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Learning by Doing: Working toward At-Scale Hygiene and Sanitation Improvement in Amhara

Since December 2004, Ethiopia’s Ministry of Health has been actively engaged in addressing the issues of hygiene, sanitation, and water by officially endorsing a National Hygiene and Sanitation Strategy, key principles for achieving 100 percent coverage, a National Hygiene and Onsite Sanitation Protocol, and a national tri-partied memorandum of understanding (MOU) on hygiene and sanitation among the three key ministries of Health, Education, and Water Resources.

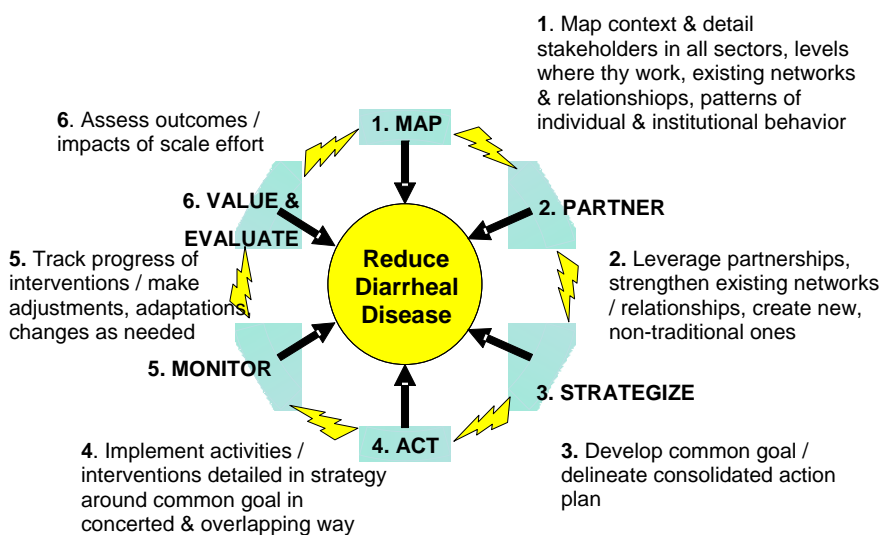
The Amhara Region has embraced the National Hygiene and Sanitation Strategy and is in the process of implementing it throughout the region. The “Learning by Doing” process being pioneered in the Amhara Region represents a new approach to At-Scale Hygiene and Sanitation Improvement. The process was launched by a “Whole System in the Room” (WSR) meeting, which brought together a wide range of stakeholders (including water and sanitation representatives as well as the education sector, religious

institutions, the private sector, etc.). Once a detailed action plan was finalized, training, planning, and implementation proceeded at the woreda (district) and kebele (village) levels. Progress is tracked and monitored to make adjustments as needed, and improvements in key hygiene and sanitation behaviors are assessed.

National & Regional Achievements

- Water Supply and Sanitation Sector Review (2006)
- Multi-Stakeholder Forum aide memoire
- Assessment of Investment & Financing Needs to Achieve Universal Access to H&S by 2012 (draft)
- Amhara regional MOU
- Influx of financial resources into WatSan
- Governmental commitment to health extension worker program (HEW) with extensive capacity building
- Multi-sectoral resources in Amhara
- NGOs addressing a wide range of hygiene and sanitation challenges individually and collectively

At-Scale Hygiene & Sanitation Improvement in Amhara



Mobilizing the whole system does not stop at the regional level. WSR stakeholder meetings are organized at the woreda level to further mobilize stakeholders and development partners in each woreda, with intensive activity at the household and community levels. The Health Extension Program of Ethiopia serves as the backbone of the outreach effort into households and communities, enhancing the capacity of development agents and the 5,000-plus health extension workers (HEWs) assigned in the Amhara Region to “ignite” their communities to end open defecation. The HEWs also encourage behavior change through the MIKIKIR process—

negotiation of improved hygiene and sanitation practices at the household level. HEWs work with householders



to identify one or more “small doable actions,” an improved hygiene behavior that they agree to try (e.g., storage of drinking water in a container with a lid, building a latrine). The HEW follow up with subsequent visits—monitoring and reinforcing new behaviors.

In general, the community approaches (based on principles of community-led total sanitation) used in Amhara engage community members, including formal and informal leaders, to take part in collective problem diagnosis, problem-solving, and action for change. Often, community approaches include harnessing peer pressure and strong emotional tactics like pride, shame and disgust to compel community members to engage in the desired collective behavior change. HEWs and development agents receive intensive training and are then sent out to ignite at the kebele and gott levels.

In recent months, 34 districts have been “oriented” to develop and implement strategic plans for Community-led Total Behavior Change. Twelve woredas have been “ignited” for total behavior change in hygiene and sanitation. In four “high intensity districts” alone, latrine coverage has risen markedly (from 12 – 49% overall, with a range of 32-67% latrine coverage). An estimated 400,000 people have already reached the goal of no open defecation and total hygiene behavior change. The vision is to reach the entire regional population of 20 million by 2012.

Strategic Components of the Regional Behavior Change Strategy

Strategic Component 1: Multi-level advocacy (region, zone, woreda, kebele, gott)

- Forge common ground and consensus to attend to the problem of hygiene and sanitation with officials, CBOs, etc.

Strategic Component 2: Strengthening Household Outreach

- Strengthen home visits
- Introduce the art of negotiation - MIKIKIR
- Promote behavior change through small doable actions

Strategic Component 3 Igniting Community-Based Approaches to Change

- Mobilize community commitment to total behavior change for hygiene and sanitation
- Create an action agenda with the community
- Promote behavior change through community level activities like coffee clubs, children’s patrols, and peer pressure

Strategic Component 4: Media and Communication Support

- Disseminate reliable information through multi-level communication program
- Reinforce HEW effort through the radio messages, radio dramas, news stories, print materials (pamphlets), etc.

Strategic Component 5: Increasing Availability and Affordability of Hygiene and Sanitation Products through Private Sector Initiative

- Encourage industries to open outlets in rural communities
- Support small artisans to locally produce “enabling technologies” like sanitation platforms
- Encourage private sector to be interested to bring products like jerry cans, potties, soap, chlorine (Water Guard) etc.

Strategic Component 6: School Hygiene and Sanitation

- Build support and certification for WASH-Friendly Schools demonstrating hardware and software components.
- Ignite schools as part of community ignition
- Strengthen or establish school clubs, PTAs, curricular activities for in school and school to community action

Strategic Component 7: Demonstration Latrines, Hand Washing Stations, and other Hygiene-Related Products

- Demonstrate how local skill and materials can be used to construct an approved traditional latrine
- Introduce hand washing station made from local materials
- Introduce local detergents such as ash for soap substitutes