Sharing the Joy of Mothers

The water supply, sanitation, and hygiene sector make a significant contribution to communities achieving their dream of leading more sustainable and better lives. However, the sector requires high capital investment and this remains the key challenge in many developing countries. Under the leadership and direction of the government, the participation and cooperation of multiple stakeholders are crucial to alleviating the challenges faced.

The Community-led Accelerated WASH (COWASH) Project is a bilateral initiative between the Governments of Finland and Ethiopia which is being conducted under the overarching umbrella of the country's One WASH National Program. Its key objective is to improve public health and well-being, social development, and climate resilience in the rural communities of selected woredas. Commencing in July 2011, COWASH is now in its fourth phase (COWASH IV) and focuses on the achievement of targets through the establishment of an enabling environment and the implementation of a community-managed project (CMP) interventions. COWASH IV is working in 104 woredas (districts) in seven regional states focusing on the provision of clean drinking water, sanitation, and hygiene.



Shallow well drilled and commissioned in 2022 for Chefie Tokofa Kebele, 22 July 2022, Deribew Zento



W/ro, Shumiye Demilie, Treasurer, WASHCO, Chefie Tokofa Water Point, 22 July 2022, Deribew Zento

During 2021, COWASH IV was working in Chefie Tokofa Kebele, Suluta Woreda in Oromia Regional State. It is a rural kebele located a short distance from Sululta Town and like most rural kebeles in Ethiopia, it had significant problems with the supply of clean drinking water.

In July 2022, the COWASH IV team's Communication and Dissemination Specialist, Deribew Zento re-visited the community to look at the clean drinking water facilities constructed and to assess the benefits of the project to the community.

Deribew met W/ro, Shumiye Demle, a resident of the kebele and member of the Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene Committee (WASHCO) formed for the project, she explained the problems they had prior to the project:

"We used to drink water by traveling a long distance and fighting with donkeys and horses in the flowing river. At that time, we wasted a lot of work time searching for water, which should be spent on other tasks. Besides, the water we used was not clean, so we were exposed to various diseases and wasted a lot of time in treatment. We used to spend a lot of money for treatment."

She went on to say "Children and students used to waste their school time fetching water. Moreover, they were subjected to rape and sexual violence. Because they come to school tired, they had a hard time achieving the expected results in their studies. In particular, disabled people were facing great challenges to get water, even if it was unclean. Most of them got water with the help of their families. Pregnant mothers and the elders were also facing many hardships to get water."

W/ro, Shumiye explained that COWASH IV understood the problem of the community and was prepared to find a solution by working with the concerned project stakeholders in the woreda. For this the direct support and participation of the community were crucial.

W/ro, Shumiye advised that they were trusted by the district WASH team to establish a WASHCO and, through the community, to save the amount of money needed for their contribution and to meet the conditions that will allow them to fulfill their role in the project.

The pre-construction process was been completed by the Woreda Water, Minerals, and Energy Resources Development Office and with the support of labour, money and ideas from the community, the construction of a shallow well was successfully completed and services to 60 households were commenced

From the visit, it was apparent that the condition of mothers, children, and the community as a whole had changed a lot. Their joy had increased! They expressed their good wishes for the COWASH project that built the water facility for them with love. On the day of the visit, many residents of the kebele came out and joined the discussions to share their joy.



Women members of Chefie Tokofa Water Point WASHCO, 22 July 2022, Deribew Zento



Deribew Zento with members of Chefie Tokofa Water Point WASHCO, 22 July 2022,

According to W/ro Shumiye, "Nowadays, we can get enough clean water at a close distance. No time, money, or energy is wasted searching for water. Diseases caused by unclean water and related problems have been greatly reduced."

The next and most important task was to make their happiness and benefits long-lasting by maintaining the sustainability of the water facility. The community understands that this is mainly the responsibility of the WASHCO and the user community and they are ready to contribute their part. W/ro. Shumiye and other committee members and local users assured Deribew that they have been given the necessary awareness training for this.

In addition, to protecting the water source with a fence, a variety of indigenous vegetation was planted to promote water safety in the area and to prevent the source from being exposed to floods. In order to determine the opening hours of the water facility and to ensure that it is not exposed to damage, etc., in-depth discussions were held with the user community and acted upon.

A seven-member WASHCO has been established for the water point. Three of them are women including W/ro, Shumiye who is the treasurer. Before the construction of the water facility, and apart from the 1,000 Birr collected from each of the beneficiary households and kept by the committee accountant, they discussed and agreed with the community to contribute 100 Birr from each household every month for the sustainable service of the water facility.

The WASHCO firmly believes that with the support of the Woreda Water, Minerals, and Energy Resources Development Office and the relevant stakeholders they will be able to implement all of this.



Ato Dereje Legese, Sululta Woreda Water, Mines and Energy Office Head, 22 July 2022, Deribew Zento



Chefie Tokofa Water Point beneficiary Community with woreda and regional COWASH representatives, 22 July 2022, Deribew Zento

The Head of the Sululta Woreda Water, Mineral, and Energy Development Office, Ato Dereje Legese, said that although COWASH IV is new to the woreda, seven shallow wells serving five communities and two educational institutions, together with one school toilet, were approved in the Ethiopian fiscal year 2014 (2021/2022) and subsequently completed with more than 3,000 people benefitting as a result.

In addition to achieving the project's construction and sustainability, by involving the relevant parties in various awareness training, he advised that the necessary work has been done to make the community contribute to the sustainability of the projects.

The COWASH IV team would like to convey our message that the supply of clean water supply, sanitation, and hygiene work cannot be handled by just one body and should fully involve communities. Furthermore, the user community should protect the infrastructure built and should fulfill its operational and management responsibilities, for there is nothing more joyful than sharing the joy of our mothers.