 <i>2nd work- shop</i>	26 Finish analysis & report	6
AUG./ SEPT. Field: <i>Maichew</i>	27 <i>Marc:</i> <i>Addis</i> <i>& U.S.</i>	28 3rd field- work	29 3rd field- work	30 3rd field- work	31 3rd field- work	1 3rd field- work	2 Return to Mekelle	7
Mekelle	3	4 Translate data	5 Translate data	6 Analyze data & write up	7 Analyze data & write up	8 Analyze data & write up	9 Analyze data & write up	8
Mekelle, and in Mekelle Zone	10 <i>Amare</i> <i>to</i> <i>Addis</i>	11 Plan for wrkshp/ fieldwork. <i>In Mek.</i>	12 <i>Holiday</i> <i>Ethiopia</i> <i>New</i> <i>Year!</i>	13 Prepare reports workshop	14 <i>Amare &</i> <i>Marc</i> <i>return to</i> <i>Mek.</i>	15 Prepare reports workshop	16 <i>3rd</i> <i>workshop</i> <i>(review)</i>	9

Field: Axum	17	18 4th field- work	19 4th field- work	20 4th field- work	21 4th field- work	22 <i>Dr. Jim Williams arrives</i>	23 4th field- work	10
Mekelle	24 <i>Return to Mekelle</i>	25 Finalize study results	26 Finalize study results	27 Prepare workshop	28 Holiday: Meskel	29 Prepare for workshop	30 Prepare for workshop	11
OCT. Mekelle	1	2 FINAL WORK- SHOP	3 FINAL WORK- SHOP	4 FINAL WORK- SHOP	5 <i>Dr. Jim Williams leaves</i>	6 Write final reports	7 Write final reports	12
Mekelle/ Addis	8	9 Write final reports	10 Write final reports	11 <i>Marc & Amare: to Addis</i>	12 In Addis: submit final reports	13 send all reports to Mekelle	14	13

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ANNEX B: RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRES

QUESTIONNAIRE No. 1

Teachers

Coder's Name _____
Date _____

1. Name of zone _____
2. Name of woreda _____
3. Name of School in grade level _____
4. Type of School _____
5. Teacher's record number _____
6. Age (in years) _____
7. Sex Male Female
8. Years of service as a teacher _____
9. Qualification _____
10. Courses taught in that school _____
11. Language of instruction during training period _____
12. Institution and Location of training _____
13. Languages spoken well _____
14. If not a graduate of TTI, specify how and where training took place _____

15. How many periods do you teach per day? max. _____
16. How many periods do you teach per week? _____
17. How many different subjects do you teach? _____
18. Does the school have a shift system? Yes No
19. If the answer to 18 is yes, in how many different shifts do you teach? _____
20. How far away do you live from the school? _____ Km.

21. Where have you been working for the last 10 years (work history)?

22. Check presence of teacher guides for courses taught.

23. Check presence of syllabi for courses taught.

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36. Does the school calendar fit the local farming calendar (e.g., harvesting, etc.) _____
37. How do you think the school calendar can correspond with the farming schedule? _____

38. Who decides what the school calendar & schedule will be? _____
39. What criteria are used in determining and deciding the school calendars and schedule (by those who decide)? _____
40. How is your teaching activity evaluated? By what method? _____

41. Who makes the evaluation? _____
42. Do you get feedback for your evaluation? _____
43. If your answer to 42 is Yes, in what form do you get this feedback? _____

44. Is the feedback that you receive helpful? Yes No
45. Why? or Why not? _____
46. How often do you use radio lessons?
- Always once a week
 - Always twice a week
 - Always three a week
 - Always when there is radio broadcast
 - Sometimes
 - I have never used
47. If the radio timetable conflicts with your classroom timetable, what do you do to solve the problem? _____
48. Do radio lessons enrich classroom teaching, or simply replace what the teacher does?
- Yes they enrich Simply replace
49. Do you have adequate numbers of radio sets in the school _____
How many? _____
50. Out of all the radios you have in the school, those which work _____
those which do not work _____

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51. In general, what do you think are the two biggest educational problems in Tigray region?

1. _____

2. _____

52. Why do you think that these two problems are the most significant?

1. _____

2. _____

53. Have you thought about ways that these two problems could be solved? Please explain in detail. _____

54. What would help you the most in improving teaching in your classroom? _____

55. In your opinion, what are the two most serious problems for your students today?

1. _____

2. _____

56. What do you think are the major reasons why parents send their children to school? _____

57. What do you think are the major reasons why parents do not send their children to school?

58. Why do you think that some children drop out of school? _____

QUESTIONNAIRE No. 2

**Condition of the School-personal Observations by Researchers, Enumerators,
or Interviewers**

Coder's Name _____

Date _____

1. Name of zone _____
2. Name of woreda _____
3. Name of school & grade level _____
4. Type of school _____
5. Presence and condition of school building _____

6. Condition of school grounds _____

7. Condition of classrooms _____

8. Condition of classroom furniture (chairs & desks, broken, rough, etc.) _____

9. Condition of chalkboards _____

10. Classroom cleanliness _____

11. Presence & condition of wall charts, models, bulletin, boards, etc. _____

12. Presence and condition of radio _____

13. Presence and condition of labs _____

14. Presence of geographic and mathematical equipment such as maps, globes, templates _____

15. Presence and condition of library facilities _____

16. Presence of school pedagogical centers _____

17. Condition of school pedagogical centers in terms of availability of materials, condition of materials, etc. _____

18. Presence, number, and condition of latrines _____

19. Presence of water and sanitation condition _____

20. List any other unusual observations _____

QUESTIONNAIRE No. 3
School Directors/Heads

Coder's Name _____

Date _____

1. Type of school _____
2. Name of zone _____
3. Name of woreda _____
4. Name of school and grade level _____

5. Record No. of director /officer _____
6. Age _____
7. Sex Male Female
8. Years of service _____
9. Qualification _____
10. Where have you been working for last 10 years (work history)?

11. The director's activities performed during the last academic year?

LAST WEEK

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LAST MONTH

LAST YEAR

12. From record (statement) total number of teachers in the school.

Male _____ Female _____ Total _____

13. Total number of students in the school _____

14. Total number of students by sex & grade level

15. Total number of students who drop out by grade level and sex

27. Why don't more children in the local community enroll at your school? _____

28. In your opinion, what motivates parents in your community to send their children to your school? Describe. _____

29. In your opinion, why don't some parents send their children to school? Describe

30. What are the problems of education that are most often mentioned by community members?

31. In your opinion, what is the average distance that most students travel to school (one way)?

32. What is the maximum distance that students travel to your school (one way)?

33. In general, what do you think are the two biggest educational problems in Tigray region?

34. Why do you think that these two problems are the most significant? _____

35. Have you thought about ways that these two problems could be solved? _____

36. What would help the most in improving teaching in your school? _____

37. In your opinion, what are the two serious problems of your students today? _____

38. Why do think that some children drop out of school? _____

39. What kind of statistics do you have about your school? (Could we get copies of these statistics?) _____

QUESTIONNAIRE No. 4
Parents (Including Guardian)

Coder's Name _____

Date _____

1. This questionnaire is answered by parents or guardian who

- a) Send all of their children to school
- b) Send some of their children to school
- c) Send none of their children to school

2. Who is the person you are interviewing?

Mother Father Guardian Male Female

3. Name of zone _____

4. Name of woreda _____

5. Name of school _____

6. Record number of parents/guardian _____

7. Age (in full year) _____

8. Where have you been working for the last 10 years?

9. Size of land (in Tsimad) _____

10. Type of house

Corrugated metal

Thatched roof

Undistorted

Others

11. Number of Oxen _____

12. Number of Children _____

13. For those who enrolled in primary school now and who have been enrolled in primary school in the past list their sex and age.

14. Why do you send you child/children to school? _____

15. Do you think that elementary education will be helpful to your children? Yes No

16. If yes, how? _____

17. What do you feel about your children's teachers? _____

18. Does the school satisfy your children's educational need?

Yes

No

19. How? _____

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20. How many of your children go to school? _____

Male _____

Female _____

21. If you do/do not send your female child to school, what are the main reasons?

22. Do you believe that the primary school is useful to your community?

Yes

No

23. In general, what do you think are the two major educational problems in Tigray region?

1. _____

2. _____

24. Why do you think that the two problems are the most significant? _____

25. Have you thought about ways that these two problems could be solved? _____

26. Have you suggested ideas that improve the learning teaching process? _____

27. In your opinion, what are the two most serious problems for students today? _____

28. Do you have a child who dropped out of school?

Yes

No

29. If yes, what is the reason for the drop out?

14. What kinds of activities did you hope to get done, and could not get to last week? _____

15. Why were you not able to get them done? _____

16. Please describe your activities for the past month.

17. What kind of activities did you hope to get done, and could not get to last month? _____

18. Why were you not able to get them done? _____

19. Please describe your activities over the past year.

20. What kind of activities did you hope to get done, and could not get to this year? _____

21. Why were you not able to get them done? _____

22. What does the Regional Education office expect you to do (if you are a zonal officer)?

23. Do you believe that their expectations are realistic? _____

24. What does the zonal education office expect you to do (If you are a woreda officer)? _____

25. Do you believe that their expectations are realistic? Please explain (if you are a woreda officer) _____

26. What do the school directors in your woreda expect you to do for them (if you are a woreda officer)? _____

27. Do you believe that their expectations are realistic? Please explain (if you are a woreda officer). _____

28. What do the school communities expect you to do for them (if you are a woreda officer)?

29. Do you believe that their expectations are realistic? Please explain (if you are a woreda officer). _____

30. What are the major impediments/problems that hinder your ability to carry out your job?

31. In your opinion, what do you think are the best things that are going well in your woreda/zone/region?

32. In general, what do you think are the two biggest education problems in Tigray region?

33. Why do you think these two problems are the most significant?

34. Have you thought about ways that some of the problems could be solved? Please explain in detail.

35. What do you think are the two biggest problems in the school of your woreda/zone/region?

36. What would help you the most in improving teaching in the school of your woreda/zone/region?

37. In your opinion, what are the most serious problems for the students of your woreda/zone/region today?

38. What do you think are the major reasons why parents send their children to school?

39. What do you think are the major reasons why parents do not send their children to school?

40. Why do you think that some children drop out? _____

41. What kind of statistics do you gather about the primary schools in your
woreda/zone/education bureau? Could we get copies of these statistics? _____

QUESTIONNAIRE No. 6
Questions About Pedagogical Centers

Coder's Name _____

Date _____

1. Have the school/WEO/ZEO/pedagogical center officials got training on how to use the pedagogical center? _____

2. Do the pedagogical center officials have familiarity with the materials in the center? If yes, in what way? _____

3. What is the future prospect of the pedagogical centers? Do you have any plan to expand them/it? _____

4. What general thoughts do you have about the use, importance, problems, etc., of educational centers? _____
Use: _____
Importance: _____
Problems: _____

5. Does the school/educational system have/make inspection of the pedagogical center(s)? If yes, how? _____

6. Do all the schools have school pedagogical centers (if woreda/zone official)? _____

7. How many schools have pedagogical centers? _____

8. How many schools don't have pedagogical centers? _____

9. How much do officials know about the intent and content of pedagogical centers?
A) Intent (objective) _____

B) List the materials that fairly equip pedagogical center? _____

10. Appearance of the pedagogical center.
A) good appearance _____
B) fair appearance _____
C) looks like a store _____
D) It is a messed up store _____
11. How are the teaching materials preserved?
A) acceptable _____
B) not acceptable _____
C) in a very bad condition _____

12. From your observation the pedagogical center

- A) has fairly enough materials for teaching most subjects
- B) is poorly equipped
- C) can hardly be called a pedagogical center

13. Most instructional materials available in the pedagogical center are

- A) commercially prepared _____
- B) prepared at the school _____

14. The annual budget of the pedagogical center is _____

15. The source of the budget is

- A) government _____
- B) community _____

16. Level of pedagogical center

- A) school-level pedagogical center _____
- B) woreda-level pedagogical center _____
- C) zonal-level pedagogical center _____

**ANNEX C: LIST OF WOREDAS AND SCHOOLS VISITED BY THE BASELINE DATA
TEAMS (in chronological order)**

1. **Eastern Zone**
(A half-week of research, as it constituted a combination training and supervised data collection)
 - 1.1 Tsaeda Emba Woreda
 - Dinglet Elementary School
 - Senafe Elementary School
 - 1.2 Kilte Belesa Woreda
 - Mai Kado Elementary School
 - Adi Beles Elementary School
2. **Western Zone**
 - 2.1 Laylay Koraro Woreda
 - Selekeleka Elementary School
 - Selekeleka Evangelical School
 - 2.2 Tahtay Koraro Woreda
 - Adi Abozut Elementary School
 - Wukar Duba Elementary School
 - 2.3 Mai Tsebri Woreda
 - Mai Tsebri Elementary School
 - Emba Mdre Elementary School
 - 2.4 Tsimbela Woreda
 - Endabaguna Jr. Secondary School
 - Zena Kode Elementary School
3. **Southern Zone**
 - 3.1 Emba Alage Woreda
 - Adi Shihu Elementary School
 - Egri Albe Elementary School
 - 3.2 Enderta Woreda
 - Mai Mekden Elementary School
 - Debri Elementary School
 - 3.3 Mekhoni Woreda
 - Aebo Elementary School

- Fana Weyane Elementary School
- 3.4 Enda Mekhoni Woreda
- Adi Arbaete Elementary School
 - Tesfay Ferede Elementary School
4. **Central Zone**
- 4.1 Enda Abatsahama Woreda
- Enda Abatsahama Elementary School
 - Mai Misham Elementary School
- 4.2 Naedier Woreda
- Mahbere Deigue Jr. Secondary School
 - Enda Arbi Elementary School
- 4.3 Adi Abun Woreda
- Adi Abeto Jr. Secondary School
 - Mai Darero Elementary School
- 4.4 Degua Tembien
- Maie Gua Elementary School
 - Ruba Khissa Elementary School
5. **Mekelle Sub-Zone**
- Aba Begremichael Catholic School
 - Adi Haki Elementary School

ANNEX D: FINAL WORKSHOP PROGRAM

FINAL WORKSHOP

USAID / BESO Decentralization Study — Mekelle, Tigray; Ethiopia

Monday – Wednesday, 2–4 October 1995 / 21–23 Meskerem, 1988

Workshop Program

Day One of Final Workshop: Monday, 2 October / 21 Meskerem

9:00 a.m.	Introduction/Welcome—Dr. Marc Sommers, USAID/BESO	10 minutes
9:10 a.m.	Opening Speech I—Dr. Solomon Enquay, Head, Social Services Sector, Regional Council of Tigray	10 minutes
9:20 a.m.	Opening Speech II—Dr. James Williams, USAID-Washington	10 minutes
<hr/>		
9:30–10:00 a.m.	—BREAK (<i>Beso</i> is served)—	30 minutes
<hr/>		
10:00 a.m.	Presentation I—Introducing the Research, and Some General Findings, Dr. Marc Sommers, Decentralization Specialist, USAID/BESO	30 minutes
10:30 a.m.	Presentation II—Perceptions of Educational Problems in Tigray, Ato Amare Asgedom, Project Researcher (Addis Ababa University)	20 minutes
10:50 a.m.	Presentation III—Report on the Pedagogical Centers, Askale Gebre Egziabher (Tigray Education Bureau)	15 minutes
11:05 a.m.	Presentation IV—Report on Issues of Access and Equity, Taklay Tesfay, Field Interviewer (Mekelle Business College)	20 minutes
11:25 a.m.	Presentation V—Report on Issues of Quality, Kinfe Abraha, Field Interviewer (Mekelle Business College)	20 minutes
11:45	Final Comments— Dr. Marc Sommers, Decentralization Specialist, USAID/BESO	10 minutes

11:55 – 1:00 p.m.	— LUNCH —	1 hour
1:00 – 2:30 p.m.	Questions and Comments Ato Amare Asgedom, Chair	1 1/2 hours
2:30 – 3:00 p.m.	— BREAK —	30 minutes
3:00 p.m.	Workshop Presentation — The Tradeoffs of Different Approaches to Decentralization, Dr. James Williams, USAID-Washington	15 minutes
3:15 – 4:15 p.m.	Workshop Discussion Ato Amare Asgedom, Chair	1 hour
4:15 – 4:20 p.m.	Preview of the schedule for Day II, on Teaching and the Woredas <i>End of Day I.</i>	5 minutes

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Day Two of Final Workshop: Tuesday, 3 October / 22 Meskerem

9:00 a.m.	Introduction—The “Bottom” of the System, Part I: Context for research on teaching/learning issues, Dr. Marc Sommers, Decentralization Specialist, USAID/BESO	15 minutes
9:15 a.m.	Presentation I—Report on Teaching Issues I, Kinfe Abraha, Field Interviewer (Mekelle Business College)	15 minutes
9:30 a.m.	Presentation II—Report on Teaching Issues II, Taklay Tesfay, Field Interviewer (Mekelle Business College)	15 minutes
9:45 a.m.	Questions and Comments Ato Amare Asgedom, Chair	1 hour
<hr/>		
10:45–11:15 a.m.	— BREAK —	30 minutes
<hr/>		
11:15 a.m.	Introduction—The “Bottom” of the System, Part II: Context for research on issues regarding the Woredas, Dr. Marc Sommers, Decentralization Specialist, USAID/BESO	10 minutes
11:25 a.m.	Presentation III—Report on Problems and Perspectives of Woreda Education Officials, Ato Amare Asgedom, Project Researcher (Addis Ababa University)	15 minutes
11:40 a.m.	Questions and Comments Ato Amare Asgedom, Chair	35 minutes
<hr/>		
12:15–1:15 p.m.	— LUNCH —	1 hour
<hr/>		
1:15–1:25 p.m.	Workshop Report—Update on Current Concerns and Issues Regarding the New Role of the Woreda Education Offices, Ato Ridaee Mesfin, Head, Department of Administration and Finance, Tigray Education Bureau, and Member of the Management Committee	10 minutes
1:25–2:25 p.m.	Workshop Discussion on the New Role of the Woredas Ato Amare Asgedom, Chair	1 hour

2:25 p.m. **Moving from the Woredas to the Entire System:
Previewing the Third and Final Day of the Workshop,
Dr. Marc Sommers, Decentralization Specialist, USAID/BESO** **5 minutes**

2:30-3:00 p.m. **— BREAK —** **30 minutes**

End of Day II.

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Day Three of Final Workshop: 4 October / 23 Meskerem

9:00 a.m.	Introduction—"Basic Visions" for a Decentralized Education System, Dr. Marc Sommers, Decentralization Specialist, USAID/BESO	15 minutes
9:15 a.m.	Presentation I—One "Basic Vision" Proposal, Ato Haddush Gebru, Head, Central Zone Educational Department	15 minutes
9:30 a.m.	Presentation II—A Second "Basic Vision" Proposal, Ato Guesh Hadgu, Head, Eastern Zone Educational Department	15 minutes
9:45 a.m.	Charting the Two Visions, Dr. Marc Sommers, Decentralization Specialist, USAID/BESO	10 minutes

9:50–10:20 a.m. — BREAK — 30 minutes

10:20–12:00 a.m. Questions and Comments
Ato Amare Asgedom, Chair 1 hour &
40 minutes

12:00–1:00 p.m. — LUNCH — 1 hour

1:00–2:00 p.m. Final Resolutions on the "Basic Vision" of a Decentralized Education
System for Tigray Region
Ato Amare Asgedom, Chair 1 hour

2:00 p.m. Closing Speech I—Ato Seged Abraha, USAID-Ethiopia 5 minutes

2:05 p.m. Closing Speech II—Wezero Aragash Adane,
Executive Secretary of the Regional Council of Tigray 5 minutes

2:10–2:30 p.m. — BREAK — 20 minutes

END OF FINAL WORKSHOP