Strategies to Improve WASH Implementation in South Gondar, Ethiopia

CASE STUDY
Executive Summary
This document discusses best practices and approaches of CARE’s successful WASH+ program in the South Gondar Zone of Ethiopia.

The key strategic approaches of the program are:
- Multi-level planning
- Coordination through joint structures
- Water point mapping and analysis
- Hygiene and sanitation coverage
- Monitoring of functionality and governance
- Moving towards an Integrated Water Resources Management Approach
- Community participation and ownership
- A gendered approach
- Capacity building

The strengths of each approach are outlined while suggestions for improvement are noted where relevant. This document aims to highlight successful practices in order to encourage other programs to adapt their approaches accordingly.

List of Acronyms and Key Terms

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<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>CLTS</td>
<td>Community-led total sanitation</td>
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<tr>
<td>GS</td>
<td>Gravity springs</td>
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<td>EOC</td>
<td>Ethiopian Orthodox Church</td>
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<td>GIS</td>
<td>Geographic Information System</td>
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<td>HDW</td>
<td>Hand-dug well</td>
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<td>IWRM</td>
<td>Integrated Water Resources Management</td>
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<td>Kebele</td>
<td>Parish or local community, the lowest government structure</td>
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<td>MDGs</td>
<td>Millennium Development Goals</td>
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<td>MWA/P</td>
<td>Millennium Water Alliance/Partnership</td>
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<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organization</td>
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<td>ODF</td>
<td>Open-defecation free</td>
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<td>ORDA</td>
<td>Organization for Rehabilitation and Development in Amhara</td>
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<td>PO</td>
<td>Project Office</td>
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<td>SDW</td>
<td>Shallow-dug wells (machine-made)</td>
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<td>SSD</td>
<td>Spot Spring Development</td>
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<td>VIPL</td>
<td>Ventilated Improved Pit Latrine</td>
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<td>WASH</td>
<td>Water, Sanitation and Hygiene</td>
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<td>WASH+</td>
<td>An approach that encompasses both traditional work with drinking water provision, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and productive uses of water (such as irrigation), along with ecologically sustainable water resource management.</td>
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<td>WASH-CO</td>
<td>Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Committee</td>
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<td>Woreda</td>
<td>District</td>
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<td>WP</td>
<td>Water point</td>
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INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND
This case study shares and analyzes a number of approaches used by CARE in South Gondar to strengthen the collaboration and joint engagement of communities, local government actors and partner NGOs during the implementation of a community level Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)+ program. These initiatives push the boundaries by challenging ways of working and adopting specific approaches to ensure greater sustainability. Such strategic approaches could be adapted by other initiatives both within Ethiopia and elsewhere. This paper evaluates their value while also providing suggestions for improving future WASH+ program implementation.

This document explores a set of best practices and approaches used within the WASH+ program to show their benefits as well as suggest additional improvement for future programming. Each sub-section discusses each of the identified approaches in detail as follows: multi-level planning, coordination through joint structures, water point mapping and analysis, hygiene and sanitation coverage, monitoring of functionality and governance, moving towards Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM), community participation and ownership, a gendered approach to programming and capacity building.

CARE IN SOUTH GONDAR
CARE Ethiopia’s South Gondar Project Office (PO) has successfully implemented a number of initiatives since its establishment in 2000. Focus areas of South Gondar programs include health promotion, economic development, girls’ education and WASH services. Projects that support community-based WASH+ are currently underway in the eight districts (called woredas) of Farta, West and East Estie, Libokemkem, Ebinat, Tach Gayint, Lay Gayint and Simada. These initiatives are funded through the Millennium Water Alliance (MWA) with grants from the Hilton Foundation, USAID, the European Union, Johnson and Johnson and AusAID.
Implementation Approaches

MULTI-LEVEL PLANNING
The WASH+ program in South Gondar has been operating for over ten years. Over that period, it is estimated that CARE provided more than 180,000 people with access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene services while the program supported approximately 800 water schemes and 160 institutional latrines in partnership with target communities and local government actors. These figures have made an impact in terms of overall woreda coverage figures.

Surprisingly few programs are designed to provide district-wide coverage; however planning at the district level is the beginning of a simple, yet important process of reaching scale and fostering dialogue with the government. The South Gondar case is now moving into a zonal approach, with three levels of intervention, as a pathway towards full coverage of the South Gondar Zone. The Government of Ethiopia developed a ‘Universal Access Plan,’ a framework that provides overall targets which are linked to the Millennium Development Goals (MDG).

COORDINATION THROUGH JOINT STRUCTURES
One of the distinguishing characteristics of CARE’s WASH programs is its strong linkage with woreda-level government bodies and processes. This collaboration is undertaken during program planning, initial selection and assessment of priority communities, delegation of staff for supervision and technical support and assignment of vehicles for program activities. Where possible, woredas also jointly contribute to capital costs through provision of pumps funds from their own budget.

Coordination with other key stakeholders is also prioritized by the program. These stakeholders include: CARE’s local partners—the Organization for Rehabilitation and Development of Amhara (ORDA) and the Ethiopian Orthodox Church (EOC)—private sector actors and other development partners.

The entire process was overseen by a dynamic, multi-stakeholder steering committee formalized by a Terms of Reference. The steering committee meets on a monthly basis at the woreda level and quarterly at the zonal level. There are also quarterly meetings for dialogue between each kebele (small community) and its woreda.

Program in coordination and harmonization has been very concentrated at the woreda level. However, this has been supported by coordination at other levels including the zone and region. For example, the program sponsors a two-day review meeting on a quarterly basis at the zonal level and has also started to support a WASH forum at the regional level. CARE has also supported the development of a number of standardized manuals on relevant topics such as water point caretaker training and maintenance, WASH committee management and artisan training.

WATER POINT ANALYSIS AND MAPPING
Systematically identifying and evaluating all the water points (WP) in CARE’s target areas promotes more equitable planning, targeting and implementation of WASH+ programs. This approach also enables greater transparency and efficiency in resource allocation by impartially showing where the need is greatest.

The program collected data on all the WPs in selected South Gondar woredas. In addition to providing crucial information for planning and targeting, the annual mapping and analysis exercise was also a useful way to encourage staff by highlighting the success of CARE’s programming and its impact on overall WP coverage. Another important effect of calculating coverage rates based on a physical inventory was that it showed significant differences between the actual situation on the ground and the figures on WP coverage based on available government data. For instance, the difference in Farta was extremely large. While existing government figures stated a figure of 74 percent average coverage, the mapping study found a significantly lower figure of only 40 percent average coverage.
The program mapped all the collected WP data by using a Global Positioning System (GPS) to record locations precisely. It used official population statistics to calculate coverage rates in each of the target woredas.

The Farta map (below) shows a significant clustering of WPs along roads. This presents a visual depiction of the ‘road-side bias.’ This means that easier to reach areas have greater access to water as compared to more remote areas. The same analysis for the neighbouring woreda of East Estie shows even more marked distribution inequality. Many of the lowland kebeles in the southern part of the woreda have very poor WP coverage—if covered at all.

The mapping process is critically important to help identify the disparity of WP access both within and between kebeles and woredas in the zone. Following the study, CARE and relevant government bodies took immediate action to focus on those kebeles with zero coverage. Similarly, following the findings on non-functionality, woreda-level officials included a priority to address non-functional WPs in their work plans. Additionally, this issue has been added to the reporting agenda for the regular review meetings held between kebele and woreda officials, thereby institutionalizing a formal process through which related concerns can be discussed. This is a significant achievement as previously a formal regular feedback process did not exist among these different levels of government.
Although there is an increasing use of the WP mapping approach in WASH initiatives in Ethiopia, thorough data analysis and government inclusion in program planning and monitoring is still a rare practice. Furthermore, an important issue in moving forward remains how to ensure that these WP maps are updated regularly and integrated into planning processes of government and other stakeholders. They should be used systematically to allocate scarce available resources based on the current needs on the ground.

**HYGIENE AND SANITATION COVERAGE APPROACH**

The South Gondar program is moving towards reaching full hygiene and sanitation coverage and aims to expand the existence of open-defecation free (ODF) communities. It focuses on community hygiene and sanitation promotion as well as infrastructural support for institutional latrines in schools and clinics. The program has not mapped existing institutional latrines; however this is an activity worth considering as it would likely highlight the same biases seen in the WP maps.

The elements that strongly contributed to improved coverage results have been the adoption of a Community-led Total Sanitation (CLTS) approach and promoting close engagement with religious and other community leaders. For example, almost all of the churches in target kebeles now have latrines—this was unheard of just a few years ago.

The program piloted a green flag system with great success and will likely expand its use. A flag is raised by the community to indicate ODF status and can be lowered by those in charge of monitoring the status of community hygiene and sanitation. Once this system is further developed there is the possibility of mapping these flags using GPS in order to obtain a visual summary of total ODF status among target communities.

Another key component of the hygiene and sanitation coverage approach is CARE’s coordination with local government to implement all 11 aspects of the government’s health extension package. The package includes non WASH+ elements, such as wider issues of disease prevention and control and family health services. Instead of viewing these services as the responsibility of government health extension agents, CARE is supporting these efforts and facilitating strong joint collaboration between hygiene and sanitation promoters and government health extension agents under one united agenda.

Maintaining water quality is an important aspect of hygiene and sanitation promotion; therefore the program conducted a water quality assessment in 2008 at both water sources and point-of-use (household). This study was pivotal in increasing attention to hygiene and sanitation issues within the program. While there was a relatively low water contamination rate of 20 percent or less at water sources, a startlingly high rate of 81 percent was found at point-of-use. This highlighted an important issue that needed to be addressed through the WASH+ program.

The study also found that those households that use latrines, practice hand-washing and pour rather than dip into water all had better water quality than those who did not adopt these practices. Water contamination was found in 54 percent of latrine users as compared to 92 percent of those who did not use latrines. Meanwhile, contamination was 44 percent among those practicing hand-washing compared to 91 percent who didn’t. Finally, the study found a water contamination rate of 69 percent among those who poured water versus 89 percent among those who practiced dipping. CARE shared these findings at different community and government levels and they proved to be a wake-up call for all those involved. Subsequent research also reinforced the importance of maintaining water quality as well as safe hygiene and sanitation practices at the household level to safeguard water quality from the source to point-of-use. One of the key lessons for the program was that research could be used to promote improvements in practice and behavior change. All water monitoring work now includes an element of monitoring water quality at point-of-use and using this data in hygiene and sanitation promotion work.
MOVING TOWARDS AN IWRM APPROACH

As with other programs in the water sector, the South Gondar program has evolved from a water approach to a WASH approach and is now shifting again to a community-based WASH+ approach. The changes have emerged from an understanding that hygiene and sanitation require greater attention in order to maximize the health benefits of water interventions. Thereafter, the program also started to consider enhancing multiple uses of water within an IWRM framework. This framework also addresses long-term sustainability of water interventions and considers relevant environmental and climatic factors. These changes were initiated by the program as a result of compelling evidence from the field, technical advice from visitors to the program and exposure to lessons from other programs within the Millennium Water Alliance/Partnership (MWA/P) in particular.

In terms of addressing multiple-uses of water, the program introduced the provision of cattle troughs and washing basins as well as support for vegetable and fruit-tree planting, as these are all linked to water accessibility.

Another strategy that the program adopted under the MWA/P framework was to ensure the five following key points related to water interventions:

- Monitoring water quality
- Monitoring water quantity where possible
- Ensuring an effective drainage management system
- Assessing up-stream and down-stream rights prior to interventions
- Water source protection

This five-point plan is considered as a starting point in every intervention to ensure that increased attention is paid to environmental and sustainability issues.
COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION AND OWNERSHIP

This paper has discussed the importance of a strong partnership and relationship with the government in WASH+ programming. Of equal, if not greater importance, is the interaction between the program and the target communities. This is another area where there is evidence of significant progress. Over the course of the program, the level of community contribution in terms of labor and cash resources has increased from five percent in 2007 to between 30 and 40 percent currently—even without accounting for labor, which is considerable. The increase in contribution is merely one piece of evidence for a progressively demand-driven approach.

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION AND OWNERSHIP PROMOTION PROCESS

1. Information packages and guidelines for WASH program application are shared with all communities in target woredas.
2. Interested communities submit formal requests for assistance via the local government administration (kebele).
3. Communities that submit required evidence of interest are assisted by government and CARE extension staff in the formation of WASH committees (WASH-CO).
4. Elected WASH-COs represent their communities in planning regarding location, design, layout, infrastructure and mobilization of community resources and voluntary labor. If the water scheme is approved, members are also trained on management, maintenance and repair.
5. Once the WASH-COs are elected, a team consisting of the woreda water office, CARE, local government development agents and the committee members conduct pre-feasibility, feasibility and detailed studies. These studies provide detailed information and cost estimates for different scheme options. Committee members share and discuss the findings with their community and then make selections based on community preferences.
6. A follow-up appraisal is undertaken by a technical committee comprised of actors from the woreda water office, health desks and CARE. This committee analyzes the technical feasibility of the selected approach. If determined to be feasible, a formal Memorandum of Understanding clearly outlining the responsibility of each party is signed.

A GENDERED APPROACHED

The program has gradually strengthened its approach regarding gender issues and women’s empowerment, resulting in encouraging progress. One example is the promotion of female members to WASH-COs; the current figures show an average of four to five female members out of a total of seven committee members. There are also a few WASH-COs that are completely female. Furthermore, women are increasingly being elected to roles of significant responsibility, such as chair and treasurer, and demonstrating great success. Women are also prioritized by the program in employment and training opportunities. The following are some key efforts to enhance a gendered approach to WASH+ programming:

- Provision of training for women in leadership positions such as WASH-CO chair.
- Communities are asked to select both a female and a male to be trained as artisans for the water scheme construction work. This has challenged traditional norms of gender-based division of roles and responsibility. There is some flexibility to this requirement if the community is truly unable to identify a woman who is both suitable and interested in the artisan job. However in general, there has been active involvement of many women in the activity.
• Promotion and recognition of female role models in non-traditional roles. For example, a female engineer has been working on the program, which is quite unusual in this local context.

Another important component of adopting a gendered approach has been the establishment of women’s saving groups at the water scheme level to establish more formal and improved rotating savings and credit resources. These groups provide an additional benefit to women through the positive social interaction that comes with belonging to such groups. These groups also act as an entry point for program staff to promote hygiene and sanitation. Income generating activities are linked to the use of the funds and can support the sustainability of the water schemes. Thus far the program has established 60 groups with about 12 members each. The plan is to systematically scale-up these groups based on community interest.

Finally, research conducted by the program also explores issues related to gender and WASH. This included a study examining the extent to which women’s empowerment and gender equality are affected by WASH+ provision. It helped CARE to better understand how differing groups of women are being affected by the program. Other studies explored psycho-social stress linked to poor WASH provision and issues related to menstrual management. Research results are important to making adjustments to the program in order to better meet the needs of women while also promoting their empowerment.

**CAPACITY BUILDING**

Capacity building is a core program component at all levels among community members, private sector actors, different government bodies and CARE staff. Changes to CARE’s capacity building approaches in South Gondar has contributed significantly to program success. For instance, the WASH-CO training was originally given only once, either before or after water scheme construction. Now the training is given twice, both before and after construction. The first training focuses on construction materials and management, community mobilization and report preparation while the second training focuses on water scheme management and administration issues.
A WASH+ program approach that promotes community engagement in the private sector is important to create new opportunities and enhance sustainability. However, due to the low level of private sector engagement in the sector outside of large towns, CARE found it beneficial to facilitate this from the community level upwards. The program supported the emergence of trained artisans at the community level by training two people in each target kebele.

CARE supported artisan training on well digging, water pump installation and construction of both institutional and domestic latrines. New artisans also received a refresher training course to strengthen their skills. In addition to providing income-generating opportunities for these artisans, many of them have become invaluable to their communities by providing local, cost-effective, committed and accountable resources.

The organization of community artisan cooperatives is a new approach the program is piloting to increase opportunities for trained artisans. Working together in an organized manner enables them to bid for more construction work on larger contracts. Cooperatives can also provide ongoing maintenance and repair services when there are technical difficulties that the WASH-COs cannot resolve on their own.

Capacity building of local government officials at the kebele level has also become an important element of the program. In an attempt to protect the long-term functioning of each individual scheme, a structure of committees at kebele level has been established by the government. The goal is that these 12 member committees will act as a mechanism for information flow from the individual WASH+ scheme from the community to kebele level and then up to the woreda level. This will provide a means for addressing specific problems related to individual schemes as well as for common concerns to be brought to the attention of the woreda government. This structure was established by the government but had not been actively functioning and committees had not received training. With CARE’s support, these government structures are now playing a meaningful and critical role in linking individual water schemes and monitoring functionality and water quality.

The program is also providing capacity building at the woreda level and above through various methods such as direct training, exposure visits and equipment provision. However, one key lesson is that some of the higher level capacity building and training activities have been rather ad-hoc and are not part of a wider capacity building strategy with clear long-term goals. Such capacity building efforts are not being systematically monitored and evaluated. Two-way accountability between CARE and those involved in capacity building needs to be established. In light of this, the program is currently exploring how it can operate within a clear long-term capacity building strategy at all levels.

**FUNCTIONALITY AND GOVERNANCE ASSESSMENT**

Recently, the program conducted a functionality and governance assessment of 100 schemes in two target woredas of South Gondar. The key findings were twofold: while community participation and inclusiveness scored relatively well, elements related to transparency and accountability scored less favorably. Based on the assessment results, the three areas which require the most attention for improvement are:

- Lack of regular feedback systems, in particular information sharing by WASH-COs with community members on scheme finances. Specific feedback mechanisms should be considered, such as an annual or bi-annual report detailing committee income, expenditure and balance.
- Systematic re-election and rotation procedures are required for the WASH-CO election process (e.g. one third of the committee should rotate every three years).
- WASH-CO record keeping also requires improvement to increase transparency and accountability.
CARE Ethiopia’s South Gondar Project Office is currently in its 12th year of programming. Rather than continuing to implement WASH programs in the same way over these years, CARE has questioned and evaluated its approaches as an ongoing process to strengthen program quality and impact. The increase of community contribution from five to 40 percent and the evolution of the government to playing a leadership role in the program cycle are notable achievements. The focus of programming has shifted from ad-hoc scheme development to systematic woreda/district-wide coverage that considers both equity and functionality issues in resource allocation and planning.

Improvements are still needed to achieve sustainable long-term impact. However, the main lesson is the importance of thinking strategically to achieve scale, develop new approaches and ensure greater impact over the long term.

In the beginning of the program, only a few schemes and communities were supported each year, however this has grown significantly to an estimated figure of 400 schemes supported through the program as of last year. Improvements are still needed in order to achieve sustainable long-term impact, especially in areas of hygiene and sanitation coverage, multiple uses of water and environmental protection. However, the main lesson is the importance of thinking strategically to achieve scale, develop new approaches and ensure greater impact over the long-term.
Founded in 1945 with the creation of the CARE Package, CARE is a leading humanitarian organization fighting global poverty. CARE places special focus on working alongside poor girls and women because, equipped with the proper resources, they have the power to lift whole families and entire communities out of poverty.

Our six decades of experience show that when you empower a girl or woman, she becomes a catalyst, creating ripples of positive change that lift up everyone around her. That's why girls and women are at the heart of CARE's community-based efforts to improve education, health and economic opportunity for everyone. We also work with girls and women to promote social justice, respond to emergencies and confront hunger and climate change. Last year CARE worked in 84 countries and reached 122 million people around the world. To learn more, visit www.care.org.