

The colour of change

Innovation, motivation and sustainability in hygiene and sanitation work



A success story in the making?

Achefer woreda is situated in Amhara National Regional State in West Gojjam Zone around 500 km north west of Ethiopia's capital, Addis Ababa, and a couple of hours' drive from the town of Bahar Dar and its famously beautiful Lake Tana. This is the site for the Achefer woreda Water Supply, Hygiene and Sanitation programme, implemented by the Organisation for Rehabilitation and Development in Amhara (ORDA), and supported by WaterAid (WAE), and the focus of this report: *The colour of change*.

The title links to something that is unique in Ethiopian WASH projects to date: Achefer's use of coloured flags as motivators for household sanitation and hygiene practice. But this is just one of several innovations seen in the project that makes it an interesting case study to share.

The report comes out of a four-day visit to the project by a joint WAE-ORDA team in December 2006, some four months before the project was due to be handed over to the community. Base-line surveys, participatory evaluation exercises and mid-term reviews since the project's instigation in 2004 had suggested Achefer was a success story, outstripping many of its project targets. This visit was an opportunity to analyse and understand this apparent success further.

As such *The colour of change* aims to bring alive various aspects of the project and provide food for thought. After a brief overview of the project it considers some of the elements that might have helped to make Achefer a success: the unique combination of circumstances and approaches in terms of the ORDA/WAE partnership and the project's position in relation to other work ORDA is carrying out in the region; the unusual staffing model; the holistic nature of the project components. Perhaps above all the report highlights some of the innovative and motivating sanitation and hygiene promotion methodologies.

Front cover: Sisay Berhanu hand-washing after using the latrine. The project awarded his household with a red flag for sanitation and hygiene.



A snapshot of Achefer: children collecting clean drinking water from the new WAE/ORDA community hand-pump.

The second half of the report considers how some of these components and mechanisms might look in the future once the project is handed over to the community. Clearly the time to measure overall sustainability will be an in-depth evaluation in several years time. But for now the fairly raw snapshot provided by *The colour of change* should encourage discussion around issues such as the sustainability of promotion work, the sustainability of changed hygienic practice, the way in which community and woreda can work together, and so on. At the request of Achefer woreda colleagues, the report also includes two "practitioners' toolkits" (pages 7&12 and 9&10) which can be separated out (by opening the central staples) as training and motivational aids for the community.

Abbreviations and explanations

WAE	WaterAid in Ethiopia
ORDA	Organisation for Rehabilitation and Development in Amhara district
woreda	smaller administrative area
kebele	group of households/village
gote	Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene
WASH	Water Resource Management
WRM	Health Extension Workers
HEW	Hygiene Promoters
HP	Village Hygiene Communicators
VHC	

A WaterAid report.

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Achefer: an overview

Achefer woreda is typical of the estimated 43 per cent absolute poverty levels (ORDA-WAE report, 2004) and agricultural subsistence livelihood strategies of the rural population of the wider Amhara Region. School drop out is high in the woreda either because children are needed for labour or due to sickness: malaria and other water related diseases are the main culprits.

The woreda is mostly plain, with some undulating areas (see photo, left). There are many streams and swampy areas fed by ground water connecting variously to Lake Tana and rivers that later join the Blue Nile. Despite the abundant water resource potential in the region, prior to the project almost 88 per cent of the rural population of Achefer lacked adequate and safe water for drinking and domestic uses, including for livestock consumption. In addition between December and May most of the existing sources dry up altogether forcing women and children to travel long distances for water. Limited access to unprotected sources has caused ill health, lost work time and reduced school attendance, as well as created conflict in the area. Meanwhile a government study (Rural HH socio-economic survey, 2002) showed that only 2.3 per cent of the woreda had access to sanitation facilities, though observation at field level by ORDA-WAE indicated that latrine coverage in the project area was almost nil (0.2 per cent) with proper hygiene and sanitation practice and awareness extremely low.

The ORDA-WAE project was devised to meet the challenges of the area using many tried and tested components. ORDA's impressive track record of effective water supply delivery was married with the experience WAE could bring from their insistence on always integrating sanitation and hygiene promotion with water supply. Other elements were borrowed from projects in other regions and countries, and from other partnerships, including employing Hygiene Promoters, awarding flags as incentives, using Video for promotion work and providing training in horticulture. Each component will be explored in detail, but the box (left) gives an overview.



Project facts and figures

- Achefer woreda population: 344,000
- **The project area covers 6 kebeles:** Kongerie, Ambeshen, Kualabaka, Kurbeha, Lihudi and Dilamo, with a total population of 40,623
- Project office: in Yismala town
- A three year project: 2004-2007
- **Project staff/voluntary groups:**
 - 1 Project Coordinator/Sanitarian,
 - 1 Construction Foreman, 2 guards
 - 10 paid Hygiene Promoters (HP),
 - 7 voluntary Village Hygiene Communicators (VHC),
 - 155 WATSAN Committee members,
 - 48 Caretakers/guards
- **Water supply components:**
 - Hand Dug Well, Gravity Spring,
 - Spot Spring Development and Cattle Troughs
 - Water source protection/rehabilitation
 - Promotion of horticultural activities
- **Sanitation/hygiene components:**
 - Model Traditional Pit Latrines (TPL)
 - TPLs built by villagers
 - Refuse Disposal Pits (RFP)
 - Hand-washing at household level
 - Communal showers and clothes washing basins
 - Household improvements
 - Hygiene promotion
 - Community development training
- **Planned project beneficiaries:** 29,400 sanitation, 17,410 hygiene, 9,130 water (rising to 18,000 water by project end)

Reasons for success?

A holistic vision, energy and a spirit of innovation

Visiting the phase I project a few months before its completion, there were clear successes to note: for example 27 water schemes had been built as opposed to the planned 22. The reason given for this by the project team was the enthusiasm of the community for clean water and their matching this with a commitment to give their time and labour freely, and to contribute funds. The project office had received 30 further requests for water works, villagers having organised committees, elected a chairperson and put money into a bank account before submitting their applications. While communities are often eager for water, Achefer was having wide success with latrine construction, with many gotes (groups of households) nearing 100% sanitation coverage. As much as this, many people were working to achieve the full quota of hygiene and household components promoted by the project, such as two hand-washing facilities, clean clothes and compounds, fuel-efficient stoves, solid waste pits and vegetable gardens. What then was driving such enthusiasm and activity?

Achefer seems to derive much of its success from the sense of “vision” behind the project and the attitude in realising this vision that originates with the project team. This in turn is supported strongly by ORDA and WAE, and the project team has inspired a similar spirit in the wider team and community.

❖ The two permanent ORDA staff members have personalities that demand of themselves a high level of commitment to the community and their work, but they also saw the project as an opportunity to trial new methods that they may not have been able to do in previous more closely circumscribed work places (e.g. innovative hygiene promotion methods). This was a chance both to be more effective and to further their personal professional development. Working as a uniquely small core team with limited resources has had the disadvantage of work overload, but the advantages of flexibility, and more independent and creative thinking.

WAE's Dr Abdu Zeleke with a traditional water-lifting device. Having seen such a device used in Benishangul in the south west of Ethiopia, he helped introduce the simple, replicable technology to Achefer.



❖ WAE's growing ethos is to embrace innovative ideas in its work with partner organisations: to look beyond the obvious solutions, whilst trying to ensure new ideas are backed up with appropriate systems. In Achefer the partnership with ORDA was itself experimental (see page 4) and based on a desire to integrate water with hygiene and sanitation – that part of WASH which time and again proves difficult and requires extra energetic thinking and persistence in implementation.

❖ The project was conceived in a holistic manner, so that hygiene and sanitation was extended beyond latrines and hand-washing to improved household management and devices. Water supply was taken in the direction of Water Resource Management, so that communities could see the future potential of water run off for community conservation or income generating horticultural projects. And individual households were encouraged to improve their nutrition and make use of easily accessible ground water for vegetable plots. The project staff took their own initiative beyond plans in the project documents, such as providing training in food preparation for vegetables previously unknown in the area.

❖ Effectively designed management strategies for the wider project team were certainly strengthened by the tireless support visits, accessibility and good communication skills of the two core project staff, as reported by the HPs, VHCs, Water Committees etc.

Reasons for success?

A tight team and a new partnership model...

As mentioned the key project team for Achefer has been two people – a project coordinator/sanitarian and a construction foreman. Through necessity they also covered the work of secretary, storekeeper etc. There are two guards and very recently a cleaner has been recruited. Comparing this tight team with the demanding nature of the job in the project sites, it is doubly surprising to witness the successes of Achefer. In addition the budget for Achefer allocated by WAE was minimal. Does this make Achefer a cost-effective “miracle model” showing that “small is *indeed* beautiful” as the saying suggests? Unpacking the realities behind the situation reveals a more complex picture and sheds light on the variety of models possible in WASH projects.

Clarifying Achefer’s situation

The reality is that for most of the first two years the Achefer project only had the project coordinator-sanitarian as a permanent staff member, the foreman joining at the end of the second year. For these twenty months the sanitation worked with the voluntary VHCs. At his request, and after evaluations, paid HPs were employed (a fairly recent model used in Tigray, northern Ethiopia, by WAE’s partners the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and Oromia by Water Action), as well as a permanent foreman.

However Achefer has had the support of a range of professionals from a pool of staff at ORDA’s head office in nearby Bahir Dar, including geologists, engineers and technicians loaned for short periods for the water supply component of the project.

Although the funding for Achefer from WAE looked remarkably little - £14,000 for the first year, £30,000 for the second and £40,000 for the third - the monetary value of ORDA’s deployment of existing personnel to Achefer has to be factored into the real costs. The community also contributed cash and labour that amounted to around 20-30% of the overall project costs, as well as a great deal of labour. With only a skeleton team at

their compound, the Achefer project had less access to vehicles (often a high cost in projects) than is customary. ORDA had negotiated a motorbike loan from the woreda office for the first months of the project, but complications with this meant that there was a great deal of time when the sanitation travelled through the six kebeles on foot. At the first 6-month review, WAE provided a dedicated motorbike to the project.

The question is why such a tight budget and team was decided upon, what the positive and negative consequences have been and whether this model is one to replicate elsewhere. The issue of employing HPs is considered later in relation to promotion and sustainability.

ORDA and WAE

The Achefer project was a new departure for ORDA. ORDA has a reputation for their ability to mobilise the community and deliver water services, but they have not been successful in integrating water with sanitation. Meanwhile WAE saw the opportunity in ORDA to work more closely with an organisation that usually worked with larger donors than WAE. Perhaps this was an opportunity to influence ORDA and its more regular donors to take on an integrated water, sanitation and hygiene approach. However, WAE invested little in the project in order to re-test the capabilities of the two organizations working together which was tested earlier with two small projects in Angolela Asagirt and Moretna Jiru areas. ORDA meanwhile had a range of ongoing water projects in the area and was able to



Project construction foreman Walle Setotaw, with the motorbike and trailer. Such motorbikes can be unstable on rough terrain.

provide water supply quite easily, but working with WA and on sanitation was a new challenge, especially with their limited budget.

The Achefer project required reassessment and redesigning as the partnership clarified and the team found its strengths and limitations, and flexibility in this from both organisations has been important. The initial thinking had been to employ a water engineer as the coordinator for the first year and then a construction foreman and sanitarian for the second year. ORDA however argued that with only 10 or so water schemes constructed per year, a full-time engineer would be a waste of resources when they could loan one from head office. In time it became clear that a more appropriate staff person for water supply would be a construction foreman, i.e. - a middle level technical support person for the day-to-day work and community mobilisation. Meanwhile the skills and character of the sanitarian worked well in the coordinator role, and perhaps having a sanitarian in this post was an important balance for the project beside the loaned professionals working on water.

An evolving model

As the staffing evolved over time, with the addition of paid HPs and foreman, so the project components evolved by virtue of the Project Coordinator's innovations and both organisations' responsiveness to these. Elements that have become standard in Achefer by the third year took time to crystallise. WAE had suggested other components such as clothes washing basins, shower and cattle troughs could be built as models if the water were sufficient, but they are now considered part of the project. Likewise gardening was suggested by ORDA but the detailed activities evolved with the project staff, as the water lifting devices were suggested by WA and have now become popular. Household improvements such as fuel saving stoves grew out of planned components such as keeping the compound clean and waste disposal pits, gradually forming a holistic project that considered a family's wider needs for a healthy life.

Initially there was a small budget for promotion work of around £600 (10,000

Ethiopian birr), but the Project Coordinator requested more. He wanted to introduce a coffee ceremony gathering (see box on page 8 for more on this cultural tradition) that would bring community members together and allow training and discussions on hygiene and sanitation. But he also wanted to introduce external technologies to these gatherings not usually encouraged by WAE: requesting a television, video player and generator. To trial the coffee ceremony promotion method the Project Coordinator actually started with money from his own pocket, before formally requesting a small budget for this from WAE and ORDA. A budget was also required for a system of incentives that evolved.

Getting the balance right

For ORDA this was the first time to be so strongly involved with hygiene and sanitation, for WAE it was the first time to work with an organisation with a crew of professionals, and thus have the option of a small project team. Achefer appears a good model both for water and for hygiene and sanitation work, and the fluid evolution of its components and staffing a useful experience in adaptation and trial. A tight team with close community relationships and an efficient, strategic use of a limited budget are positive lessons to take forwards.

On the other hand the personal load on so few staff has been considerable. The question is could one or two additional staff have resulted in proportionately greater success, especially in terms of completing work before project phase out? There seem lessons in balancing cost-effectiveness with the minimum requirements for efficiency and for fairness. Clearly ORDA, with its crew available for short periods, is unusual. For WAE, many of its partners are at a much earlier stage of maturity and have fewer resources at their disposal, while others have well-established strategies for large projects with teams of professionals employed on site.

But Achefer does raise questions about different models, not least can professional staff in certain roles be shared, or can certain roles, e.g. guard and storekeeper, double up?

Reasons for success?

Community mobilisation through innovative methods, incentives, and a paid promotion team

An integrated approach to hygiene and sanitation promotion has been key to the successes of Achefer. This page gives an overview of the promotion work. Pages 7 and 12 form a pull-out poster, which aims to draw the promotion tools together as a training and motivating aid. On page 8 Achefer people give their perspective, while challenges like cost and sustainability are debated later on.

Coffee ceremony: The project team believe that community acceptance has been the single most critical strength of the project. They attribute the coffee ceremony they introduced as one of the keys to establishing this sense of trust. As a traditional social occasion within Ethiopian society, coffee ceremonies have been used to bring people together in various projects. However, it was Project Coordinator Tesfaye Yalew's idea to trial them for sanitation and hygiene promotion and he set about organising these six months after the project started. With no budget allocation at first, he experimented using his own money to provide just coffee without sugar. He imagined the meetings would attract women with their children, but found men attended as well. Tesfaye then requested a budget so each gote (more than



Project Coordinator, Tesfaye Yalew, with tools the project awards to individuals for exceptional project participation and positive change. These incentives or rewards are given out at the coffee ceremonies.



Achefer's Hygiene Promoters: HPs divide up the project area and each manage a small team of VHCs. They must be 12th grade graduates, have experience in community mobilisation or health work and pass the project training course. They are paid 300 birr per month. HPs train house to house and at the coffee ceremonies, covering all aspects of latrine construction and hygiene promotion.

50 people) in the project area could attend regular ceremonies with formal trainings and discussions. The project staff, HPs, VHCs, elders, and others speak and people read poems that they have composed.

Video: Another innovation has been filming the successes of community hygiene and promotion work to show on the project television set. The short films document the challenges people have overcome in one or other gote, and record the positive changes as ways to motivate and inspire others in the project area. The films are shown at the coffee ceremonies together with traditional music and dance videos.

Incentives – flags, sweets, and tools:

Use of flags to encourage latrine building is an idea borrowed from WA Bangladesh. Tesfaye, his team and WAE staff discussed piloting a similar method with some modifications in Achefer to encourage latrine building primarily, but also hand-washing systems, compound cleanliness etc. After some experimentation red, green and white flags were chosen with the project office awarding them according to the components people had achieved, with the possibility of upgrading, and downgrading (for neglect). Sweets are given to children for clean clothes and faces, tools to active households and the school plans to give exercise books and pens for children making particular effort.

INCENTIVES

→ Awarding coloured flags for household sanitation and hygiene:

Hygiene Promoters, Village Hygiene Communicators or Health Extension Workers working together with WASH committees and community members may like to introduce a flag incentive/award system to encourage people to improve personal and household sanitation and hygiene.

Mostly people will be motivated by their own sense of achievement in receiving a flag for their efforts (and the chance to move to a higher level of flag). The public nature of the award creates an additional competitive edge. It is best to decide on categories and flag colours together as a community. What worked in Achefer were three flags: red, green and white. This might be a starting point for discussions. To get a red flag in Achefer you need:

- A latrine (safely built & well maintained)
- A hand washing facility beside the latrine and ideally beside the house door too (a jerry can and tap, or local version – e.g. a gourd with pen tap).
- A dry waste disposal pit
- Home and compound cleanliness
- Family hygiene

For a green flag you need three of these (but certainly a latrine and hand-washing) and for the white flag two components (but certainly a latrine).

The promotion workers encourage and support households, assess their progress and then flags are awarded at a community ceremony. Flags can be upgraded as people improve or downgraded if they neglect things. From a sample group questioned in Achefer, 56% said they found the flag system encouraging, 32% found it created a positive sense of competition and 12% found it community spirited. In this case none felt negatively towards the flags. But it is good to run a pilot, and see if people like it.

Checking the cleanliness of children's clothes and giving sweets as rewards for good hygiene helped other children learn.



↙ Awarding tools, sweets, washing-powder, or exercise books and pens, for personal achievement:

During their promotion and mobilisation work in Achefer project staff observe the cleanliness of household compounds, randomly check herding children's clothes, hands and faces when they meet them, visit the school regularly and test the children's knowledge of hygiene practice, and observe families at community meetings. The staff use these opportunities to encourage people and train them, but also to reward them with appropriate items if it is clear they are adopting day-to-day and long term behavioural changes necessary for good hygiene and sanitation. Children will receive sweets; students receive exercise books, mothers washing-powder. During the construction phase (of water systems) highly committed individuals are given tools to cultivate their plots with vegetable seeds provided by the project.

Incentives can increase personal and community pride and encourage competition. A project or community needs to consider how to organise a budget for such items, and decide how long it is necessary to run an incentive scheme for it to have long-term impact.

Discussing.. promotion, incentives & coffee ceremonies



Fitfitae Techelo
(left)
Kualabaka School:

“The hygiene promotion has to continue as there are still some people who do not think that this is important. They (ORDA) are teaching us about water cleanliness, latrines, household compound cleanliness, regarding energy saving stoves. They did this by coming to each household, and at the coffee ceremony place. Here people who have performed well or have good experiences are invited to share their experience and are given awards e.g. a flag. On weekends, when there is no school, the children play together and move from one house to the other and when they see a red or green flag, they appreciate it and go back to their parents and ask their parents to have the same flag. In my school, for example, most students know that we have a red flag and some come to me and say how much they like that. They say ‘tadelesh’ - you are lucky.”

Yirdaw Amare
(right), also from
Kualabaka School:



“I once answered a question and was given a candy by Tesfay (Project Coordinator). I was so glad.

I know the candy is so small but it indicates that if I work hard, I can even get bigger awards. In the school you compete. One will become a genius and gets an award and the others won't. It is like that. If people want to get the flag or any other award, they know they have to work hard. If not, it is obvious that the others who did well will get it. About sustainability? Well you know a child starts to learn and when he/she completes education, they become a teacher, a doctor etc. but they do not go back to illiteracy. It is

like that. My impression is that my parents and others will continue to practice the lesson they got from ORDA and will also shape the future generation.

We are now used to the clean water. I once remember, I was tired and asked someone to give me water to drink and they gave me water from the spring. Then I got sick. Even our stomach is now used to the clean water. We didn't give attention to such things before. Now we are not sick anymore.”



Tangut Reta (left)
is a VHC
for Sekut
gote,
Kualabaka:

“Before we started to build - that's a year ago - everyone was defecating everywhere and drinking polluted water. I had seen a latrine in Bahir Dar but I did not know how to make one and I didn't know the connection between latrines and health until after the project training. The community selected me as a VHC because I work hard, keep myself clean and am organised. I work every day with the other staff. We blow a trumpet to call people for the coffee ceremony. Everyone comes, unless they have commitments. The project supplies the coffee and we all take food. There is the training. Then the community likes to stay on and chat, even if Tesfaye and the others have to leave. It's like a picnic.”

The Ethiopian Coffee Ceremony is unique. Coffee is generally reserved for special social gatherings. Usually fresh grass or flowers are spread on the ground; a woman sits on a low stool often with two small charcoal burners – one to prepare the coffee and the other heating fragrant incense. Firstly fresh beans are roasted and the smoke wafted towards each guest for them to enjoy the aroma. The beans are then ground by hand and added to water in a traditional clay coffee pot, with leaves (in some places) acting as a stopper. The coffee is boiled up and served three times, poured each time from high up into small ornate cups, and served with toasted grain or pop-corn. The atmosphere created is respectful to guests, sociable, and also poetic.

AT HOME

→ **Water-lifting pulley for vegetables:** In areas with accessible ground water a small well in the compound can produce water for gardening (but not for drinking, unless it is treated). The design for the pulley comes from the south west of Ethiopia but is easily replicable using eucalyptus wood. These photos can help anyone



↙ **Hand-washing at home:** Promote having clean water (and soap) on a shelf outside the house door, as well as beside the latrine. This creates a habit of hand-washing at important points in the day, such as after visiting the latrine and before cooking and eating. It also means there is safe drinking water at any time.



↙ **Latrine construction:** Latrines can be built from 100% local, cheap materials. Neighbours can help each other build. The style will vary depending on the soil type and availability of straw, rocks and wood, but people should be advised on the design to ensure their latrine is safely built. The other essentials are hand washing after each visit, and daily cleaning of the latrine so it is hygienic and pleasant, and people will actually use it. In addition to the hand-washing gourd or jerry can beside the latrine, families can (1) make a cover for the hole when not in use (2) have a door that can also be securely closed from inside (3) provide a bin for used paper and a brush for cleaning.



↑ **Improved stoves:** Removing the cooking fire from the home means less smoke indoors which reduces eye and respiratory health problems. Raising the stove reduces back pain. This easily replicable model made from mud and straw uses far less fuel wood than an open fire. A separate kitchen does not need to be expensive: this is a simple semi-circular ventilated shelter. Mud and straw can also be used to build shelves into the walls to keep utensils clean, and as people gain confidence, they can use it to make sofas.



↗ **Refuse and compost pits:** Training families to dig pits in their compound for (1) waste vegetable matter (and ash) to decompose and become useful fertiliser for gardening (2) refuse matter which can be covered over later, is a practical way to help people keep compounds clean, and show that it is possible to start a productive vegetable garden in a small space.

Effective integration of water supply with sanitation and hygiene

As used in the ORDA-WAE Water, Sanitation and Hygiene programme, Achefer, Amhara.

IN THE COMMUNITY



← **Clean water:** Realising the benefits of clean water, community members willingly contribute 0.12 penny (2 birr) per month to a bank account to cover water supply maintenance costs. Students are able to have clean drinking water during their school day with water diverted from a community hand pump to a reservoir close to the school whenever the pump is not being used. In this way there is no conflict between children and other users.



↙↑ **Clothes washing basins and showers:**

Health promotion staff and teachers can encourage community members to wear clean clothes with competitions and rewards. In the Achefer project the school director comments that there are no flies in school now the students come with clean faces and clothes and that they feel pride in their new behaviour.

At first women were unwilling to use the communal showers, even though the walls offered 100% privacy. It seems they were culturally uncomfortable standing up to wash. Building a concrete seat for them to sit on and wash has made the showers popular.



← **Community initiatives:**

Overflow water from water schemes can provide opportunities for community tree plantations or communal vegetable plots. However the same land is often used for cattle grazing and not everyone may agree to a new use and transparent discussions are essential. Selling vegetables can provide income to help maintain water schemes.



↓ **Cattle troughs:**

These were planned as models but have become integrated in the project. Providing troughs prevents cattle from damaging water points. "Now even cattle have changed their behaviour. They do not go for water to the previous sources, but to the cattle trough."



↗ **Raising funds and raising awareness:** People from the nearby town visit Achefer because their water is not clean and they do not have clothes washing basins, showers and cattle troughs. The guard charges for each facility used and this helps cover maintenance and salary costs. Meanwhile more and more people understand the benefits and importance of integrated WASH activities: that it is possible to prevent about 88% of diseases by practicing personal hygiene and sanitation.

Discussing.. hygiene, home improvements & horticulture



Debas Adugna, (left), is an HP with the Achefer project. Debas comes from Yismala town. He has been working for the project for a year. Before he worked as Kebele Chairman:

“Personally I have a latrine and two hand-washing facilities - one attached to the latrine and the other at the main gate. So, I do not wait for my wife or others to give me water for hand-washing. I have also used ‘madaberia’ to plaster the roof inside my house and the wall is also kept very clean. We can wash clothes twice a week. This has all been taught to us by ORDA. We are also teaching the same to others. In my neighbourhood many people changed when they saw what my wife is doing.

My friends appreciate what I do but compared to what I got previously, they say the payment is too little. But I’m happy with what I do. I come from this community and I would be happy to help them change practices. My future plan is to see other villages also changed like Skut and Gudri. That they all have good latrines, separate houses for their cattle, benefit from their garden, eat good foods that gives them resistance from different diseases - be rich like other areas and countries. That is my vision and I’m trying my best to realise this. For example, I once had to take people’s cabbages to Bahir Dar to sell. The reason was they had planted a lot and it was not the fasting season so no one was buying them. But I didn’t want people to get frustrated. From then on, I taught them to think about the timing for the different vegetables. We are also connecting villagers with hotel owners so that they will have somewhere to take their vegetables.

Madaberia: plastic fertiliser sac or grain bag material
Injera: similar to pancake, the staple food in many areas

I teach the community by going house-to-house, or at the coffee ceremony, about the benefits of a latrine, hand-washing facilities, dry waste disposal pits, personal hygiene and so on. Also about house management – that they need to have a separate place for human and animals, and a place for cooking and sleeping. About energy saving stoves – for injera. We not only tell them about the benefits but also show them how to make them – that is, the latrine, the stove, shelves for household utensils. First we show them a drawing or a picture – both negative and positive. Then we tell them the benefit of the positive pictures. Then we show them how to make it and how to use it – that way it becomes simpler to communicate. The main thing is whatever we show people is made of locally available materials. If they want to improve it, it is going to be their decision, but we make sure that they know they can make it from local materials. We also use drama to teach people. We use students and the active VHCs.”

Sisay Berhanu (pictured front cover and page 9 with water lifting device):

“I have been doing well in gardening. So the project gave me this pulley to encourage me. I’m happy. Not only because of the award but because the technology is introduced in this village. They also told us that it is possible to do it here. For example, my neighbour is now planning to make one for himself. Since we have this one, we can copy it. The incentive encouraged not only me but others as well. If you work hard, you know that you will get something. Not always an award (from ORDA or government) but the fruits of your labour are also something. These people are giving us awards for the time and energy we spend to support ourselves. On the other hand we should have given them awards since they brought new ideas to our village. The technology, the new seeds that we did not know before, and the lessons they gave us, and the changes they brought to our village. Our village is clean now. Everybody has a latrine and hand washing facility. You do not see even children’s faeces in any compound. People are getting modernised.”

Effective community sanitation and hygiene promotion

As used in the ORDA-WAE Water, Hygiene and Sanitation programme, Achefer, Amhara.

PROMOTION METHODS



← **Active community participation:** Achefer community members and woreda officials state that people became motivated to participate because of the practical steps taken by the project (coffee ceremony, school club, incentives, house-to-house visits, horticulture, village-to-village exchange visits) – and that the project staff kept their promises. A woreda staff person says: “They are practical. They taught us to be practical.”



← **The project compound as a model site:** The Achefer compound acts as an inspiring demonstration site with vegetables, water pulleys, a latrine and a shower.



Coffee ceremony, television, and experience sharing ↗: A budget for promotional resources for community hygiene and sanitation related meetings can be money well spent. Creating regular coffee ceremony gatherings with music, films of experiences from other villages, award ceremonies using flags and gardening tools, poetry readings - as well as trainings - has create a positive atmosphere in which to learn and share information in Achefer. However, the film equipment (video camera, television, generator) is costly, the issues can become repetitive, and people can become passive observers. The ceremony works best when it complements house-to-house visits - bringing people together and reinforcing learning.



← **A committed promotion team:** Good hygiene and sanitation promotion for the present and the long term relies on a committed, communicative and collaborative team that extends from the grassroots - Village Hygiene Communicators (VHC), water committees and water point guards - to paid professionals such as Hygiene Promoters (HP) and Health Extension Workers (HEW), project staff, woreda water and health related staff and school teachers, and to the community administrators and officials such as members of kebele committees. The Project Coordinator’s role is key in setting effective management and communications systems up but the individuals concerned will need their own strategy to ensure systems carry on after the project end. This is essential to ensure the intensive house-to-house work of such people as HPs (right in the photo) is not lost.

→ What encouraged you to build a latrine?

Community members in Achefer were asked to prioritise 3 motivators out of 7 promotion tools. Their responses were:

Rank	Motivator/Reason	Point	%
1	House-to-house promotion	92	31.3
2	Coffee ceremony	73	24.8
3	Flag rewarding	39	13.3
4	Government enforcement	36	12.2
5	Influence of friends & neighbours	27	9.2
6	Video show	23	7.8
7	Fear of being publicly shamed	4	1.4

Looking to the future

The importance of people

As a *project* Achefer has had many people invest their expertise and time into making it work over the last three years: the on-site project team, ORDA experts from Bahir Dar, support from WaterAid in Addis Ababa and 10 Hygiene Promoters working with a grassroots team. The project has made particular efforts to link with woreda officials and consciously brought all the different individuals together in regular meetings. What happens then when these staff people move on, and Achefer is no longer a project, but simply a *community*?

A grassroots team

The fact is – as with most WASH projects - the project has trained community members over the three years who are now placed to carry on - 67 VHCs, 155 individuals forming WASH committees, and 48 caretakers to guard and manage water points. But how do they rate their own motivation and success for the future when – with the exception of the caretakers - maintaining the WASH activities is a voluntary commitment in addition to their private work, rather than their paid job. What challenges do they see and what are their strategies to overcome these?

Members of the Gudri WASH Committee are positive at present. They witnessed the community's willing participation in the water construction work and their continuing commitment through contributions deposited to a bank account for ongoing maintenance work. Yaregal Mekonen who is committee member, kebele chairman and a VHC says: "This water is for all of us. We work together. We know it is for the good of society."

Regarding sustainability the committee feel they can use this account to maintain the promotional and motivating mechanisms such as the coffee ceremonies and the flag system. They also have an idea for their own community project: to fence off land near the water point and collectively grow vegetables to raise more funds. However some in the gote are less keen on this idea, believing the land is more useful for grazing. Such dilemmas might hint at possible challenges to come. And while Gudri are aware that their

WASH committees in Achefer

Each has 9 members and ORDA-WA expect a good gender balance. The members of the committee have the following responsibilities:

- two VHCs (1 male, 1 female)
- five WASH (3 male, 2 female)
- two technicians (1 male, 1 female)

People in Achefer say it is sometimes difficult to get women involved in community work. They try hard but when it becomes impossible they choose men.

The role of a WASH committee is to:

- mobilise the community
- make sure that the scheme continues to work
- make sure that the water is managed well
- report to the project office/woreda if there is a problem e.g. breakage
- mobilise the community to contribute 1 birr a month for the guards and maintenance

gote is one of the most dynamic in the project area, and other gotes have less self-confidence, their positive feelings are based in the trust that the woreda will support the community after the project hand over: "At the moment we do not see any threat for the future. Up until now there has been no problem. But if these come then we will report them to the Water Desk."

Government support

Woreda Administrator Goshu Endalamaw's view of the situation is equally positive. He says his office sees the Achefer project as a model, and they are inviting other kebeles in the woreda to visit and learn from it. What most impresses the woreda staff is the practical approach to new technologies, the coffee ceremony to which people can bring issues for discussion, and the sense of ownership that the community feels for the project activities. In his view people's minds have changed so there is no going back. A reality however in terms of continuing the promotion work is whether the woreda budget is sufficient. He would like to replicate the coffee ceremony in other kebeles and continue with the ORDA-WAE initiated incentives, the woreda having already used

small agricultural tools as awards successfully for farmers at the zonal level. “We haven’t planned to use the coffee ceremony yet, but in the future the coffee ceremony can be an input for the HEW. In the agricultural activities of the woreda there is what we call a Development Group. We want to integrate the coffee ceremony with that.” He said the Group are already adopting the practical approaches of the stove and latrine in other kebeles.

Goshu believes that ORDA have created good systems that - together with the all-important sense of ownership – will endure. Individual water schemes have already been handed over to the community, the committees have been trained, and villagers are contributing money for maintenance. He sees the woreda work as simply to help sustain these systems and perhaps give some refresher training, but that this is all within their capacity - that the government is planning to upgrade the Water Desk to office level, while hygiene and sanitation is handled by the Health Desk.

Health Extension Workers

In the view of the HPs, as important as anything will be the way the government-employed Health Extension Workers (HEW) work together with the community. As relatively new posts their remit covers some 16 components - everything from nutrition to HIV, but amongst these are also sanitation and hygiene.

Looking at some of the weaker gotes, some HPs are concerned sustainability might be a problem. To try and minimise a possible drop in hygiene and sanitation progress and practice, the HPs have been working closely with the HEWs and passing names of households or villages that need follow-up to them. The HPs are going house-to-house once or twice a week with the HEWs and hope the HEWs will continue such visits after the project ends. In the final months of the project the HPs have started nominating elder and respected people who are listened to and requesting that they keep discussing WASH issues with the wider community

Management and regular follow up

Some HPs fear, however, that despite the



Women users of the water point at Sununda Gote, Kualabaka. The Achefer project has worked to empower women by encouraging a gender balance in the WASH work. Women make up around 40% of WASH committees, and 80% of VHCs. Changing the behaviour of women is essential for the future health of the community. Rural Ethiopia’s traditional division of labour means that it is women who are primarily involved with fetching water, cooking, cleaning, washing clothes and child care.

longer training (a year and a half) HEWs received, they lack the commitment the HPs feel. A reason for this might be the way in which the HEWs have to cover so many issues, or the fact that for the HPs the project team were able to motivate them through a close and communicative management style. One HP commented: “We are pushing the HEWs to work with us as we’ll be handing over our responsibilities to them and we want our work to be sustainable. But there needs to be a strict follow-up on the work they do if they want to bring change. In our case we have allocated dates in a month for monitoring and evaluation. We criticise each other and learn from one another. Every 12th day of the month I have a meeting with all the VHCs who work in the villages I work. We have a meeting to discuss reports from each gote, to discuss challenges and listen to solutions or suggest solutions. On the 29th day of the month, we have a meeting for all the HPs and all the project VHCs together.” Whilst in most villages in the project area latrines are being adopted quickly, the HPs are aware that it takes time for people to apply lessons on personal hygiene, and hence persistent follow up will be essential

after the project has ended: “People are still weak on shower and hand-washing habits. However, we are trying to follow that up as well. We have developed a follow-up sheet and we know at least 5 people per day from one gote are using the shower. We also tell people they have to come to the coffee ceremony clean, so that they can develop the habit. We rely on the VHCs to help us on this. Because they live in and are part of the community, we use them to convince people.”

Certainly the HEWs will need management and motivation from their woreda managers if they are to continue this kind of follow up work, but equally – when the HPs leave the project – both the HEW and the woreda desk managers will need to work closely with the VHCs who are those staff who worked *within* the project and will remain after its end.

Supporting staff who stay on

The project team’s assessment of the VHCs is that some are stronger and some weaker. Clearly there can be many reasons for weakness, perhaps that they themselves are not active or are less skilled communicators. But their progress can also be affected by the culture of the community they are working with, the management skill of the HP under whom they work, the attitude of the WASH committee etc. At present the meetings organised by the wider project team support the VHCs but it will be important that this trained human resource does not lose its momentum once the project ends.

Village Hygiene Communicators (VHCs)

- There are two VHCs (male and female depending on selection) in each gote. VHCs report that women feel more at ease when they are taught by female VHCs, and husbands are often unhappy if a male VHC goes to a house alone, thus VHCs often work in m/f pairs or just female VHCs.
- VHCs are selected by the community.
- The project gave them 20 days training: 16 days theory and 4 days practical.
- Their commitment is to work 10 days a month for the community and 5 should be on usual working days.
- Their role includes educating people about positive hygienic practices and mobilising the community.
- They commit to work after the project end.

Respect at all levels

The project successes are grounded in mutual respect between all staff and the community. HPs say they generally have good relationships with the kebele administration, often involving them in WASH committee activities. However in one case kebele leaders used the coffee ceremony to agitate about tax, asking people to pay tax or be penalised. The HPs had to stop inviting the kebele leaders to the ceremony, as people would feel suspicious of the purpose of an event whose focus was supposedly WASH.

On-going learning

Refresher training is something that should keep Achefer moving forwards. Some HPs question whether the five days training they received via the project was adequate in itself. In five days they learnt about hygiene, environmental cleanliness, about latrines and how to construct them, about hand-washing facilities and the simplest ways to make them. HPs were recruited because they had mobilising experience, giving them the confidence to stand up and teach people, but the VHCs find this harder. In any case as the community learns more their interest needs to be held by new information. One HP commented: “Now the farmers are changing. There are 12th grade among them. We don’t know if they come with challenging questions and we cannot be seen as if we do not know what we are doing. We need supporting materials and a budget for refresher training.”

When to stop?

In theory the HPs leave when the project ends. And usually an NGO will move on from a project area. However ORDA is to start a new similar project in a neighbouring area. At the time of the research visit the debate was whether the HPs should stay on in Achefer for a further year. With the project’s successes so great, but some gotes still struggling and neighbouring kebeles ready to learn, could funding for continuing management enable the HPs and HEWs to team up and make a really significant difference to WASH in the woreda. Deciding “when to stop” is possibly an important issue for WASH colleagues to debate more.

Looking to the future

Maintaining incentives

An unusual sight greets one when visiting Achefer and that is the coloured flags - so many households have one visible above their roofs. It is a sight suggesting activity and progress relating to a project, but does it have an air of control or artificiality for normal community life? Until now people have been positive – recognising the flags have motivated change. Woreda staff admit they were not initially convinced the idea was a good one, but the community assured them of the need for it. The flags have created competition and there is an atmosphere of people wanting to be front line figures. However flags are part of a staff-intensive hygiene promotion system starting with household visits and made effective through public awards at the coffee ceremony. While an evaluation in several years time can assess people's changed hygienic practice, for the shorter term questions arise regarding the sustainability of the promotion methods, e.g. can and will those staff members who will continue in Achefer (both paid and voluntary) maintain this level of intensity? And is an incentive system in fact necessary long-term?

Project Coordinator Tesfaye Yalew is pragmatic about human nature and essentially positive: "After the project, the flag may not continue. It is up to those who stay on. It was introduced to encourage those who did not have a latrine. The upgrading mechanism was implemented to encourage sustainability. Our assumption is before we leave the project, we will be able to change people's mind. Once they are changed, there will not be any going back. I remember my father throwing away fertilisers and not wanting cows to eat straw from the fertiliser. It is about changing people's minds. Now fertiliser is used everywhere and the farmers know the benefit of it. It is the same here: we just need to show the benefits and people will continue to carry out sanitation and hygiene activities. The promotion work we do is intensive so that people should not go back to their previous position."

While it may seem preferable to many to maintain the flags and coffee ceremony for

longer until behaviour changes become a fixed habit, there are also questions around the sustainability of covering the cost of tools, sweets, and coffee, as well as the eventual cost of replacing the TV equipment used in the coffee ceremonies as it wears out.

Kualabaka school director, Getenet Abebe, stressed his wish to maintain the sense of competition between students in terms of being clean by introducing a new incentive system. Following the lead of the project staff who visited to train the students, checked their cleanliness and tested their knowledge, Getenet would like to award books and pens for students at school with consistently clean clothes and washed face. However the school's severe budget limitations might make this difficult to put into practice. The school's role highlights the need for linked promotion between the generations. Student Yirdaw Amare states: "We have been trying to teach our parents before about hygiene from the things we learnt at school. But they did not listen to us. We thank ORDA, now our parents are listening to them and changing their behaviour. The reason they listen to ORDA is because they come with water and they also introduced this flag as an award."

Water and horticulture as incentives

Without doubt water provision is a strong incentive for people and can be the catalyst for hygiene and sanitation activities, even if it is the intensive promotional work that cements behaviour changes for life. With its horticultural promotion work, tools and seeds awarded as incentives, Achefer also raises the issue that for many people food security will be a more immediate concern than hygiene and sanitation. Can integrating horticulture with WASH also be a way to engage people with the possibilities of their own efforts to bring change? Meanwhile an important consideration is the sustainability of water sources for gardening, as well as for wider WRM activities.

"The gardening has also brought change in my and my family's life. We sell beetroot for 0.12 penny (2 birr), cabbage 0.07 – 0.12 penny (1 to 2 birr), papaya for 0.18 penny (3 birr). This is something we didn't have before. For me I won't have to worry about the children's uniform - I can use the money I got from the fruits. This covers it all. My wife cooks good things with the cabbage, carrot, beetroot and potato. We are getting healthy foods as well." - Sisay Berhanu, farmer.

Looking to the future

Handover, “extra time”, planning and more..

On several occasions during the short visit to Achefer it became apparent that although the project design included a handover strategy, the process could be improved, both at the project level and the community level. This observation raises questions about transition periods in WASH work in general.

Considering handover options

Clearly each situation has its unique qualities. For Achefer the project was the first one for ORDA that strongly integrated sanitation and hygiene, providing them with a model for a new way of working. The HPs had only been in place in Achefer for the final year of the three-year project, and ORDA was staying on in the area. Because of new woreda administrative divisions, half of the Achefer project kebeles will fall into the new woreda ORDA are moving on to. This gives the potential for continued water, hygiene and sanitation work in the Achefer project kebeles and the chance to reach more households - given that a project is generally only able to provide resources and promotion work to some of the population of an area and rarely all. If ORDA decides to continue working with the HPs in the former Achefer project, or only in those areas that overlap with the new project area, this has implications for management and the way in which HPs and HEWs can work together. Within this situation there is also room for creative thinking around other ways of allocating staff, managing, carrying out exchanges and so on. Thinking creatively with the unique situation of each project as it phases out highlights the fact that more time might usefully be devoted to handover in general: either in the planning stage, or at mid-term evaluation, or – very practically - during the final project months.

Extra time and equity

Considering ORDA's new five-year project area of 10 kebeles (6 of which are former Achefer project kebeles) draws attention to the different attitudes present in the WASH sector. The original plan for Achefer was to achieve 39% water coverage. At the time of



Going it alone? Is the transition from an organised WASH project to community management too sudden because woreda Water or Health Desk responsibilities towards communities are not made clear enough after project staff leave? Can woreda and project staff establish a phase-out strategy jointly? In Achefer's particular case this could mean one year of HPs working together with HEWs.

the research visit the coverage was nearing 40%. For the project staff the situation is frustrating: ideally they would like to reach 80% water coverage. Meanwhile in the final months of the project, sanitation coverage varies in Achefer's project gotes, with some reaching 90-100% and others far behind. While WAE aims always to achieve 100% water coverage *and* 100% sanitation, ORDA's view is regional, that there should be an equitable distribution of WASH investment among woredas, and they prefer to move to a new woreda, achieving some coverage everywhere, rather than total coverage in just a few areas. ORDA sees their role as demonstrating a model and the government's obligation to fill the gap.

Failing or weaker villages

While Achefer has shown itself to be broadly successful, there are project gotes that are weaker in WASH or could be classified as failing – where people are less receptive for any number of reasons – to do with culture, history, personality, isolation and so on, and other WAE reports have documented such

instances in greater detail (e.g. *A Tale of two villages*, available from WAE offices). Should such villages therefore have more time spent on them before a project moves on? Project Coordinator Tesfaye Yalew's view is: "It is good to identify weaker and stronger villages. But if something is incurable then we don't spend too much time and energy in that kebele. We tried in Lihudi kebele again and again but there was low participation and people were not positive about change. To some extent we then left and went to another village and encouraged that village to participate and "not be like Lihudi", i.e. we used negative villages for promotion purposes. But if they change their mind we will go and help them before we leave. In fact one gote from there came to us and said we will do whatever you want us to do. They had become convinced of the need for WASH."

Community plans for the future

Other issues community members raised related to their visions for future work, such as starting communal vegetable gardens or plantations around water points. One WASH committee is aiming to buy their own television for kebele use from the sale of plants. This kind of development of WASH projects is very possible - in an EOC-WAE project in North Gondar one village has bought their own generator for household lighting - but people say they lack confidence in drawing up plans. Perhaps as part of their hand over process NGOs should aim to provide training in project planning?

Meanwhile other community members voiced concern that before ORDA left someone should be assigned to lead the WASH work – to help the coffee ceremony, VHCs and WASH committees continue. Although such an individual might not be deemed appropriate by either ORDA or WAE as woreda and kebele staff, WASH committees, VHCs and HEWs are all placed to ensure activities continue the requests demonstrate people's perception that as the project ends they are losing leadership that they would like to continue in some shape or form. This might suggest a lack of clarity in the handover process – that they are unsure who they should look to in any given situation. Equally it could be a valid sense that someone should

guide the community a little longer - to consolidate successes and strengthen weaknesses.

In brief

Questions from Achefer

The aim of this report is to share learning. It is *not* a project evaluation document including project recommendations etc. And as it is published some months after the research trip, neither does it aim to give an absolutely up to date picture of the project and community today. Instead it is hoped the range of ideas and processes emerging from Achefer encourage interesting debate amongst WASH colleagues - and that the pull-out posters act as useful training tools. As with all learning, the visit to Achefer raised as many questions as it presented answers, and just some of these are included here. Both ORDA and WAE would welcome feedback on these or anything else raised by their reading *The colour of change*.

- How should Water Resource Management options be brought into WASH projects? What criteria do WAE and its partners have for WRM in different projects and regions? Should there be a standard strategy? Does it divert time and money from core WASH work or does it encourage? How is the sustainability of water resource measured?
- To what extent is food security a central concern for people? Is tying vegetable production to sanitation appropriate?
- How might the hygiene and sanitation model from Achefer be scaled up or down, or modified depending on the size of project area, the permanent project staff and the partner organisations working together?
- All WASH colleagues have experienced villagers who are uneasy about the motives and allegiances of NGOs. For some of the "failing" kebeles in Achefer their unwillingness to participate stemmed from some discomfort around a perceived political agenda coming at the time of national elections. In what ways can colleagues increase transparent debate around these, and other, sensitive issues that might block effective WASH work?



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The colour of change is dedicated to Tesfaye Yalew in acknowledgement of his vision and dedication as Project Coordinator with the Achefer project, and to the countless others who are spearheading the way in terms of hygiene and sanitation in Ethiopia. The research team would also like to express their thanks to all Achefer community members, project and woreda staff for their help in researching this report.