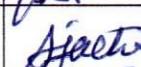


# MINUTES OF THE NATIONAL WASH STEERING COMMITTEE (NWSC) MEETING ON COWASH IV

**Date:** 26-27 June 2021

**Venue:** Haile Hotel & Resort, Adama

**Present in the SC meeting:**

Name	Position	Organization	Signature
<b>1. Members of the National WASH Steering Committee on COWASH</b>			
Dr. Negash Wagesho	State Minister and SC Chair	MoWIE	
Ato Gezahegn Alemu Tadesse	Water & Agriculture Growth Advisor	Embassy of Finland	
Ato Gadissa Adane	Team Leader, Channel 1 Coordination Directorate	Ministry of Finance	
Ato Simachew Zelalem	Team Leader, Bilateral Directorate	Ministry of Finance	
Ato Teklit Berhane	M&E Specialist	Ministry of Education	
<b>2. Other Participants</b>			
<b>35 People from Regions &amp; Federal Ministries (List Attached)</b>			
- 3 From MoWIE	Commissioner of WDC, OWNP Coordinator, Water Supply Director		
- 5 from Amhara	BoFEC, BoE, and BoW heads, Bilateral Cooperation Head & RSU Team Leader		
- 6 from Oromia	BoFEC head, BoH, BoE & BoW Representatives, RSU Coordinator and RSU Acting Team Leader		
- 5 from SNNPR	BoFEC, BoW & BoE heads, Representative of BoH, RSU Team Leader		
- 4 from Sidama	BoW head, BoH & BoE Representatives, COWASH IV Focal Person		
- 5 from BG	BoFEC, BoW & BoE Deputy Bureau Heads, BoH head, and RSU Team Leader		
- 1 from Tigray	Deputy BoH		
- 6 from COWASH	COWASH IV FTAT		

**Agenda Items:**

1. Evolution of COWASH, including change of Phase III to Phase IV
2. COWASH Regions 2014 EFY Core Plan
3. Different issues from the Core Plan for discussion and decision:
  - 3.1 Government of Finland budget (GoF) allocation to the project regions
  - 3.2 Regional Government Commitment (GoE) to COWASH in 2014 EFY
  - 3.3 Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Ministry of Finance (MoF) and Regions on COWASH Finance
  - 3.4 Procurement plans and procurement of duty-free cars for the RSU use
  - 3.5 RSU Terms of Reference (ToR) and Salary Structure
  - 3.6 Number of COWASH IV Woredas in each region



Item	Description	Actions agreed
<p><b>1. Opening of the meeting and approval of the meeting agenda</b></p>	<p>The Federal WASH Steering Committee (NWSC) on COWASH IV was held on 26-27 June 2021 in Haile Resort, Adama, in the presence of Regional WASH Steering Committee (RWSC) members, including RSU team leaders, and COWASH IV FTAT staff. A total of 44 participants, composed of different NWSC and RWSC member ministries and bureaus including Embassy of Finland and COWASH FTAT, were invited for the meeting. Consequently, the meeting was conducted with the participation of 40 participants of whom 2 are females. Tigray RWSC members couldn't attend the meeting due to flight problem from and to Mekele. Fortunately, one of the RSWC members of Tigray, deputy head of the Tigray Bureau of Health, who was in Addis Ababa before the flight problem, managed to participate the Steering Committee meeting. From the NWSC members, Ministry of Health didn't participate due to unknown reason.</p> <p>In the opening session, the COWASH IV CTA, Mr. Arto Suominen, warmly welcomed all participants to the meeting and informed that only one Tigray RWSC member managed to attend the meeting and MoH didn't send any representative due to unknown reason. Mr. Arto went through the schedule. Following the brief of the schedule, the introduction of the participants was made in a different and fascinating manner so as to refresh the participants and be energized for the upcoming presentations and discussions. The introduction of the participants was made in a way that any participant introduces any other participant by repeating what the previous participant has said and throwing a virtual ball to any one of the participants.</p> <p>The agenda (presented above) was tabled for discussion and it was endorsed without change or additions.</p> <p>Opening remark was made by the Chair of the NWSC, H.E, Dr Negash Wagesho, State Minister of Water and Sanitation of MoWIE. The Chair appreciated the COWASH project for its acceleration of WASH targets through constructing and sustaining community and institutional facilities and building the implementation capacity of the stakeholders. He went on saying that though the budget of COWASH IV is almost similar to the COWASH III budget, the number of project woredas has increased in Phase IV from 76 to 107, which has a serious effect on the impact of the project. This together with other issues, like GoF phase IV budget allocation, which was allocated to the regions based on an allocation formula from the Project Document, should be one of the points of discussion in this meeting. All stakeholders at all levels should work hard to successfully implement the new phase.</p>	
<p><b>2. Presentation and endorsement of</b></p>	<p>A series of presentations were made during the SC meeting. Firstly, the COWASH IV CTA, Mr. Arto Suominen, made a presentation on the evolution of COWASH starting from RWSEP to COWASH IV, emphasizing on the new areas of interventions in the new phase. The participants were informed that, unlike the previous phases, COWASH IV</p>	

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Item	Description	Actions agreed
<p><b>the 2014 EFY Core Plan</b></p>	<p>will implement a "Full WASH" approach in the woredas and the GoF fund transfer channel is now changed from Embassy of Finland to Ministry of Finance (MoF) and there should be a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed between the MoF and Bureau of Finance (BoF) of each project region.</p> <p>In his presentation, the "call to action" points were clearly indicated: 1) Change of GoF fund transfer from Channel 2 to Channel 1 in MoF and the associated issues (development of Financial Management Manual. 2) Signing of MoU between MoF and Regions); 3) "Full WASH" implementation in COWASH IV; 4) Deepening and thicker Versus spreading and thinning approach in project woreda coverage; 5) Household improved latrine financing from RuSACCOs; 6) Development of Web-based Databases (PMDB, &amp; WASH Facility); 7) Temporary financing arrangement for capacity building activities until regions receive GoF fund transferred from MFA to MoF; 8) Programmatic integration (Water Supply &amp; Sanitation; MSE development; O&amp;M; WSP; Social Inclusion and gender programming; Disability inclusion; Climate Resilience; Water Quality monitoring; Menstrual Hygiene Management; etc.); 9) Capacity building (following a "standard"); 10) Communication (strengthening and establishing RCCN); 11) Sharing lessons learnt; and 12) Contextual risks like Security situation in some regions like Tigray and BSG.</p> <p>Following the completion of the CTA's presentation, regions were given some 15 minutes to present summaries of their 2014 EFY Core Plans prepared on 11-14 June 2021 at the same place. Accordingly, RSU team leaders presented their summaries as per a template developed for the purpose. The project woredas that COWASH IV will be working has increased from 76 to 107, majority of them are in Amhara region (40) followed by Oromia region (30 woredas). According to the regional presentations, a total of 1,146 new water supply schemes (953 Community, 110 school and 83 health facility) will be constructed in the first fiscal year of COWASH IV. Out of the 193 institutional water supplies planned, 150 of them (78%) will be constructed in institutions using the GoF budget as per the COWASH IV project document. Moreover, 565 water supply schemes (473 community, 60 school, and 32 health facility) are planned to be rehabilitated in 2014 EFY.</p> <p>In the 4<sup>th</sup> phase, MHM is given due emphasis and regions planned to benefit 62 schools (28 with latrines and 34 only MHM) in the 2014 EFY.</p> <p>With regards to physical capacity building, regions planned to procure 7 field vehicles for RSUs, and a total of 110 motorbikes for the different offices at the regional, zone and woreda levels. Many other procurements (computers, printers, file cabinets, office furniture, etc.) are also planned.</p>	



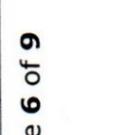


Item	Description	Actions agreed
	<p>Regions have also planned a lot of human capacity building activities mainly trainings at all levels: Regional, Zone, and Woreda. Overseas training was planned for the RWSC members, which was later decided to be held in the first quarter of the next fiscal year (2015 EFY) as there will be big turnover of officials expected after the 6<sup>th</sup> national election.</p> <p>A total of nearly half a billion-birr (METB 252.7 from GoF &amp; METB 246.1 from GoE) budget is allocated for the 2014 EFY. More than half of this amount (51.0%) is allocated for investment. Quite a lot of money is allocated for capacity building as this is the first year of the project that requires procurement of a number of items, and this procurement will be decreasing as move on to the second and third fiscal years of COWASH IV.</p> <p>Regions have mentioned some challenges encountered during implementation, namely, lack of fieldwork vehicles, price escalation of materials, turnover of staff, and security issues.</p> <p>Following the presentations of the regions, thorough and participatory discussion chaired by the Chair of the NWSC, and Co-Chaired by Ato Gezahegn from Embassy of Finland, was conducted for extended time. During this discussion, every region was given the opportunity to air their views on the 2014 EFY Core Plans and on the concerns that COWASH IV implementation will encounter.</p> <p>The following were the major points raised and discussed, and the decisions made are indicated in the column to the right.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The timing of the RWSC members overseas training and Revision of the 2014 EFY Core Plan: it was explained and accordingly agreed that the overseas training, in the EFY 2014 Core Plan, for the RWSC members should be postponed to the first quarter of the 2015 EFY. The main reason for the postponement was that there may be a lot of turnover of RWSC and also WWT members expected in the post-election period and it is advisable to conduct this training when things are settled. In addition to this the RSU salaries in the 2014 EY core plan should be calculated based on the existing salaries. The Core Plans are approved with the removal of the overseas training from the Core Plan and the revised versions, with summaries, should be shared with MoWIE and MoF with copies to the COWASH FTAT.</li> <li><b>Allocation of GoF budget to the regions:</b> Amhara region participants have complained on the formula used to allocate the GoF budget to the project regions. They were with the opinion that the 15% GoF budget allocation, based on the GoE budget utilization performance, should consider the physical performance of the regions and not only the COWASH III GoE budget utilization performance of regions. In the other 15% of GoF budget allocation formula, based on GoE budget</li> </ol>	<p>Regions shall revise their 2014 EFY Core Plans by removing their overseas training for the RWSC members. The overseas training for the RWSC is postponed to the first quarter of 2015 EFY.</p> <p>The RSU salaries to be calculated in the 2014 EFY core plans using the existing salaries.</p> <p>The issue of RSU new salary scale will be decided in the future based on different assessments and MoF decision.</p> <p>The 2014 EFY Core Plan of regions is approved with these modifications. The revised version of the Core Plans should be shared with the COWASH IV FTAT.</p>


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	<p>commitment, should favour regions who committed more GoE budget for COWASH IV. The Chair explained that the GoF budget allocation formula in the COWASH IV Project Document was used for the budget allocation. The 70% of the GoF budget was allocated based on the government budget allocation formula, the 15% based on the Region's GoE commitment for Phase IV, and the remaining 15% of the GoF budget based on the COWASH III GoE budget utilization performance. The Chair informed that some GoF budget (EUR 920,000) is put as contingency to be used for some unforeseen, emergency, foreign currency related procurement activities, upon the decision of the NWSC. This contingency budget will be used in a transparent manner in consultation with the regions.</p> <p><b>3. Need for procuring new field cars for RSU:</b> Many of the RSU cars have served for more than 10 years and the maintenance cost of these cars is so high to use them in the 4<sup>th</sup> Phase. Some regions, like Tigray and BSG, have lost their cars due to the conflict and they don't have field cars to implement the COWASH IV activities. Therefore, agreement was reached on the importance of new field vehicles for RSUs, but the problem is on the procurement. MoF representatives suggested that the car procurement can be made in either of two ways: regions can procure by themselves or delegate MoF to procure on their behalf. It was discussed that the car procurement requires to have foreign currency and if regions want to procure car, they have to request the MoF to retain the budget in foreign currency so that MoWIE can procure the cars and MoF can pay on behalf of the regions. Finally, it was decided that the Chair will discuss with the State Minister of MoF and inform to the regions on the process (who can procure the cars, the tax and the associated plate number issues).</p> <p><b>4. Need for signing MoU, bank account opening, and reconciliation and closure of old accounts: preparatory activities:</b></p> <p>The COWASH CTA emphasised that, according to the COWASH IV PD, MoF should sign Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with each project region's BoF for the flow and management of the GoF funds. Draft MoU has been prepared and shared with the MoF Channel One directorate for comments and suggestions. Ato Gezahegn from Embassy of Finland and the Chair, from MoWIE side, are communicating with the MoF and the signing of the MoU with the regional finance bureaux was agreed to be finalized in a week time.</p> <p>Moreover, MoF should open two accounts at MoF level: one foreign currency account to receive the GoF funds in Euro and the other to transfer the Euro to Birr equivalent and transfer from there to the regions based on approved plans and fund transfer requests of the regions. According to the MoF financial experts, the COWASH III</p>	<p>The use of the GoF budget allocation formula in the COWASH IV PD is approved</p> <p>The Chair will discuss with the State Minister of MoF (H.E. Dr. Eyob) on the RSU car procurement issue and inform the regions on the process.</p> <p>MoU between MoF and each COWASH IV Project Region's Finance Bureau will be signed in a week time. Ato Gezahegn, from EoF side and Chair, on the side of MoWIE, will communicate</p>

Item	Description	Actions agreed
	<p>accounts cannot be used for COWASH IV as there may be still some transactions and leftover funds in the accounts and they can remain opened for a certain period even during the COWASH IV implementation period until they are properly reconciled and closed. Therefore, each project region Bureau of Finance should open new COWASH IV bank accounts to receive and manage the project funds. To do this, they need a letter to be written from MoF to the regional finance bureaus about the bank account opening. Moreover, all project woredas (old and new) should open accounts for the project based on an authorization letter written from the respective finance bureaus. It was decided that all these activities should be finalized until July 7, 2021 and the fund reconciliation should be made on the old accounts so that leftover funds will be transferred to the new accounts of the COWASH III Woredas.</p> <p><b>5. RSU contract agreement and budget after July 7, 2021:</b> All RSU staff contract agreements expire at July 7, 2021 and regions clearly told that most of them do not have budget to cover the RSU costs after the end of 2013 EFY. Discussion was held to look for possible solutions that help to retain the staff for some months until GoF finance-flow to regions in Phase IV has materialized. The discussion led to the conclusion that regions should extend the RSU contract agreement for three months as per the ToR prepared by the COWASH FTAT, with the existing salary structure, and get reimbursable funds from regional sources until they receive the COWASH IV fund from MoF. Many regions told that borrowing budget from regional sources is not a new practice in the country's financial system. It was noticed that regions will calculate and inform their leftover GoF funds to MoWIE so that their gap can be known. To expedite all this process, MoWIE will write a letter to the project region's Water Bureaus.</p> <p><b>6. Preparation of a new Financial Management Manual and hiring of a Financial Specialist at MoF:</b> It was mentioned that a new financial management manual needs to be prepared for COWASH IV. Accordingly, COWASH FTAT hired a national consultant to prepare the financial management manual and FTAT has provided important resource and reference materials to the consultant. The manual preparation is expected to be finalized in two months' time. Moreover, COWASH FTAT prepared a ToR to hire a financial specialist and submitted to MoF for comments and suggestions. The ToR is being reviewed by MoF and the employment is expected to be finalized until end of July 30, 2021. MoF Channel One representative explained that all the financial staff at all levels should be trained on Channel One working modalities and the implementation of this financial manual.</p> <p><b>7. Sidama RSU establishment:</b> Sidama is the new region to COWASH, having 5 project woredas - 2 old and 3 new ones. Yet, a regional support unit (RSU) has not been established. The regional focal person, assigned by and based in the Bureau</p>	<p>the MoF and speed up the process.</p> <p>MoF will write a letter to each Project Region Finance Bureau on the process of opening new accounts for COWASH IV.</p> <p>After the signing of the MoU with MoF and receiving the bank opening authorization letter, each project region finance bureau will write an authorization letter to their project woreda finance offices to open account for the COWASH IV.</p> <p>Extend the RSU staff contract agreement for 3 months following the ToR prepared by COWASH FTAT, maintaining the existing RSU salaries, and look for reimbursable funds to cover their 3 months cost of RSUs from the regional sources, including the COWASH III leftover budget.</p> <p>Each project region finance bureau will calculate the COWASH III GoF budget left and inform the MoWIE.</p> <p>The COWASH IV financial management manual will be completed in two months' time; the employment of the</p>


Item	Description	Actions agreed
	<p>of Water, has been getting technical support from the SNNPR RSU in preparing the 2014 EFY Core Plan. COWASH CTA has assigned one FTAT member to support and work together with the region. Therefore, it was decided that the Sidama RSU should be established, as fast as possible, as per the RSU ToR developed by COWASH FTAT.</p> <p><b>8. Heading out deeper and thicker Versus Spreading and thinner:</b> The COWASH woreda coverage has increased from 76 in COWASH III to 107 rural woredas in COWASH IV and the Core Plans of the 2014 EFY have been prepared based on this change. However, this spread of woredas may not enable the project to make meaningful impacts as the funds will be thinly distributed and prices of materials are increasing at an alarming rate. Some of the SC meeting participants were with the view that deepening and thicker is more important than spreading and thinner the number of project woredas given the market circumstances that will undoubtedly affect the contribution of the project towards attaining the WASH targets. These participants advised some regions like Amhara if they can discuss to reduce their number of project woredas. Finally, it was decided to continue with the existing number of woredas (107) and implement the Core Plan prepared and look for additional funds to cover the budget gap.</p> <p><b>9. Budget shortage in BSG region:</b> The COWASH IV budget allocation formula is giving the least budget share to BSG mainly due to the small number of population of the region. The region has been facing budget shortage and unable to allocate matching fund to COWASH project even after reducing their number of project woredas by half, from 9 to 4. The regional representatives appealed to the NWSC meeting to consider this critical budget shortage and look for some budget to successfully implement the 2014 EFY Core Plan.</p>	<p>financial specialist is expected to be completed until July 30, 2021.</p> <p>Sidama Water Bureau is in charge of establishing RSU, as per the ToR developed by COWASH FTAT, with the technical support of SNNPR RSU team leader.</p> <p>With the consultation of the RWSC members, the NWSC decided to continue implementation in the 107 project woredas as planned in the 2014 EFY.</p> <p>It was agreed that neighbouring regions of Oromia and Amhara will look for the possibilities to collaborate with the BSG region for joint projects. Federal participants will also look for other options to increase BSG investment and capacity building funds.</p>
<p><b>3. Closing</b></p>	<p>The Chair closed the meeting by thanking all the NWSC members and regional participants for their active participation and fruitful discussion and encouraged all participants to swiftly act upon the decisions made in this meeting, and hoped to review the 6-month performance of the project in the presence of all the federal and regional steering committee members.</p> <p>The 2-days NWSC on COWASH IV meeting was concluded at 12:15 pm on June 27, 2021.</p>	

**COMMUNITY-LED ACCELERATED WASH (COWASH IV) PROJECT**

**COWASH Phase IV National WASH Steering Committee (NWSC) meeting on COWASH  
26-27 June 2021, Haile Resort, Adama**

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