

# Mainstreaming Civic Engagement into Water Supply Management in Kondoa District Council, Tanzania

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## Abstract

One of the significant changes made by the Government of Tanzania over the last two decades is mainstreaming of civic engagement mechanisms into water supply management. This instigation is motivated by the belief that civic engagement would contribute to greater voice and oversight of government functions through shared decisions, responsibility, transparency, trust and respect of public input. However, little evidence affirms the capability of citizens to articulate their voice in water service decision-making spaces. It is obvious that citizens' ability to articulate their voice is associated with the extent to which their voices are mainstreamed in water service decision-making spaces. This study, therefore, examined the extent to which citizens' voices are mainstreamed in water service decision-makings spaces. A mixed-method approach was used to generate data through survey of 376 households, 4 focus group discussions, 14 in-depth interviews, and field observations. The result shows that the spaces for decision making are moderately open for citizens but they are less capable to influence the pre-determined position of the public officials. There is also a lack of citizens' readiness to engage with government to some provided responsibilities in National Water Policy of 2002 and National Water Resources Management Act of 2009. All these hold-ups are a result of unclear ownership of water infrastructure and, therefore, citizens assumed it the responsibility of the government alone to deliver and maintain water sources. The author recommended for citizen's empowerment for creating awareness and capacity interventions for effective water supply management.

**Keywords:** Civic Engagement, citizens' voice, water resource management

## 1. Background and Context

The depressing state of water service delivery has taken a central theme in the discussions of

the international community since 1990s (Bakker, 2003; Brown, 1997). The global quest for the answers to the growing water shortage calls for international conferences and declaration to zero in the processes used in scaling up the provision of water services (Akhmouch & Clavreul, 2016; Makoni, Manase, & Ndamba, 2004). Among the conferences that gave a due attention to this include the 1992 Dublin Conference and United Nations Environmental -Meeting held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 and Ministerial Declaration of The Hague on Water Security 2002. This contributed to changes in water provision and management (United Nations, 1992). These conferences came out with two major principles: first, the involvement of market in water management which referred as water commodification; and second, community management which is referred as engagement of water users in provision and management of domestic water facilities (Bakker, 2003; Harris & Gantt, 2007). The second principle of engagement were highly adopted and practiced in developing countries especially Africa, as the market principle were feared to make water more expensive to users (Estache and Kouassi, 2002).

In Africa, some of the countries started to shape policy, legal, and institutional framework that accommodate civic engagement under broad reform of decentralization. Some of these countries include Ghana, South Africa, Uganda, Kenya, and Tanzania (Gbedemah, 2010; Mugumya, 2013). Important strategies for strengthening citizen voice include creating spaces for public debate and platforms for citizen-state dialogue, building citizen confidence and rights awareness (Andrews & Shah, 2002). According to Schlozman et al (2012) argued that level of influence of citizens public decision making has been used to describe their level of engagement in decision making process. Masifia & Sena (2017) argued that water is public trust and its management must not remain in public hands, but citizens need to be enhanced in decision making process to ensure transparency and accountability.

In Tanzania, civic engagement is stipulated in the Constitution of the United Republic of Tanzania 1977 and further detailed in Local Government Legislation. The United Republic of Tanzania is a state which follows to the principle of democracy, in which every citizen enjoys some direct and indirect share in administration as stipulated in Article 8 (1) of URT constitution of 1977. The Local Government Legislation also safeguards citizens' engagement in development initiatives. The Article 146(1) that established Local Government Authority (LGAs) states that the purpose of LGAs is to transfer authority to the people and consolidate democracy. These have formed the basis for the Constitution and the Local Government Legislation to vest power on citizens to control public institutions or public servants. All these are essential to ensure proper and effective service delivery. Civic engagement entails two-way interaction between citizens and service providers in various spaces of decisions in service delivery (Malik & Waglé 2002). Pertinent to this definition, in 1961, the Government of Tanzania declared water service one of the peoples right and declared its commitment to provide free water to all citizens (Nyerere, 1968). In 1991 the first water policy introduced cost sharing whereas citizens are required to contribute in water service through water fee for services. This was the period citizen's involvement is firstly introduced in water service delivery.

Further attempts to welcome citizens' engagement are observed in the reforms done in the

past two decades. Decentralization by Devolution (D by D) was made to decentralise service delivery, including water services (URT, 2006). The main focus of the reforms are to make Local Government Authorities more responsive to the needs of citizens by increasing transparency, accountability and participative decision making forums to make service delivery more customers focused (URT,2015). In the 2000s, Tanzania underwent water sector reforms both at the policy and strategy level. The policy framework is set out in National Water Policy (NAWAPO, 2002), which is also oriented towards achieving Tanzania National Development Goals set out in vision 2025 to achieve universal access to safe and clean water. The policy aims at ensuring that beneficiaries participate fully in planning, construction, operation, maintenance, and management of community based domestic water supply schemes (NAWAPO, 2002). Together with these policies in practice, National Water Resources Management Act (NWRMA) No. 11 of the year 2009, and Water Supply Act (WSA) No. 12 of the year 2009 was enacted. The target was to increase access to water services from 53% in 2006 to 90% by year 2025 (URT, 2006).

Despite the policy and practical interventions, water crises remain the risk of the highest concern, particularly to those who reside in the rural areas. The evidence available shows that, on average, 53.4% of the population in Tanzania lacked access to water services in 2017 (National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), 2017) and about 18,500 children under the age of 5 die yearly from the diseases related to lack of water services, like diarrhoea. Around 90% of these death were connected to poor water hygiene (Kessy & Mahali, 2016). In Kondoa District Council 57% of population has access to piped water (URT, 2020). These statistics imply that Kondoa District Council fail to achieve the set five-year development plan (2016/2017- 2020/2021) target of 85% of rural population with access to piped water.

Several empirical studies conducted in Tanzania have produced mixed results regarding declined access to safe and clean water. Some of these studies have revealed that poor access to water services is a result of improper decentralization of water services (Masanyiwa, 2014), political capture of water policy and projects (Nganyanyuka *et al.*,2014) weak oversight of watchdog institutions (Kunkuta, 2011) and a misunderstanding between Water Users Association (WUAs) and LGAs (Masafia & Sena, 2017). Furthermore, the conflicting governmentality between informal accountability and donor-driven formal accountability narrow the chances for citizens to hold their government accountable for water service (Katomero, 2017). These studies scantily explore on the capability of citizens to articulate their voices in available decision-making spaces provided under the reforms programs. This information is necessary in understanding the citizens' capability to engage with the government in fostering meaningful dialogues to improve water supply management.

## **2. Theoretical Framework**

This study is informed and expanded from the principle-agent theory and collective action theory. It theorizes that an Agent (i.e. government and other service providers) act on behalf of the principal's best interest and not self-interest (Blanchard, Hinnant, & Wong, 1998). Therefore, while, the principal will be exercising power and control over resources and decision-making through engagement in various public spaces, the agent would strive to free

control from the principal who is part of external constraining environment. The principal-agent theory helps to understand power position in decision-making organs of water service delivery framework. The theory goes on postulating that successful and meaningful engagement is determined by power of citizens in decision-making spaces. However, the theory is criticised for its failure to consider context or collective action problems arising due to people's different interest based on class, gender, income, wealth and other many elements of identify and social stratification.

The Theory of Collective Action was, therefore, adopted to address the conflicting interest arising among the people. According to Olson (1965) and Ostrom (1996) lack of motivation to share common interest in the group geared to free-rider problem. This scenario happens when individual members of the group abstain from contributing and yet enjoy the benefits arising from group members. Ostrom (2010) propose several conditions to resolve problem associated with collective actions problems. First, those entitled to the common pool resource and those who to be eliminated from accessing the common pool resources must be clearly stated. Second, engagement of the users of common pool resources is another important condition to influence collective action. The reason is that rules changes with time. If the beneficiaries were engaged in modifying the rules, they would be motivated in the management of the common resources. This will finally minimise the free rider problems. Third, the guiding rule is the usage and management of common pool resources which should be linked to the local desires and prevailing situation. The reason is that the way resources are valued by local peoples depends on how the usages processes were put. These conditions were used to analyse how citizens were engaged in formulating the rules for regulating water services (common pool resource) and management of water service delivery in general. Generally, this theory proposes the traditional self-designed institutions as the fundamental prerequisite in the delivery and management of water services. In this study, water is considered a common pool resource that are collectively managed to benefit all community members.

### **3. Methodology**

#### *3.1 Study Design and Setting*

This study employed a cross-sectional survey design. In cross-sectional survey, independent and dependent variables are measured at the same point in time. The design was used to investigate the extent which civic engagement mechanisms are mainstreamed in domestic water service delivery. The design is appropriate in this study because it helped to capture and control a large sample and explore the problem from multiple perspectives (Bhattacharjee, 2012). The cross-sectional design was compounded by mixed method approach. The choice of this approach was informed by the pragmatics epistemological position which combined both element of positivism and interpretivism. According to Saunders *et al.* (2012) and Creswell (2009), the pragmatism relied on philosophical assumptions that there are multiple ways of looking at the world and that no single way that can describe the entire picture of the phenomena. In this study, both quantitative and qualitative data were collected simultaneously and interpretations of result were integrated.

### *3.2 Study Area and Sampling Technique*

Kondoa District was selected as the study area among the eight district found in Dodoma Region in Tanzania. Kondoa District was purposively selected among others because it has the highest number of water schemes in Dodoma Region. In selecting the villages to involve in the study, a number of criteria were considered. First, list of all villages (strata) and residents in the study area were established with the help of village leaders by referring to currently used Village Household Register. The selection of the respondents from each stratum was based on simple random sampling. The proportionate stratified sampling was used to draw 376 heads of household from all 9 villages sampled from Kondoa District. Yamane's (1967) formula was used to calculate sample size from the population of 6126 households from Mnenia and Kikore Wards. Also, the key informants who are government officials at the higher and lower LGAs were selected by virtue of the positions they held. The officials from higher LGA are Council Director (CD), Heads of Department (HoD), District Water Engineer (DWE), and officials from lower LGAs include Councillors, Village Executive Officer (VEO) and Village Chairperson (VC). The Village Water Committees (VWC) and Community Based Water Supply Organisation COWSO were participated through Focus Group Discussions (FGDs).

### *3.3 Data Collection Technique*

The data for the study were collected through questionnaires survey, in-depth interviews and FGDs. The questionnaires were distributed in the households whereas a 5- point Likert scale was used to rate each statement related to civic engagement in water services and collective action. The Likert scale ranged from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agrees). Arsenault and Anderson (1998) described Likert scale as an excellent means of gathering people's attitudes and opinions. On the other hand, in-depth interviews were used to collect data from government officials. The audio-tape recorder was used for all interviews to ensure accuracy of the information (Elmendorf & Luloff, 2001). Focus group discussions (FGDs) with averagely 8 participants were conducted with Village Water Committee (VWC) and Community Owned Water Supply Organization (COWSO) from the selected 4 villages. Participants were encouraged to express their opinion without fear and provide very useful information based on their knowledge and experience. According to Berg (2007), FGD is a good method of gathering a wide range of views within a short period of time and it provide a room to collect unanticipated useful data during the discussion

### *3.4 Data Management and Analysis*

Appropriate data collection methods must be compounded by appropriate data management and analysis to authenticate research findings (Kothari, 2004; Yin, 2011). Informed by this observation by Kothari and Yin, the researchers in this study considered suitable and appropriate data management and analysis. The data that were collected though of questionnaires were analysed statistically following the suggestion by Saunders *et al.* (2012). Descriptive statistics were used to determine the extent of civic engagement mechanisms and results are expressed by using table containing frequency, percentages, and standard deviation. Based on the five points Likert scale, 3.00 was considered as a central mean score. All the



scores below the mean (3.00) indicate the less extent and the mean score between 3.00 and 3.99 is considered moderate while the score above 4.00 is engagement mechanisms was mainstreamed to large extent. Also, the Standard Deviation (SD) was used to show the extent of variation adoption of civic engagement attributes. The qualitative data, i.e. the data obtained through interviews, FGDs, and observation were analysed thematically (Kumar, 2011). Thematic analysis considers coding transcribed through the Nvivo software. The transcripts were uploaded to the software, and extracted through Nvivo coding system. The Nvivo coding system includes identification of the key concepts, which formed the basis of classifying the key categories and sub-categories.

#### **4. Results and Discussions**

To determine the extent in which civic engagement is mainstreamed into water service delivery processes, 376 households were surveyed to capture their perceptions. Respondents were requested to show their level of agreement or disagreement with each of the given citizens' voice related statements. The core assumption is that civic engagement would give citizens greater voice and hold government officials accountable of their functions through shared decisions, responsibility, transparency, trust and respect of public input. Rocha Menocal and Sharma (2008) asserted that the majority of citizens raise their voice in planning processes, make complaints when they are unhappy with a decision, or the quality of service received or when their expectation are not met. The responses were quantified using descriptive statistics based on percentages, frequencies, mean and standard deviation. Moreover, in-depth interviews, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and observations were employed to solicit information regarding the adoption of civic engagement in water service delivery. The extract from the interviews and FGDs were organised by categories of civil servants from higher and lower LGAs, politician and members of VWC/COWSO.

##### *4.1 Citizen's Perceptions on the Extent of Engagement in Water Service Delivery*

The results on Table 1 indicate the citizen's perceptions regarding their extent of engagement in water supply management. Seven (7) individual statements were used to solicit citizens' perceptions on their voice in the decisions related to water service delivery. The result tabulated in Table 1 show that the highest mean score related to the citizens' voice statements was 3.8 and the lowest mean score was 2.9. The overall results show that six statements out of seven scored above the given mean of 3.0 while only one statement had scored below the given mean score. This means that the majority of respondents took moderate position regarding mainstream of citizens' voice in water service delivery processes. The overall mean score regarding perceptions of citizens' voice was 3.5 with standard deviation of 0.62. This implies that, on average, people agreed on the statements measuring extent of citizens' voice in water service delivery processes. These results were also in line with the findings of Rahman (2006) who carried a study in Thailand to investigate how citizens' participation in development matters mainstreamed public hearing. The result shows that public hearing is highly mainstreamed in service delivery process because the governing body has positive attitude toward citizens.

Moreover, the results of this study pronounce ineffective handling of the citizens' complain in

LGAs. In the analysis, the majority (47%) of the respondents in this study disagreed with the statement when they were asked to rate if complain are resolved fast and efficiently in water sector. This is contrasted from the situation in other countries. For example, in Malaysia, Weng Wah (2012) reported that Public Complain Bureau (PCB) is entrusted with managing public complains and it is observed to take the citizens complain very positively. Feedback is timely provided and the Bureau has influence in the government's improvement of services. For example, in 2010, the PCB received a total 2310 complains and 1820 complains in 2011 and all these were timely resolved. However, citizens' engagement in social services delivery in developing countries, Africa most often mentioned, leaves a lot to be desired. Nyarko (2007) revealed the same complaints as of this study through a study on sustainable access to better water supply in Ghana. The result both in Accra and Kumasi, shows that the majority (70%) of the people directly make complain about water service in person by reporting to the respective regional or district office. The study further indicated that for them making complain in person was the sign of seriousness. This implies that although Tanzania adopted the Public Complain Desk (PCD) every LGA, the citizens challenges were still ignored and peoples concern were remain unattended. The option that people took if the complains are not responded is the use on unprotected water source rather than raising voice to service providers. Theoretically, voice in terms of complain attempt to change the state of affairs by encouraging people outside the service provider to have say on the best ways service are to be provided and dissatisfaction. The result shows that people's voice expressed in form of complain they are not heard to improve water service delivery problems. This suggests that citizens have no power to influence some of the decisions whenever they show dissatisfaction with water service delivery in their localities. The statement and appropriate statistics were given in Table 1.

Table 1. Citizens Perceptions on Voice in Water service Delivery process (n=376)

Statements	SD n[%]	D n [%]	U n [%]	A n [%]	SA n [%]	Mean [SD]
We were actively engaged in all stages of water delivery	0.0	16.5	2.93	67.55	13.03	3.8[0.88]
We regularly give opinion to the government over water services	0.5	15.2	0.00	80.59	3.72	3.7[0.78]
Government accommodates opinions in decision making	2.1	21.8	0.53	66.22	0.80	3.5[0.91]
We were given a space for public hearing in your District	5.6	22.1	0.00	66.22	6.12	3.5[1.07]
Space of engagement is open for	7.7	24.7	1.06	55.05	11.44	3.4 [1.19]

discussion and question

Complain to the government about water service delivery	7.5	14.4	6.91	64.10	7.18	3.5[1.06]
Complain are solved fast and efficiently	14.9	32.5	9.84	30.59	12.23	2.9[1.31]
Overall	0.0	6.4	42.8	50.3	0.5	3.5[0.62]

Source: Field Data, 2019

#### *4.2 Perceptions on Civic Engagement among the Actors in Higher and Lower LGAs Levels*

The subsequent qualitative data presented the views of actors in water supply management of such as heads of department (HoDs), Ward Councillors, Village Executive Officers, Village Chairperson, members of COWSO and VWC to provide some further insight regarding mainstreaming of citizens voice into water service decision-making processes. This study sought to get the perceptions of district heads of department on how they mainstreamed civic engagement in water service delivery and how citizens' priorities are harmonized in the wider district plans. The result indicates diversities of opinions regarding the mainstreaming of civic engagement in water supply management. The study reveals the current use of bottom-up planning process known as Opportunity and Obstacles to Development planning methodology (O & OD) facilitated the collection of people's demands and priorities at the initial stage of the planning and budget processes. Through these processes the official listen to the views and development needs of the people in their localities. In O & OD process, people make plans based on their felt-needs and priorities. Plans prepared by local people in collaboration with technocrat at the District and local level are not limited to any of the sector but they cover various sectors such as water, health education, agriculture, livestock, fishery, and environment etc.

The extract below precisely informs that the government official at district level is quite aware on the needs of engaging citizens at the initial stage of the projects development for the benefits of ensuring proper management, ownership and sustainability of water facilities. The interview findings reveal that civic engagement serve the purpose of meeting statutory requirement apart from securing people's voice in decision and priority settings. When they were requested to inform how they engage citizens and the benefits associates, one of the respondents replied:

You cannot use a lot of public money to build water points which may shortly abandoned by the community. Engagement is legally recognised and there is no comprise about it. Community engagement is necessary to ensure continuity of the projects especially when maintenance is needed (In-depth interview with HoD in Kondo DC, June, 2019)

Other civil servants at the higher LGAs, in the same way explained that civic engagement in water service delivery is a good thing but not practically well implemented. The study further



reveals that apart from good plan the district have, the burden of responsibility is very high because district is big in size compared to number of extension officer they have. This finding indicated there is a shortage of extension officers to engage with citizens in executing water service delivery. The researcher further probed to know if there is budget to support citizens' engagement. The findings of interviews explain that the budget is precisely well established in every financial year but its implementation became cumbersome because they depend on internal own sources which they earn very little compared to demand of the budget to execute those activities. One of the civil servants was quoted:

Water service delivery in Kondoa District requires active engagement of both citizens and civil servant. But such engagement is constrained by the lack of enough staffing and sufficient financial resources. The challenge we are facing in water service delivery is not only question of people's engagement; it is also matter of human and financial resources" (In-depth Interview with HoD in Kondoa DC in June, 2019)

From the responses, it can be interpreted that civic engagement does not automatically lead to improved water service as emphasized in theories. The problem is that civic engagement operating under poor financial condition cannot achieve its success because government cannot bear transaction cost as disclosed by LGAs officials. This is because government officials and stakeholders might find it difficult to execute the required functions with limited financial resources. From that observation, it is clear that engagement of the citizens in water service delivery in the study area had not been achieved as it was expected partly because the council could not raise its own financial resources to carry out its outreach programmes. This finding is in line with Holland *et al.* (2012) who revealed that, in developing countries, a well-recognized set of weakness is inability of the state to provide the acceptable level of performance due to limited resources, low wages, mismanagement, poor oversight and political patronage. Limited financial and human resources to engage citizens entail that the government decides on its own while citizens remain ignorant of what is decided with regard to budget and distribution of resources. Put it in other words, the government officials have the monopoly over decisions related to water services or that citizens have very limited input in the decisions and the services provided. A similar problem was pointed out in the study by Oyugi and Kibua (2006) in Kenya who concluded that inadequate participation of the primary stakeholders in the projects has created a suspicion that both council staff and councillors are in cahoots to mismanage the funds meant for development. Inadequate citizens' oversight who is the primary water users may lead to misuse of the public funds.

Most of the civil servants interviewed, particularly the VEO who are responsible for supervision of all development activities in the village level perceived that engaging peoples representatives or politician in decision-making process is more efficient rather than engaging individual citizens. They took the position that elected representative are enough to ensure citizens voices in decision are taken into account and service are delivered on the best the interest of the people and they consider this as perfect practice. They believe that evolving every person is creating more problems in project execution. One of the respondents at the lower LGA remarked that:

If we involve every person to share their view they tend to cause more problem than benefits. I know in our society some people are not good at all. They always try to spoil everything and opposing for even development for their personal interest. I think councillors and Villages chairperson can represent people's interest in the meeting (In-depth Interview with VEO in July, 2019).

These results inform this study the negative perception of the VEO could probably constrained inclusion of people's priorities in water service decision-making. These findings is contrary with those of Nguyahambi's (2013) who conducted study in Mtwara, Shinyanga, and Morogoro to examine the influence of citizens' voice in monitoring and management of the primary education. The study found that public meeting were not effective to address the needs of the citizens' because citizen feared being labelled stubborn by the government officials. Related to this is the observation made in this study that it is difficult to engage people in maintaining and repairing water points. The leader went on arguing that it is very difficult to maintain infrastructures because citizens mainly depend on the support of the LGAs. The interviews revealed that it sometimes took more than two weeks to collect money to maintenance and repairs water point for example.

It is sometimes difficult to convince the people to contribute for the water pump repair whenever they were needed to do so... Some can even tell you that we are using their money to cover our family expenses (In-depth Interview with VEO in July 2019)

The same information was reiterated by civil servants at the Lower LGA that, sometimes, it is a daunting task to engage citizens when they were required to contribute in case of water point breakdown. The FGDs reveals that water service delivery is deteriorating because citizens are not ready to contribute whenever they required to responds as requirement of the policy. One of the interviewed COWSO members asserted that:

The community complains whenever they were requested to contribute for repair due to the frequent breakdown. Majority of the citizens think the government is responsible for the repair (FGDs with COWSO member, July 2019)

The above findings are in line with Carter *et al.* (2010) who reported that the ability and willingness to pay recurrent cost are very critical in water service delivery and sustainability. The study further argued that while community management model demands the users to bear cost. In practice, the amount collected does not suffice the required repair and users wait hope for the government and NGOs to cover the costs instead. The results of the current study were also corroborated with study conducted by Akayombokwa *et al.* (2015) in Nabuyani-Zambia where individual farmer were required to contribute USD 2 per year for maintenance of irrigations schemes. The study revealed that the lack of readiness among citizens in contributing money for irrigation schemes which established for their own benefits. Even though the agreement was participatory, farmers never made such a contribution. The researcher argued that such situation might be due to unclear ownership of the schemes and, therefore, citizens assumed it the responsibility of the government to sustain the irrigation schemes. The situation in Zambia are similar with what is happening in Tanzania in the sense that citizens were not empowered to participate in monitoring and evaluation development

activities that why citizens were reluctant to contribute whenever they were presumed to do so. The study conducted by Marks *et al.* (2013) in Kenya support the idea that sense of ownership and satisfaction is associated with participatory water planning. The result indicates that a sense of ownership and satisfactions is positively associated with individual households having made cash contribution for construction of the piped water system. This informs the study that if the sense of ownership to water project were built to citizens and if the relations between them are trustworthy they can take control the development programs and that ultimately result to better water service delivery.

From the collective actions theoretical lens, COWSO as the smallest institutions managing water service at the village level in Tanzania rural areas lack legitimacy because it is not citizen's self-designed institutions but rather formulated on the procedure provided in NWRMA (2009) and they were also not accountable to citizens. In such a situation, the existence COWSO fragmented the ownership of water resources for citizens because theoretically it does not exploit collective ability of the members such as knowledge, resources, and information for the benefits of the group interest. Through collective action processes, citizen-based knowledge is shared, debated, and combined with technical knowledge of the technocrats. The implication derived from this finding increases the need to formulate the tailor-made community-based institution that performs the collective roles to achieve result that benefit the whole group members. The supremacy of the community based-institution were echoed by Nukunya (2003) in Ghana who argued that the customary laws and practices do not cover only the use of water but it go further to realms of pollution control, water conservation and protection of catchments. The study further added that the influence of customary practices is still strong in rural areas due to respect for ancestors and existence of belief that the earth and all that are in surface are spirits.

The elected representatives such as Ward Councillors and Village Chairperson were interviewed to understand the extent to which civic engagement is mainstreamed in water service decision-making processes. Their view seems to be quite different with those of civil servant at the lower LGAs who favour people representative in decision-making processes. The elected representative claimed that civic engagement was dominated by government official. Majority of the elected representative at the village level posed their doubt in most of the event like village assembly when the civil servant were engaged with citizens in setting priorities because they failed to enforce their demand unless what they are proposing are similar with predetermined plans of Government officials. This was supported by respondents when they were asked if there is a value or need for citizen engagement in water service delivery; one of the respondents replied that:

Yes, there is the need for engagement because citizens they were given an opportunity to voice their demand, but my doubt is when district official meet with citizens in name of collecting views, they tend to come with predetermined position and sometimes they are not ready to accept if their view differ with citizens (In-depth Interview with Ward Councillors, July 2019).

As it can be inferred from the quote above, district officials are keen to the rhetoric

engagement only to show that they observe procedures which they don't obviously observe. This findings are same with that of Sanyare (2013) who found that, in Ghana, the local government satisfies the requirements of the laws by engaging citizens in planning processes as matter of procedures but they do not truly trust the process that would guarantee the needs and interest of local community members. Yang and Callahan (2007) who confirm that, in the structure which elected official were ranked high with respect to pressuring for citizens engagement, they are likely to have greater involvement effort by government. The study further noted that the elected officials affect the government decision because their influence increases the possibility of more engagement in decision making processes. This finding is contrary to the current study which reveals that citizens engagement in Kondoa District failed to attain it is expected output because the civil servant are more powerful than elected official particularly in making-decision processes. Moreover, elected representative added that involving people in water service decision-making process could not change anything unless they were provided with power over the civil servants. They think that if citizens were given a power to control money could help them to make decisions that are aligned with their need and preferences. This implies that most of the public meetings in lower LGAs are still consultative rather than interactive. One of the interviewee who reveals that situation explained that;

Engagement of local people could not bring any change, if people have not power to control official. We need power over utilization of funds and decision making (In- depth Interview with Village Chairperson, July 2019).

The quote above has an implication that the local government officials serve their interest, instead of the local people's interest. The question of whose voice was heard in water service decision-making process is not explicit but it can be learned from the quote above that decision-making was not born out of the need of ordinary citizens but rather dominated by government official. A similar argument was made two decades ago by Mukandela (1998) that many citizens and Ward Councillors from the lower LGAs have very poor education and find it difficult to make significant contribution to discussion and decision-making. The study further revealed that they have very difficult in comprehending discussion and they are threatened by those more educated and self-confidence. The results are consistent with work of Zikode (2009) who argued that people's engagement and participation in developing countries is just a way for the state to pretend to be democratic, when in reality all the decision have already taken. Thus, consideration should be given to substantive nature of public engagement because according to constitution and national water policy the power, responsibility and resources are supposed to be fully controlled by the citizens. Implication derived from the argument is that for engagement to be meaningful, the interactive relationship between citizens and government must be capable to influence each other in decision that geared towards implementation of national policy that is responsive to the people's desires.

## **5. Conclusion and Implication**

The results from this study contributed to the limited understanding on the capability of

citizens to articulate their voice in water service decision-making spaces. The study reveals that the pathways for civic engagement in water service delivery were moderately open but citizens were less capable to change the position of public officials in decisions-making processes. Some of the practices and conflicting perceptions among the actors in the water sector were found to create obstacles to effectively engage citizens in water service decision-making processes. First, the pre-determined position of the government officials in decision-making processes weakens citizens' voice in planning and priority setting. Second, the lack of sense of project ownership among citizens constrained their voluntary engagement in the management of water infrastructures. With those reasons in mind, this study concluded that the mere opening of the civic spaces for decision-making would not help unless the identified obstacles were addressed by giving the citizens space and power in discussion and water resources management.

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