Keressa Woreda, One of the Best Achieving Woredas under 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) interventions.



School Shallow well, constructed and commissioned in 2014 EFY. Seid Abajihad, August 2022



Community Shallow well, constructed and commissioned in 2014 EFY. Seid Abajihad, August 2022

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, Tigray, Southern Nations and Nationalities Peoples, Oromia, Benishangul-Gumuz, Sidama and South-west Ethiopia regions.

Keressa is one of the 30 COWASH woredas in Oromia National Regional State

and is located in Jimma Zone. Sarbo, the capital of the Woreda, is located 18 km away from the zonal capital and ancient city of Jimma. Keressa is one of the three woredas included in the earlier COWASH III project which has continued as a target woreda under COWASH IV. The Woreda has almost 250,000 residents with more than 80 per cent living in rural areas.

In 2014 EFY, the Woreda planned to implement WASH facilities through the allocated regional government budget of 8,782,350 Birr together with a budget of 1,202,492 Birr from the Government of Finland, a total of 9,984,842 Birr. Community participation was also one of the great sources of resource mobilization to achieve the COWASH IV 2014 EFY target in the Woreda, with 1,205,500 Birr being contributed locally from the communities.

The COWASH IV Federal Technical Assistance Team (FTAT) team made a field visit to Keressa Woreda at the end of August 2022. The aim was to monitor how the project activities were proceeding. From observations made at the project sites visited by the FTAT team and through discussions with the Woreda Water and Energy Head and other experts, the team understood that the Woreda has performed very well in making progress towards achieving its WASH targets.

Ato. Ahmed Abafita, Head of the Kerssa Woreda Water and Energy Office, said. "Capacity building works were given priority attention. It has been possible to provide wide awareness training on various subjects to WASHCOs, Kebele leaders, heads and experts for health and education offices, woreda leaders, and all concerned parties. By doing this, it was possible to get the commitment of the concerned parties."



Community hand dug well under construction in 2022



Ato Ahmed Abafita, Head of Kerssa Woreda Water and Energy Office

He went on to say “We were planning to build nine shallow wells, three hand-dug wells, three on-spot springs and three springs with collection chambers in 2014 EFY, a total of 18 water facilities. We were able to succeed in that, 10 shallow wells, 3 hands dug wells, 3 on-spot springs, three springs with collection chambers, a total of 19 water facilities constructed, which is greater than 100 % of the plan. Through this work, 7,078 males and 7,483 females, a total of 14,561 people have been able to benefit from clean drinking water. Furthermore, five water facilities have been rehabilitated and are again functioning for benefit of the community. By using these water facilities constructed at the community level, the Woreda’s water supply coverage has significantly increased through active implementation of COWASH IV.”

The head added, "The water facilities that have been built are considered suitable for persons with disabilities. The proportion of women in the established WASHCOs is very high. Efforts have also been made to include persons with disabilities as WASHCO members and in decision-making areas.

For the sustainability of water supply, efforts are being made to secure the water facilities with fences and to plant indigenous saplings around the source. Furthermore, we are setting the opening and closing times at the discretion of the user community and collecting monthly contributions based on the capacity of the users for the water they consume.”

In relation to Institutional water supply, the Woreda planned to construct one shallow well for the school and one shallow well for the health center.

Regarding latrine construction in the education and health institutions, Ato Ahmed said that “both projects are now under construction. The school latrine, which costs more than 2.9 million Birr includes one building for boys, one building for girls and one building for Menstrual Hygiene Management. The completed facilities will serve 1,445 boys and 1,568 girls, a total of 3,013 school children. At the same time, the health center professionals and staff will benefit from the water facilities and latrines under construction.”

"With the awareness activities created for the relevant stakeholders of the Woreda and Kebele, it has been possible to make 27 kebeles Open Defecation Free from the total 32 kebeles in the Woreda. As a result, and compared to the previous years, the incidence of diseases related to sanitation and hygiene has significantly decreased." Ahmed Abafita reported.



Health post - Shallow well constructed and commissioned in 2014 EFY



*School latrine under construction in 2014 EFY*T

Ato. Ahmed pointed out '' the attention paid to the project by the beneficiary community and the leadership at woreda and kebele levels, has directly led us to this good achievement. The Woreda WASH Team closely monitors the progress of the project, solves challenges we face and manages the work by looking at the project as the main regular task. The community knows the project very well and contributes in terms of ideas, money and labour." He expressed his gratitude to the COWASH IV stakeholders at all levels who are making their contributions.

The Keressa Woreda performed very nicely in the 2014 EFY. COWASH IV tried to solve the WASH problems of the community, the school and health institutions. Everyone should understand that all these results have been achieved by the commitment and genuine participation of the community and the leadership. The contribution should continue not only for the rest of the project period but also until the challenges will be solved once and for most.

In conclusion, the COWASH IV can assure you that it will provide all the necessary support during the life 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 leadership at the different levels of Government and the community at large.