Oromia, On-track Region in COWASH IV

The Community-led Accelerated WASH Project, Phase IV (COWASH IV) is a bilateral project between the Federal Governments of Finland and Ethiopia aiming to improve public health and well-being, social development, and climate resilience in the rural communities of selected woredas. It fully supports Ethiopia's One WASH National Program which has the overall objective of achieving universal access to water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) services in the rural areas of the country. 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 Community Managed Project (CMP) intervention.

COWASH IV builds on the work of the earlier phases and is targeting increased and sustained coverage of safe water supply, sanitation, and hygiene in 104 rural woredas of Amhara, Benishangul-Gumuz, Oromia, Sidama, Southern Nations & Nationalities Peoples, South-west Ethiopia and Tigray regions.

The overarching goal of COWASH IV is improved public health and well-being, social development, and climate resilience in the communities in the Project areas with expected outcomes of increased and sustained coverage of safe water supply, sanitation, and hygiene in rural areas of selected woredas.



Bureau head handing over the procured materials to woredas. zones and region sectors, Nov. 2022



Community water point constructed and commissioned in EFY 2014, Nov. 2022

Oromia National Regional State is the largest regional state with an area of 363,375 square km of land representing 34.4 percent of the country. The total population of the region is 38,292,661 (19,805,936 males and 19,486,725 females) as per the 2021 population projection. The Region is divided into 21 administrative zones, 292 rural woredas, 743 urban kebeles and 6,431 rural kebeles.[1]

The Regional Government has been striving to improve the quality of life of the region's population by supplying safe water, sanitation, and hygiene with the cooperation of different development actors. Among these actors, COWASH IV is playing a key role.

COWASH IV is working in 11 zones and 30 woredas, which covers approximately 10 percent of the total woredas in the region.

The region has reviewed the EFY 2014 performance and 2015 core plan at a workshop in Adama city and concluded that the project was successful in most of the Woredas where COWASH IV was implemented. Regarding the outcome of the meeting, the COWASH IV Federal Technical Assistance Team (FTAT) Communication and Dissemination Specialist had a short discussion with Ato. Abadir Haji, the Oromia COWASH IV Coordinator.

Ato Abadir said "*Out of the planned 438 communal water points, 331 were constructed. Furthermore, of the planned 18 school water points, 24 were actually constructed in reality while of the planned 12 water points in health institutions, 10 were constructed. In addition, a further 33 existing water points were rehabilitated during the same period. In total, almost 90,000 people have benefited from the newly constructed and rehabilitated water points.*"

He added, "*Six schools and health institutions latrines were constructed while a further 28 latrines are under different stages of construction in schools and health institutions*."

According to Ato Abadir, most of the WASH facilities that are being built under COWASH IV in the region include provision for persons with disabilities. In addition to the contribution of the user community in terms of ideas, money and labour during the construction of water facilities, the commitment of the community to cover the operation and maintenance costs for better service water facilities is increasing. As a result, the rate of non-functional water facilities is decreasing with time. Implementation of a Water Safety Plan is in practice in most of the project areas of the region.

[1] Oromia Statistics Agency

In relation to capacity-building training, Ato Abadir reported *that "Capacity building and training is a key aspect of COWASH IV work. 15,092 people, from regional to the kebele level, were trained on different aspects of COWASH IV during the reporting period."*

With regards to the attitudes of the public Ato Abadir noted that "*Although it is not at the expected level, the social behavior towards WASH is improving. The community practice of building and using improved latrines, establishing handwashing facilities close to latrines and using them properly and maintaining drinking water treatment and safe storage at home is promising*."

Ato Abadier also mentioned that almost all of the planned procurement activity for EFY 2014 was successfully completed including motorbikes, desktop computers, laptop computers, printers and office equipment for use by project sector bureaus and woredas.



The Oromia 2014 review and planning workshop participants, November, 2022



Ato Abadir Haji, Oromia COWASH Coordinator, when he leads the discussion, November 2022

In relation to the budget source, Ato Abadier stated that *"For EFY 2014, Birr 81,543,331 was allocated from the Government of Finland and Birr 88,506,963 from the Regional Government, a total of Birr 170,050,294. As reported by the regional team, the fund utilization was Birr 41,562,860 from the Government of Finland and Birr 63,678,657 from the Regional Government giving a total of Birr 105,241,517 which is 61 percent of the total allocated budget."*

Ato Abadir reported that "*The implementation of the COWASH IV activities has been hampered by a number of issues including security problems throughout the region and the country, with the inflation in the cost of construction materials being a major challenge*."

The Communication Specialist also asked Ato Abadir that what was the main reason for all these results to which he responded: *"The Regional Government's decision to solve the clean drinking water, sanitation, and hygiene problems of the people of the region, especially in allocating the necessary budget for the project, the COWASH IV*

Regional Steering Committee's commitment to lead the project and solve the problems that are encountered, the contribution of the management bodies at all levels from Kebele to Federal level, and the participation of the user community is more than ever before.

"For EFY 2015 a budget of Birr 91,209,047 from the Government of Finland and Birr 131,925,365 from the Region, a total of Birr 222,984,412 has been approved for the capacity building activities and the construction of 463 water supply and sanitation facilities for the community, schools, and health institutions which will benefit over 105,000 people. Capacity building, social inclusion and behavioural change interventions will be some of the focal areas in EFY 2015." Ato Abadir said.



Health post inclusive latrine, Goba Woreda Bale Zone, constructed and commissioned in EFY 2014, Nov. 2022



Wayyu Tuka health center latrine constructed and commissioned in EFY 2014, Nov. 2022

The COWASH IV FTAT can assure everybody that it will provide all the necessary support during the course of the project for the benefit of the entire community, but everyone should understand that the main development actor for a project area is the Regional Government and the community at large. The Oromia COWASH IV family should be thanked for showing this outstanding result. Other COWASH IV regions should take the experience of the Oromia region and apply it considering their own reality. The COWASH IV FTAT has no doubt that during EFY 2015 results in the region will be even better than the last year