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COWASH



GREETINGS

Welcome to the second edition of the COWASH IV newsletter! We are excited to share updates on our progress in delivering safe water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) solutions across eight regions of Ethiopia. This issue highlights key achievements from the past quarter (March - June 2024) and features inspiring stories showcasing the impact of our work.

THE STORY OF ZARA ALI: FOFA'S MHM CHAMPION

As a student counselor at Fofa General Secondary School, Zara Ali has witnessed a significant change within her school. This transformation is all thanks to the Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) center built by COWASH IV and the dedication of Zara herself.

For years, Zara observed the hidden struggle of many female students who lacked proper hygiene facilities during their menstrual cycles. The impact was undeniable – missed classes, discomfort, and a sense of shame. This motivated her to advocate for change.

The construction of the MHM center built by COWASH IV in 2015 Ethiopian Fiscal year (EFY) was a turning point. This dedicated four room facility offered a solution and a new opportunity for Zara. The center became a platform for her to connect with students on a personal level, offering support and addressing their concerns.

Students like Kalkidan Banteayehu, a 12th grader, are now free to focus on their studies without the worry of missing classes due to period pain. "The MHM center makes a huge difference," said Kalkidan. "Thanks to Zara's support and this facility, I can attend school regularly."





Mekdes Degefu, a 10th grader, echoes this sentiment, "having the MHM center means I can stay in school and focus on my education. We are all grateful to COWASH IV and Zara for her hard work."

Zara's impact goes beyond individual interactions. She, along with some proactive students, spearheaded awareness campaigns to tackle cultural stigmas surrounding menstruation. These efforts, coupled with ongoing MHM education programs, have fostered a more open and supportive school environment for girls.

The success of the Fofa MHM center stands as a testament to Zara's dedication and the transformative power of menstrual hygiene education. It empowers girls to stay in school, reach their full potential, and pursue their dreams.

Fofa is just one example of COWASH IV's impactful work. Its MHM program extends across 16 project Woredas with a total of 20 MHM centers built within schools. Aiming to further expand this initiative, COWASH IV is carrying out an assessment in different project regions

FROM LONG WALKS TO LASTING CHANGE: COWASH IV IN OROMIA AND SIDAMA

Safe WASH access is the foundation of a healthy life, but accessing it can be a daily challenge in many rural parts of Ethiopia. COWASH IV is working to change that, bringing clean water and improved sanitation and hygiene to communities in rural Ethiopia. In this issue of our newsletter, we explore the project's transformative work in two regions: Oromia and Sidama.

Transforming WASH in Oromia

COWASH's journey in Oromia began in EFY 2005, focusing on just two zones and five woredas. Today, the project's reach has expanded to 10 zones and 30 woredas.

The impact on people's lives has also significantly increased. Over 777 new community water points have been constructed, providing clean water access to more than164,000 people. Schools have seen a significant improvement in hygiene with 63 new water points, benefiting over 35,100 students and staff. Additionally, 11 schools received new latrines, improving sanitation for more than 14,500 students. Beyond schools, COWASH IV constructed 24 new water points and improved sanitation in 46 health posts, ensuring better hygiene for healthcare workers and patients. The project also constructed 16 MHM centers and facilitated the establishment of 30 WASH SLAs across the region.





Sidama: Expanding Access

Building upon its success in Oromia, COWASH entered Sidama in 2014, initially focusing on two woredas within the then-existing Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples Region. Following regional restructuring, Sidama joined COWASH IV as a distinct region in 2021. The project's reach has expanded to include three additional woredas, now serving over 545,000 people across 79 rural communities.

The positive changes are evident. Over 110,000 people gained access to clean water through new and rehabilitated community water points. Schools received 14 water points, benefiting approximately 12,600 students and staff. Improved sanitation in schools with latrines for over 7,700 people has also been achieved.

COWASH IV also has empowered girls' education with MHM centers in four schools. Additionally, 20 WASH saving and loan Associations were established, fostering financial independence.

COWASH IV's work in Oromia and Sidama is a testament to the power of collaboration and well-designed interventions. By prioritizing WASH and community empowerment, COWASH IV is building a brighter future for communities in rural Ethiopia. Stay tuned for the next chapter of COWASH IV's story, where we'll explore the project's impact in other regions of Ethiopia!

COWASH IV CHARTS COURSE FOR FINAL YEAR AT CORE PLANNING MEETING



COWASH IV, held its annual core planning meeting for the Ethiopian Fiscal Year (EFY) 2017 from April 23 to 24, 2024, in Arba Minch. The meeting served as the final planning session for COWASH IV, making it a critical juncture to solidify plans and address remaining tasks before this phase of the project concludes in EFY 2017.

Around 70 participants attended the workshop, including representatives of Regional Bureaus of Water (BoW), the Embassy of Finland in Ethiopia (EoF), the Ethiopian Ministry of Education (MoE), and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland (MFA) as well as COWASH IV Federal Technical Assistance Team (FTAT) and all eight project regions' COWASH IV Support Units (RSUs).

Regional teams presented reports on their performances in EFY 2016 and discussions followed on overcoming challenges and identifying strategies to achieve remaining goals. Representatives from partner organizations also presented on various WASH-related topics, fostering collaboration across sectors.

Presentations included updates on the MoE's School WASH Program, internal audit procedures and insights from the EoF perspective. The meeting also facilitated in-depth planning, with dedicated sessions for each region to chart their course for the final year.

A highlight of the event was a side meeting between the Finnish Ambassador to Ethiopia and the African Union, Sinikka Antila and RSU team leaders, along with representatives from the MoE and BoW. This meeting further solidified the ongoing partnership between COWASH IV and the Finnish government, ensuring continued support for the project's mission.

Building on the momentum from COWASH IV's core planning meeting, all regional steering committees held meetings to discuss performance in the previous year (EFY 2016) and approve their plans for the coming year (EFY 2017). The regional meetings involved representatives from the Embassy of Finland, the Ethiopian Ministry of Finance, Regional Bureaus of Finance, Water, Education, Health and Women and Children Affairs, COWASH IV Regional Support Units, and the Federal Technical Assistance Team.

The Meetings proved to be a valuable platform for collaboration, knowledge sharing and strategic planning. With a clear roadmap in place, the project is well-positioned to achieve its goals and make a lasting impact on communities across Ethiopia in its final year.

COWASH IV EXPLORES WASH SUSTAINABILITY MODEL IN ETHIOPIA



Seeking to empower rural communities with long-term water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) solutions, COWASH IV is exploring the possibility of transforming existing WASH SLAs into Rural Savings and Credit Cooperatives (RWSCCs). This innovative approach, discussed with key stakeholders, could empower communities to pool resources and invest in WASH infrastructure projects, promoting financial independence and long-term WASH management.

Building on Success: In March 2024, COWASH IV's FTAT conducted a field visit to Yem Zone, Central Ethiopia, to strengthen existing WASH SLAs. Previously, COWASH IV facilitated the establishment of five WASH SLAs in Wegencho Kebele at the end of EFY 2014.

These groups, with a total of 152 member households, received essential training and successfully achieved their goal of constructing improved household latrines with functional handwashing facilities for all members. With the initial objective accomplished, COWASH IV and the WASH SLAs' leaders are setting their sights on the future.

Recent discussions involved Zonal and Woreda level partner bureau officials, cooperative development experts and WASH SLA leaders. The central theme of these discussions was the potential for WASH SLAs to transform into formal RWSCCs.

A Promising Path to WASH Sustainability: This transition holds significant promise, particularly for WASH SLA members. RWSCCs offer and foster financial services and independence empowering them to collectively save and pool resources for WASH infrastructure projects like household piped water systems. It will also enable them to manage their WASH needs autonomously, achieving long-term sustainability.

Beyond empowering existing members, RWSCCs can facilitate access to credit for sanitation and hygiene improvements or even establish market-based sanitation businesses within the community.



A Model for the Future: This initiative has the potential to establish the first WASH RWSCCs in Ethiopia, serving as a model for other communities seeking WASH sustainability.

The discussions highlighted the potential of this initiative and the willingness of local stakeholders to collaborate. COWASH IV FTAT plays a key role in facilitating these discussions and exploring the possibilities.

With 60 successful WASH SLAs established in Amhara, Central Ethiopia, Oromia, and Sidama regions, COWASH IV's commitment to empowering communities is clear. Its focus on developing RWSCCs represents the next step toward long-term WASH sustainability.

By supporting these initiatives, the project is paving the way for a future where communities can effectively manage their own WASH needs and build a healthier future.



KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

Safe Water for All: Over 437,542 rural people now have access to clean water through new and rehabilitated water schemes.

Empowering Communities: 20 WASH businesses launched and 73 WASH Saving and Loan Associations established, fostering sustainable solutions.

Healthy Schools: Improved WASH facilities in 220 schools, benefiting 152,260 students.

Hygienic Healthcare: 163 health institutions equipped with water points and latrines, creating a healthier environment for patients and staff.

Menstrual Hygiene Management: 20 menstrual hygiene management facilities built, promoting women and girls' health.

EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES FOR LONG-TERM INCLUSIVE WASH MANAGEMENT

COWASH IV is empowering communities and stakeholders across project regions through targeted training programs. These initiatives aim to promote long-term sustainability and inclusivity in WASH management.

Building Resilient WASH Facilities: COWASH IV successfully delivered two on-the-job training programs on Climate Resilience and WASH System Sustainability. Held in Sidama from March 25-29, 2024 and South Ethiopia from April 1-5, 2024, these programs equipped around 53 participants with valuable knowledge on COWASH IV's comprehensive Water Safety Planning (WSP4+) approach. This strategy empowers communities to effectively manage their water supply systems, from source protection to household water management, ensuring long-term sustainability.

The training focused on key areas such as comprehensive water management, building climate resilience and prioritizing sanitation safety. Participants learned how to protect water sources, adapt to changing weather patterns, and implement proper sanitation practices to safeguard water supplies from contamination. Additionally, the program addressed empowering communities to manage their water schemes for continuous operation and establishing sustainable financing mechanisms for long-term maintenance.





Building Capacity for Improved Sanitation and Hygiene: A separate training program in Southwest Ethiopia People's Region from March 26-28, 2024 focused on practical application. Here, 16 experts from Woreda and health institutions participated in site visits and discussions with WASH committees. The program aimed to assess sanitation and water point performance, identify challenges and opportunities for improvement, and ultimately chart a path forward for enhanced WASH services in the region.

Ensuring WASH for Everyone: Recognizing the importance of accessibility for all, COWASH IV conducted disability inclusion training in Tigray from March 11-21, 2024. 161 participants, including partner bureau representatives, COWASH IV focal persons from partner bureaus and representatives from person with disability associations, gained valuable knowledge.

The training sessions focused on raising awareness about disability inclusion in WASH facilities and equipping trainers to implement standardized inclusive designs.

This initiative is a crucial step towards ensuring the long-term sustainability and inclusivity of COWASH IV projects in Tigray.

Building Sustainable WASH Businesses:
In Oromia, COWASH IV held a training program that aimed to empower WASH business in Oromia from May 21-22, 2024. The training which took place in Adama city focused on empowering local stakeholders to support the long-term success of WASH Micro and Small Enterprises.

Around 21 participants from the Oromia Bureau of Health, COWASH IV focal points, and water and job creation offices gained knowledge in financial management. The participants are expected to train WASH MSEs established by COWASH IV throughout the region.

Enhancing Communication for Effective WASH Management: Simultaneously, a separate training session focused on building a robust communication network within the COWASH IV project carried out in Adama.

Around ten experts including regional partner bureaus' communication personnel, the regional support unit team staff and representatives from regional media participated in the training program.

This training equipped them with the tools for effective communication: clear reporting, targeted messaging, and accessible information dissemination. Following the training, communication specialists formed a regional COWASH IV communication network



This network will play a role in facilitating communication efforts throughout Oromia, ensuring information reaches rural communities.

COWASH IV's commitment to capacity building across various regions is empowering communities and stakeholders to manage their own WASH systems effectively. This focus on long-term solutions ensures a healthier future for all by prioritizing sustainability and inclusivity.

DID YOU KNOW?

COWASH IV has a wide reach! The project is working in 104 woredas across Amhara, Benishangul-Gumuz, Oromia, Central Ethiopia, Sidama, South Ethiopia, Southwest Ethiopia Peoples and Tigray regions.

THANK YOU FOR READING!

We hope this newsletter has inspired you to learn more about COWASH IV and the communities we serve. Together, we can make a difference in the lives of rural communities in Ethiopia by ensuring access to clean water, sanitation and hygiene.

cowashinfo@cmpethiopia.org

www.cowash.org

Community-led Accelerated WASH IV

COWASH IV (Community-led WASH Project) Ethiopia

@COWASHIV