

Success Story

Community Managed Water Scheme

Community empowerment ensures effective and sustainable WASH services



People used to drink water from open pond



Long journey by lowland people in search of water

Arsi Negelle Woreda is found in Oromiya Regional State, West Arsi Administrative Zone. It is situated in the Rift Valley at a distance of 230 km from Addis Ababa. The Woreda is inhabited by 264,314 people with a total land size of 16,953.7 km², and endowed with three rift valley lakes, namely; Lake Langano, Lake Abyata, & Lake Shalla. Altitude ranges from 1500 meters a.s.l around the lakes to 2600 meters a.s.l at the eastern escarpment of the Rift Valley region, which is adjacent to the Arsi highlands. In fact, most kebeles of the woreda are located at the low land, where the annual precipitation is about 600 mm per year.

According to a survey conducted in May 2009, the water supply coverage of the Woreda was only 36% and only 20.5% of the rural population had access. The problem was worse in those kebeles found in the extreme lowlands that are situated adjacent to the two lakes (Lake Shala and Lake Abyata). People living in these kebeles did not have any alternative source of water. They used to drink water from unsafe runoff harvesting ponds traveling more than one hour per round trip. As the soil texture is sandy loam and the rate of evaporation is very high, water harvested in ponds dries up in few months after the rainy season. During the driest period (December to April), people migrate to other areas in search of water for themselves and their livestock.

Water from Lake Langano, Abyata and Shalla is not usable for domestic consumption because the water in the lakes has very high concentration of fluoride and saline. To get safe water, people have to go up to 6 hours journey per round trip. The problem was more severe for the poor who do not have the capacity either to buy or rent pack animals for fetching water.

To alleviate the critical water problem in the Woreda, Welthungerhilfe in cooperation with its local partner - Bole Bible Baptist Child Care and Community Development Program (BBBC) - implemented Arsi Negele Water Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) Program for five years since January 2008. The program aimed at fostering poverty reduction and sustainable development of deprived people in the Woreda, through achieving the MDG targets of halving the population without access to safe water supply and improved sanitation facility and building solid local capacity with a total outlay of €3.5million.

Community members fetching water from water kiosks



The construction of this water supply scheme brought about enormous positive impact in the life of the user community. One of the community members, Mr. Tamiru, when he explained the change: *“I wish, if our fathers and forefathers, who passed away while suffering from water problem for their whole life, could awake for a while and see this incredible change”*. With cheerful face, he said *“I am feeling like I was born again. I observed obvious change in the health of our children. They used to suffer from recurrent diarrhea and also many were died. Women and children were affected by the problem differently, as water fetching was entirely the responsibility of girls and women. Girls used to miss school as they had to travel long distance to search for water. Now we are blessed. I am very grateful for those who contributed for the realization of this project”*.

Guna-Dole water supply scheme is the largest gravitational water supply system among others constructed by the program. It is sourced from two springs with average discharging capacity of 10l/sec and 38l/sec and connected to 4 reservoirs having a capacity of 300m³, 200m³, 100m³ and 50m³ through main pressure pipe line of 74.9km and secondary & tertiary pipe line of 73.63km connecting the main line to 62 water kiosks supplying about 93,926 people in 18 target Kebeles.



Mr. Tamiru, community member of Shala bila Kebele

So, how is the sustainability aspect of this vital scheme addressed?

Regular operation and maintenance are indispensable to ensure long-term provision of water services. Hence, Welthungerhilfe and its local partner (BBBC) have been working towards assuring the sustainability of water supply schemes from the outset of the program. The program followed a “community led project management approach (CLA)”, where the beneficiary community members are at the center of the action. The approach encourages the community members to initiate, propose, plan, procure, implement and monitor project activities, so that in the process community members can step by step develop sense of project ownership.

“Guna-Dole water supply scheme board” is a community based organization established by the program to take the overall management responsibility of Guna-Dole Water supply scheme. It comprises 34 members of the user community. The members have been democratically elected by the user community through a participatory process started at the outset of the program. A community conference has been conducted in each target Kebeles and the wider community members were familiarized with the program. During the conference the community members were also encouraged to elect Water Sanitation and



Guna-Dole Water supply scheme board members partly

Hygiene Committee members (WASHCOs) who will be actively participating in the program representing the community members in their respective Kebeles. As a result WASHCOs, each having 9 members, have been organized in each target Kebele. Then a general assembly, where all WASHCOs from the 18 Kebeles participated, was conducted and 2 members from each 18 WASHCOs again elected to form the board.

To enhance the capacity of members of the board and WASHCOs, trainings on community led project cycle management and sustainable scheme operation & maintenance have been given. The capacity building effort was further supported by experience exchange visits made to “Itaya”, “Ego-Lole”, and “Aje Siraro” water supply schemes, which have well established water board and showed exemplary scheme management for more than five years.

As a result of the many capacity building efforts made by the program, active participation by members of the board and WASHCOs in project implementation has been achieved. They have been engaged in water kiosk site selection, negotiation of plot of land for reservoirs and water kiosks, construction material procurement, selection of water attendants from the user community, mobilizing the community for labor and local material contribution. Furthermore, since the last two years, the board has been managing Guna-Dole Water supply scheme independently and showed good and reliable management capacity.

Currently the board has 77 permanent employees hired to support the day-to-day scheme operation and maintenance works. These include; 1 Manager, 1 Accountant, 1 cashier, 58 water attendants, 12 guards, 2 plumbers, 1 water meter reader and 1 generator operator. The program also constructed and handed over to the board two furnished offices with two motorbikes. Presently, the cash capital of the board, which mainly comes from the user fee, reached to ETB 850,000 and deposited in the cooperative bank of Oromiya. Since the date of establishment, the water board has become stronger. For example, with in the last one year the board further expanded the water and served 4 health stations, 6 schools, 2 mosques, 2 churches and 1 NGO office.



Mr. Abraham, board chairperson, said “Today, we recognized that we have untouched wisdom and Capacity”