

COUNTRY: Ethiopia

Case Study Purpose	Showcase the acceleration of project accomplishments and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Ethiopia through government partnership
Project	Water4Life+ and SAFE4HCFs project
Sector	Water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH)
Timeframe	September 2021 – February 2027
Location	10 woredas (districts) in 8 regions of Ethiopia: Aheferom (Tigray), Amibara (Afar), Debatie (Benishangul Gumuz), Garbo (Somali), Gimbichu (Oromia), Itang (Gambela), Jeldu- Chobi (Oromia), Legambo (Amhara), Shebel Berenta (Amhara), and Sodo Guraghe (Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples’ Region)
Donor	Children’s Investment Fund Foundation (CIFF) and Conrad N. Hilton Foundation (CNHF)
Project Budget	\$81,338,885 (CIFF – \$79,888,885 and CNHF – \$1,500,000)
Project Goal	To transform the lives of 1.6 million people and schoolchildren in Ethiopia

Context

Water access in rural areas continues to lag behind urban areas regardless of a country’s income level or overall water coverage rate. To reach the SDGs by 2030, a major shift needs to occur in the way countries approach rural access to water.

Though Ethiopia is rich in resources and rainwater, the country is behind in meeting safe water demand for communities, including in schools and health centers. Although hand pumps are a conventional option to install in rural areas, they lead to longer travel and wait times for users, resulting in Ethiopia falling short of its SDG targets. Piped-water systems must be prioritized to bring water closer to homes, and directly to points of use at schools and healthcare facilities. Piped water reduces the distance people must walk for water, can deliver a higher water quality, and increases the amount of water available for cooking, hygiene, and livelihood activities.

While most implementers in the WASH sector know this to be true, piped systems are not expanding rapidly in rural areas and there is a lack of proven models for their technical and financial management. What is clear is that no comprehensive and sustainable rural water management structure can take root without strong government engagement and clear roles defined for all stakeholders.

Background

The government of Ethiopia (GoE) has designed different integrated approaches to improve service delivery to its people, such as One WASH National Program in 2013 and Multisectoral Woreda Transformation (MSWT) in 2018. Such integrations have brought the efforts of various ministries into one area, with due attention to water sector development.

To expand upon the transformational aspirations of the Ethiopian government, the Water4Life+ project was jointly launched in 2021, by World Vision, the GoE, and CIFF. In 2022, CNHF provided additional funding through the SAFE4HCFs project to strengthen and support sustainability of WASH services in 62 health centers. The overall goal is to transform the lives of 1.6 million people and schoolchildren in Ethiopia through improving access to safe water, sanitation facilities, and hygiene

PROJECT TARGETS

- Drill 396 wells and equip them with pumps, distribution systems, and water points
- Cap 50 springs and construct distribution networks with water points
- Rehabilitate 48 existing non-functional water supply systems
- Provide access to clean water on-site at 281 healthcare facilities
- Provide access to clean water on-site at 415 schools

The major shift and catalyst needed as we enter the second half of the SDG era is for all stakeholders to commit to bringing rural water management to a consistent and predictable place for system operators and end users.

practices in healthcare facilities, schools, and their communities. The project also plans to provide solar electrification for 271 healthcare facilities and 462 schools within the same geographic area, which is being implemented by APCON (a solar electrification contractor).

Collaboration

This joint project supports the transformational agenda of Ethiopia. A project management unit (PMU) was organized to strengthen collaboration and implementation for the project. The PMU includes representatives from the government of Ethiopia, including the ministries of Finance, Health, Water and Energy, and Education. It serves as secretariat for high-level project governance, ensuring key promises and commitments are met throughout the project's life.

The local government is an active partner in the project with defined roles and responsibilities articulated in the master framework agreement between ClFF and the government at the inception of the project. The agreement brings together ClFF, the government, and World Vision to collaborate and implement the WASH components of the project. Beyond facilitation and support for the project, the GoE allocates annual budget and resources for designated activities. Resources allocated through the Ministry of Finance are channeled to district offices, healthcare facilities, schools, and communities through government structures.

Since the issue of sustainability is at the core of our work, the project aspires to see the respective Kebele Administrations (KA), supported by the woreda, take leadership in managing project activities. The project also promotes community-led planning, implementation, and joint monitoring practices. For management of the water systems, regulated rural water utility management structures will be established, trained, and supported by district government offices.

Results

This project intentionally focuses on reaching schools and health centers with sustainable water access, while building the capacity of the local government and communities to maintain these water systems.

World Vision acknowledges there will be varied results and learnings throughout the five-year project. However, some key results were identified at both the planning stage and first year of project implementation. Recognizing that WASH governance, especially at the institutional level, will be key to successfully sustaining SDG achievements, the project was intentionally designed with systems strengthening as the central driver.

Project distinctives that will yield greater results in the long term include:

Strengthening the enabling environment. The project setup shortens government approval processes as decisions around topics such as imports and customs clearance are coordinated with the PMU. **One government contribution under this project is expressed through the provision of tax-exempt privilege extended for items, goods, and services procured from overseas to successfully implement the project.**

Accelerating progress toward SDG 6. The project has a functioning office in all the target districts, making collaboration with the district government offices easier with shared plans. At the woreda level, the Water4Life+ project field offices oversee zone- and woreda-level coordination and implementation. This allows World Vision to implement the project via government structures at all levels. Field project offices, which are located at the woreda level, are the day-to-day implementers of the program. **Aligning with government structures at all levels to effectively implement the activities of the project ensures the target institutions and surrounding communities and children get the maximum benefits.**



Ayelech, 16, now collects clean water from a tap near her home. She shared, "the water has saved me time, and I am using my time for school."

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- Improved quality of health services in healthcare facilities (antenatal care, postnatal care, births, immunizations, sexual and reproductive health services, severe acute malnutrition treatment, and treatment for respiratory and gastrointestinal infections)
- Reduced communicable and infectious disease prevalence (soil transmitted helminths, schistosomiasis, diarrhea, hepatitis B virus, and others)
- Improved access to quality education that helps girls and boys to live their dreams
- Model/demonstrate transformation for scale-up

To date, **six water systems** have been constructed, providing water at **six schools, four health centers**, and to **six communities**. Additionally, a WASH governance guideline was prepared and shared with WASH governance officers in all implementation districts.

Challenges

While launching the Water4Life+ project, challenges were faced in the project startup phase as well as in procurement. The scale of this project is unlike what has been done previously with local partners in Ethiopia. To achieve 100% institutional water access in 10 woredas over five years, the right team and systems must be in place. Since World Vision is directly constructing piped-water systems, addressing supply chain issues and reforecasting material costs were crucial.

Local and global supply chain constraints led to slow procurements, and significant market price dynamics affected the project. The unavailability of required materials (casing, pumps, and panels) and competent suppliers led to long lead times to deliver consignments from overseas.

To address these challenges, an acceleration plan developed with the PMU and World Vision staff enabled the procurement team to coordinate approval waivers and create a multiyear procurement plan with contingencies. This led to expedited procurement beyond first-year project needs and swift clearing of items from customs in coordination with the PMU.

Recommendations/Advice

This ambitious project aims to mobilize all stakeholders to ensure 100% water coverage for targeted institutions and surrounding communities. The targets districts are planned as model districts to pilot multisectoral district transformation, strategies, and policies for wide incremental adoption to advance SDG 6. The focus the project receives from all stakeholders, donors, implementers, and the GoE, combined with the opportunity it presents for learning, will lead to a more conducive WASH governance policy and enhance the enabling environment to advance national WASH policy objectives.

The key recommendation from this project's design is that rural water utilities, established within a legal framework, through the involvement of all stakeholders, and with defined accountability systems and mechanisms, contribute significantly to sustainability and help increase WASH services to rural communities.

The extensive partnership with the government is a successful model to replicate. Working with the district government, planned hygiene and sanitation efforts can complement the water systems and community engagement around water point management.

With a large-scale project, leveraged co-funding allows partners to fill in any gaps and strengthen current programming. For example, an additional \$1.5 million was committed by the CNHF to strengthen WASH services in 62 health centers in Legambo and Shebele Berenta districts, including waste disposal, infection prevention and control, and environmental cleaning practices. This funding will complement the provision of water systems to further advance the needs of healthcare workers and surrounding communities. Learnings from the project will inform program changes and improvements planned throughout the Water4Life+ project and beyond. Continued engagement with donors and stakeholders can increase resources beyond the target districts and build concrete evidence to inform WASH policies.

Conclusion

Through this project, World Vision spearheaded development of a trailblazing partnership with the government of Ethiopia and donors who value both WASH governance and systems strengthening to address sustainable rural water supply in the SDG era. This project, as well as the learnings to come, brings together donors such as CIFF and CNHF, the government, and World Vision to collaborate and implement transformational WASH programs far beyond the current 10 districts. While the immediate outcome measured is the number of people, especially children, gaining access to safe water services, the frameworks created and the deepened partnerships will have an even longer-lasting impact.



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