

Case Story of Water Schemes Maintenance Enterprise in Tigray

The Community-Led Accelerated Water, Hygiene and Sanitation Project, COWASH, is a bilateral project (2011-2020) between the governments of Finland and Ethiopia. Community-led Accelerated WASH (COWASH) started operation in seven woredas of Tigray National Regional State in July 2011. COWASH has gone to three phases between July 2011 and June 2020. In Phase III, the project added new component that focus on establishment or strengthening of women-led WASH enterprises in pilot woredas/districts. In order to facilitate establishment / strengthening of enterprises, COWASH III has prepared a guideline for women-led WASH enterprises development and conducted training for relevant government partners. In doing so, Endamehoni district, Southern zone of Tigray Regional State, has been one of the pilot woredas/districts benefited out of this initiative.

The water scheme maintenance enterprise in Endamehoni woreda, was established in 2016 by 8 (3 female) members. COWASH support since 2017 has been made to strengthen the enterprise aiming to ensure sustainability of water schemes and bring pioneer business women in leadership positions in WASH business. The size of membership reduced to 5 (3 females). All members have completed high school and two male members graduated from Maichew Polytechnic College in Electromechanics, Level 4. One female member graduated from the same College in Construction, Level 1, while the other two female members did attend short term training of the College on installation and maintenance of hand pump and spring development. The enterprise is led by women; hold Chairperson and Treasurer positions.

Between 2018 and 2020, COWASH supported four rounds of capacity building trainings that include: (i) 17 days training of which 13 days spent on skill enhancement training to perform the required maintenance works of springs and hand dug wells (U seal/ O-ring, bobbin, cylinder, PVC, Plunger, pump itself) and four days spent on entrepreneurship training (kaizen and financial management in particular); (ii) three days training on business model canvas; (iii) four days training on generator maintenance and shallow well pump installation; and (iv) water schemes construction training. The trainings were conducted by district water office staffs in collaboration with Maichew Polytechnic College instructors.

Based on the trainings they received, the business group members have managed to maintain 29 water schemes and received payment that amount Birr 3,500.00 for labor cost excluding spare parts. Difficulty to get spare parts has not been reported by the entrepreneurs due to the established spare part supply system in Tigray region. In a way, the regional government has established a revolving fund for water supply spare parts that are sold to the woreda with a 3 percent profit margin, then WASHCOs and water scheme maintenance enterprises procure the parts from the woreda with additional 3 percent profit increment.

Woreda water resources office play leading role in linking the business group members with WASHCOs when request for maintenance service came to the office from WASHCOs. The manual developed by the regional water bureau with the support of SNV, Netherlands Development Organization to use flat rate payment for different maintenance works facilitated the financial settlement process both for the WASHCOs and for the business group members.



Practical trainings conducted at woreda water resources office, March 2019 / Meaza K.

COWASH support extended in provision of tools needed for water schemes maintenance for the entrepreneurs. There was a plan by the woreda WASH team to avail a room for the business group members in the water office, though it couldn't be materialized as planned. Thus, decision has been made by the government partners to construct low cost office using COWASH financial support in the compound of water office to ease communication

between water office staff and the business group members.

As per Desta Berhe, the district water office staff and CMP supervisor, the entrepreneurs would give great assistance for the woreda water office which lacks adequate technical staff to perform water schemes maintenance works in the rural communities timely. However, adequate promotion needs to be done by woreda and kebele government officials to convince user communities to effect payment for the service provided by the private sector. So far, they have been doing payment to procure spare part but not for labor cost since water office staff, government employees have been doing maintenance work. Continuous awareness creation is essential which otherwise user communities may tend to use unprotected water source not to cover additional cost. Woreda water office uses COWASH capacity building trainings for WASHCOs as a good opportunity to create linkage with the entrepreneurs so that WASHCOs can communicate the entrepreneurs when they need maintenance service.

With due understanding for the need to diversify their business, in September 2019 the enterprise has got a license for water construction work, level 11. The name of the enterprise is called *Maeregu and Gebresamuel Water Construction Works Enterprise*. Thus, the enterprise is now engaged in water works construction and maintenance business activities. The license makes them eligible to tender water construction works up to Birr 300,000.

It will also allow them to take subcontract from major contractors to carry out part of the work on their behalf. In 2020, they did submit a bid to compete with other contractors for construction of hand dug wells. Though they were not successful, Maeregu Haddis, chairperson of the enterprise said that the members have got lesson on how to prepare bidding documents and take part in tendering process so that they will keep on competing with others in the coming years. In order to compensate their income, the business group members perform side businesses individually. For instance, one of the members work electric installation for newly constructed houses and some of them sell cereals during weekends.

In relation to the water maintenance business, entrepreneurs have reported transportation problem to travel to the 19 rural kebeles; distance of the kebeles and topography of the area are the major challenges. Public transport covers some area but not reached up to the water point site. For instance, while doing the maintenance work of five water points, entrepreneurs spent Birr 320 for transportation. In order to solve this problem, the district water office has planned to share a motorbike received from regional water resources bureau as a reward for its achievements of planned COWASH activities, with the entrepreneurs in a well-planned manner. For this purpose, one of the business group members has started attending class to have motorcycle driving license. The expense that amount Birr 1000.00 has been covered from revenue of the enterprise.

The enterprise, as a private sector, is a pioneer in Endamehoni woreda to be engaged in water schemes maintenance business activity. Beyond the job opportunity created for the business group members, it has immense contribution in lessening burden of water office staff. Technical input to diversify the business and capacity building support to the entrepreneurs need to be continued for some time to sustain the business and minimize turn over of business group members.

About COWASH

The Community-Led Accelerated Water, Hygiene and Sanitation Project, COWASH, is a bilateral project (2011-2020) between the governments of Finland and Ethiopia. The project combines capacity development, innovation and the delivery of new infrastructure at scale through the empowerment of communities and government. It works in 76 rural districts of Amhara, Tigray, Oromia, Benishangul-Gumuz and Southern Nations and Nationalities Peoples' regions to extend rural community and institutional WASH services through the Community Managed Project (CMP) approach. Activities are focused on achieving the rural WASH targets of the second Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP II). COWASH is led by the Ministry of Water, Irrigation and Energy and regional water bureaus, with technical assistance provided by Ramboll Finland Oy (lead consultant), Niras Ltd and IRC WASH. For more information, see www.cmpethiopia.org or follow us on FACEBOOK [@cmpethiopi](https://www.facebook.com/cmpethiopi)