



Youth Entrepreneurship for Sustainable Rural Services

PROBLEM AND CONTEXT

Despite significant investments in rural water supply infrastructure in Ethiopia, many systems are non-operational or underperforming. Key challenges include inadequate post-construction support, lack of community management capacity, and limited access to spare parts. Local technicians often have minimal resources and incentives, impacting maintenance. Additionally, Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene Committees (WASHCOs) struggle with dysfunctional management frameworks, resistance to fee contributions, and poor spare parts management, leading to reduced access to safe water, especially in areas with limited energy access.

**More than 19%
of water
schemes
in Amhara
Region are
non-functional**

What we do: Solution



The HELVETAS YES-Amhara II project aims to enhance the capacity of Water and Sanitation Committees (WASHCOs) and Youth Enterprises (YEs) to improve rural water access, functionality, and affordability. It seeks to establish strategic partnerships to provide sustainable and affordable water services in the target woredas.

This project employs a facilitative approach that empowers local stakeholders to assume responsibility for development changes, thereby sustaining long-term improvements. Key strategies include:

- **Empowerment of WASHCOs:** The project aims to establish and formalize WASHCOs to enhance community ownership and governance. WASHCOs play a key role in tariff setting, fee collection, water scheme management, and encouraging community participation.
- **Establishment of Youth Enterprises (YEs):** The initiative aims to empower youth entrepreneurs (YEs) to offer operation and maintenance (O&P) services for water schemes, providing affordable spare parts. This approach helps them support under-resourced rural communities and enhance sustainable water service delivery.

Our Approaches



Partnership

Partnership and coordination are crucial to the YES-Amhara project. HELVETAS plays a facilitating role, while key partners including kebele water committees, water and energy offices, labor and training offices, finance offices, TVET colleges, and Tsedey Bank lead the implementation of project activities. The project also collaborates with private sector entities such as spare part suppliers, traders, financial institutions, and training providers.



Strategic Approach & Methodology

The project enhances rural water supply by **empowering communities** to maintain services and provide spare parts, promoting ownership and sustainable access. It also fosters **gender and social equity by involving women in enterprises and WASHCOs**. Additionally, the project employs a **conflict-sensitive approach** to minimise tensions and negative impacts, ensuring adaptability and adherence to the Do-No-Harm principle.



Scaling and Sustainability

The project focuses on sustainability and replicability by promoting best practices for youth enterprises and WASHCOs, advocating policy reforms, and enhancing collaboration among stakeholders. It aims to establish a sustainable framework for water supply management, collaborate on solar initiatives, and ensure long-term impact. This approach aligns with the government's water resource strategy and can be replicated in other regions to secure water resources and foster economic opportunities.

Results

- 68 Youth Enterprise members (23 women) were trained and certified
- Thirteen Youth Enterprises established
- 226 water points maintained by Youth Enterprises
- These youth enterprises generated ETB 2.9 million (25,000 CHF) in revenue from the maintenance of water schemes and the sale of spare parts
- 26 youth enterprise members (13 women) trained on liquid soap production as part of business diversification

Gainful Employment

Community ownership & management

- 549 WASH committees (204 women) trained on operation and maintenance, water tariff setting, record keeping, and financial management
- 394 WASCHOs legalised, well-operated, and managed, and 54 WASCHOs legalised through scale out practices
- Legalised WASCHOs collected ETB 4.3 million (37,000 CHF) to facilitate the operation and maintenance of water schemes.

- Developed/reviewed directives and model by-laws for youth enterprises and WASHCOs
- Drafted training manuals on entrepreneurship and soft skills
- Provided training for partners on WASCHOs legalisation, Water tariff setting, record keeping, and financial management.
- Annual project progress workshop and experience sharing event conducted

Project Learning

Enabling Environment for sustainable and affordable WASH services

- 161,618 (53,589 women) people access affordable WASH services.
- A revolving loan fund of 1.7 million (22 thousand CHF) has established with Cooperative Societies' Saving and Credit Union (CSSACUs) to be disbursed to youth enterprises
- Strong partnerships and collaborations have been forged and maintained.
- New trade licenses have been issued to 13 youth enterprises.

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