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Learning and reflection from the Negelle Arsi and Shashamane woreda WASH Sustainable Development Goal master planning process

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This learning paper is developed based on the lessons captured through WASH SDG Master Plan development of Shashamane and Negelle Arsi woredas. The purpose of this learning process is to portray basic learnings in the master plan development process.

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Abbreviations

BBBC	Bole Baptist Biblical Church
GTP	Growth and Transformation Plan
DGIS	Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Government of The Netherlands
HCF	Health Care Facility
LCC	Life Cycle Cost
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
WASH	Water Sanitation and Hygiene
WASHCOs	Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene Committees
WI	Wetland International
WinS	WASH in Schools
WWT	Woreda WASH Team
ZoWT	Zone WASH Team

Introduction

The water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) sector in Ethiopia does not have a comprehensive strategic plan to meet the Sustainable Development Goal 6 (SDG 6) focusing on WASH. Previously, Growth and Transformation Plans (GTP) 1 and 2 were two medium term plans lasting 5 years each. [GTP 1](#) was completed in 2015 and [GTP 2](#) in 2020. Both plans did not incorporate sanitation, hygiene and institutional WASH aspects. In addition, these national plans did not plan for life cycle costs (LCC). With the phasing out of GTP 2, the development of a new, [ten-year Prosperity Plan](#) was completed recently. we learnt that the WASH plan is neither comprehensive and nor is the life cycle costed

To address these gaps, the [WASH SDG program](#) supported the development of comprehensive [WASH master plans for Negelle Arsi and Shashamane woredas](#). The master plans aim for universal access to safe and sustainable WASH services for the entire population of the woreda by 2030. They are framed within the targets of SDG 6 and provide a strategy towards achieving the set visions and goals.

This 5-year (2018-2022) WASH SDG program is under implementation in Shashamane and Negelle Arsi woredas. The program is financed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Government of The Netherlands (DGIS) and implemented by Amref, Wetlands International (WI), Bole Baptist Biblical Church (BBBC), Akvo, and IRC WASH. It aims to increase access and sustainability of WASH services.

Through the WASH SDG program, IRC WASH supports the two woredas and the program on system strengthening activities like the development of master plans, facilitating woreda and national learning alliance platforms, budget tracking, advocacy, and knowledge management. The support to the development of the woreda master plans started in July 2019. The master plans aim to strengthening the planning building block of the WASH system through the development of life cycle costed woreda plans with the leadership of the government. This learning paper discusses the process of developing the two woreda WASH master plans and the learning and reflection from the process.

The Woreda WASH SDG Master Plan

In Ethiopia, there is prior experience in developing medium term WASH plans (GTP1 & 2) from national to local levels (region & woreda). But the local level WASH plans fail to consider sustainability of services. In addition, these plans were not comprehensive, for instance, did not plan WASH as a package including water supply, sanitation, and hygiene at and away from home.

The WASH SDG program with the technical support of IRC WASH is able to deliver plans that address universal SDG targets that Ethiopia is committed to achieve. The woreda WASH SDG master plans are a road map for the woredas, showing when and how everyone in the woreda receives sustainable WASH services.

To support the planning process, IRC WASH developed four Microsoft Excel-based planning tools; [community water supply, sanitation and hygiene](#), [WASH in health care facilities \(HCF\)](#), and [WASH in school \(WinS\)](#). The purpose of the tools is to help in handling quantitative data systematically,

support the strategic planning and costing process of going from the current level of service to the agreed vision.

The planning tools are accompanied by a narrative report written based on the discussion with the master planning teams. The reports describe information from the Excels, the woreda context, service delivery models, challenges, and gaps in the WASH sector of the woreda, the vision and strategies to implement the plans, costing and financing, and the monitoring and evaluation process.



Figure 1 Training on the Microsoft Excel-based planning tools

The planning process

The planning process for both woredas involved a series of workshops with coaching and evaluation activities. The process was led by the master planning teams established from the woreda WASH sector offices, these comprised of two staff from water, health, and education and one from Finance in each woreda. IRC WASH provided mentoring and monitoring support during the planning process.

The master plan process started with a [launching workshop in July 2019](#). Three additional workshops were facilitated until December 2020 when the master plans were validated. All workshops were conducted together with both woredas present. IRC WASH staff supported virtually and in person throughout the master plan development process. The process was completed with the woreda WASH Teams (WWT) composed of leadership from water, health, education, finance, and administration offices signing off on the plans in April 2021.

The master plan development **launching workshop** was conducted in July 2019. Participants included woreda administration, woreda WASH sector offices, zone WASH sector departments (water, health, education, and finance), regional water bureau, and NGOs working on WASH in both woredas. IRC WASH discussed the objectives of the project, concept of WASH systems

strengthening, SDG targets with a focus on SDG 6, and the woreda WASH master plan development process and data requirements. Initial training was given on the water planning tool, supported with a live demonstration of a similar initiative that IRC WASH had supported in other districts in Ethiopia.

During the launch of the workshop, the two woredas' master planning teams were established. The participants agreed on roles and responsibilities of the planning team, WWT, and zone WASH sector departments in the development of the woredas' master plans. The Zone WASH Team (ZoWT) composed of leadership of WASH sector departments from water, health, education, and finance assigned a zone water office NGO coordinator to coordinate the zone level support. The master planning teams expressed their commitment to produce realistic woreda WASH master plans by giving attention to data quality, sticking to the agreed timeline, with a request for regular follow up and support from WWT, ZoWT, and IRC WASH.

After the launch of the workshop, the master planning teams started data collection from secondary sources. The data collected for water includes; kebele¹ level population, woreda² population growth rate, inflation rate, exchange rate, list of water facilities (beneficiaries, functionality status), water resource potential, current costs (new construction, rehabilitation, and household connection), life span of facilities, cost of operation (preventive and minor maintenance, salaries, spare parts, transport, power, and other costs), and expenditures on direct support (current staffing, actual time spending and expenditure on salaries, non-salary expenditure and desired staffing, time spending and expenditure on salaries, and non-salary expenditures). Similar data on sanitation, hygiene and institutional WASH was collected. To fill data gaps the team travelled to sites and made telephone calls to service providers, caretakers, kebele health extension workers, schools, and health care facilities.

The aim of data collection was to assess existing services and identify future needs and associated LCCs. Though the woredas did not plan for it, the data collection expense from both primary and secondary sources was covered by the woredas, indicating their interest and commitment for the development of the WASH master plans. IRC WASH supported the data collection process remotely. IRC's continuous support helped clarify the confusion on technical issues and solving recurring administrative problems such as handling beneficiaries of schemes that serve more than one administrative kebele and dealing with the lack of providing logistics to the planning teams. Amref field team supported bridging communication gaps between IRC WASH and the planning teams. The master planning teams do not have internet access in their offices and less frequently use emails. Hence, Amref supported by sharing data and documents.

Having the necessary data on the woreda WASH status and potential, the master planning teams set draft scenarios to achieve sustainable WASH services to everyone forever by 2030. The vision was revisited many times by testing service levels and technology options to reduce the overall finance. The woredas both set a vision of achieving 100% of at least basic WASH services in the community and 100% basic services in institutions. The draft visions were then endorsed by the respective WWTs, the highest body who can make decisions related to WASH in the woredas.

The **second workshop** was conducted in October 2019 with the participation of the master planning teams, WWTs and ZoWT coordinator. The master planning teams presented their baseline data on water which included the served/unserved population per kebele, functionality

¹ The lowest administrative structure in Ethiopia similar to ward and translated as "neighborhood"

² Districts in Ethiopia, the third level of government after region and zone

status, technology options to reach unserved communities, life span of technology options, unit costs for construction, rehabilitation, and household connections and vision.

The workshop participants raised questions related to service level determination, exclusion of institutions (church and mosques, market centres, and other public institutions) from the baseline assessment, determination of the beneficiaries per facility type, determination of vision, and consideration of self-supply (hand dug wells and roof water harvesting) as safely managed sources, coordination between the planning team, and collaboration of WASH actors, challenges encountered on using the planning tools, strategies to ensure sustainability, consultation of potential stakeholders that can finance the master plans, and internalization of the plan by sector offices. The planning teams and IRC WASH reflected on the questions and agreed to consider comments.

For a better understanding of the data requirements, assumptions, and calculations, additional training was given on the planning tools. In addition, a member of the planning team from Dera Woreda of Amhara Region presented their experience on the planning process, collaboration of the sector offices during the planning, challenges faced, and the implementation status of the woreda WASH master plan. This encouraged the team to work more collaboratively. Dera Woreda was supported by [Millennium Water Alliance \(MWA\)](#), another initiative IRC WASH was involved in.

The **third workshop** was conducted in August 2020. The planning process was delayed because of the COVID-19 pandemic and consecutive declaration of a state of emergency followed by travel bans and restrictions on meetings. This workshop was conducted with the objective of finalizing the plans and collecting information for the write up of the narrative report. Participants of the workshop were the master planning teams, the ZoWT coordinator, and zone finance staff. Zone finance was invited to support financial planning which was a challenge for the planning teams.

During the state of emergency, the planning tools were further improved to address gaps observed while working with the tools. A refresher training was given on the improved version of the tools. After the refresher training, the master planning teams worked on plans for community water supply, sanitation and hygiene, and WASH in HCF and WinS in separate groups lead by the water offices, health offices, and education offices, respectively, with additional support from woreda and zone finance. Each team presented their plans on plenary which was an opportunity for cross woreda and sector experience sharing. In addition to finalizing the plans in Excel, the planning teams also worked on bullet points for the narrative reports with the support of IRC WASH through discussion with each team separately. For the discussion, IRC's team prepared discussion outlines and guiding questions.



Figure 2 Both woredas sharing their experiences in the third workshop

In the August workshop, it was suggested to establish Telegram groups to share information between IRC WASH, the master planning teams, and the wider woreda WASH stakeholders. Accordingly, Shashamane and Negelle Arsi learning alliance Telegram channels were created with woreda and zone level WASH actors as members. Among the discussions and information shared on the platforms were the naming of the channels, status of the master-plan process, minutes of meetings, workshop agendas, invitation letters, workshop reports, action points, photos from workshops, PowerPoints, draft master-plan narrative reports, and logos of WASH sector offices.

Based on the third workshop, IRC's team revised the plans communicating to the planning team through telephone calls for further refinement. The write up of the draft report was completed using the bullet points from discussions with the planning teams and shared on the Telegram channels for review by the planning teams and wider woreda and zone WASH actors.

The **fourth workshop**, the validation workshop, was conducted in December 2020 separately for the two woredas. For this workshop, government WASH actors at the region, zone, and woreda levels were invited. In addition, NGOs working on WASH, woreda administration, the governing political party, woreda communication office, utilities, water boards, and water, sanitation, and hygiene committees (WASHCOs) were invited. The woreda master planning teams presented their master plans. Plenary, panel, and group discussions were conducted to review and enrich the plans. On the closing of each workshop the woreda political leadership suggested sector offices should review their 10-year Prosperity Plans so that it can meet the standard of the woreda WASH SDG master plan. The zone level sector office leadership requested IRC WASH to support other woredas of the zone for evidence based LCC planning.

For the master plans to be endorsed by the woreda cabinet councils, WASH sector offices were requested to approve their sector plans with their management and then submit to the woreda administration for approval by the woreda cabinet councils.

After the validation workshops, IRC WASH and the woreda master planning teams worked on the plans and reports to incorporate suggestions from the workshops. The finalized plans and reports were shared on the Telegram groups and the master planning teams presented to their respective sector management. The sector management approved the plans and submitted them with minutes of the meeting to their respective woreda administrations. The woreda administrations organized a special cabinet session where the master planning teams participated and presented their master plans. The Shashamane Woreda WASH Master Plan was endorsed by the Woreda Cabinet Council in February 2021 while the Negelle Arsi plan was endorsed in March 2021. The Woreda Cabinet Council is the highest executive body of the woreda. All participants in the meetings signed the meeting minutes and the plans were declared as the official WASH road map of each woreda.

After the master plans were endorsed by the Woreda Cabinet Councils, the suggestions from sector management and the councils were incorporated and submitted for signing by the WWTs. The WASH sector office heads for water, education, health, and finance, and the woreda administrators signed the plans and the official seal of each office was stamped on all pages of the plans. Copies of the signed and stamped plans were given to the WASH sector offices. In addition to the signed hard copies, soft copies of the Excel plans, and narrative reports were given to WASH sector offices on a memory stick.



Figure 3 Negelle Arsi woreda discussing on the next steps in the fourth workshop

Tools to support woreda WASH master plan development

IRC WASH developed four Microsoft Excel-based planning tools to support the planning process. The purpose of the planning tools was to help in handling quantitative data systematically, support

the strategic planning and costing process of moving from the current service to the agreed vision, while ensuring sustainable WASH services for everyone is achieved by the end of 2030.

The tools support planning and costing infrastructure needed over longer periods to provide universal services for all and planning for LCCs to sustain these services, including the provision of new infrastructure, expansion, and household connections (CapEx), operation and minor maintenance (OpEx), capital maintenance (CapManEx), and Direct Support (ExpDS) to service providers.

The water planning tool was originally developed to support an MWA supported initiative in three woredas of Amhara Region in Ethiopia and were improved for this project. The other three planning tools were newly developed. In the improvement of the existing water planning tool and development of new sanitation and hygiene, HCF WASH and WinS planning tools, national and global indicators were taken into consideration. The master planning teams contributed their part in the improvement of the tools.

All four-planning tools have five main sheets to facilitate the planning process. The information in the tools is presented per kebele, the lowest administrative level in Ethiopia.

The **woreda information sheet** includes general information about the woreda. In addition, the number, type, and functionality of WASH facilities along with additional detailed information used in the planning is included. The **planning assumption sheet** includes cost calculations for CapEx, CapManEx, OpEx, and ExpDS. This part also includes minimum design lifespan per facility type. The **option selection sheet** is where the actual planning happens and includes sections for setting and achieving the vision, planning of rehabilitation of non-functional facilities and construction of new facilities for unserved/underserved communities. The **cost estimation sheet** presents an overview of the expected changes in service levels and required costs in line with the planning. It shows all costs, CapEx, CapManEx, OpEx, and ExpDS. The **financing sheet** is developed for defining options available to finance the woreda WASH SDG master plan. It estimates the amount to be spent from main sources of finance (taxes, transfers, and tariffs).

Learning and reflection

The key learnings from supporting the two woredas WASH master plans are centred around the approach, capacity development, financing, and collaboration.

Approach

The master plans took more than a year and half (19 months) to realize. The process was led by government with the cost of baseline data collection covered by WASH sector offices, but the activity was not in their annual plans and not budgeted for. An ambitious completion timeline was set without considering the availability of staff time, resources, and challenges in collaboration. Their previous planning experience did not require collaboration between different WASH sector offices, the collection of comprehensive baseline data, and planning for LCC. Adopting the new planning approach took longer than originally thought.

Giving sufficient time and resources for consensus building on the need for and importance of a master plan with the various government structures that need to be involved is crucial. Deciding on the roles and responsibilities of each stakeholder and incentives available and needed before

starting the consensus building process can increase support and ease the process. Leadership's engagement at an earlier stage is important not only to gain buy-in, but also for creating accountability during the process, and after the plan is finalized. For this micro-level plan detailing the activities, estimating the resource requirements (time, finance, and logistic) and roles and responsibility of each party involved should be identified, and agreed on at the beginning.

Capacity development

At the woreda level there is lack of access to and knowledge on national and regional policies, strategies, proclamations, directives, and legislation. In addition, the knowledge on terminologies used in the master plan like service level, LCC and their mode of financing, service delivery models, and project delivery models was limited. There was also knowledge and skill gaps on the use of Excel. Future master plan support needs to prioritize skills to complete the planning, such as Excel, as well as more in-depth training on national policy, strategy, and LCC. The concept training is needed for the planners as well as others who may need to approve the process within government are not directly involved in the planning.

Going forward, pressure to use the plans and report progress against them is needed. Additionally, support on implementing the plans, particularly around improving tariff collection and management, is essential as it can demonstrate improvement and be a basis for showing how much more external finance is needed to meet the plans. Capacity needs to be built for implementing the plans and improving local operations in areas vital to finance.

The WASH sector offices did not have an organized database on available WASH services prior to the master plans. The data collected helped establish a comprehensive baseline database on community and institutional WASH services. But both the masterplans and the baseline data need to be updated on regular basis to be of value, and the woredas may need additional support to develop the skills needed to maintain the data.

Overall, the mentoring and monitoring support provided by IRC WASH helped in understanding the systems approach in general and strengthening the planning building block. However, capacity is still low and specific needs should be targeted to continue to improve the woredas ability to plan and implement necessary changes.

Financing

The implementation of the plans depends on availability of additional funding. According to the master plans, each woreda needs ETB 6-15 billion (up to USD 400 million) through 2030, allocating ETB 600-1500 million (up to USD 40 million) annually, to achieve their vision. This is very high compared to the existing resource allocation practices. This has created frustration with the planning teams and sector offices. The woredas need support in resource mobilization strategy development if they are to achieve their vision by 2030. Tracking the previous years' finance flow of the sector (allocation and expenditure by government, NGOs, and service providers) can help to identify gaps and find innovative sources of finance for better evidence-based advocacy to raise additional funds. The woredas require technical support in budget tracking and strategy development.

Collaboration

The collaboration between WASH sector offices increased during the planning process, although getting more collaboration was not easy. The planning teams drawn from WASH sector offices worked together and WWTs and other WASH actors participated in the evaluation and validation process. The discussions helped to exchange ideas on opportunities and challenges of the sector. The process also helped increase understanding of funding LCCs to ensure sustainability of services.

The two woredas' master planning teams evaluated their plans jointly which created opportunities for cross woreda and sector experience sharing. In addition, the plans were validated with the participation of woreda, zone, region, NGOs, and other WASH actors. Participation of the zone level stakeholders created interest for scaling up the approach to other woredas and sectors. The approval of the plans by the sector office management and woreda cabinet council helped increase buy-in of the masterplans. This was important because resource allocation for the implementation needs cross sector collaboration.

Participation of NGOs operating in the area in the planning process was limited. Their involvement in the process can have positive contributions through the provision of data, technical and logistic support, and potentially as a source of finance in the future. Besides, concrete resource commitment can be obtained for the implementation of the masterplans.

Conclusion

Overall, despite the challenges, the planning process was a success. The woredas greatly improved their planning, collaborated across sectors to create comprehensive plans, and gained skills to continue the planning process in the future. Going forward it is recommended to work closer with leadership and other government bodies to gain buy-in and help increase understanding outside of the directly involved sectors and offices. Capacity building also needs to focus on broader capacity outside of the planning tools such as Excel skills and deeper understanding of planning concepts. Finally, moving beyond planning to implementation, reporting and accountability will be essential to ensure that these plans are useful and further pursued.

To view the full master plans please click the following links:

[Negelle Arsi Woreda WASH SDG Master Plan](#) (compressed version [here](#))

[Shashamane Woreda WASH SDG Master Plan](#) (compressed version [here](#))

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