

COWASH in Abichu Gnea Woreda, field visit experience on 6th of May 2019,

COWASH Ethiopia together with the Oromia Regional Support Unit, (RSU), hosted a successful field visit to Hanna Ojanperä, Team Leader, Horn of Africa, Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland. We also had the privilege to have the company of Ms. Marjaana Pekkola, Advisor, Water, Land Administration, Agricultural Growth, and Arto Valjas, Desk Officer, Trade and Development, from Embassy of Finland. We were thoroughly briefed on the Abichu Gnea WASH activities by the Woreda Officials.



We had successful visit at Abichu Gnea Woreda, North Shewa Zone, Oromia, region. The team visited Mamo Spring Protection, Dure Hand Dug Well and a latrine in Illani Primary School on 6th of May 2019. All the constructions were built by the community with the support of COWASH and the Abichu Gnea Woreda Water Office. From COWASH Federal Arto Suominen, Yohannes Melaku, Aino Himanen and Melaku Tekola were there and from Oromia Water Bureau Tibebe Telila and Dereje Paulos were with us.

During the visit, community members and Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Committees (WASCHOs) expressed their delight and the benefit they got out of the construction of the spring protection, the hand dug well and the school latrine.



Ato. Mateows, Chair of the WASCHO at Mamo Spring said that “the life of the individuals in his community has dramatically changed due to the readily available water scheme that is found in the middle of their residence and helped them to access safe water”. He added “as a result of the water scheme, water borne diseases have disappeared and the residents have become healthier”. Gulma Tadese, treasure of the WASCHO said, “the community used to drink unsafe water from the same source with the animals and the water was highly polluted”. She complemented “Children used to be sick and get absent from

school. At times, this was a factor for school drop out in her community. She added the community lost many cattle due to the cattle diseases found in the unsafe water. She closed by saying, “today, let alone the community, the cattle have got relief due to the construction of the spring”. At Dure hand dug well, Birhanu Debela, WASCHO Chair, said that “the hand dug well is the only safe water source for over 100 community members in that Got”. He added the construction experience was invaluable to manage the hand dug well through the community managed project approach. He



said the training before the construction helped them to manage and maintain the hand dug well properly. He stated that the Hand Dug well has never been non-functional over the past two years. He related this with the approach of the construction process through CMP approach and community’s enhanced capacity to manage the scheme.

We also visited the latrine at Illani Primary school. In collaboration with the school, COWASH has built two latrines for boys and girls and a separate latrine for

teachers. There are 342 students (171 females) and the school community has now access for clean latrine.

In all the project sites we visited, three interrelated issues clearly emerged.

1- Community managed project (CMP) approach is a still relevant and viable means of project implementation in such a rural setting as this is done by the woreda and the local community. We have noticed that the approach is famous in the rural community and a preferred approach as it builds local capacity.

2- Project ownership; we have noticed that all the projects we visited had local ownership and the schemes are seen as a private business of the individuals and not a construction done by another organization that belongs to a government or another organization. All constructions facilitated by COWASH are seen as properties of each individual in the community hence why functionality rate of COWASH schemes are 100% in the Woreda. At this point it is worthwhile to note that the total number of rural water supply schemes in the Woreda is 592. Out of these 220 (29 Shallow Well, 162 Hand Dug Well and 29 Spring Protection) are built by COWASH. As per the GTP 2 standard, the water supply access coverage of the Woreda is 80%. Out of this, COWASH contribution is 27%.

3- Sustainability, we have also observed that ownership and capacity to lead operation and maintenance by the community itself led to sustainability of water schemes, one of the programme legacies of COWASH Ethiopia among many others.



In all the projects sites, we have been showered by the love, care and kindness of the local community who has given everything to host us in a typically Ethiopian hospitality manner. We were touched by the kind move and care poured on us. We were blessed by the Abba Geddas, (Oromo social leaders) with typical kindness of the Oromo culture.

We are honoured, humbled and proud to see our engagement with the community is paying off and capacity has been built at the ground and community level.

We would like to thank and express our appreciation to the Oromia Regional Support Unit, (RSU), not only working hard for organizing such a successful trip but also for their hard work in building the capacity of the Woreda based on COWASH's principles. Kudos to the Abichu Gnea Woreda Water Office, the Woreda Administration and COWASH RSU team.

We in Federal COWASH, are excited and inspired. We reaffirm our commitment working for this community and the region in general.¹

¹ Blog written by Melaku Tekola, COWASH Communications and Knowledge Management Adviser,