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Lowland Water, Sanitation and Hygiene WASH Activity

Briefing Note, December 2020



Bena tsemay woreda, duma kebele, community fetching and using ground water from the newly built water point at buluko. Photo credit: Michael Tewolde.

Understanding the Impact

USAID/Ethiopia's flagship WASH activity, the Lowland WASH Activity, strengthens sustainable water and sanitation service delivery in the lowland Somali, Afar and Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples (SNNP) regions through technical assistance, small-scale infrastructure, and capacity building of national and regional governments and stakeholders. In July 2019, the Lowland WASH Activity undertook a gender-focused Beneficiary Satisfaction Assessment to better understand the impact interventions had in target communities, and to gather feedback to guide future activity and program design. The assessment looked specifically at water access and water management at 15 water points in nine woredas across all three Activity regions.

BY THE NUMBERS

- **255,000** beneficiaries gaining access to an improved water scheme
- **126** verified ODF kebeles
- **131** established / revitalized and trained WASHCOs
- **277,000** people gained access to basic sanitation services
- **131** NRMCs established and trained

“Currently our wives and girl children are getting rest because of accessing water in our nearby environment. Previously our wives were mainly affected by back pain and kidney disease because of carrying large jerricans and travelling long distances”

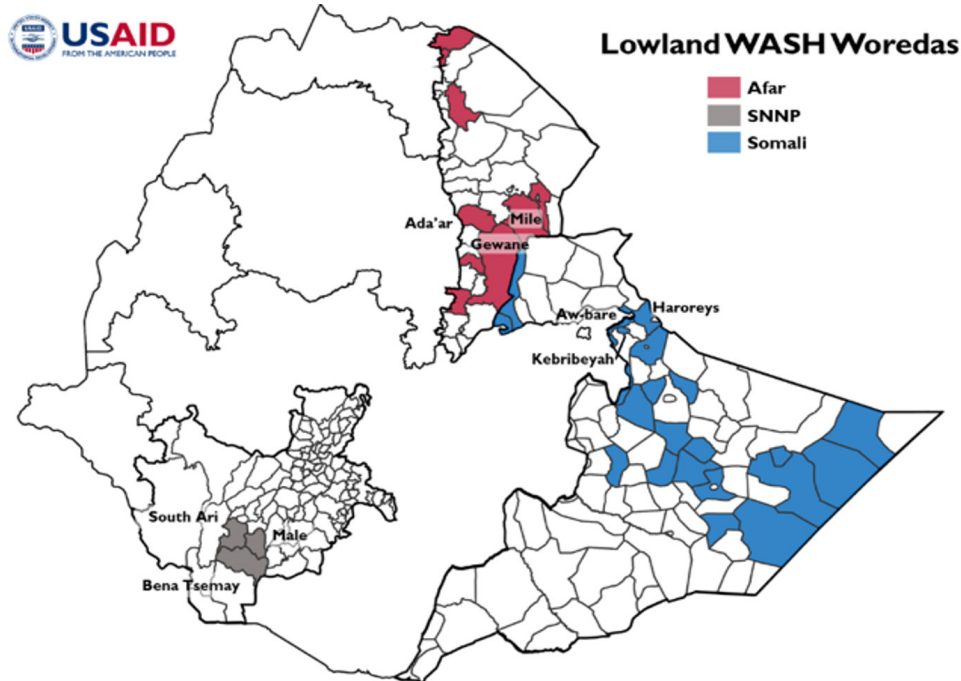
— Men FGD, Afar region,
Hadaar Woreda,
Mudena Kebele

“Before IRC Jinka Lowland WASH Activity came to this kebele, we were not able to talk freely with men, but at this time we equally participate in other community meetings and express our feelings freely like that of men”

— Women FGD,
Benna Tsemay Woreda,
Luka Kebele

This note complements the USAID Lowland WASH Activity Beneficiary Satisfaction Assessment conducted in July 2019.

Local Assessments



Data Collections Areas

- 15 water schemes from 9 woredas in 3 regions
- 30 Focus Group Discussions
- 41 Key Informant Interviews
- 11 WASHCO member interviews
- 6 Water Scheme Observations
- 5 staff interviews

Assessment Methodology

- Inventory of Activity Interventions
- Research Design
- Tool Development
- Data Collection
- Data Processing and Analysis
- Results Reporting

Results of Assessments

- In woredas where community members, especially women, were engaged at the onset of the intervention, be it a new water scheme or the revitalization of a WASHCO, satisfaction levels with the Activity's work were higher.
- The Activity's intervention did not always meet the needs of the community, despite increased engagement. This outcome occurred when the regional governments and the study and design teams did not engage communities during technical design phases. For example, women in the Hadaar woreda in Afar expressed frustration with the new diesel powered electric water pump installed by the Activity, citing they preferred a solar powered system.
- Capacity building on WASHCO roles and responsibilities — which also included discussions on gender roles, the importance of shared responsibilities, and benefits for both women and men — were viewed positively in female FGDs. In some cases, in Afar and South Omo, these discussions led to increased female engagement, e.g., members to take on as the role of cashier in the WASHCO. Though improvements were identified, many barriers were still observed for women to take more senior roles in WASHCOs (e.g., chair or secretary) and to speak up in meetings.
- Life-skills training, provided for women in WASHCOs by the Activity, identified barriers and proposed solutions to promote women's leadership in O&M of their water and sanitation services. The training aimed to share information and skills on how to become a successful community leader. Female FGD members stated that such trainings allowed them to speak more freely with male counterparts.

- WASHCOs with a quota of at least 3 women members expressed improved communication and greater influence in community decision making regarding O&M water supply services, as reported by female survey participants. However, many women still face the issue of influence from male members and do not feel comfortable speaking out. Support mechanisms for these women are needed to ensure more equitable participation.

Recommendations

- **Community Engagement** – Provide feedback to community members, including technical decisions made to improve the water scheme, to manage expectations with the community. In addition, it is essential to support continuous behavior change to ensure use of improved water sources to attain improved health status. Our assessment showed that communities felt discontent when expectations did not meet reality, and when unaware of technical decisions and resulting mechanisms to ensure continued water service. This outcome was especially true for existing water schemes that underwent rehabilitation. Communities also expressed the desire for continued engagement following construction of water schemes; this type of support mechanism could be managed by the local governments and provide the local governments an avenue to support behavior change in the community.
- **Increased Women’s Participation at the Community Level** – For women to have meaningful participation in community decisions, including on WASHCOs and Natural Resource Management Committees (NRMCs), men require increased awareness in order to change cultural and social norms. The assessment revealed that capacity building, with a clear discussion about gender norms and conducted with both male and female participants seemed to result in more women in cashier positions. In addition, build on existing life skills training to include hard skills such as water pump O&M, or latrine construction and maintenance; this provides women with the skills to ability to have improved participation in water and sanitation service provision. In addition, these monetizable skills will allow women to contribute to household expenses, which may result in increased participation in their household and communities.
- **Community Mapping of Water Usage** – Understanding the demand on an existing or potential new water point is essential to meet community needs. Because some water points serve users beyond their immediate kebeles, over-usage from non-paying extrajudicial users results in restricted access to water and additional wear and tear on pumps that was not initially accounted for. A broader look is needed to ensure access for all, but especially the target community.

ABOUT

The USAID Lowland Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (Lowland WASH) Activity: USAID/Ethiopia’s flagship WASH activity delivers technical assistance, develops small-scale infrastructure, and builds the capacity of national and regional governments and stakeholders in the lowland Somali, Afar and Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples (SNNP) regions. In support of the Government of Ethiopia’s Growth and Transformation Plan and One WASH National Program, it aims at (1) increasing access to improved drinking water supply sources on a sustainable basis; (2) increasing adoption of key hygiene behaviors and increased access to improved, sustainable sanitation; (3) improving efficiency and sustainability of food production from irrigated and rain-fed agricultural systems; and (4) improving water governance and data management. For more information, contact Petros Birhane, Chief of Party, at pbirhane@lowash.com.

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