

Development,
complexity
&
evolution

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www.owen.org
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Development is complex

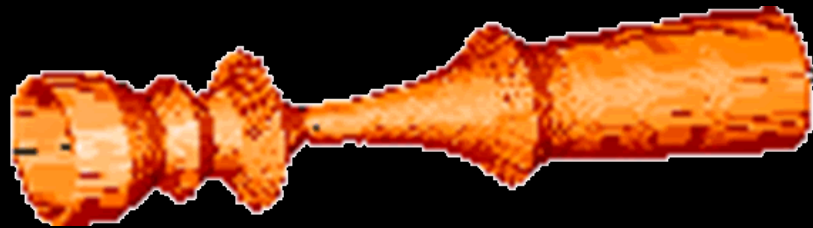
Some problems are so complex that you have to be highly intelligent and well informed just to be undecided about them.

Laurence J. Peter

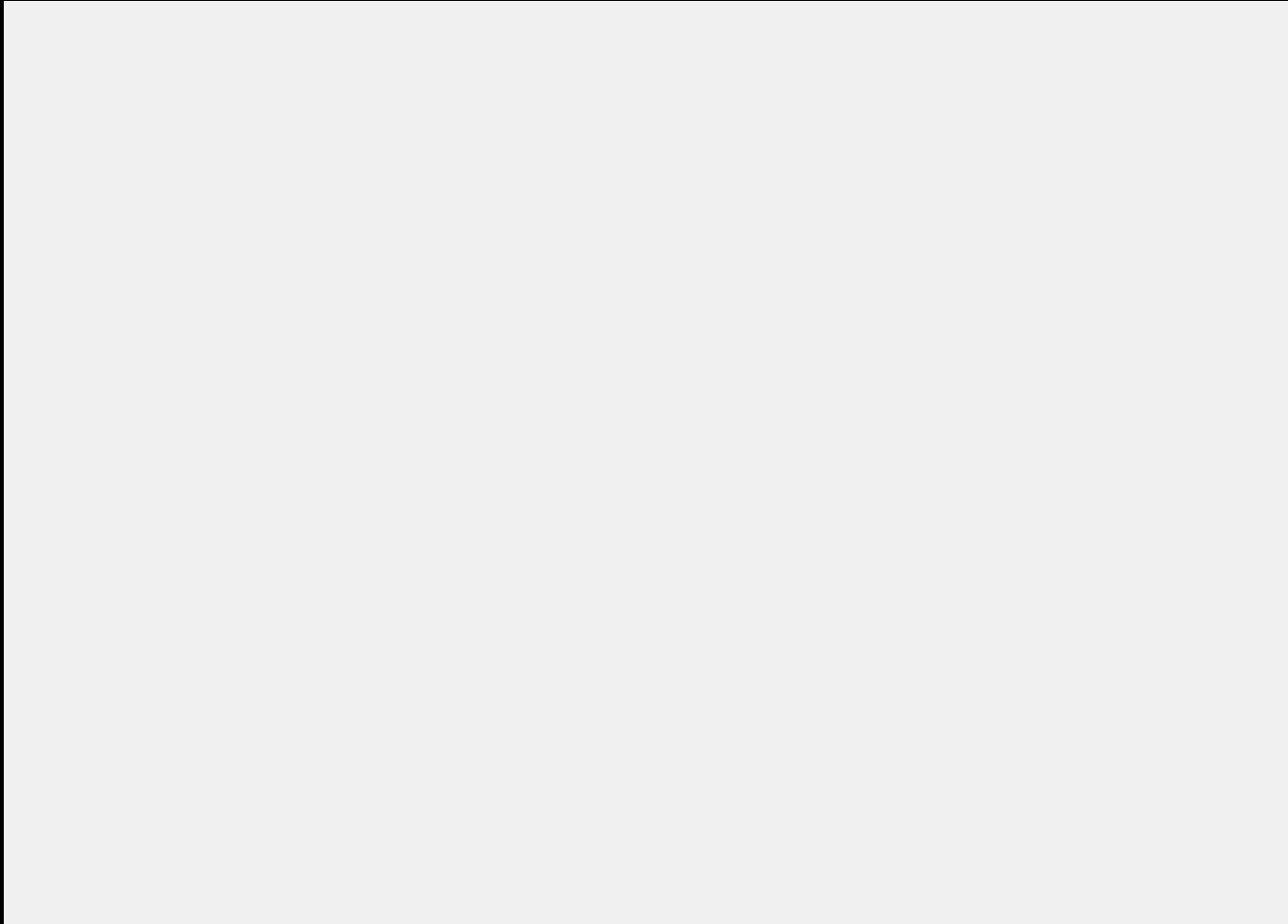
Definition of “wicked problems”

- Difficult to define clearly.
- Many interdependencies, multi-causal.
- Unforeseen consequences.
- Often not stable.
- No clear solution.
- Socially complex.
- Not the responsibility of any single organization.
- Involve changing behaviour.

All successful
complex systems are
the result of evolution.



Steve Jones, evolutionary biologist



1

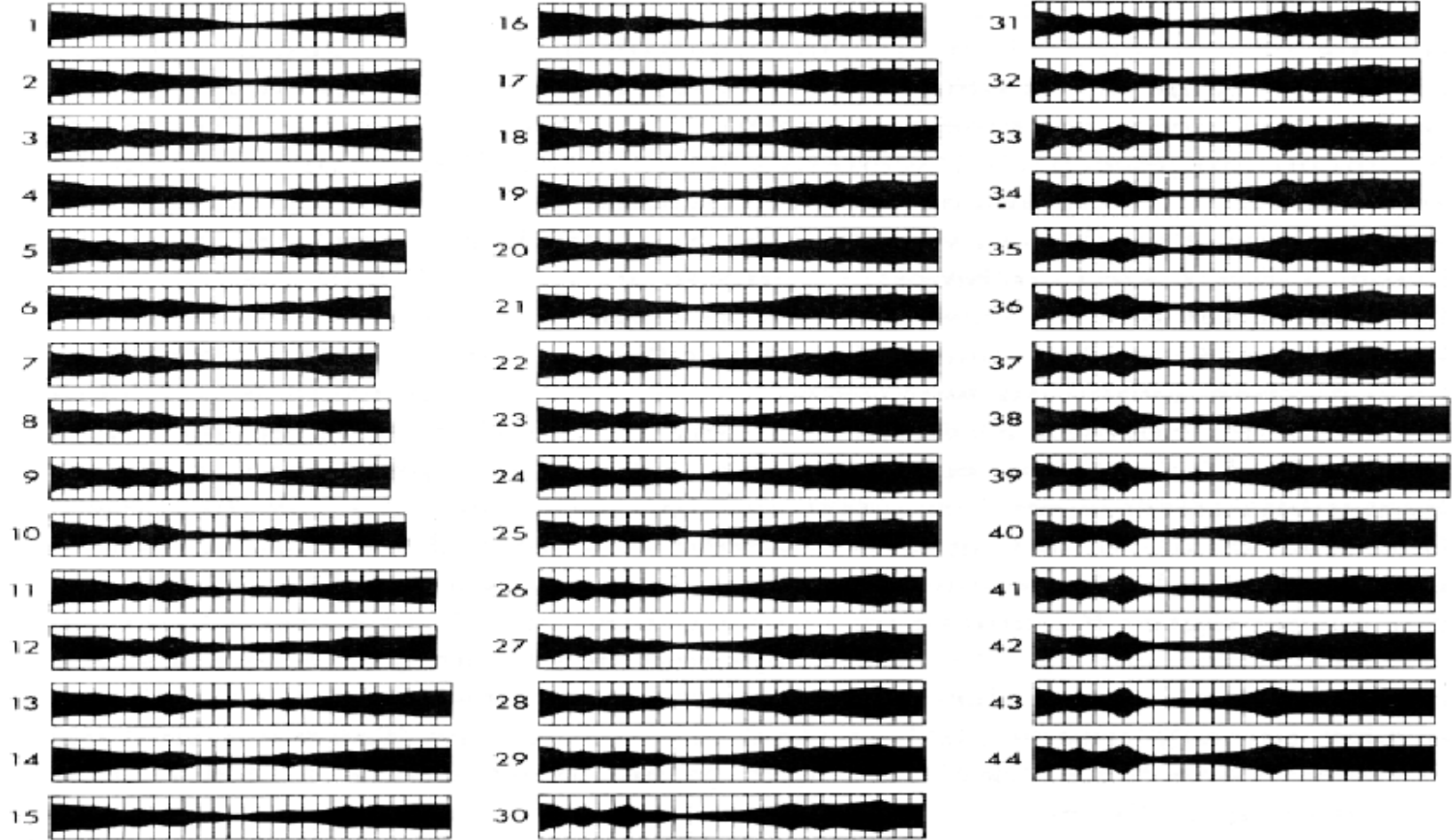
“Almost impossible problems” are solved by evolution not design

2

Evolution requires
variation and selection



“Almost impossible problem”
solved by evolution not design



Evolution requires
variation and selection



1

Development is a
“wicked problem”

2

Wicked problems are solved
by evolution not design

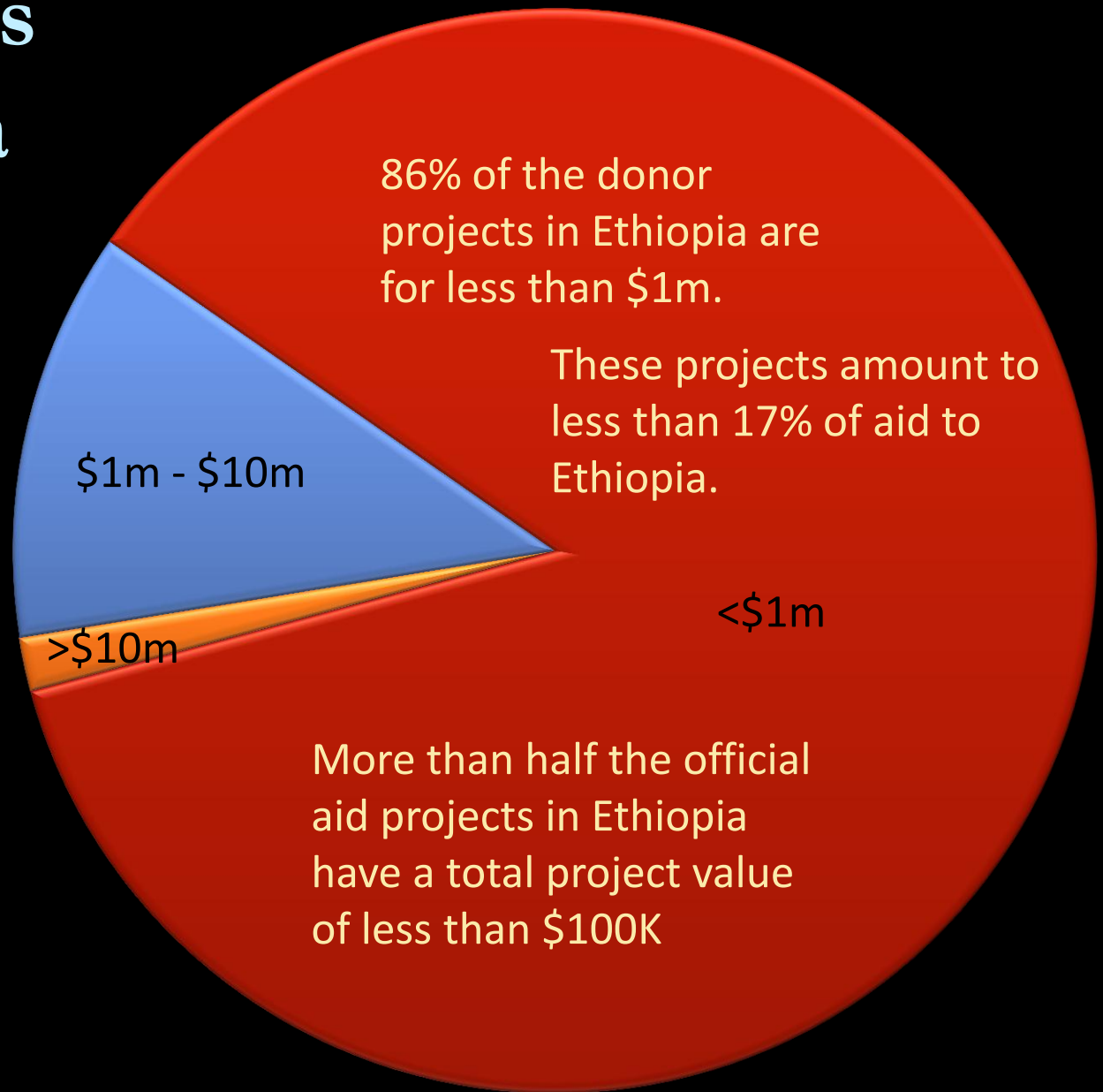
3

Evolution requires
variation and selection

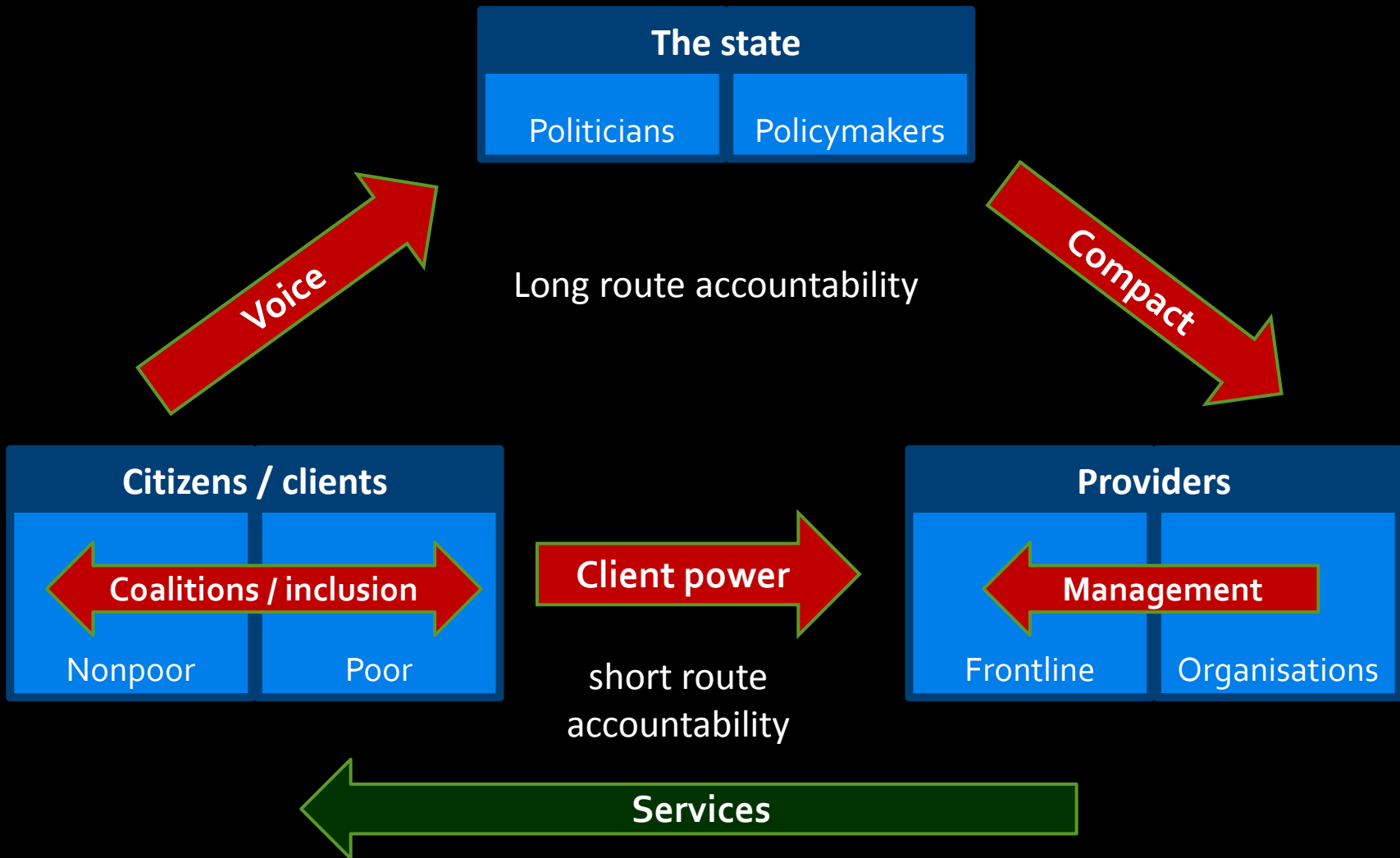
Aid projects in Ethiopia

About 12% of the projects are for between \$1m and \$10m. These make up 41% of aid to Ethiopia

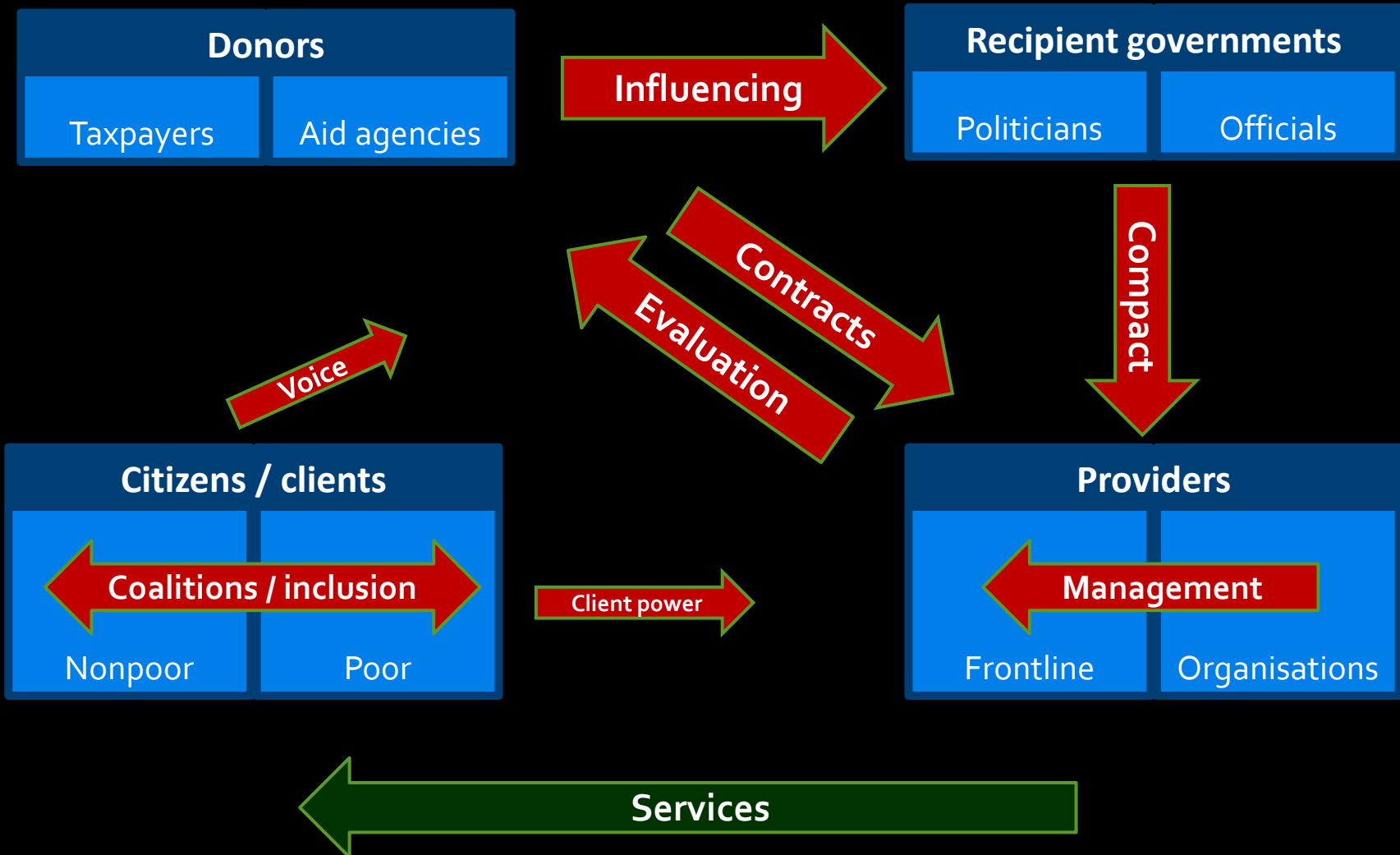
Less than 2% of the projects are for more than \$10m. These make up 42% of the aid to Ethiopia.



Short and long route accountability



Very long route of aid accountability



The power of information



Video Placeholder
Your video will display here.

Power to the people

- Randomised trial
- NGO report cards & public meetings
- Good results:
 - Waiting time decreased
 - Doctor and nurse absenteeism plummeted
 - Clinics got cleaner; fewer drugs stolen
 - 40-50% more children vaccinated
 - 33% fewer children died under the age of five
 - Saved 550 lives (in area of 55,000 households).

As change-makers
we should not try to
design a better world.
We should make better
feedback loops.