

Findings from the ESAP2 programme water sector interventions

1. Introduction

In March this year, Ethiopia reached the MDG 7c for access to drinking water supply. This was an astonishing feat, given where the country has come from in terms of drinking water coverage. A UNICEF press release that announced Ethiopia's reaching of MDG 7c, states:

The current JMP¹ estimates show that in the 1990 baseline year access to drinking water was 14 per cent and access to sanitation was 3 per cent. This means that Ethiopia's MDG target for drinking water was 57 per cent and for sanitation was 52 per cent. The current JMP estimates show that by 2015 access to improved drinking water has increased to 57 per cent and access to improved sanitation has increased to 28 per cent.²

However, meeting MDG 7c is only one step on the road to the Government of Ethiopia's far more ambitious target: It is aiming for universal coverage. This will involve bringing access to safe water to an additional 42 million Ethiopians, as stated in the UNICEF press release:

Accordingly to the JMP, the total population reached with safe water between 1990 and 2015 is 48 million. There are still 42 million Ethiopians without access to safe water. Of the 42 million Ethiopians who are not using improved water supplies, an estimated 33 million people are residing in rural areas and peri urban communities and 9 million are living within towns and cities.

Achieving universal coverage will need further investment and a joint effort from the Ethiopian Government, its donors, its civil society and its citizens. The evidence from ESAP2's water sector interventions shows that social accountability can play a role in supporting the government to reach that target.

1.2 Why is water so important?

Water – the impact of safe water goes beyond sector: Water impacts on health and nutrition, and it also has an economic impact. Bringing water closer to communities frees up valuable time to work. In many instances where water resources were brought closer to people, it has also reduced price of water, freeing up valuable resources for families and communities.

Water is a gender issue – women collect water, bathe the children, do the cooking, wash clothes and dishes. Increasing access to safe water is probably the single biggest improvement one can make in the daily life of women in Ethiopia.

Water is a health issue – when families can use safe water, instead of contaminated water from an unprotected source, it dramatically decreases the incidence of waterborne diseases. Nearly half of deaths from diarrhoea among young children occur in Africa where diarrhoea is the largest cause of death among children under 5 years old and a major cause of childhood illness.³ A recent study in Eastern Ethiopia found that 22.5% of all children under five suffered from diarrhoea in a random two-week interval during the research.⁴

1.3 The Ethiopia Social Accountability Programme-Phase 2

The ESAP2 programme has been working on the improvement of basic services in Ethiopia since the programme's inception in 2012. Social Accountability is a process by which ordinary citizens - who are the users of basic public services – voice their needs and demands and create opportunities to hold policy makers and service providers accountable for their performance. The process aims to improve the quality of and access to public basic services.

Working with 49 Social Accountability Implementing Partners (SAIPs), the programme has been implemented in 223 woredas in five key sectors: health, education, agriculture, rural roads and water and sanitation.

Over 20 SAIPs chose to engage themselves in the water and sanitation sector in 58 woredas. By December 2014, social accountability projects contributed to the following results in the water sector:

Type of result	#	Type of contribution		
		Community (cash and in kind)	Government	Others (e.g. NGOs, private sector)
Water points repaired /maintained (#)	99	246,720.00	471,137.00	740,160.00
New water points constructed (#)	104	737,340.00	1,475,442.00	4,530,000.00
Fences built around water points (#)	109	244,037.00	307,000.00	86,000.00
More community latrines built	762	421,250.00	4,500.00	30,000.00
Additional water lines connected-stretched (meter)	276.5	692,300.00	379,270.00	106,000.00
Total WASH		2,341,647.00	2,637,349.00	5,492,160.00

This report will provide a brief overview of the key findings that have emerged from ESAPs' engagement in the water sector. It shows the main trends that have emerged from the reports and monitoring visits to the SAIPs that are working in the water and sanitation sector.

2 Key findings

There are a number of key findings that stand out when it comes to water sector social accountability interventions, which will be elaborated on below:

A: Differences in challenges between rural and urban water related problems

B: Larger sums needed to solve water problems compared to other sector

C: Often need to engage zonal and regional authorities in order to achieve water improvements

2.1 Rural versus urban challenges

The difference between solving water related problems in rural areas are vastly different from finding solutions in urban areas, here are some of the key issues encountered in rural, in urban and in all areas:

Rural challenges:

- Because of the remoteness of many communities, the authorities are not always aware of broken down water points or the fact that certain communities simply have no access to safe water within reasonable distance.
- The woreda water and sanitation bureau often has only a few water technicians /engineers who can maintain water sources, and they are often hard to get hold of.
- Adding new water points in rural areas is often complicated and can involve geological surveys, attempts at drilling boreholes that may fail, or laying pipes for many kilometres.
- Rural communities are often relatively poor, so collecting funds from the community for the upgrading of water resources is difficult.

Urban challenges:

- Because of larger populations, the solutions in urban areas often need to be large in scale and are therefore costly, such as a series of tanks that need installing, a network of pipes that needs to be fitted, and multiple distribution points.
- Sometimes it is impossible to find a good location to route a pipe into a densely populated area. If this threatens to involve the demolition of people's living quarters, it can result in a water installation being cancelled for lack of suitable space (this happened in one location in Addis Ababa, supported by Cheshire).

Challenges which are common for water sector regardless of location:

- Water bureaus do not systematically collect information about breakdowns, which can leave water systems and water points in disrepair for months, sometimes years.
- Water bureaus can face frequent staff turnover and staff shortages, causing large water system implementations to stall without any reason.
- Many water systems that have been installed some time ago, no longer have (or never had) a functioning water management group in place. This means communities do not feel any ownership over the water installations, people are not always careful with pumps and taps, breakdowns go unreported because there is at best a loose feedback mechanism in place, and no money is collected for maintenance.

- Where voluntary water management groups *are* in place, the collection of funds to cover the cost of maintenance can be challenging, some water schemes have encountered problems with regards to the mismanagement of water funds.
- There are no standard solutions in water sector, and all proposals are subject to an assessment by technical staff, who may be hard to find, very busy, are unable or unwilling to share results with community in a way that people can easily understand.
- The installation of water systems usually requires specialist knowledge, which makes it almost impossible for communities to check up on the quality of the construction that is being carried out by contractors. Some water points and systems break down because of substandard construction or a lack of spare parts that are locally unavailable.
- Often very little that can be achieved at Kebele level, necessitating multiple Woreda interface meetings” because “issues were beyond the Kebele capacity to solve”.
- The water sector is more susceptible to ‘reverse incentive structure problems’ than other sectors. The lack of government water provision gives rise to private sector suppliers, who may lose business when water supply problems are solved. If the owners of such businesses have good connections within local leadership, water issues can sometimes be left off the priority list.

2.2 Larger sums needed to solve water problems compared to other sector

Improvements, especially expansion of water coverage (through the construction of water pipes and distribution points; through the protection of new springs, also with pipes and water points; or the drilling of new bore holes) in the water sector have shown to be costly and therefore not always possible to achieve within the time frame in which the SAIPs have been able to support communities. A number of Joint Action Plans (JAP), that were drawn up by Social Accountability Committees based on their communities’ priorities, list yet unaccomplished water supply improvements for which funding was simply not available at the time. This brings us to the second point, which is ‘the source of funding for water systems’. The SAIPs that have worked in the water sector have documented a series of different trajectories followed by communities and their local governments. What has become evident is the fact that some woredas have pre-existing links with local and international agencies that have been able to react to the demand for funds to implement water projects, and as a result, funding has been found through this route. The UN Food and Agricultural Organisation, the NGOs World Vision, Farm Africa and Merlin and the Wolkiti Catholic Church are some of the entities that have collaborated with local governments and communities to help realise some of the JAP items. In several cases where there were no links to external funding sources, local communities turned to their Iddrs to release funds to support the implementation of the JAP. A third route to accomplishing costly water interventions has been to engage with Zonal and Regional government in order to find solutions (see 2.3 below).

2.3 Often need to engage zonal and regional authorities in order to achieve water improvements

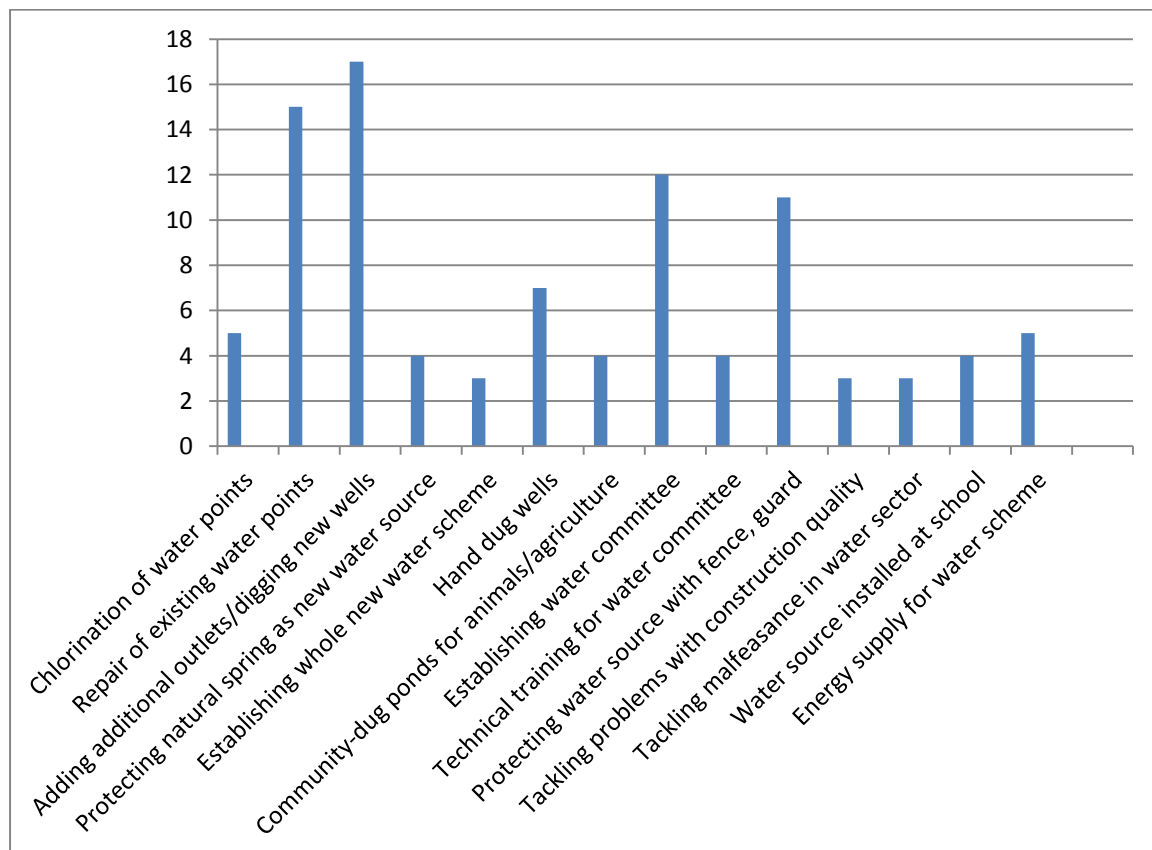
The SAIPs that have engaged in the water sector have reported, on more occasions than in the other ESAP2 sectors, that they have supported local SACs and local communities to engage with zonal and regional authorities to find solutions for water problems. This appears to be for a number of reasons: Firstly, the significant cost involved in expanding water system, as explained above. Secondly, water solutions that involve the contracting out of drilling or pipeline construction work is often handled by zonal or regional water authorities, which are mandated to oversee tendering processes. Overall, the engagement of the ESAP2-supported community groups with regional and zonal officials appears to have been positive

and successful, and seem to have been an empowering experience for community groups which had never before interacted with government at this level before.

3-The solutions patterns identified through ESAP2

Figure 1 gives an overview of the types of interventions that were included in the JAPs and were completed by the joint effort of the SACs, the communities, the local authorities with support from the SAIPs. In most woredas a mixture of interventions was implemented, based on the communities' priorities.

Figure 1: Frequency of most common interventions in water sector, as reported by SAIPs



When we look at the themes that emerge from the M&E reports and case studies collected from the SAIPs that are active in the water sector, we note the following trends:

3.1 Simple solutions have worked well in many locations

- SA has often provided a clear and up to date overview of non-functioning water points, which has been prioritised for repair
- minor repairs to water sources were often easily achieved, even when water points were out of order for years!
- protecting water sources with fencing and planting prevents future breakdown
- adding chlorine makes water safe to drink

- community labour can be used to dig shallow wells or dams for animals

3.2 Setting up or reviving local water management groups, helping with fee collection systems creates local ownership

Many of the existing water schemes were found to no longer have functioning water committees. SAIPs have been instrumental in helping communities re-establish water management groups, which have often received technical training from the water bureau so that local groups can carry out minor repairs. Fee collection management has, in many cases also been improved, creating a local sense of ownership and shared responsibility, along with a cash reserve for water management groups to solve minor problems.

Case study: *Mums for Mums in Endamekoni Woredas in Tigray Region. When Mums for Mums started to look into the problems with the water provision in the kebeles where they had planned to work. It transpired that a total of 22 water points were no longer functioning in the area. This issue was raised by the community and as a result all 22 broken water points were repaired. The community ensured that each of the water points was fenced off to protect it from animal contamination or vandalism. The SA intervention also led to the revitalisation of the water committees that were no longer active. Each water point now has its own five-member water committee, two water committees are made up of women only! Each water committee deposits the fees it collects into a savings account, and these funds will be used for water point maintenance in the future. The water points are also guarded by a community volunteer who ensures that the water points do not get vandalised.*

3.3 SA has helped to bring stakeholders together to overcome inefficiencies

The remoteness of many communities, a quick turnover of Woreda water desk staff, and an inefficient feedback system, means that authorities are not always able to have a clear and up-to-date picture of which water points have broken down or which communities simply do not have access to safe water within reasonable distance. Even when the implementation of a solution is in progress, certain interventions can simply get stuck when staff change and nobody appears certain about who is in charge of completing a project.

Case study: *ADV, and its sub partner MSCS, supported communities in Mirab Azernet Berbere Woreda, where the shortage of water was particularly severe. During the focus group discussions it transpired that a solution, the 'Bilalo water supply project' had been planned by the government several years ago, and it was supposed to benefit six Kebeles from two woredas, including Mirab Azernet Berbere. The community had no information about the status of this project, which had seen no progress for two years. The SA interventions brought all the stakeholders around the table: Kebele administrators, service providers, and Kebele community representatives, Woreda administration representatives, Woreda Council, sector officials, and NGO representatives. Representatives from the Zonal and Regional government and the Federal House of People's Representative were also present during the Woreda interface meeting. As a result, the water project was reinvigorated and subsequently completed. The Bilalo water project had sufficient funds from a private donor, Lera Vicky, but it appears that several changes of staff within the water authorities led to the scheme being halted. This was overcome by the joint meeting of all relevant*

Now we understand the government standard. We have a right to one water point for 300 users within 1.5 kilometers, which provides 100 liters of water for daily consumption per household, at a price of 20 cents for 25 liters

stakeholders. The Bilalo water supply scheme was expanded with two additional water points and more than five individual water lines. The funds even covered the changing of the pumping system, which now runs on the electricity grid, because the previous solution, a generator-powered pump, caused repeated pipeline breakages due to high water pressure.

3.4 Addressing quality issues with regards to water point construction and point maintenance continues to be a challenge

The majority of the service improvements were achieved through the repair of water points that were no longer functional - at least half of the SAIPs reported that repairs were carried out in the communities they supported. The cause of such the breakdowns is usually not known, but in one case it was clear that sub-standard water points continue to be constructed. In the majority of cases, after the SA process had commenced, the SAC and the community were involved in the monitoring of the construction of water points, but that is not always possible. Given the technical nature of water related engineering, water point construction continues to require careful monitoring from the relevant water authorities.

Case study: HFC Oromia, Babile Woreda, Likale Kebele. The community prioritised the construction of 4 water points- this was item number 1 in the JAP. The woreda allocated budget of 180,000 birr and managed the tendering for the construction. Work was allocated to private contractor, but once they started on the job, the SAC noted that the quality of construction was below standard. They contacted the Woreda, but the work continued. All four were constructed and the contractor was paid. The SAC complained formally to the Woreda about the substandard work; by this time 3 out of the 4 water points already stopped functioning soon after completion. The SAC have now formulated a special task force to appeal the matter to the next level because the Woreda seems unwilling to adequately address the problem.

3.5 Issues are taken to higher levels to solve complex water problems

As highlighted in 2.3, the SAIPS, SAC and community members engaged in the water sector have reported interacting with officials much more often than in other sectors. The example below is one of three large water supply schemes that appears to have come to a successful completion with support from one of ESAP2's 20 water-sector focused SAIPs.

Case study: MENA supported communities in Dodota Woreda. After community consultations, the community and the SAC prepared a detailed Joint Action Plan to provide safe water to Dire Kiltu Kebele and several surrounding kebeles in the neighbouring woredas. The Woreda Water office enthusiastically adopted the community's JAP and wrote a detailed funding proposal for it, calling it 'Melkahuba Water Supply Scheme Project'. The SAC and the relevant local authorities reached out to Zonal and Regional counterparts. The total budget proposed for the project was Ethiopian Birr 1,068,071.91. In addition, the community provided free labour for the water scheme's construction, which was worth an estimated Birr 14,222. The SAC, together with the Office of Dodota Woreda Water Sector was successful in mobilizing local resources and raising the funds from Oromia Water Resource Bureau, the NGO Merlin, and from Wonji Catholic Church; as a result, the water scheme was successfully constructed.

3.6 SA can lead to the uncovering of incorrect practices

While corruption and misuse of funds is relatively rare in Ethiopia, it occasionally happens that inappropriate practices come to light through SA. It is no surprise that this happens in the water sector, which is often thought of as a sector that is vulnerable to such problems,

due to the complex technical nature of many water supply solutions. Due to SA, at least two cases of malpractice were uncovered and rectified, and a third case is under investigation.

Case study: ADA, operational in Debre Marcos town, uncovered a double payment scheme that was operated by its technicians. The town administration employed several technicians who were responsible for the repair of the water system at household level. Through the focus group discussions, the technicians were found to incorrectly demand money from individuals whose water point they went to fix. The community identified the culprits and the three workers were arrested and are being prosecuted.

3.7 Provision of energy supply to make water schemes functional

In at least four cases, water schemes that had been powered by diesel generator were changed over to a connection to the electricity grid. The generator-powered systems proved costly for the community to contribute to buying fuel and the generators were prone to breaking down.

Case study: REST was one of the SAIPs that supported the SAC and the community in Adwa Woreda, Debregenet kebele. The JAP focused on the repair of water points, the construction of several new water points and on the reinvigorating of the water committees. The community and the SAC initially thought that the problem with the costly diesel generator was beyond their capacity. However, when they communicated this problem with the Woreda administration, the authorities contacted the regional electric power corporation to see if it was possible to connect the water scheme to the power grid, and it was. The water scheme is now powered by electricity, which is much cheaper and less prone to breaking down.

3.8 Water for vulnerable households

The SA methodology, in which SAIPs are trained before they set out to support communities, has a strong emphasis on equality and vulnerability. By ensuring that vulnerable groups are heard in focus group discussions that bring sector specific problems to the fore, the whole community (and the authorities) are made aware of how certain service delivery problems impact on people who live with disabilities, with HIV/AIDS, the elderly, those who are extremely poor, etc. The SA process has resulted in a number of communities and local governments taking action to improve access to public services for vulnerable groups. In the water sector this has resulted in the free installation of water points in areas where many vulnerable people reside, or the free provision of water for people who can't afford to pay.

Case study: The SAIP JECCDO worked with the community in Bahir Dar town. The SAC and the communities created a Joint Action Plan which contained the communities' main priorities in the water sector. They received active support from Bahir Dar municipality, which decided to adopt the JAP as its own plan and allocated enough resources to maintain the water points, hygiene and sanitation facilities. To date, 7 water points have been constructed and 1 renovated. In addition, maintenances of public toilets and construction of public shower is in progress. Moreover, the government, with encouragement from the SAC, also decided to implement an existing but not commonly implemented by-law that allows the municipality to assist the poorest of the poor to gain access to water services in their house. The instalment of water points, which usually costs 2000 birr per household, was provided free of charge to 10 households per kebele in several kebeles, it is expected that this assistance will be rolled out across the whole of Bahir Dar Municipality.

Annex 1:

Water sector research – frequency tables for typical problem-solution patterns

Typical problem-solution pattern:	Encountered by following SAIP:	Frequency:
Chlorination of water points	MSCFSO, REST, WSA, NEWA, UEWCA	5
Repair of existing water points	AFD, ADA, Cheshire/Impact, HFC, MSCFSO, M4Ms, RCWDA, REST, WSA, NEWA, LIA, RCDE, VECOD, SOS Sahel, PICDO	15
Installing additional outlets to established system/digging new wells	ADV, ADA, Cheshire/Impact, EOC/DICAC, MSCFSO, M4Ms, RCWDA, REST, WALDA, WCAT, WSA, NEWA, RCDE, VECOD, ODA, SOS Sahel, PICDO	17
Digging hand dug wells by community	ADV, EOC/DICAC, HFC, RCWDA, NEWA, RCDE, SOS Sahel	7
Digging water dam for animals/ agriculture	AFD, RCWDA, NEWA, RCDE	4
Protecting natural spring and creating water collecting point(s)	ADV, EOC/DICAC, RCWDA, WALDA	4
Protecting water sources with fencing, guard, planting	AFD, ADA, Cheshire/Impact, EOC/DICAC, HFC, MSCFSO, M4Ms, WSA, ODA, SOS Sahel, PICDO	11
Establishing new water committee + fee management system	AFD, ADA, EOC/DICAC, MSCFSO, M4Ms, RCWDA, REST, WCAT, WSA, NEWA, VECOD, SOS Sahel	12
Technical training for water management committee	AFD, MSCFSO, NEWA, LIA	4
Installing whole new water supply system	ADV (still in process), MENA (Melkahuba Water Supply Scheme), UEWCA	3
Tackling problems with quality of water source construction	HFC (new water pumps were constructed but not working because of low quality), MSCFSO, VECOD (Gambella school-new water point already broken)	3
Tackling malfeasance in water sector	ADA (Debre Marcos town), Cheshire/Impact (1 water point was used for private business), HFC (contractor for new water points had no previous experience in water point construction)	3
Partially achieved JAPs, but with work outstanding and no plan to tackle outstanding JAP issues	AFD, AFD, ADA, MSCFSO	4
Community has made free water available to vulnerable groups	MSCFSO, M4Ms, RCWDA, JECCDO	4
Provision of energy supply to make water scheme functional	REST, ADV, MENA	3
Water point constructed at school	MSCFSO, ELWA, KMG, VECOD, Amudaeas	5
Improve power provision to water pumping system	UEWCA, REST, ADV, MENA, ODA	5
Consumer forum	WCAT EUWCA	2

One-off interventions:

Water point constructed at health centre	RCDE	1
People hired to manage water point (give access and collect fees)	M4Ms	1
Tackling lack of responsiveness of water bureau staff through SA training	RCWDA	1
Construction of bridges to make route from community to water points shorter	NEWA (using Universal Rural Roads Programme funds)	1
Places where water bills can be paid increased to make fee collection easier	ADA	1
Mention of water as a gender issue	RCWDA	1

¹ Joint Monitoring Programme, a UNICEF and World Health Organisation initiative, 2015 report.

² Press release on 23rd March 2015: <https://unicefethiopia.wordpress.com/2015/03/23/ethiopia-meets-mdg-7c-target-for-drinking-water-supply/>

³ Fisher Walker, L.C., Perin, J., Aryee, J.M., Boschi-Pinto, C. and Black, R.E. (2012) Diarrhea incidence in low- and middle-income countries in 1990 and 2010: A systematic review. BMC Public Health, 12. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1186/1471-2458-12-220> and UNICEF/WHO (2009) Diarrhoea: Why children are still dying and what can be done. The United Nations Children's Fund/World Health Organization, Geneva.

⁴ Mengistie, B, Berhane, Y and Worku, A. 2013, Prevalence of diarrhea and associated risk factors among children under-five years of age in Eastern Ethiopia: A cross-sectional study, Open Journal of Preventive Medicine, Vol.3, No.7, 446-453 <http://dx.doi.org/10.4236/ojpm.2013.37060>