3.3 Ethiopia

Background

SusWASH is being implemented in Gololcha woreda, Oromia Region. A woreda-wide approach\textsuperscript{xxiii} is applied, with implementation focused on Jara (a small town) and two rural kebeles (Buriya and Safogue). The area experiences occasional political tension which can affect movement around the woreda and wider zone. Poor road access and complex hydrogeology make implementation challenging. There is animosity between service users and the water utility in Jara Town where poor coverage and regular service interruptions fuel anger. People in rural areas feel ignored and conflict can arise at water points as there are not sufficient services to meet demand. Service levels are particularly low in the rural target kebeles of Buriya and Safogue. At the start of SusWASH, 100% of the population of these two kebeles were using either surface or unimproved water sources. More than half the population of Buriya, and over 80% of Safogue, were practising open defecation. WaterAid had no pre-existing relationship with Gololcha woreda prior to SusWASH and spent considerable time building trust.

WASH system analysis

Context analysis identified several blockages and challenges in Gololcha:

- **Finance**: Large financing gap for achievement of targets set out in the One WASH National Plan. Minimal budget allocations for water (an average of just 2.5% of the woreda’s total spending from 2015–2018) and failure to ensure budget allocations for WASH.
- **Institutional arrangements**: Limited institutional capacity to deliver basic services at the local government level. Only 42% of the required staff are in place to support WASH services and there is a lack of required skills and knowledge.
- **Monitoring**: Infrequent monitoring, and no link with the national database.
- **WASH delivery models**: Some efforts to end open defecation, no hygiene behaviour change and unsupported water delivery.
- **Coordination and integration**: Lack of coordination among WASH stakeholders and across WASH, health and education sectors.
- **Planning**: Lack of a costed woreda-wide WASH plan, reducing potential for successful coordination of efforts to achieve the woreda’s stated WASH priorities.
- **Water resources and environment**: Large-scale *E. coli* contamination of improved rural water sources (85%). High fluoride and limited groundwater potential.

During the woreda participatory context analysis, local stakeholders ranked the WASH system building blocks accordingly (see Figure 18). (N.B. faded building blocks were added to the tool after the initial assessment in 2017).

With low WASH coverage in the woreda, poor service levels and weak accountability causing hostility in Jara Town and gaps identified in woreda monitoring, planning, financing and coordination, our efforts focused on strengthening these components of the WASH system.

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**Figure 17: Overview of institutional arrangements showing who is responsible for rural WASH in Ethiopia.**

![Institutional Arrangements Diagram]

- **Planning and policy**: Ministry of Water, Irrigation and Energy (MoWIE).
- **Planning and regulation**: Regional level.
- **Technical support**: Zonal departments.
- **Service authority**: Woreda.
- **Service provision**: Water and sanitation committees (WASHCOs) and rural utility.
- **Hygiene**: Ministry of Health (MoH).
- **Health Extension Workers**.
Figure 18: Results of Ethiopia’s participatory building block assessment of Gololcha woreda.

- Coordination and integration
- Strategic planning
- Financing
- Institutional arrangements
- Accountability and regulation
- Monitoring
- Service delivery and behaviour change
- Environment and water resources
- Gender and social inclusion
- Active and empowered people and communities
- Government leadership

Figure 19: Service levels in SusWASH project areas.

Water service levels
- 100% Unimproved
- 80% Limited
- 60% Basic
- 40% Safely managed
- 20% 4.0%

Sanitation service levels
- 100% Open defecation
- 80% Unimproved
- 60% Limited
- 40% 65.0%
- 20% 10.0%

Hygiene service levels
- 100% No facility
- 80% 65.0%
- 60% Limited
- 40% 10.0%
- 20% 25.0%
- 0% 0%

System strengthening for inclusive, lasting WASH that transforms people’s lives
Outcome 1: Inclusive and sustainable WASH delivery models

3.3.1 Supporting the implementation of government-recognised water service delivery models

Model 1: Small town utility model in Jara Town

With intermittent electricity supplied through the grid, and no budget to repair its diesel generator, Jara Town utility could only provide water for three hours per day. The connection of unprotected springs to the network raised concerns about water quality. The 20-year-old network suffered from leakage and low pressure, and the original 100m³ reservoir was too small to serve all areas of the town, let alone meet the demand of its growing population (17,098 people in 2020). These challenges exacerbated the communities’ unwillingness to pay for water and illegal connections increased. With limited finance, the utility became unable to pay staff salaries and had to reduce its staff by five people.

Hailu Moti is the manager of Jara Town Water Utility. In front of him is the old, only operational generator. Jara, Gololcha, Bale, Oromia, Ethiopia, November 2017.

Figure 20: Small town utility management model in Jara Town.
Our support to improve the functioning of the utility under a small town utility model had four main components:

1. **Supporting the utility to meet existing and future water demand by rehabilitating the old network, extending it to unserved areas and bringing new water sources online**

   We drilled one borehole but fluoride levels were too high to bring it into service. We subsequently protected three more distant springs and connected these to the network. We supported the utility to connect two existing boreholes to the power grid to reduce their reliance on diesel which can be challenging and expensive to procure. A new 300m$^3$ reservoir and 9 public waterpoints were constructed in areas previously unserved, while old and damaged pipelines were replaced with new, more durable polyethylene pipes. The network now has capacity to serve the town’s current population with spare capacity to meet future demand.

2. **Strengthening the management capacity of the utility**

   A board was set up to oversee the operation and management of the utility. Board functions include: approval and monitoring of utility budget, appointment of senior management staff, approval of tariffs, ensuring adequate financial controls and monitoring utility performance. Utility capacity was built in asset management, business planning, customer services, financial management, O&M and E&I.

3. **Supporting the utility to understand the full life-cycle costs of the operation and attract ongoing investment in service continuity**

   We and IRC-WASH supported the utility, woreda water office (WWO) and zone to undertake a life-cycle costing analysis (LCCA). Results were presented to the deputy head of zonal administration to increase awareness of the finance required to ensure a sustainable service. We continue to advocate for sufficient budget allocations at zone and regional levels (see case study 3.3.3 for more details).

4. **Setting up a customer forum to ensure effective communication between the utility and service users**

   Following our support to the rehabilitation and extension of the utility network, we started working with the utility and woreda council to establish a customer forum. The customer forum aims to ensure effective communication between the utility and service users (see case study 3.3.4 for more details).

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**Model 2: Rural water board model for piped water supply in Buriya kebele**

With a population of 7,676, Buriya is a remote rural kebele approximately 1.5 hours by unsurfaced road from Jara Town. Prior to WaterAid’s intervention there was no functional improved water service in the kebele. Groundwater potential in the area is very low and people relied on a large unprotected hand-dug well (~10m deep) for their water supply. The community reported instances of ill-health as a result of drinking the water and instances of death (from women falling into the well and drowning).

Our support to improve the water supply in Buriya focused on three areas:

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* xxiv. The board is composed of a chairperson (from the woreda administration), and one representative from each of the district offices including water, health, finance and economic development, education, women’s affairs offices, as well as two people (one female and one male) representing the customers (from the customer forum – see case study 3.3.4), the utility manager and utility secretary.
1. Supporting improvements to water supply infrastructure

Low shallow groundwater potential close to the community and no high yielding springs necessitated the construction of a deep borehole (149m), a reservoir tank (75m³) and re-connection to an existing non-functional piped networkxxv to reach demand centres. High cost and low availability of diesel for a generator necessitated the construction of a hybrid (solar/diesel) water supply scheme. The new piped system serves the whole community and a school.

2. Implementing a rural water board model

The remote nature of the community makes establishment of a sophisticated service delivery model difficult, but with some access to external support from the WWO, we supported the set-up of a rural water board model.37 The Board or main WASHCO (water, sanitation and hygiene committee) is responsible for overseeing the management of the scheme,xxvi while a paid manager and technical operator ensure the everyday O&M.

This model helps to ensure technical and financial support is available when repairs go beyond the Board’s capacity. Sub-WASHCOs are elected by the community to manage each tapstand. Board members are elected sub-WASHCO representatives.

Training was provided to the WWO, the scheme manager, the scheme’s technical operator, Board members and sub-WASHCOs on O&M, fee collection and conflict resolution. We continue to work with the WASHCOs, Board members, operators, WWO and zone to ensure they have the right skills and budget available to cover minor and major maintenance and asset replacement needs.

xxv. The non-functional piped scheme was previously part of a multi-village scheme. A previous extension to the network had resulted in low pressure in the Buriya section which left users with an unreliable, failing water supply.

xxvi. The scheme is overseen by a Manager while a scheme operator provides technical O&M support – both positions are paid for by user tariffs Sub-WASHCOs, comprised of community volunteers are assigned to each tapstand and are responsible for the management, supervision and collection of fees. The sub-WASHCOs are also responsible for ensuring proper use of the water point by users, resolving conflicts and raising issues to the Board. The Board, comprised of two people from the WWO, a representative from each sub-WASHCO, the Manager and Operator, coordinates technical and financial support from the WWO for any repairs that go beyond its ability to resolve.
3. Supporting the WWO, woreda administration and zone to understand life-cycle costs for the scheme and attract finance for major maintenance and asset replacement.

Asset registry, service level data and LCCA fed into the development of a costed woreda WASH plan (see case study 3.3.3).

Model 3: WASHCO model for spring-fed gravity-flow scheme in Safogue kebele

Safogue is a remote rural community of 5,364 people, approximately 30–45 minutes drive from Jara Town. The population were using unprotected springs for their main water supply. The community now has access to a water point and wash basin for laundry. The water point and wash basin are supplied by two high-yielding protected springs which are channelled into a 26m³ capacity chamber.

Requiring little maintenance and with low operational costs, the gravity-flow scheme is managed by a WASHCO, xxvii as set out in the National Rural Water Supply Operation and Maintenance Management Strategic Framework (see Figure 22). xxviii We continue to work with the WWO, WWT and zonal office to ensure there is sufficient budget and capacity to reform the WASHCO and repair and replace assets should it be necessary.

Evidence of change

Inclusive and sustainable service delivery models:

- Water supply services are being well-managed under the new management arrangements.
- The populations of Jara Town, Buriya and Safogue now have an improved water supply service. In all three communities, we have heard from women and girls who report spending less time collecting water per day.

xxvii. The WASHCO consists of nine members (four women and five men) all of whom were elected by the community. WaterAid trained the WASHCO on leakage prevention and minor maintenance. Tariffs were also set in accordance with the regional legislation and manual; users pay approximately 1 Birr (USD $0.03) per 25l jerry can. The WASHCO has a bank account to manage revenue generated.

60 / System strengthening for inclusive, lasting WASH that transforms people’s lives
Lessons learned

Demonstrating water supply service delivery models:

• Demonstration of service delivery models in areas of such low WASH coverage met community demands and local government priorities (to extend services). This helped to secure local government and service provider buy-in for broader efforts to strengthen management arrangements, monitoring, planning, financing, coordination and accountability. This may not have been possible without a significant service delivery component in Gololcha.

• Building flexibility into plans is necessary to accommodate unexpected challenges when working in difficult environments. Challenges included prolonged periods of political tension in nearby woredas disrupting road access. Low groundwater potential and difficult access meant that drilling contractors were unwilling to bid for work in Buriya. High fluoride in boreholes in Jara meant the project had to switch to development of distant springs. Securing permission from communities already using distant springs was extremely challenging and required identification of alternative sources. It was very difficult to secure permission from a land owner for construction of the main town service reservoir.

3.3.2 Demonstrating a behaviour-centred hygiene and sanitation delivery model

We worked with national, regional and woreda government, and local performance artists, to design a hygiene behaviour change campaign building on the government-endorsed community-led total sanitation and hygiene approach (CLTSH). The campaign was informed by formative research (see Box 5), and another study examining the factors affecting the achievement and sustainability of ODF status.xxviii

The campaign delivered hygiene messages that tap into the motivations and interests of the target community. Hygiene behaviour change messages focused on: handwashing at critical times (e.g. before eating and after using the toilet), safe disposal of children’s excreta, access to and use of sanitation facilities, safe water

People collect water from the newly-installed waterpoint in Safogue.

xxviii. The study found that the more visible and active government and local leaders were in the triggering and post-triggering process respectively, the more likely people were to construct latrines and change their sanitation and hygiene behaviours. It highlighted that weak follow-up support from kebele leaders and health extension workers affected achievement and sustainability of ODF status. Generally, communities were willing to construct, upgrade and repair their latrines using their own resources, but suggested marginalised people should receive some extra support. Open defecation was reported to be practised among farming and pastoralist communities who did not have access to latrines while at work or for the management of children’s faeces.
management in households, good food hygiene and solid waste management. Hygiene behaviour change messages were disseminated through theatre performances in markets.

Markets were selected to ensure messages reached as many segments of society as possible, particularly women and girls. We intend to expand the hygiene behaviour change campaign to schools and HCFs to ensure messages reach children, mothers and people with varying health status.

We continue to work with local leaders and the health office to ensure there are sufficient funds to follow-up with communities on the construction, use and maintenance of latrines, and practise of good hygiene behaviours.

Evidence of change

• Since the start of the campaign, 67 latrines have been constructed or rehabilitated in Safogue and Buriya. Prior to SusWASH, more than half the population of Buriya, and over 80% of Safogue, practised open defecation.

• In Buriya, community members are reportedly practising improved hygiene behaviours more frequently now that a water supply is more readily accessible.

Lessons learned

Strengthening WASH delivery models:

• Designing an evidence-based hygiene behaviour change campaign requires extensive time and resources. Undertaking formative research to understand and analyse the drivers of people’s behaviours can take up to six months.

• Government stakeholders from national to woreda levels, creative agencies, health and WASH professionals must work together to turn research results into motivational messages and resources for use in the campaign. Pictures that create an emotional response were given to participants to help them devise motivational messages and move beyond traditional knowledge and educational messages of good health.

Box 5: Our approach to hygiene behaviour change

WaterAid applies a Behaviour Centred Design (BCD) approach to our hygiene work. Developed by the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, BCD draws on evolutionary psychology and marketing techniques to motivate individuals to change their behaviour on a long-term basis.

Undertaking formative research to understand the emotional drivers of people’s behaviour is central to the BCD approach. BCD involves: changing people's behavioural motives, disturbing their settings with visual ‘nudges’, and changing social norms. BCD has been found to be more effective than hygiene promotion or hygiene education programmes as it taps into the deeply held values, beliefs, social norms and cultures that drive individual and community behaviours.

In doing so, it aims to achieve and sustain improved hygiene behaviours. A five-step (ABCDE) creative process is used to ‘Assess, Build, Create, Deliver and Evaluate’ the hygiene behaviour change campaign, which lasts a minimum of 18 months.

Embedding the hygiene campaign into existing government initiatives and processes helps to scale and sustain results.
Outcome 2: Improved capacity for planning, monitoring, financing and coordination

3.3.3 Strengthening woreda monitoring, financing and planning processes

We worked with the WWT to undertake a water asset inventory and a baseline of WASH service levels. We trained the WWO and zonal staff to visualise the data and update the inventory on an ongoing basis. Previously, the WWO received functionality reports from WASHCOs. However, this data was not used to maintain an asset inventory nor to systematically plan or budget for future repairs and replacements. While WASHCOs continue to send monthly reports to the woreda (either in writing or over the phone), we are supporting the woreda to upload these onto an online database to maintain the asset inventory.

With support from IRC-WASH, we then facilitated a participatory LCCA to understand the full cost of reaching and sustaining universal basic water access (as defined by the JMP) in the whole woreda by 2030. It highlighted the scale of the finance gap and provided evidence of where investment was needed. We subsequently calculated the direct costs of supporting sanitation at household and institutional levels.

We supported the woreda to use this data to develop a costed WASH plan. The plan includes targets for extending and sustaining coverage and improving WASH service levels.

We continue to support the woreda to lobby zonal and regional levels of government to release further funding for the plan’s implementation and allow for more flexibility between budget lines, particularly for capital maintenance.

We also supported the WWO to establish a data and information management system and centre. The centre enables the sharing of documents, data and resources from across different woreda offices to improve cross-sector coordination and planning.

As secretariat of the One WASH Coordination Office, which oversees the National WASH Equity and Inclusion Task Force, we also successfully lobbied government for the integration of E&I indicators into the National One WASH Monitoring Framework.

Evidence of change

Improved planning, monitoring, financing and coordination:

• The process of developing a costed woreda WASH plan helped to build understanding of different sector offices’ role in the provision of inclusive and sustainable WASH.

• The LCCA highlighted the amount of revenue required to maintain existing services and increase basic access in the woreda on a phased basis, leading to revenue allocations for these functions in the plan.

• The costed WASH plan has helped to attract additional finance to the woreda from government and non-government actors. While Gololcha did not receive an increase in funding for capital maintenance, it did receive an increase in budget for capital expenditure from the zone in FY19/20. Furthermore, the NGO, SNV, referred to the woreda WASH plan when deciding the nature and location of their intervention in the woreda.

• Zonal officials intend to scale the planning, monitoring and costing methodologies used to other woredas within the zone. We will continue to support them to do this.

• The newly-established management information centre is being used by the water, health and education offices to share resources and documents. It is too early to report its use in their decision making.

• Woreda staff now have the skills needed to map assets and update the asset inventory on an ongoing basis. This is helping to ensure up-to-date data is available to inform planning and direct investment.

Lessons learned

• Despite our efforts to attract additional funding for major maintenance, through the LCCA and development of a costed woreda WASH plan, it is understandable that in a woreda with very low coverage, government priorities remain sighted on extending coverage. Building political understanding at higher levels of government about the need to allocate sufficient budget for ongoing service delivery costs is one thing. Turning this understanding into action is another. In very low coverage contexts, this will take more than three years to translate into tangible budget increases and changes in central government’s finance allocation formula. We will continue to call for increased finance for the woreda WASH plan, particularly for major maintenance.

• Frequent and prolonged power outages in remote woredas and internet shut downs during political unrest mean that data solutions should not be overly dependent upon online solutions. Results shown on online dashboards should also be printed periodically to ensure access to essential data.

Outcome 3: Active, empowered people and strong accountability mechanisms

3.3.4 Strengthening customer voice and accountability pathways in Jara Town

We worked with Jara utility, the WWT and service users to establish a customer forum.xxx Early efforts to establish the forum included initiating community score carding exercises and establishing a community committee to facilitate dialogue between the public and the utility. This exposed issues of illegal connections and non-payment of bills which the committee tried to address by explaining to households that only by paying would the utility have funds to provide a continuous service. However, after a prolonged period of service interruptions the committee lost motivation and stopped meeting. We waited until significant improvements had been made to the utility’s infrastructure and capacity to deliver services before revisiting plans for the customer forum.

Following our support to the utility (see case study 3.3.1), the town’s population is now receiving a more reliable service, and those

xxx. The 2011 National WASH Implementation Framework makes provisions for service users and services providers in towns to interact via ‘Customer Forums’.
previously unserved will soon have access. With these service improvements, plans for the Customer Forum have resurfaced. Two representatives from each of the nine zones of Jara Town make up the 18-strong membership of the Customer Forum. We worked with the district offices of women, children and youth affairs, and of labour and social affairs, to raise understanding among men and women about the added burden of water on women to encourage women to participate. The Customer Forum is relatively new, but there are promising signs that it is helping to facilitate communication between the community, utility and WWO. WaterAid continues to identify ways to increase the participation of women in the forum and encourage more regular, monthly meetings.

Evidence of change
Active, empowered people and strong accountability mechanisms

• There are early signs of a greater understanding among the community of the constraints faced by the utility, and greater understanding among utility staff of the challenges faced by marginalised members of the community. Aware of their interconnected constraints, users are now more willing to pay for water from the network, call out illegal connections, and support the utility with network maintenance and expansion. The utility also communicates information and challenges that may affect users’ water supply on a more regular basis.

• Accountability gains achieved in Jara Town are unlikely to be sustained unless matched with the necessary finance and capacity to deliver a quality water supply service to all. This requires further budget advocacy efforts at zonal, regional and national levels to ensure allocation, disbursement and use of sufficient WASH budgets and ongoing professional training of woreda and utility staff.xxxi

• While we tried to ensure women’s participation in the customer forum, engrained gender roles make this challenging. Deeply held ideas about gender norms prevent women from speaking out. Similarly, women’s reproductive role in society (e.g. caring for children and elderly relatives, doing housework etc.) means they have less time to engage. There is a total of 18 people on the customer forum, only two are women. We plan to do further analysis to understand and address the barriers to their participation and to arrive at a more balanced representation of women on the forum. We also need to enlist the help of a CSO partner to support greater participation of women on an ongoing basis.

Lessons learned

• Prior to SusWASH, service users were angry that they were not receiving an acceptable level of service and utility staff had to hide from Jara residents to avoid abuse and possible violence, particularly during service outages. Our first attempts to establish the forum while the utility remained unable to improve service levels exacerbated tensions between service users and the underperforming utility. We therefore postponed work on the customer forum until the network had been rehabilitated/extended.

xxx. This is consistent with findings from Governance and Transparency Fund programmes and other evaluations of accountability projects such as RTI and DFID. Available at: rti.org/rti-press-publication/governance-and-service-delivery (accessed 29 Jul 2020).

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Outcome 4: Clear institutional arrangements and strong government leadership

3.4.5 Establishing clear roles and responsibilities for stronger government leadership

As set out in the National WASH Implementation Framework (2011), we supported the woreda administration to setup the WWTxxxii and facilitated agreement of roles and responsibilities and application of human rights principles.xxxiii Woreda staff were trained on application of the National Guidelines for inclusive WASH and we implemented a training programme to the Woreda Education Office so that female school teachers would have the skills and understanding to facilitate conversations with girls on MHM. We demonstrated application of the inclusive WASH guidelines in four schools (two in Jara Town, and one each in Safogue and Buriya), by installing accessible, gender-segregated toilet blocks with handwashing and MHM facilities. We also supported SMCs to budget and plan for O&M costs and supported the set-up of school WASH clubs (involving girls, boys and female and male teachers).

In our position as secretariat of the One WASH Coordination Office, we successfully lobbied government to hire a dedicated E&I specialist to work full-time on the Government's National One WASH Programme to help ensure that all WASH policies, guidelines and standards provide for everyone’s WASH needs, and that these are applied by all actors working to improve WASH in the country.

Evidence of change

Clear institutional arrangements and strong government leadership:

- Before the SusWASH programme, there was no WWT in Gololcha and no formal mechanism to plan and coordinate WASH activities. The WWT is now established, has clear roles and responsibilities and meets regularly and independently of WaterAid to ensure planned activities are coordinated and remain on track.
- National WASH policies, guidelines, standards and training manualsxxxiv now make provisions for targeting and inclusion of marginalised groups.
- Woreda staff understanding of the national E&I guidelines has increased and they are now factoring inclusive design into new WASH facilities.
- The WASCO manual has a stronger focus on inclusion at woreda and kebele levels.
- Developing a costed woreda WASH plan (see case study 3.3.3) is helping to ensure the woreda education office allocates sufficient resources for school WASH.

WaterAid Ethiopia facilitates discussion with WWO and utility staff about their roles and responsibilities for the inclusive and sustainable provision of WASH using Making Rights Real (MRR) tools.

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xxxii. The WWT consists of the Woreda Administrator and the Heads of the Finance and Economic Development, Water, Health, Education, Agriculture and Women’s Offices, as well as NGO representatives.

xxxiii. We used the MRR materials to facilitate conversation with the district about how they could operationalise the human rights principles in their everyday work. They can be downloaded here: human-rights-to-water-and-sanitation.org/. Read more about our experiences of using the tools in this paper: Designing Human Rights for Duty Bearers: Making the Human Rights to Water and Sanitation Part of Everyday Practice at the Local Government Level Available at: mdpi.com/2073-4441/12/2/378 (accessed 29 Jul 2020).

xxxiv. See OpenWASH learning resources, produced in partnership between WaterAid and The Open University in the UK. Available at: open.edu/openlearncreate/course/view.php?id=2244 (accessed 29 Jul 2020).
Conclusion

Realisation of a stronger WASH system in Gololcha will require more time and effort, particularly at higher levels of government. Good progress has been made in some areas set out in our theory of change, namely in relation to strengthening models of WASH delivery, improving capacity for monitoring, planning and budgeting and facilitation of clear roles and responsibilities.

Significant improvements have been made to service levels, the performance of Jara utility and adoption of improved hygiene behaviours. We will continue to lobby and work with national, regional and zonal governments to strengthen their understanding of the need for increased funds to be made available for major maintenance and extension of coverage. More work is needed to ensure stronger participation of women in decision making processes.

We also need to continue to strengthen the customer forum. A lack of CSO partners in the woreda means we have had to implement directly. We will need to work towards a situation where support for women's empowerment and ongoing behaviour change is available from local authorities, community groups and CSOs operating in the woreda.

In an area with low WASH coverage and service levels, demonstration of service delivery models allowed us to simultaneously meet the demands of communities, the priorities of local government (to extend services) and secure government and service provider buy-in for broader system strengthening efforts.

Lessons learned

• Facilitating regular discussions with local government about their roles and responsibilities for the realisation of the human rights to water and sanitation was supported by MRR materials. The tools allowed for constructive and continuous dialogue about how to practically apply human rights principles into their everyday work, without using more divisive or confrontational language such as ‘rights holders’ and ‘duty bearers’. Understanding the context and perceptions of government towards human rights language is central to strengthening institutional arrangements and local government accountability. This targeted engagement and support to the WWF played an important role in establishing the customer forum (in case study 3.3.4).

• While all government staff at woreda level have a personal work plan and objectives, these are very rarely monitored or reviewed at senior levels and there are limited repercussions if objectives are not met. There are limited incentives to achieve targets. This demotivates staff and delays decision making. More must be done to strengthen performance management within government structures to overcome this challenge.

• It is well known that deeply embedded cultural beliefs, social norms and taboos at community level restrict achievement of gender equality and broader system change – despite women's empowerment being a national priority in Ethiopia (50% of WASHCO members should be women in decision making positions). More efforts are needed to unpick the barriers to women's participation in WASH decision making and women's empowerment more broadly at the local level. We found that working on issues of MHM, and engaging men and boys on the issue in particular, is more accepted in Jara Town than in remote rural kebeles of Buriya and Safogue. This is possibly due to the heterogeneous nature of Jara's population with varying educational backgrounds, religions, economic status, greater access to information and easier access to urban centres. Support is required from a CSO partner who can help to further understand and tackle these issues, particularly in Buriya and Safogue.