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GREETINGS

Welcome to the fourth edition of the COWASH IV newsletter! Join us on a journey across rural Ethiopia as we share our latest updates, inspiring stories and project progress from October to December.

THE POWER OF INCLUSION: BOGALECH'S STORY



Bogalech Boresamo is one of the first women with disabilities to become a successful entrepreneur in her community." As a founding member of the Roori Market-Based Sanitation Center in Sidama, Ethiopia, she has been instrumental in the center's success, ensuring the availability of affordable sanitation supplies for her community.

Roori, which was successfully launched in April 2024, is a market-based sanitation center (MBSC) in Sidama's Chrione *Woreda* (District). It was established by COWASH IV in collaboration with Sidama Regional Government and is engaged in manufacturing and distributing liquid soap (detergent) and improved toilet slabs.

Before joining the center, Bogalech says unemployment was a huge challenge. However, the MBSC has provided her financial independence and a platform to contribute back to her community. Beyond financial stability, the center has empowered her to dream big.

Bogalech and her team aspire to expand their business and make a greater impact on public health.

Bogalech highlights the potential of individuals with disabilities stressing everyone has the capacity to work, given the opportunity. She says "as I've overcome challenges, others can too. We won't achieve anything by staying idle. Let's take action and work towards a better future." She personally exemplifies this message, demonstrating that a disability need not hinder one's capacity to work and make a difference. Belaynesh remains committed to the project's disability-inclusive goals, offering her expertise and support to other areas.

Bogalech's story is a testament to the power of inclusion and the potential of people with disabilities. Her determination and hard work have not only transformed her life but also inspired others to overcome challenges.



ETHIOPIA AND FINLAND CELEBRATED 30 YEARS OF SUCCESSFUL WASH PARTNERSHIP

A celebration of the 30th anniversary of Ethiopia and Finland's successful collaboration in the WASH sector was held on November 27th, 2024 in Hawassa City. The Embassy of Finland in Ethiopia organized the event to commemorate this milestone and the visit of the Finland Development Policy Committee.



The event was attended by State Minister of Water and Energy Ambassador Asfaw Dingamo (PhD), State Minister of Finance Semereta Sewasew, Ambassador of Finland to African Union, Ethiopia and South Sudan Sinikka Antila, Sidama Regional State President Desta Ledamo, members of the Finland Development Policy Committee and other invited dignitaries.

A key highlight of the event was the recognition of the 13-year-long effective implementation of the COWASH project as a testament to this successful bilateral partnership.

Ambassador Antila praised the project as a "role model for rural WASH in Ethiopia," highlighting its unique community-managed project (CMP) approach that brought a strong sense of ownership and commitment in beneficiary communities.

Ambassador Asfaw Dingamo and Semereta Sewasew echoed Ambassador Antila's sentiments, highlighting the project's effectiveness and sustainability. They commended COWASH's significant impact on the lives of millions of rural Ethiopians, improving public health and overall quality of life. Members of the Finnish Development Policy Committee also recognized the significant contributions of the project to rural communities. Since its inception in 2011, COWASH has benefited over 5.5 million rural communities across eight regions.





In addition to its approach, the project's success has been attributed to commitment and strong collaboration of the project partners. This, according to Neil Chadder, COWASH IV Chief Technical Advisor, makes COWASH a true testament to bilateral cooperation, emphasizing the remarkable partnership between Finland, Ethiopia, and the communities themselves.

As the celebration concluded, there was a shared optimism for the future of Ethiopia and Finland collaboration. Both sides expressed their commitment to further strengthen their partnership and expand the impact of the COWASH project.

Ethiopia and Finland have a bilateral relationship that dates back to 1959. Their cooperation in the WASH sector began in 1994 with the launch of the Rural Water Supply and Environmental Program (RWSEP). Over the next 17 years, this project improved access to safe water supply in the Amhara Region.

In parallel, the FinnWASH project was launched in Benishangul-Gumuz, further expanding the scope of the partnership. Building on the success of these earlier initiatives, the COWASH project, which is now in its fourth phase, was launched nationally in 2011, becoming the heart of this 30 years successful bilateral collaboration.

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

Safe Water for All: Over 697,759 rural people now have access to clean water through new and rehabilitated water schemes.

Empowering Communities: 26 WASH businesses launched and 108 WASH Saving and Loan Associations established, fostering sustainable solutions.

Healthy Schools: Improved WASH facilities in 376 schools, benefiting 259,344 students.

Hygienic Healthcare: 267 health institutions equipped with water points and latrines, creating a healthier environment for patients and staff.

Menstrual Hygiene Management: 39 menstrual hygiene management facilities built, promoting women and girls' health.

A HIGH-LEVEL DELEGATION VISITS COWASH IV'S WORK IN SIDAMA



On November 28, 2024, a high-level delegation from Ethiopia and Finland visited COWASH IV's community water schemes and school WASH initiatives in Sidama's Wongo Genet Woreda. The delegation, which included State Minister of Water and Energy Ambassador Asfaw Dingamo (PhD), State Minister of Finance Semereta Sewasew, and members of the Finland Development Policy Committee, witnessed first-hand the impact of the project in rural Ethiopia.

The delegation visited Edo *Kebele*, where they observed community water points constructed in collaboration with local communities. Subsequently, the delegation visited Wesha Primary School, where COWASH IV has constructed improved latrines and a Menstrual Hygiene Management Center. The project has also provided educational materials and training on menstrual hygiene management and reusable sanitary pad and underwear production to teachers and students. They engaged with community members, teachers and students to discuss the project's impact on their lives.

State Minister of Finance Semereta noted the project's far-reaching impact, stating, "the project not only provided safe WASH services but also has improved the overall quality of life promoting the health and productivity of communities." Inka Hopsu, a member of the Finnish Development Policy Committee, praised the project's CMP approach, highlighting its role in ensuring the sustainability of WASH infrastructures. She also noted that the project has particularly benefited women and girls by addressing their needs and empowering them.

The delegation's visit underscores the strong partnership between Ethiopia and Finland and the shared commitment to sustainable development. COWASH IV's success serves as a model for other WASH initiatives and highlights the importance of empowering communities to take ownership of their WASH infrastructure.



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COWASH IV HELD SUCCESSFUL NATIONAL STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING

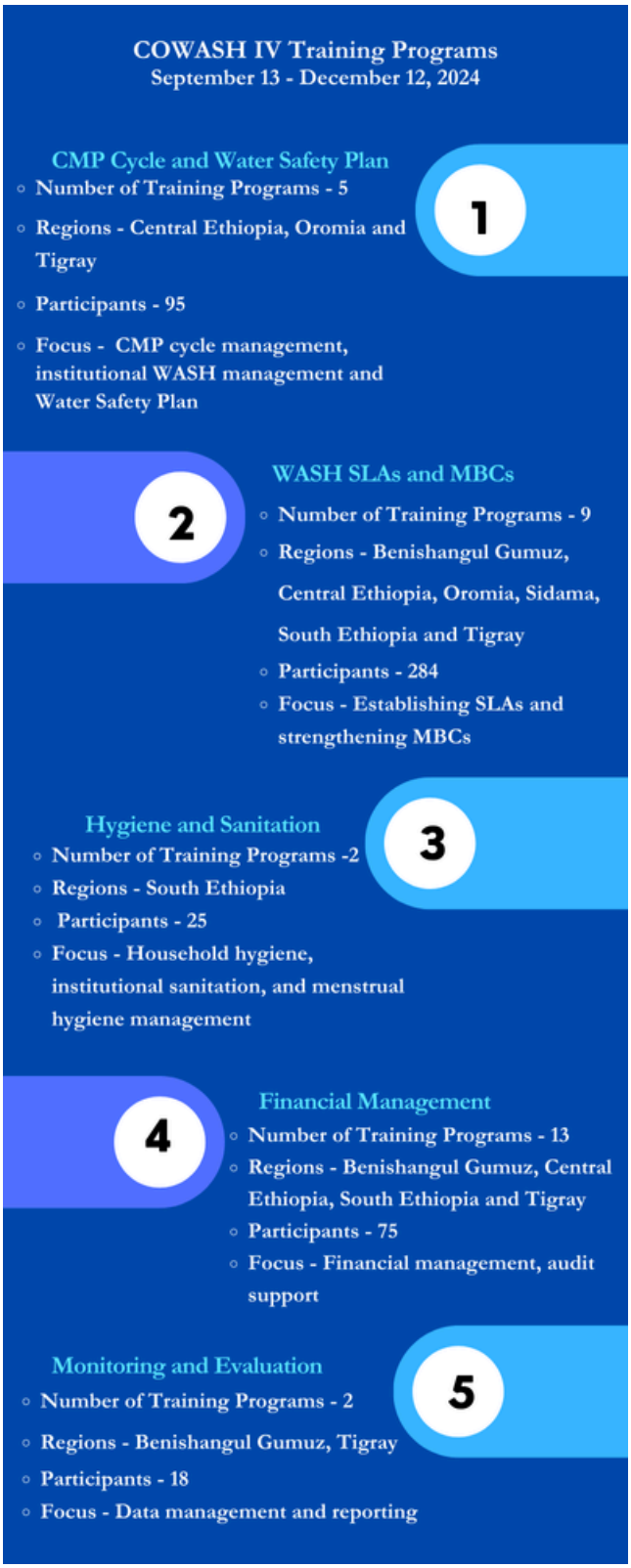


The COWASH IV project successfully held its national steering committee meeting on September 26, 2024. The meeting brought together key stakeholders from the Ethiopian government, the Embassy of Finland and NIRAS International Consulting.

COWASH IV Chief Technical Advisor, Neil Chadder presented a detailed report on the project's progress and outlined the steps ahead. Following the presentation, the steering committee engaged in productive discussions, led by the State Minister of Water and Energy, Ambassador Asfaw Dingamo. The meeting concluded with a consensus decision to adopt the proposed course of action presented by COWASH IV.

During the past Ethiopian fiscal year (EFY), COWASH IV has made substantial progress in improving the lives of rural communities. The project constructed and rehabilitated 1,017 community water supply points, benefiting over 272,000 people.

Additionally, the project constructed and rehabilitated 137 school water supply points and menstrual hygiene management facilities in 19 schools



BUILDING ON SUCCESS: A STEP FOR COWASH V

The planning for COWASH Phase V is officially underway with the arrival of the design team in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in the first week of November.

The team held productive discussions with the Federal Technical Assistance Team (FTAT). The design team also, along with FTAT and RSUs, conducted field visits to Central Ethiopia, Sidama, and South Ethiopia Regions from November 5th to 11th, 2024.



During these visits, they held discussions with Bureau Heads of Finance and Water and Energy in each region and visited WASH saving and loan association groups, community water points, schools water points and menstrual hygiene management centers. These interactions aim to inform the design and implementation of COWASH V, ensuring that the project addresses the specific needs of the communities it serves.



The design of COWASH V was also the key topic of discussion at the COWASH IV joint national and regional steering committee meeting held on November 14, 2024 at the Capital Hotel in Addis Ababa. The meeting brought together key stakeholders, including members of the National Steering Committee, Regional Bureau Heads of Finance and Water and Energy, the COWASH V design team as well as FTAT and RSU leaders.

By building on the successes of COWASH IV, COWASH V aims to further improve the lives of rural communities by providing sustainable water, sanitation, and hygiene services.

DID YOU KNOW?

Simple Handwashing Saves Lives! Studies show that handwashing with soap can reduce diarrheal diseases by 30% and acute respiratory infections by up to 20%.

COWASH IV IN BENISHANGUL GUMUZ AND TIGRAY



The COWASH IV project is making significant progress in improving water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services in rural Ethiopia. Among the eight regions where the project is working, Benishangul Gumuz and Tigray have been part of the project since its early phases.

COWASH began operating in Tigray during its first phase in 2011 initially covering the then Ofla and Enda Mokoni Woredas. By its third phase, the project had expanded to seven Woredas. In the post-conflict period, COWASH IV was the first project to bring WASH finance to the region. Following the peace agreement in Tigray, the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Ministry of Finance and the Tigray Bureau of Finance on 02 June 2023 enabled the project to commence work in the region. Recognizing the need for post-conflict recovery, the project focused on rehabilitation and capacity building across the 12 project Woredas now covered.

In Benishangul Gumuz, COWASH began work during its Second Phase in 2013, initially covering four woredas. Within a year, the project expanded to include five additional woredas, bringing the total to nine. Currently, COWASH IV operates in four woredas of the region: Bambasi, Oda Bildigilu, Undulu, and Pawe.

Since its launch in these two regions, COWASH IV has facilitated the rehabilitation of 243 community water points, benefiting around 68,346 people. In addition, the project constructed and rehabilitated water points in 24 school and in 6 health facilities. The Project also constructed a school menstrual hygiene management center in Tigray. Aiming to promote sustainable WASH practices, the project has delivered capacity-building training to around 6,148 people in both regions.

By addressing critical WASH needs, COWASH IV is not only improving public health but also empowering communities and fostering sustainable development in rural Ethiopia.



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MAKING A DIFFERENCE: COWASH IV MHM TRAINING PROGRAM IN OROMIA



In rural communities, girls' education is often disrupted by various factors, including a simple lack of access to menstrual hygiene products. A dedicated teacher named Lemelem Ashagere is working to address this challenge in Oromia.

Lemlem who is also the Gender Club head at East Welega Horda Dongi Primary School, is making a significant difference in the lives of young girls. With training from COWASH IV's Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) program, Lemlem is empowering students by teaching them about menstrual hygiene and how to make reusable sanitary pads and underwear.

At the end of EFY 2016, Lemlem along with the school director and a student from her school, attended a COWASH IV MHM and reusable sanitary pad and underwear trainers training program in Adama City. Since then, Lemlem and her team, with the support of the Oromia Education Bureau, one of the key partners of COWASH IV in the region, have been actively training teachers and students in their school.

This initiative, beyond raising awareness about menstrual hygiene, has also helped to break down stigmas surrounding menstruation.

The training program in the school has also addressed the challenge of affordability by teaching students to make their own reusable sanitary pads and underwear. Lemlem says one of the challenges for many girls in her school has been the high cost of sanitary pads. However, with the skills they have learned through this training, some of her students are now able to produce their own reusable pads ensuring they have access to hygienic menstrual products. Lemlem and her team has already trained 537 students and aims to expand their reach to other schools and communities.

Beyond the MHM training, COWASH IV has supported Horda Dongi Primary School by constructing an MHM center, a water supply point and improved latrines, providing a safe and hygienic environment for students and teachers. By facilitating safe WASH access in schools, health centers, and rural communities, COWASH IV is working to empower the future generation and ensure safe WASH for all.



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.

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Community-led Accelerated WASH IV

COWASH IV (Community-led WASH Project) Ethiopia

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