March 2024

Learnings from the WASH SDG Ethiopia programme (2017-2024)

IRC WASH

Supporting water sanitation and hygiene services for life

Ministry of Foreign Affairs

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Abbreviations

BBBC	Bole Baptist Biblical Church
BCC	Behavioral Change Communications
BOQ	Bills of Quantities
CR WASH	Climate-resilient WASH
CBO	Community Based Organizations
CC	Community Conversation
CLTSH	Community-Led Total Sanitation and Hygiene
DSA	Daily Subsistence Allowance
DGIS	Directorate-General for International Cooperation
GESI	Gender Equality and Social Inclusion
HEW	Health Extension Worker
IGG	Inclusive Green Growth Department
IT	Information Technology
LCC	Life Cycle Costing
MBS	Market-based Sanitation
MFI	Microfinance Institution
MHM	Menstrual Hygiene Management
MIS	Management Information System
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
ODF	Open Defecation Free
PHCU	Primary Health Care Unit
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SLTSH	School-Led Total Sanitation and Hygiene
ToR	Terms of Reference
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
VSLA	Village Saving and Credit Association

WASH	Water Sanitation and Hygiene
WASHCO	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Committee
WAI	WASH Alliance International
WI	Wetlands International
WUA	Water Users Association

Introduction

The WASH SDG Ethiopia programme is funded by the Dutch Government through the Inclusive Green Growth Department (IGG) within the Directorate-General for International Cooperation (DGIS) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs from July 2017 to March 2024. In Ethiopia, the programme includes two sub-programmes implemented by WASH Alliance International (WAI) and Plan International. The focus woredas[1] for the programme were Shashamane and Negelle Arsi, Bahir Dar Zuria, and Lasta Lalibela woredas. The WAI sub-programme has been implemented by consortium members Amref, Bole Baptist Biblical Church (BBBC)[2], Wetlands International (WI), IRC WASH, and Akvo while Plan International was implementing on its own.

The programme's overarching goal is to improve access to WASH services for all, especially targeting marginalised communities, including those in urban slums and remote areas. It uses an integrated approach, aiming for sustainable, climate-resilient, gender-sensitive, and socially inclusive water and sanitation services with improved hygiene practices.

The WASH SDG Ethiopia programme encompasses three core strategic objectives or pathways: (1) increasing demand for improved WASH facilities and practices, (2) improving WASH service provision, and (3) improving WASH governance and institutional framework in the sector. Various partners within the WAI consortium and Plan International are responsible for implementing these objectives, each focusing on specific pathways. Accordingly, Amref and Plan International focused on all pathways, 1, 2, and 3, BBBC on pathways 1 and 3, WI on pathways 2 and 3, IRC WASH and Akvo on pathway 3. Except for BBBC, which concentrated on sanitation and hygiene in urban areas in phase 2, the other partners primarily operated in rural settings.

The programme aimed to improve access to safe drinking water for 145,203 people, sanitation services for 231,573 people and improved hygiene behaviours for 139,341 people. Additionally, it aimed to increase access to improved WASH facilities in schools and health care facilities. Accordingly, 25 schools and health care facilities were targeted for sanitation while 42 schools were targeted for menstrual hygiene management (MHM) activities.

Mid- and end-term reviews, alongside sustainability check studies were conducted at the end of the first and second implementation periods. The mid-term review and sustainability check studies were instrumental in assessing progress, refining approaches, and adjusting targets, while the endline review, final external evaluation and sustainability check studies provided insights into programme achievements and informed addressing persisting sustainability challenges. At the programme's outset in 2018, the lead implementers signed a sustainability compact with local governments, aiming to ensure the sustainability of services and behaviours for 15 years after closeout of the programme.

The programme implementers decided to capture the achievements and lessons learned throughout programme implementation. This document forms a crucial component of these efforts. In addition to this narrative learning document, a brief video has been created, featuring audio and video footage of the beneficiary community, government, and implementing partners.

[1] Districts

[2] WASTE is the main contract holder, while BBBC is the local partner implementing the programme

Objective and Methodology

The main objective of this work is to capture achievements and lessons learned from WASH SDG programme implementation in Ethiopia.

The specific objectives are:

- Gather all relevant documents, data, and resources related to the Ethiopia country programme to capture a comprehensive understanding of the programme's scope, objectives, and progress and identify fresh areas of learning.
- Draw lessons learned from both successes and setbacks by reflecting on past experiences, analysing what worked well and what didn't, and extracting valuable lessons that can inform future endeavours.
- Capture unintended outcomes of the programme by identifying and documenting any unexpected or unintended consequences that arose during the programme implementation period.
- Prepare recommendations for future implementations based on the achievements, challenges and learnings captured.

The work is based on the evidence gathered from the presentations given in a workshop, documents shared and accounts from government partners that participated in the workshop. No field visits were conducted to the sub-programme implementation areas to gather evidence from government partners and beneficiary communities due to time, security, and cost constraints. Additionally, the input from government partners was limited to open discussions during reflection sessions.

The main methodology for preparing this learning document was facilitation of a participatory learning workshop with the participation of WAI, Plan International, woreda and zonal government sector offices, and Community Based Organizations (CBO). The workshop spanned four days: the first two days comprised presentations on core activities and achievements from all implementing partners, testimonies from government partners, and question and answer sessions, while the remaining two days focused on group activities aimed at crafting specific learnings for each thematic area.

Prior to the workshop, a presentation guide was formulated, refined with discussion points from consortium lead colleagues and shared with implementing partners of both sub-programmes. The main questions included in the template can be found in Annex 1. A virtual meeting was also conducted with the implementing partners to establish a shared understanding of the presentation guide. Implementing partners were also tasked with organising and sharing all sub-programme documents, including annual reports, monitoring reports, sustainability check reports, as well as any published or unpublished materials, photographs, and videos.

For the interviews with government and implementing partners, questions were developed and shared so that interviewees could prepare. For those interested in capturing additional visual content, a virtual orientation session was conducted to provide guidance on capturing high-quality video footage and images.

No field visits were conducted to sub-programme implementation areas to gather evidence from government partners and beneficiary communities due to constraints related to time, security, and cost. Additionally, the input from government partners was primarily limited to open discussions during reflection sessions.

The insights gathered throughout the four-day workshop and the examination of the programme documents underwent analysis and synthesis to create this learning document. The document was reviewed by all implementing partners, as well as WAI coordination team and consortium leads.

Key Achievements

Based on the three strategic objectives, Table 1 shows overall programme targets and achievements. The programme made significant achievements in provision of WASH services, surpassing targets in most areas.

Table 1: WASH SDG Ethiopia programme targets and achievements

Activities		WAI	PI	Total	%
Water beneficiaries	Target	110,000	35,203	145,203	
	Achievements	113,500	35,000	148,500	102.3%
Sanitation beneficiaries	Target	130,000	101,573	231,573	
	Achievements	132,289	83,420	215,709	93.1%
Hygiene beneficiaries	Target	77,500	61,841	139,341	
	Achievements	85,789	69,847	155,636	111.7%
School and HCF latrines	Target	10	15	25	
	Achievements	12	13	25	100.0%
MHM (Schools)	Target	30	10	40	
	Achievements	32	10	42	105.7%
ODF kebele	Target	20	32	52	
	Achievements	20	8	28	53.8%

Increasing demand for improved WASH facilities and practices

"*The sanitation challenges in urban settlements are substantial, but they can be effectively addressed and improved with relatively small efforts. Unfortunately, these issues have not received the necessary attention from both the government authorities and development partners engaged in addressing them*", Endalkachew Bogale, BBBC head office, programme manager.

This strategic objective focused on promoting the use of toilets instead of open defecation, practising handwashing during critical times in households, and ensuring proper follow-up by local governments to ensure sustainability.

The programme aimed to provide sustainable access to improved sanitation services for 231,573 people in rural areas by creating 52 Open Defecation Free (ODF) kebeles[3] and reaching 6,135 people in urban areas in Negelle and Shashamane towns. Furthermore, the programme targeted the construction of new improved sanitation facilities for 25 schools and health care facilities (HCFs).

To achieve the sanitation targets and attain ODF status in the rural kebeles, the programme adopted Community-Led Total Sanitation and Hygiene (CLTSH) and School-Led Total Sanitation and Hygiene (SLTSH) as the primary approaches. For the urban context, the programme used the FINISH Mondial diamond model in addressing both demand and supply aspects. Additionally, gender equality in WASH promotion and monitoring tools, Community Conversations (CC), and Behavioural Change Communications (BCC) were also applied. Sanitation enterprises were

[3] Smallest administrative unit in Ethiopia

established to offer improved sanitation facilities to households through the market-based sanitation (MBS) approach.

Additionally, by using the FINISH Mondial diamond model approach, sanitation loans were facilitated in urban areas through partnerships with three microfinance institutions (MFIs). Collectively these MFIs disbursed 1.81 million ETB in sanitation loans to 134 households for the construction of improved latrines, achieving a 100% repayment rate.

Figure 1: Slab manufacturing (left), construction of improved latrines (middle), and plastic slabs (right). Photo credit: Amref, BBBC and Plan international sub-programme offices

In total, the overall country program trained and supported 1,111 community members and 20 Small and Micro enterprises (SMEs) to increased demand for improved sanitation services.

Table 2: Trained community sanitation facilitators and promoters

S.No.	Activities	Numbers trained and supported
1	CLTSH/SLTSH facilitators	278
2	Community conversation facilitators	700
3	Hygiene promoters	133
Total		1,111
4	Small and Micro enterprises	20

These efforts benefitted 215,709 people, 22 schools and 3 HCFs with improved sanitation facilities and 42 schools with MHM.

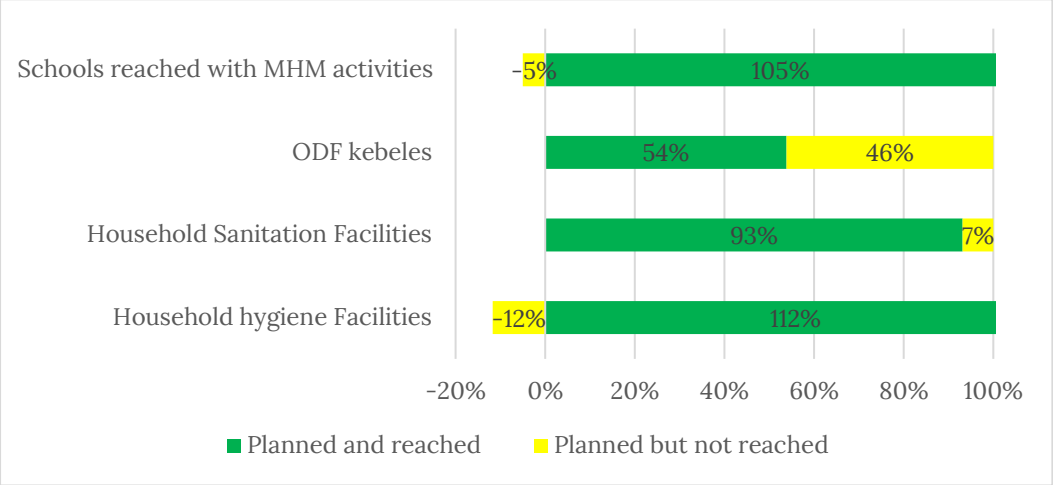

Figure 2: Target vs achievement of strategic objective one

The baseline, midline, and endline reports, conducted through household surveys, indicate a noticeable improvement in the provision of at least basic sanitation services, and a reduction in open defecation and use of unimproved latrines in Shashamane and Negelle Arsi woredas.

However, in Lasta Lalibela and Bahir Dar Zuria woredas, there was an overall decrease in basic sanitation service levels and an increase in unimproved sanitation service levels and open defecation (open defecation increase in Bahir Dar Zuria only). These changes are mainly attributed to the conflict in the region, lack of leadership commitment, and insufficient attention to WASH activities.

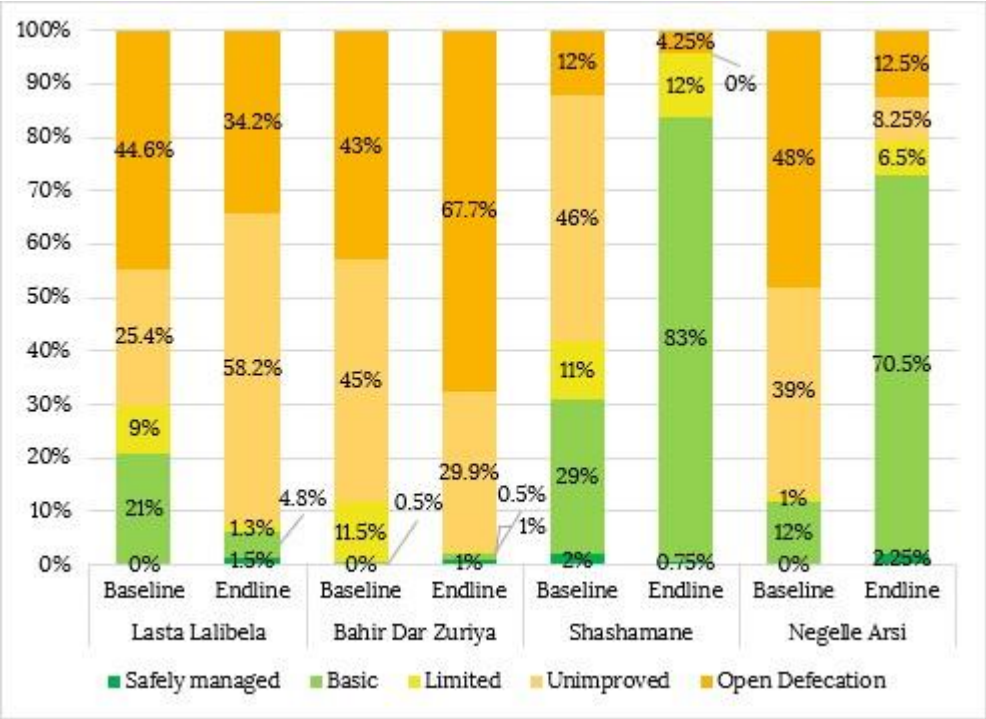

Figure 3: Sanitation service level (baseline and endline) in the four woredas.

The WASH SDG programme also planned and constructed wetlands to treat sewage from a condominium area in Shashamane City Administration. The programme constructed 850 m3 of sewage management wetlands at two condominium sites. This initiative directly benefited 120 households, 575 condominium residents. The programme's successful approach in managing sewage from communal septic tanks in the condominiums through wetland construction has been replicated in Adama city as well.

Figure 4: Septic tank (left) before and wetlands constructed (right) for sewage treatment in Shashamane. Photo credit: BBBC

The primary objective of the hygiene initiative was to promote handwashing practices at critical times and MHM across all targeted programme kebeles and schools, specifically targeting 139,341

individuals and 40 schools. The strategies used to promote hygiene behaviour included integration of handwashing, and MHM at community level and in schools. It also involved training of trainers who then cascaded the training to schools, kebeles, and villages through Health Extension Workers (HEWs), community promoters, Women Development Army, schoolteachers, and health clubs. The work with MHM groups in terms of developing skills on local sanitary pad making and the provision of MHM rooms and facilities led to positive impact on girls' attendance at school, as well as reducing the stigma of menstruation. In addition, the improved toilet facilities in schools have significantly improved the toilet-student ratio which is now close to the national standard. As a result, 155,636 individuals have started practising basic hygiene practice, emphasizing the need for a safe water chain and proper handwashing during critical times.

Figure 5: Disability inclusive school WASH facilities, Bahir Dar Zuria and Last Districts Photo credit: Plan International

Improving WASH service provision

"*In the programme kebeles, communicable diseases such as water borne illnesses (e.g., cholera) were common in the past. However, in recent years, there has been a notable decline in their occurrence. This positive change can be attributed to the improvements in WASH services implemented through the WASH SDG program activities*," Temam Abdela, Shashamane woreda health office, WASH NTD focal person.

The focus of this strategic objective was to improve access to and utilization of sustainable and safe drinking water for 145,203 people in the two sub-programme areas. The strategy to provide access to safe drinking water included the active involvement of local government and communities throughout all programme phases to ensure transparency, accountability, and compliance with government standards and regulations. The joint effort encompassed conducting feasibility studies and preparation of Bills of Quantities (BOQ) and design documents. Additionally, there was emphasis on engaging decision-makers to secure shared responsibilities, obtain approvals, and allocate resources. Leveraging resources from both the government and the community was considered the key strategy to address budget gaps within the programme, especially in water supply projects in Shashamane and Negelle Arsi.

Figure 6: Water supply activities in Shashamane (left) and Solar power-driven water supply system in Bahir Dar Zuria (right). Photo credit: Amref and Plan International

The WAI sub-programme successfully completed the construction of five new multi-village water supply systems and rehabilitating three existing ones. These efforts surpassed the initial target, providing access to improved water services for 113,500 people. The Plan International sub-programme successfully constructed 29 new water supply systems, rehabilitated six existing multi-village water supply systems and installed six solar power systems in Bahir Dar Zuria and Lasta Lalibela woredas. These efforts benefited 35,000 people in the two woredas.

Table 3: Water supply main activities

	Activities	WAI	Plan
New construction	Multi-village water supply system	5	
	Construction of water points	52	
	Installation of multi-village solar system		6
	On spot spring		20
	Shallow well		8
	Hand dug well		1
Rehabilitation	Multi-village water supply system	3	6

The key strategy for addressing budget gaps within the programme involved leveraging resources from both government and community. Accordingly, the two sub-programmes signed MoUs with the government and Water, Sanitation and Hygiene committees (WASHCOs). As a result, the WAI sub-programme managed to leverage up to 43%, while the Plan International sub-programme managed to leverage up to 30%.

The water supply service level during the baseline and endline show that the use of unimproved and surface water sources declined in Shashamane and Negelle Arsi while there has been an increase in provision of at least basic water services in Shashamane. However, in Negelle Arsi, an increase in use of the water supply by neighbouring kebeles resulted in an increased waiting time, which is why they still have a limited service level. Despite the construction of many schemes in Lasta Lalibela and Bahir Dar Zuria, the basic service level for drinking water has decreased, and reliance on unimproved and surface water sources has increased. This is attributed to the conflicts in which schemes were destroyed and prolonged drought which caused a drop in water tables.

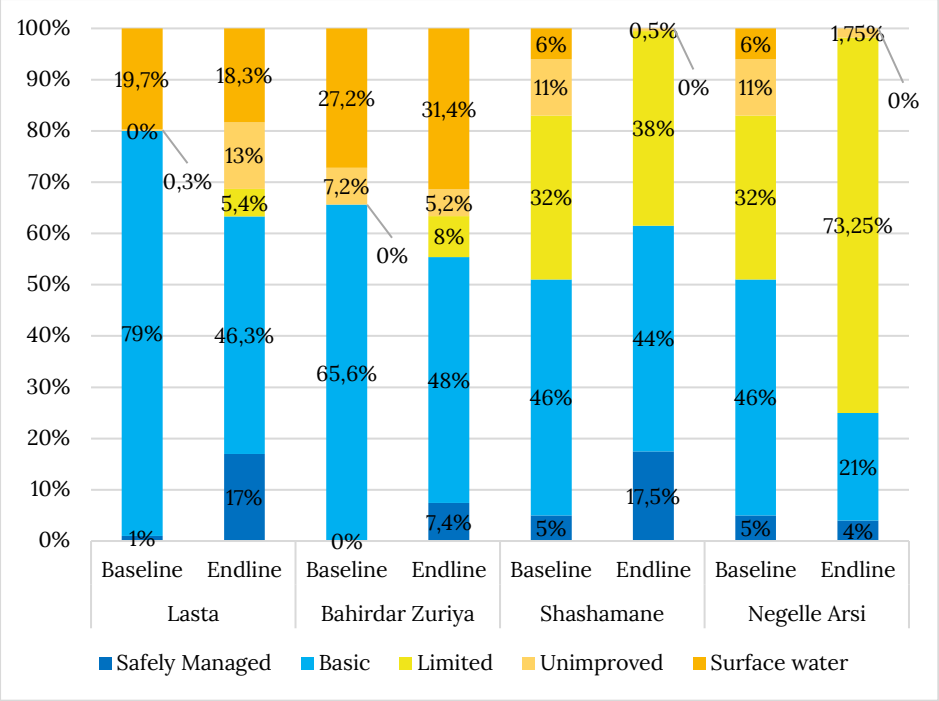

Figure 7: Contribution of WASH SDG to drinking water service level improvement

Improving WASH governance and institutional framework in the sector

The focus of this strategic objective was strengthening the capacities of national and district authorities, technical staff, and kebele level stakeholders. This was achieved through the establishment of various coordination and learning platforms both at national and district levels. Additionally, the objective involved advocating for business models and financing systems that foster the efficiency and sustainability of WASH services. Furthermore, the objective included the establishment of a Management Information System (MIS) and the provision of necessary Information Technology (IT) equipment to ensure the functionality of water supply systems.

"The establishment of Water Users Association (WUAs) has improved community ownership of water supply schemes, empowering them to independently undertake maintenance. This shift has transferred the responsibility from the woreda to the WUAs," Feyisso Keranso, Shashamane woreda water office.

Ensuring the sustainability of WASH infrastructure was a critical aspect of the programme. To address this, the programme established and trained 71 WASHCOs and 182 caretakers to manage, operate, and maintain the water supply schemes. Notably, 50% of WASHCO members are women, with many serving in roles of purchaser and treasurer. Those women actively participate in decision-making processes of their respective water supply schemes. Numerous capacity-building training sessions were conducted at intervals, covering topics such as technical management of drinking water schemes, tariff setting and financial management, rules and regulations under the Water Supply Schemes Management Proclamation, customer handling and conflict resolution, hygiene promotion, climate-resilient WASH (CR-WASH), and the gender in WASH monitoring tool. The use of the gender in WASH monitoring tool has improved the knowledge base on Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI). Accordingly, household WASH decisions taken by women have increased significantly in the Plan International implementation areas.

The programme supported the development, endorsement and launching of costed WASH SDG master plans, complemented by a resource mobilization strategy, in Negele Arsi and Shashamane woredas. These master plans serve as a guide for annual planning and reporting for the woredas, providing a comprehensive overview of the status of WASH services in accordance with the Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP). The woreda planning teams should update the master plan on an annual basis, reflecting changes and progress. During the process of developing the master plan, the planning capacity of the woreda-level planning team was developed and decision-makers' perceptions about WASH, particularly regarding budget allocation, have improved. The capacity of the woredas on resource mobilization and expenditure tracking has also improved.

"*By fostering constructive interaction and communication among woreda and zone WASH actors, the WASH SDG programme facilitated learning and sharing platforms, development of district WASH master plan, and awareness raising workshops. This initiative led to increased coordination and collaboration among woreda WASH offices. Previously, the woreda water office did not perceive the water supply challenges faced by schools and health care facilities as their responsibility. However, this mindset has changed now*," Foziya Jemal, Negelle Arsi Health Office WASH focal person.

Regarding learning and knowledge sharing, the WAI sub-programme established two district-level learning alliances (Negelle Arsi and Shashamane) and the Ziway-Shalla sub-basin CR-WASH learning platform. Since 2019, 11 district learning alliance meetings and six CR-WASH learning platform sessions have been facilitated. Both the district learning alliance and the CR-WASH learning platform had active participation of relevant stakeholders and engaged in discussions on lessons derived from the implementation of the WASH SDG programme, as well as pertinent district and national WASH and CR-WASH related issues. Results from WASH service level and building block assessments, expenditure tracking, WASH SDG plans, policy briefs covering WASH financing, CR-WASH and GESI were advocated on these platforms. Whereas on the CR-WASH platform, research findings, proclamations on buffer zone, wetlands and payment for ecosystem services, experiences on CR-WASH, effect of water scarcity, impact of climate change and environmental degradation on WASH service delivery and CR-WASH water safety planning were successfully advocated and discussed. Consequently, there was an improvement in coordination and knowledge sharing throughout the WASH sector thanks to the learning alliances and the learning platform.

Figure 8: Facilitation of woreda learning alliance and CR WASH learning platform. Photo credit: IRC WASH

The WAI sub-programme successfully restored 200 hectares of degraded land in the Gubeta Arjo kebele, with the goal of restoring the catchment to improve water quality and groundwater recharge. Figure 9 shows the restoration activities in the area. A Community-Based Organization

(CBO) known as the "Shala Arjo Natural Resources Conservation Association" was formed to facilitate catchment management operations and ensure its sustainability. This CBO has 206 members, of which 98 are female. The CBO members attended capacity building trainings on different catchment treatment and management activities. Furthermore, 14 different types of hand tools were distributed to CBO members and farmers in Gubeta Arjo kebele. As part of the restoration operations, 5,850 different forest seedlings were planted across the catchment region. Additionally, 1,603 one-day-old chickens, 206 poultry, 206goats, and 20 beehives were distributed after training was provided to the CBO and community members as part of efforts to improve their livelihoods.

Figure 9: Restoration of degraded land in Gubta Arjo kebele. Photo credit: Wetlands International

The programme also made an effort to set up a WASH Management Information System (MIS) at the district level to support maintenance. Capacity building trainings were given to government WASH sector office staff at the district and zonal levels on the development and use of the WASH MIS. To assist in operationalization of the system, IT supplies, such as laptops and smartphones, were provided to the woredas. Even though the system has been handed over to the government, it is not yet fully operational.

Challenges in implementation and strategies to tackle them

The sub-programmes encountered various internal and external challenges. Challenges include lack of consortium and sub-programme level MoUs, gaps in programme design, financial constraints, market inflation, and interest rates, approaches, capacity, and expectations, utilization of WASH MIS, impacts of COVID-19 pandemic, GESI, climate change, and sustainability.

MoU and programme design

The WAI consortium partners each have individual agreements with the donor, and separate agreements with the government. However, there is no MoU between in-country implementers or between the two sub-programmes. This gap in programme design posed challenges for the signing of agreements on strengthening the enabling environment, improving WASH governance and institutional frameworks with local governments, particularly for IRC WASH and WI, , as the government priorities were construction and rehabilitation. This approach also resulted in additional expenses, as each partner had to negotiate individual agreements, organize programme launches, jointly monitor and evaluate projects and close projects with signatories.

The absence of a common document repository and publication platform (document management systems such as SharePoint, Google Drive, or Dropbox Business where documents are stored and shared) affected activities requiring collaborative efforts, such as advocacy and influencing, and learning and sharing. However, effective communication helped to mitigate some of the challenges, leading to a relatively successful programme implementation.

Catchment restoration intervention is limited to one kebele. The lack of a comprehensive woreda-level bylaw posed a significant challenge on the restoration activities. During the implementation phase the potential negative impact from adjacent kebeles was not adequately addressed. Lengthy government procedures in legalizing the woreda-based multi-kebele bylaw slowed down the signing process. To minimize the impact, awareness creation campaigns were conducted in adjacent kebeles.

Financial constraints, market inflation, and interest rates

Price escalation, because of a high inflation rate emerged as a significant challenge for the programme, leading to a strain on the allocated budget for programme implementation. This price escalation in construction materials needed for water supply scheme construction led to delays in the timely delivery of the government's committed resource leverage and in the contractor's completion of the project on schedule. To address this issue, the programme opted for re-arrangement of the financial plans.

Providing sanitation loans encountered a significant obstacle due to high interest rates from MFIs. Additionally, the requirement of collateral posed challenges for potential borrowers, particularly for those lacking assets to pledge as security. The absence of interest-free loans tailored to Muslim communities further limited credit access for a significant segment of the population. Moreover, inflation and escalating sanitation product costs surpassed loan limits, making it difficult for borrowers to adequately fund latrine construction. Furthermore, there was a scarcity of loanable funds within MFIs, reducing their capacity to meet sanitation loan demands.

Efforts to tackle these challenges required frequent discussions and workshops at regional and zonal levels to collaboratively identify solutions. One such solution was extending the repayment period from 18 to 24 months, easing the financial burden on borrowers. To accommodate Muslim communities, interest-free sanitation credit options were introduced. Additionally, a group collateral loan system allowed borrowers to collectively provide collateral, broadening credit access for those lacking individual assets. Furthermore, emphasis shifted towards promoting affordable toilet options, making sanitation projects more viable within loan limits.

A significant challenge arose from a finance shortage for full master plan implementation. This issue stemmed from limited capacity (resource and human) of the woredas to effectively utilize resource mobilization strategies, coupled with woredas' expectation for external funding agencies to provide resources for implementation of the master plan. Despite ongoing efforts to develop resource mobilization strategies, the challenge persisted, with WASH sector offices grappling with the need for adequate financial resources to execute planned activities. While these initiatives have represented progress, they have not fully resolved the finance availability issue.

Approaches, capacity, and expectations

The sub-programmes originally adopted the CLTSH approach to attain ODF status in the targeted areas. However, since these areas were already familiar with the approach, community resistance emerged. To tackle this challenge, the sub-programmes employed various strategies such as CC, BCC, MBS, meetings, follow-ups, and experience sharing experiences from ODF villages.

Regarding the implementation of the MBS approach, greater emphasis was given to organizing, training, and supporting unemployed youth rather than entrepreneurs. Consequently, the high and immediate profit expectations of unemployed youth and their lack of business management experience, hindered the availability of products and services and the sustainability of the SMEs, especially in the rural kebeles. To address these challenges, the sub-programmes implemented measures such as the development of joint action plans with stakeholders, strengthening village saving and credit associations (VSLAs), conducting frequent discussions, review meetings, follow-ups, supportive supervision, offering incentives, experience sharing visits, and competitions/rankings.

A significant challenge arose from government staff members' expectation for incentives during their participation in programme activities, particularly in critical phases such as master planning processes, facilitating learning alliances, trainings, and monitoring activities. This challenge stemmed from a misunderstanding of the roles and responsibilities of NGOs, with some government staff members assuming that NGOs could give any amount as an incentive. Discrepancies in the Daily Subsistence Allowance (DSA) of the various NGOs further complicated the issue. The lack of incentives affected the motivation of the planning team and impeded progress and commitment to the process. Efforts to address this challenge included discussions at the zone level and organizing a series of workshops aimed at increasing interest and motivation among members. These initiatives helped to alleviate some concerns regarding expectations and fostered a greater sense of ownership and commitment to the process.

Utilization of WASH MIS

A significant challenge emerged due to the operationalization of the WASH MIS developed by the WAI sub-programme. One contributing factor to this utilization challenge was the delayed delivery of the customized WASH MIS. It was developed and delivered during phase two, leaving insufficient time to build the capacity of the government stakeholders, who are the end users. The delay was primarily attributed to Akvo, the lead organization of the activity, lacking a physical presence in Ethiopia hindered continuous capacity building and training.

To address the technical gap, an intern was recruited to train the end users and develop a mobile application for efficiently capturing and reporting real-time data from the scheme level. Furthermore, IT materials such as computers and smartphones were provided to build the capacity of the woredas. However, this occurred during the programme closeout phase, limiting the opportunity to improve the capacity of the woredas, the end users of the system. The absence of a WASH MIS, particularly in the water supply sub-sector at both regional and national levels, also contributed to the ineffectiveness of the system at the woreda level.

Impact of COVID-19 pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic presented substantial challenges to the programme implementation, as it imposed restrictions on movement, face-to-face meetings, and site operations, consequently prolonging construction timelines and disrupting project activities. To mitigate these challenges, virtual platforms were utilized to partially alleviate the impact. In response to the community's challenges posed by COVID-19, the programme allocated resources to implement preventive measures and initiate activities aimed at creating job opportunities for youth.

Participation of socially excluded groups

The involvement of marginalized groups in events, platforms, and decision-making processes was limited due to entrenched social norms. Additionally, the scarcity of technical personnel in government offices constrained their participation. Individuals with disabilities and women were often deemed unfit and less knowledgeable, resulting in unequal opportunities for them to participate alongside men.

Water level drop

Some of the water facilities constructed in Plan International intervention areas stopped providing services because of a drop in groundwater level. This is caused by prolonged dry seasons due to climate change.

Sustainability

To ensure sustainability, the sub-programmes employed the FIETS[4] approach, although consistent adherence to this approach was not monitored throughout the implementation period. Securing government involvement is crucial for timely implementation and sustainability of interventions. However, achieving this has proven challenging due to factors such as frequent leadership turnover, low commitment of higher officials, conflicts, competing priorities (political assignments, etc.), district selection, budget constraints, lack of integrating NGOs' efforts into government annual plans and include in staff job descriptions, and inadequate support from higher-level sector offices. These challenges were partially mitigated by involving experts from districts and higher levels, disseminating legal frameworks issued at national and regional levels, and engaging in discussions with leadership. Additionally, the WASH SDG programme formulated, during the costed extension period, a seven-month sustainability phase aimed at addressing persistent sustainability issues.

Despite involvement from various stakeholders and efforts to access advanced research resources, finding suitable plant species remained a significant challenge due to the area's unique ecological characteristics. The initiative to generate income through beekeeping for the CBO in Gubeta Arjo lacked proper pre-assessment. As it turned out, specific bee friendly plants were unavailable in the area. This was attributed to the ecological conditions of the area, where plants struggled to grow due to factors such as water scarcity, mineral content, and complexity

[4] FIETS: five key areas of sustainability that need to be addressed to achieve structural impact: Financial, Institutional, Environmental, Technological and Social sustainability.

of ecological conditions requiring specialized knowledge. It was a significant oversight that the environment lacked essential elements for successful and sustainable honey production.

The sustainability of the learning alliance and learning platform posed a significant challenge, primarily due to the lack of funding to support the activities. This challenge was exacerbated by the failure to incorporate learning alliance activities into the Terms of Reference of WASH sector offices, resulting in a lack of recognition and support for their continued operation. Between the no-cost extension and the costed extension, there was a notable decline in learning alliance activities due to absence of resources. Efforts to address this challenge included convening learning alliance meetings during the costed extension period in the presence of woreda officials responsible for fund allocation.

Learnings

Increasing demand for improved WASH facilities and practices

Community empowerment and adaptation of approaches are important to fit the context of the woredas

The establishment and empowerment of Community-Led Total Sanitation and Hygiene (CLTSH) teams and demand creation teams at the kebele level are driven by community engagement, aiming to enhance sanitation and hygiene practices. The process includes continuous community discussions, action planning, and selection of teams by kebeles. Following team selection, comprehensive training sessions were conducted to build capacity and ensure commitment. Roles and responsibilities were clearly defined among team members to streamline efforts. Additionally, strong follow-up and support from Primary Health Care Units (PHCUs) and health offices were vital for sustaining momentum and addressing challenges.

In some of the programme areas, the CLTSH approach was not the appropriate approach because of the woreda's closeness to urban areas and familiarity with CLTSH. Different approaches including CC, MBS, and BCC were adopted to engage the community, create awareness, and improve access to sanitation facilities.

Using voluntary hygiene promoters to create a market link for the SMEs can ensure e sustainability of the enterprise through creating demand for improved sanitation products. Furthermore, establishing linkages with Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutes can ensure sustainability by facilitating knowledge transfer and skill development, enabling the adoption of innovative technologies and practices for improved sanitation facilities.

Using and adopting different tools was crucial for the success of the programme

Adoption of key WASH and gender equality promotions and monitoring tools, a portable WASH promotion tool, community conversation manuals, and a community hygiene promoter's guide are some of the tools used in the intervention areas that contributed to the success of sanitation and hygiene activities. In addition, promoting handwashing practices at critical times was achieved through the strategic use of Social and Behaviour Change Communication (SBCC) promotional materials, which effectively communicated the importance of hygiene practices. Community conversations also facilitated the adoption of handwashing practices. Gender equality promotions and monitoring tools supported improvement of participation of women in decision making.

Access to and utilization of sanitation loans support the provision of improved latrines

The bilateral agreement between the BBBC and MFIs played a pivotal role in providing access to sanitation loans for households. This agreement provided a structured framework for cooperation, enabling the smooth flow of funds and resources necessary for sanitation loans. Endorsing and integrating sanitation products and services into existing loan packages expanded the accessibility and reach of these loan facilities. The establishment of a guarantee fund by the programme for MFIs further facilitated this process. This fund mitigated the risks associated with sanitation loans, incentivizing MFIs to extend credit to households for sanitation products and services.

The participation of key stakeholders was instrumental in driving the initiative forward. Lobbying and consultations were conducted to endorse sanitation loans as a viable and profitable business opportunity, gaining support from MFIs. Consecutive training sessions on sanitation business concepts and models equipped MFIs with the necessary knowledge and skills to effectively implement sanitation loan initiatives. Follow-up and update meetings with branch managers, loan officers, exposure visits for bankers and government officials ensured continuous support and alignment with the programme objectives.

Improving WASH service provision

Leveraging resources from government and community creates sense of ownership and helps reach more people

The signing of an MoU with clear roles and responsibilities for stakeholders on financing, study and design, construction supervision, and post-construction management created strong accountability and collaboration mechanisms. By directly involving the woreda, zone and community in funding the local co-financing system (local resource leveraging), target populations were reached that would not have been reached otherwise. Engagement of political leaders and decision-makers, as well as community leaders, through evidence-based advocacy was instrumental in gaining support and mobilizing resources effectively. The decision to encourage in-kind contributions instead of cash proved beneficial in maximizing resources and developed trust and confidence in the government.

Careful planning and collaboration with relevant stakeholders will help to ensure construction of high-quality water systems

Ensuring a high-quality water supply system was achieved through careful planning, detailed assessment, and collaboration with relevant government partners. The involvement of the government in the design and construction phase was also critical. Quality supervision and technical support from a diverse range of sources, including government technical experts, and community leaders, ensured that construction adhered to high standards.

Furthermore, continuous follow-up and monitoring ensured efficient resource utilization throughout the programme. This involved regular checks, timely feedback, and proactive

measures to address any challenges. This helped to take necessary measures which helped maintain programme momentum and quality.

Implementing an intervention without sufficient evidence could lead to failure

Conducting a thorough pre-assessment before initiating any implementation activities is essential. This has become clear from WI's livelihood implementation. The assessment could involve a comprehensive evaluation of the ecological conditions, community needs, and available resources to inform programme design and adoptability. Additionally, referencing written documents and literature on beehives can provide valuable insights and best practices from existing research and successful projects.

Adopting climate resilient source and technology options is important

Shallow water sources are more vulnerable to the impacts of climate change than deeper ones. In response to climate change, emphasis should be placed on the development of more sustainable water sources, such as surface water and deep groundwater. Utilizing solar power for pumping ensures an affordable and climate-resilient water supply technology option.

Improving WASH governance and institutional framework in the sector

Capacity building activities are important to empower stakeholders and foster community ownership and accountability

The success of the water governance capacity building initiative was driven by several key factors. Firstly, by focusing on enhancing the skills of both government experts and community members in management, operation, and maintenance ensured a comprehensive understanding of water governance principles. Capacity building activities included trainings on regional rules and regulations, management practices, and empowering stakeholders to navigate local governance frameworks effectively.

Capacity development initiatives for WASHCOs enhanced their effectiveness in managing the water scheme sustainably. The development of training programmes and operational manuals equipped WASHCOs with the necessary knowledge and skills to fulfil their responsibilities.

Government officials demonstrated a keen interest in promoting livelihood options, income generating activities for CBOs and actively supported the association in addressing technical and skill gaps.

Engaging political leaders and decision-makers is critical for commitment and sustainability

Political leaders and decision-makers were engaged in the implementation process which increased their commitment and willingness to support the activities. Effective lobbying efforts including evidence-based advocacy were instrumental in gaining their attention and support. Approaching decision-makers and building positive relationships fostered mutual trust and understanding. Through briefings and active participation in the decision-making process, they were empowered to lead and champion initiatives. Organizing different workshops also provided

opportunities for in-depth discussions and knowledge sharing, enhancing decision-makers' understanding of community issues. Regular meetings, follow-ups and reviews on programme progress ensured ongoing communication and alignment of objectives, which demonstrated accountability and maintained momentum in achieving the goals.

Establishing a planning team helped in developing a comprehensive WASH SDG master plan

The establishment of the planning team proved to be instrumental in developing a comprehensive WASH SDG master plan. The engagement of multiple stakeholders ensured involvement of different expertise, resources, and perspectives, leading to comprehensive planning processes. The assignment of the team members by the woreda office heads, and individual commitment from the planning team members, ensured dedication and focus. Developing the WASH SDG master plan by involving woreda technical staff members in all the steps created knowledge transfer, and ownership. Strong follow-up, regular meetings and experience sharing with other regions, further enhanced collaboration, communication, and accountability within the team.

Evidence-based advocacy is important to get consensus at all levels

The increase in WASH budget allocation can be attributed to joint evidence generation through the life-cycle costing (LCC) approach. Advocacy on WASH finance, coupled with expenditure tracking, provided the necessary evidence to convince leadership of the importance of prioritizing WASH during planning and budgeting. Additionally, the development of tools, training sessions, and policy briefs contributed to a deeper understanding of the issues and the need for increased budget allocations.

Strong collaboration and coordination are important for collective action

The presence of strong collaboration and coordination among woreda WASH actors was significant for collective action. This was through the establishment and facilitation of learning alliances and a learning platform, which brought together key stakeholders. This can be attributed to the selection of stakeholders, establishment of a strong technical committee, and the development of the Terms of Reference (ToR) and Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). Ongoing communication and support, including the use of platforms such as Telegram groups, ensured timely follow-up and assistance.

Progressive allocation of budget by the woreda and engagement of additional partners to provide financial support for the learning alliance is important for sustainability

In addition, advocating for progressive woreda budget allocation from the beginning could have ensured adequate resources for conducting learning alliance meetings, thereby fostering continuous engagement and learning among stakeholders. Similarly, advocating for the inclusion of learning alliance focal person responsibilities in job descriptions and government annual plans would have institutionalized the role and ensured ongoing support for its activities.

Advocating for the involvement of other partners to financially support the learning alliance would have diversified funding sources and strengthened collaboration within the initiative. Additionally, advocating for uniformity in incentives across woredas and including roles and

responsibilities in project agreements could have mitigated misunderstandings and promoted consistency in implementation.

Conclusion and recommendations

In conclusion, the implementation of the WASH SDG Ethiopia programme has demonstrated substantial progress and key achievements in addressing WASH challenges in the selected woredas in Ethiopia. These achievements include demand for improved WASH facilities and practices, enhancing WASH service provision, and improving WASH governance and institutional frameworks. The collaborative efforts of stakeholders, including government bodies, community members, and various organizations, have been pivotal in driving these achievements.

Key learnings have emerged, emphasizing the crucial role of community engagement, strategic dissemination of information, and capacity building initiatives in empowering stakeholders and fostering collective action. It is evident that strong collaboration, detailed planning, and evidence-based advocacy play a critical role in ensuring the sustainability and long-term impact of these initiatives.

Several key recommendations emerge to enhance programme effectiveness and sustainability.

1. A comprehensive MoU and a centralized data repository are required to enhance collaboration, planning, and implementation efforts among consortium members and across sub-programmes.
2. Implementing partners ought to establish a physical presence within the country to provide close support and facilitate the implementation of planned activities.
3. The involvement of two partners in the same assignment within the same area leads to duplication of efforts.
4. When exploring alternative water supply technologies, prioritizing climate-resilient options such as solar power is crucial. This shift not only fosters sustainability but also reduces reliance on traditional methods. Moreover, decreasing reliance on diesel generators encourages the adoption of cleaner energy alternatives.
5. The construction of water supply infrastructure should be integrated with water resource management measures.
6. There needs to be a greater emphasis on embracing a market-driven sanitation approach. This approach prioritizes the development of sanitation products and services that are tailored to meet the specific needs of communities driven by demand.
7. Encouraging households with targeted and smart subsidies, especially those facing financial constraints, and providing sanitation loans to those experiencing liquidity issues can alleviate their financial burdens. Advocacy campaigns should target the national bank to secure dedicated sanitation loans with lower interest rates. Furthermore, incorporating Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs) into sanitation initiatives can enhance community empowerment both economically and socially.
8. Providing financial support and initial capital to sanitation SMEs can stimulate market growth and ensure sustainable access to sanitation services. In addition, emphasis should be placed on fostering business interest and motivation rather than solely focusing on job creation for the unemployed youth.
9. Scaling up best practices in improved sanitation facility construction to other areas can maximize the impact of successful interventions and address sanitation challenges on a broader scale. In addition, exploring and adapting additional innovative sanitation

technologies from both local and international sources can enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of sanitation interventions.

10. Utilizing hygiene promotion tools and behaviour change communication methods (regular peer-to-peer dialogue, engagement of men and mass mobilization, promotion through employing various approaches and tools) should be an integral part of implementation as they are effective in creating positive behavioural outcomes within communities.
11. Incorporating additional features in improved sanitation and hygiene initiatives such as MHM rooms, waiting areas, and access to water with shower facilities for girls in schools can enhance inclusivity, increase school attendance, and address specific hygiene needs.
12. Integrating feasible livelihood options such as the cut-and-carry system, poultry, and shoat farming can provide sustainable income streams for communities while promoting catchment restoration.
13. The practice of annually updating the master plan and using it for annual planning should be continued to ensure alignment with evolving priorities and challenges.
14. Strong advocacy efforts should be undertaken to increase WASH budget allocations. Making WASH budgeting a regular agenda item for discussion in review forums and stakeholder meetings can also foster transparency, accountability, and create dialogue around resource allocation and utilization.
15. Leveraging local resources from the government and communities can help to reach more people and maximize outcomes. This can also ensure engagement, ownership, and strong partnership. Moving forward, it is recommended to include leveraging of resources for all agreed activities.

Available materials

Success stories developed:

Amref:

- Clean drinking water availability at all times in a rural village.
- Leveraging resources from government and community.

BBBC:

- Construction of wetlands for sewerage management in Shashamane condominium sites.
- Construction of toilets for schools.
- Construction of improved latrines in urban areas.

Plan International:

- Improving Access to Safe Drinking Water in Schools, Health Care Facilities, and Villages.
- Working in a Fragile Context: How Local Government Commitment Makes a Difference for the Provision of WASH Services.

Wetland International

- Risk assessment for WASH infrastructure and service, learning paper.
- Policy brief paper developed on the nexus between Wetlands, WRM and CR-WASH
- Catchment treatment for WASH: Ethiopia (video)
- CRF Project Documentary Part one

IRC WASH:

- Shashamane Woreda WASH Sustainable Development Goal master plan
- Negelle Arsi Woreda WASH Sustainable Development Goal master plan
- Effectiveness of the learning alliance platforms in Negelle Arsi and Shashamane Woredas, Ethiopia
- Learning and reflection from the Negelle Arsi and Shashamane woreda WASH Sustainable Development Goal master planning process
- Fourth Climate Resilient WASH Learning platform held in Batu town
- Lessons learned from climate resilient WASH learning platform
- Improving rural water supply financing in Ethiopia
- Climate resilient WASH: Working across SDG 6
- Gender equality and social inclusion in Ethiopia
- Gender equality and social inclusion efforts in Ethiopia
- Resource mobilization and implementation strategy of Shashamane WASH master plan
- Resource mobilization and implementation strategy of Negelle Arsi WASH master plan
- Expenditure tracking report of Negelle Arsi and Shashamne Woredas of West Arsi Zone in Oromia Region State, Ethiopia (July 2019 to June 2022)
- Leveraging resources for WASH: Lessons from WASH SDG programme in Shashamane and Negelle Arsi woredas in Ethiopia
- Immediate gains of a long-term engagement
- Building sanitation service that leaves no one behind

- SDG master planning in a number of districts in Ethiopia (video)

Akvo

- Home | WAI ETHIOPIA (akvotest.org)

Annex 1: Content of different presentation and group works

Content of implementing partners' presentations

- What were the main objectives of the thematic area?
- What were the key activities associated with each objective?
- What were the main achievements comparing planned outcomes to actual achievements?
- What were the unintended results observed?
- What approaches or strategies were employed to accomplish the main objectives?
- What factors influenced the success or failure of each activity?
- What were the challenges related to sustainability, and what approaches were adopted to mitigate them?

Content of WAI coordination presentation

- What were the objectives at the consortium/sub-programme level?
- What were the main activities under each objective?
- What were the main achievements?
- What were the unintended results?
- What factors contributed to the success, best practices, or failures of each activity?
- What challenges were encountered at the consortium/sub-programme level? How did you address those challenges?
- What were the key learnings at the consortium/sub-programme level?

Learning questions for the group work

1. What were the successes? Prioritize 3 to 5 key activities contributing to achievements and address the following WH questions:
    - What was the activity?
    - Why did it succeed?
    - When did it occur?
    - Who participated?
    - How was it implemented?
    - Where did it take place?
2. What were the challenges or areas of difficulty? Prioritize 3 to 5 key activities that encountered challenges and address the WH questions above.
3. How could improvement have been achieved? This question covers aspects related to both successes and challenges.
4. Recommendations and suggestions for future actions or changes.

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