

- Amref Health Africa has built showers and toilets for 2,400 people
- Local youth earn a living running a washhouse at a busy bus station
- Pastoralist communities adopt simple pit latrines instead of open defecation
- District government increased its budget for safe water, sanitation and hygiene by 30%



Rubbish in Awash bus station before construction of community showers and toilets. Amref Health Africa in Ethiopia

In the Afar region of northern Ethiopia three quarters of the population lacks basic sanitation. Across the country more than 41 million people defecate in gutters, streams, fields or behind bushes, and even more people lack access to good places to bathe and wash. Without toilets, washing places and good hygiene, it is no surprise that in countries such as Ethiopia diarrhoeal diseases remain a leading cause of child deaths.

A Amref Health Africa¹ is working to improve health conditions in this largely rural region in a number of ways, supported by the Dutch WASH² Alliance with finance from the Dutch government.

Constructing public toilets and showers in places where large numbers of people gather is one way to open up access. Washhouses and toilets built by Amref Health Africa so far provide hygienic services to more than 2,400 people in Afar.

¹ The partner of Amref Health Africa in the Netherlands is Amref Flying Doctors, which is a member of the Dutch WASH Alliance.

² WASH is an acronym for water, sanitation and hygiene.



Communal showers ready for handover in 2012. Amref Health in Ethiopia

An example of a successful transformation can be seen at the bus station in the market town of Awash where, in 2012, Amref Health Africa constructed a block of four toilets with hand washing facilities and four showers. Bus travellers and residents of the nearby slum appreciate these clean, functional and accessible showers and toilets, used by 70 people a day.

Access to clean showers

Amref Health Africa has trained local youth to manage and operate the showers and toilets. Once trained, 20 of these youth have employment and a steady income as members of the management committee, cleaning and maintaining the facilities and collecting user fees, and receiving a monthly payment of around 315 Ethiopian Birr (USD 15) each. They can earn more by selling soap and when not on duty, they load and unload buses at the terminal to earn extra income. The committee is holding discussions with microfinance institutions about expanding the business.

Dutch WASH Alliance

The WASH Alliance International is a multi-national consortium of over 100 partners worldwide. We work together with local NGOs, governments and businesses to make sure everyone on this planet has sustainable access to water and sanitation.

Self-sustainable

The shower and toilet facilities are self-sustained and no extra funding has been needed from Amref Health Africa since construction. Each user pays 3 Ethiopian Birr (or USD 0.15) per visit to use the showers, 50 cents to urinate or 1 Ethiopian Birr to defecate.

About a quarter of the income goes to pay the wages of shower committee members and the rest is used to operate, maintain and improve the facilities. As well as maintaining showers and toilets, the management committee was able to construct two additional showers in 2014 at a cost of 68,000 Ethiopian Birr (USD 3,300).

The committee keeps the area around the shower building in the Awash bus station free from rubbish and has planted trees. The district government is so pleased with the transformation from a rubbish dump to a clean and green environment that they have approved additional land for expansion of the facilities.



Pastoralist shelter in the Afar region. IRC

Amref Health Africa has trained local youth to manage and operate the showers and toilets and become the management committee in another two areas. These additional buildings serve a total population of more than 5,000 people.

Supporting pastoralist communities to improve hygiene

Amref Health Africa also supports other initiatives in the Afar region, including the construction of toilets in health facilities and raising hygiene awareness in schools and communities.

Outside the towns, the Afar region has a large pastoralist population. Improving access to hygienic toilets for this group is a challenge. Amref Health Africa works closely with government and other organisations to increase the effectiveness of their efforts.

Working with local government partners

- Amref Health Africa facilitates WASH interventions through dialogue, planning and training to strengthen health outcomes. It works with local government partners to improve the health of people in the Afar region and ensure the sustainability of their activities.
- Technical support and guidance is provided by Amebara, Gelalo and Gewane Woreda health offices and Woreda water offices.
- Amebara-Bedim, Beede foro and Beeda Kebeles provide community support.
- Afar Regional Health Bureau is responsible for oversight, policy and the regulatory framework. It oversees how health care is delivered and promotes the transfer of knowledge, so that households take responsibility for their own health.
- Microfinance institutions support business planning and financial inclusion for youth business groups.



Pastoralist household latrine with water hand washing in small plastic container. Amref Health Africa in Ethiopia

Action-Research for Learning

Action-Research for Learning is an initiative to improve the effectiveness of hygiene promotion and community empowerment of Dutch WASH Alliance local partner projects in Ethiopia, Bangladesh, Ghana and Uganda. The programme is supported by the Dutch WASH Alliance with funding from the Dutch government.

Learning to do better

The Dutch WASH Alliance is an active partner whose members support local NGOs to achieve sustainable safe water, sanitation and good hygiene, offering finance, technical support and training. A significant contribution is the Action-Research for Learning project that supports NGOs to learn from what they are doing and improve their programmes.

Each 'Kebele' (city/town) of the region has two health extension workers based at the Kebele health post who are responsible for promoting health. They provide information about good personal hygiene such as handwashing and the safe use of water, where to dispose of solid and liquid waste and how to build and use latrines safely to prevent disease. The extension workers receive support from the Woreda (county) health office.

Amref Health Africa trains health extension workers on the best way to provide hygiene education during door-to-door visits and group meetings. Amref also

supports the construction of latrines in communities and water supply systems which supply household water and water to support livelihoods. Raising cattle is the main livelihood for the Afar people.

Amref Health Africa has been successful in changing sanitation behaviour. In the pastoralist communities where Amref works, the Afar population has moved from a custom of open defecation to building small pits with a temporary upper structure for each site where they reside; empowering these communities to take sanitation to the next level.

Amref Health Africa meets with the washhouse youth management committee and health extension workers to reflect on progress and consider questions like: *Is monthly revenue sufficient to cover the monthly operation costs? Are the showers being kept clean? Are people in rural areas washing their hands after defecation and before handling food?*

This process highlighted the need for extra training in managing the toilet and shower blocks. Amref Health Africa worked with the youth management committees to increase their financial skills and guide them in collecting user fees, bookkeeping, and developing a business plan.



Woman fetching water in Ethiopia. IRC

Increasing sustainability

Action-Research for Learning has strengthened the capacity of health extension workers and Woreda staff to collect data and reflect on the results. For example, government staff developed their own tools to collect data about whether people in the community are washing their hands after defecation and before handling food, and how the extension workers can increase this habit.

When Action-Research for Learning revealed that there is often no soap for handwashing at latrines attached to rural health facilities, Amref Health Africa discussed this with the health office, which has undertaken to ensure that soap is always available.

Before the Action-Research for Learning project, government staff used to collect information and then consider what they could do with it. Now, monitoring and analysis are more purposeful and integrated making it easier for staff to see the impact of their activities and reflect on ways to improve them.

Amref Health Africa is in close dialogue with district officials and its support helped to ensure a 30 per cent budget increase in the district government budget for safe water, sanitation and hygiene.

More information

WASH Alliance project, AMREF in Ethiopia, <http://washalliance.akvoapp.org/en/project/388/>

Action-Research for Learning: <http://www.ircwash.org/projects/action-research-learning-dutch-wash-alliance>

How to manage public toilets and showers: <http://www.pseau.org/outils/biblio/resume.php?d=2625&t=en>

Understanding pastoralists and their water, sanitation and hygiene needs:

<http://www.ircwash.org/resources/understanding-pastoralists>

Credits

This story was produced (2015) for the Dutch WASH Alliance by Jeske Verhoeven of IRC in collaboration with Marjolein Ooijevaar of Amref Flying Doctors and Gizachew Mengie of Amref Health Africa.

Action-Research for Learning is supported by the Dutch WASH Alliance in Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Uganda, and Ghana. You can read about other successful projects supported by the Dutch WASH Alliance in Bangladesh, Ghana, Uganda at www.washalliance.nl/learn-more/downloads.

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