

# USAID Transform WASH

## Door-to-Door Sales of Toilet Installation Services – Lessons from Ethiopia



Learning Note, May 2024



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USAID Transform WASH aims to improve water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) outcomes in Ethiopia by increasing market access to and sustained use of a broader spectrum of affordable WASH products and services, with a substantial focus on sanitation.

Transform WASH achieves this by transforming the market for low-cost high quality WASH products and services: stimulating demand at the community level, strengthening supply chains, and improving the enabling environment for a vibrant private market.

USAID Transform WASH is a USAID-funded activity implemented by PSI in collaboration with SNV and IRC WASH. The consortium is working closely with government agencies, including the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Water and Energy, the One WASH National Program coordination office, the Ministry of Labor and Skills, and regional and sub-regional governments.

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This learning note summarizes the findings related to USAID Transform WASH's experiences of supporting door-to-door sales through the DQ Selling® and sales management approach.

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## Abbreviations and Glossary

<b>BPD</b>	Business partner database
<b>DQ</b>	Decision intelligence (based on IQ for intelligence quotient)
<b>HEW</b>	Health extension worker (usually two HEWs are assigned per <i>kebele</i> )
<b>HH</b>	Household
<b>Kebele</b>	Smallest administrative unit in Ethiopia (typically 1,000 to 2,000 HHs)
<b>MBS</b>	Market-based sanitation
<b>SATO pan</b>	Plastic toilet pan patented by Lixil Corporation (brand name)
<b>T/WASH</b>	USAID Transform WASH
<b>WASH</b>	Water, sanitation, and hygiene
<b>Woreda</b>	District of Ethiopia (typically around 20,000 to 30,000 HHs)
<b>WRP</b>	Whitten & Roy Partnership
<b>WSN</b>	Weekly special numbers

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1. Background

Transform WASH (T/WASH) is a large-scale USAID-funded activity implemented in Ethiopia from 2017 to 2024 that aimed at increasing access to improved toilets in rural and peri-urban areas through a market-based sanitation (MBS) approach. In Ethiopia, access to improved sanitation facilities is low, with rural households typically having traditional unimproved pit latrines made of wooden logs and mud, or practicing open defecation. Creating demand for sanitation products among these potential customers and convincing them to invest in toilet upgrades is widely recognized as a key challenge for any MBS intervention.

One of the lessons learned by T/WASH is that door-to-door promotion and installation services are more effective than selling sanitation products at a fixed location (Transform WASH 2022 and 2024a). From 2020 onwards, T/WASH collaborated with the sales consulting firm Whitten & Roy Partnership (WRP) to train field teams on a new sales and sales management approach (DQ Selling®) to optimize door-to-door sales. This learning note provides an overview of this sales and sales management approach, detailing how it was implemented by T/WASH and the results achieved.

## 1.2. The DQ Selling® approach

WRP pioneered the DQ Selling® and sales management approach (referred to as the "DQ sales approach" in this learning note) to enhance the sales performance of social enterprises. The book "Sell Well, Do Good" (WRP, 2021) provides more details about the DQ sales approach, which is summarized in the following paragraphs.

The DQ sales approach evolved from the observation that most social entrepreneurs

focus heavily on designing, producing, and marketing their innovative solutions. They often mistakenly believe that if their solution is good enough, affordable enough, and visible enough, the product will sell itself, and they can send out a group of salespeople with minimal direction. However, most social entrepreneurs soon realize that their noble initiative does not convert into sales or generate meaningful revenue as expected. That's where the DQ sales approach comes in, providing guidance on implementing an ethical sales approach tailored to social enterprises.

DQ refers to "Decision Intelligence" (based on IQ for intelligence quotient), as the approach aims to enhance the customer's ability to make well-informed decisions for themselves, even if that means rejecting the proposed solution by the sales agents. It is grounded in meaningful, in-depth, and quality sales conversations that utilize attentive listening, probing, and paraphrasing as key instruments. The sales conversation is divided into four steps: identifying the problems customers face, understanding the cost of those problems, presenting the solution, and highlighting the value of that solution to the customer.

## 1.3. Door-to-door sales by mason/installers

T/WASH developed low-cost toilet upgrading options such as "SATO skirting" or "SATO retrofitting" (see Box 1) and trained local masons to provide these services. These masons were often already working on small construction projects in their communities. In this note, we will refer to them as "mason/installers". Alongside technical training, T/WASH field staff also trained and supported these mason/installers in door-to-door sales using the DQ sales approach.



### Box 1: Offerings for toilet upgrades

T/WASH supported its business partners with a portfolio of 40 different products and services. Among the most successful offerings were combinations of SATO pans with installation services (USAID, 2024c).

- **SATO retrofitting:** Installation of a SATO pan on an existing concrete slab. This product includes installation services provided by a local mason/installer.
- **SATO skirting:** Installation of a SATO pan on an existing solid wooden/dirt platform. This product includes installation services provided by a local mason/installer.



Figure 1: SATO skirting on wooden platform

Informed by field-level observations in selected project implementation districts, WRP conducted repeated training sessions for T/WASH managers and field staff. The knowledge and skills from these sessions were transferred to mason/installers through systematic internal training and intensive routine coaching. Following the training, sales performance was carefully tracked by T/WASH field staff using a set of key indicators (“weekly special numbers”).

Approximately 25 T/WASH field staff (we call them “business facilitators” in this learning note) were tasked with the training and coaching of around 300 mason/installers in about 50 woredas, averaging 12 mason/installers in two woredas per business facilitator.

Business facilitators were expected to conduct weekly coaching sessions, including joint customer visits, to ensure compliance with the DQ operational standard and to enhance the skills of the mason/installers. Business facilitators were also expected to tailor their support to the needs of the mason/installers, prioritizing attitude, competence, and execution in line with the DQ sales approach.

T/WASH management, in collaboration with WRP and through discussions with business facilitators and mason/installers, established clear targets: a minimum of 25 sales presentations and eight closed sales per week.

### 1.4. Research objective

Although the project team has praised the results of the DQ sales approach for significantly increasing sales, there is limited documentation of the implementation process and outcomes of the approach. Therefore, this assessment aims to document the application and impact of the DQ Selling® approach to increase access to improved sanitation in rural Ethiopia.

The learning questions were:

- What is the impact of the DQ sales approach on overall sales performance?
- How are mason/installers utilizing the DQ sales approach in practice (underlying principles, steps, and theories during their door-to-door sales promotion)?
- How do mason/installers and project staff perceive and evaluate the DQ sales approach based on their experiences?
- What are the drivers and barriers in the application of the DQ sales approach in project implementation areas?

## 2. Design and Methodology

### 2.1. Secondary data sources

#### Literature review

The research team conducted a thorough literature review on the DQ sales approach to establish a strong theoretical foundation for this assessment. The review included "Sell Well, Do Good" (WRP, 2021), DQ training materials, coaching documents, and other relevant materials outlining the implementation process, including previous Transform WASH learning notes. Discussions with PSI and WRP staff further supported this review.

#### Weekly special numbers

The research team analyzed weekly data gathered by T/WASH to monitor and guide the performance of business facilitators and mason/installers, also known as "weekly special numbers". The key performance indicators reported on a weekly basis by the business facilitators included:

- Number of mason/installers with sales in the past week
- Number of sales presentations
- Number of sales
- Number of coaching sessions
- Hours of conducting sales and coaching activities

#### Business partner database

This assessment also analyzed a list of T/WASH business partners provided by PSI in February 2024. The business partner database lists the names of all businesses supported by T/WASH including location (region/woreda), business type (manufacturer, retailer, or mason/installer), and activity status.

### 2.2. Primary data collection

#### Field assessment

In March and April 2024, IRC Ethiopia conducted field assessments in five woredas across five regions: Wondo (Oromia), Wondo Genet (Sidama), West Badawacho (South Ethiopia), Shashago (Central Ethiopia), and Gursum (Somali). During the field assessment, a total of 18 mason/installers were observed during customer visits: Wondo (4 masons), Wondo Genet (3), West Badawacho (4), Shashago (4), and Gursum (3). A total of 126 joint household visits were conducted with a checklist to compare their routine practices with the DQ operational standard. Each mason was observed for half a day, completing six to eight visits<sup>1</sup>. The mason/installers were asked to perform their routine sales activities as they usually would.

Apart from field observations, two focus group discussions were held in each woreda. One involved mason/installers, and the other included health extension workers (HEWs). The aim was to validate the comprehension of the DQ sales approach, its impact and challenges, the level of support and coaching received, territory management and planning, and the reputation of T/WASH mason/installers in the community.

#### T/WASH field staff survey

In April 2024, an online survey was distributed to gather inputs from T/WASH field staff, including business facilitators at regional and woreda levels. The survey aimed to assess their knowledge, attitude, and practice regarding key aspects of the DQ approach and the operational standard. The survey also included questions on perception and satisfaction with the DQ sales approach. A total of 21 responses were collected and used for analysis.

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<sup>1</sup> In the Somali region, there was less time per visit and only three to five visits were conducted due to time constraints.

## 3. Findings

### 3.1. Number of mason/installers

#### Active mason/installers

Two data sources were used to estimate the number of active mason/installers: the business partner database and the weekly special numbers. According to the business partner database, a total of 318 mason/installers were registered in 48 *woredas* in February 2024. Out of these mason/installers, 237 (75 percent) were reported to be active (Table 1). However, using the weekly special numbers (which are available for 46 *woredas*), the total number of active mason/installers by the end of 2023 was estimated at 183 out of a total of 325 (Table 1).<sup>2</sup> This suggests that the actual percentage of active masons is 56 percent, which is lower than indicated in the business partner database.

Table 1: Number of mason/installers by region according to business partner database (BPD) and weekly special numbers (WSN)

	Data	Active	Inactive	Total
Afar	BPD	8	0	8
	WSN	not included in reporting		
Amhara	BPD	84	9	93
	WSN	63	43	106
Oromia	BPD	93	32	125
	WSN	50	76	126
Somali	BPD	6	1	7
	WSN	11	0	11
South <sup>3</sup>	BPD	26	39	65
	WSN	59	23	82
Tigray	BPD	20	0	20
	WSN	not included in reporting		
Total	BPD	237	81	318
	WSN	183	142	325

Figure 2 shows the number of mason/installers (quarterly average) working per week in different regions as per the analysis of the weekly special numbers. The number of active masons fluctuated week-to-week and on a quarterly average, only 131 masons visited households (ranging from 95 to 162 per quarter from mid-2021 to the end of 2023). This means that not all active masons work every week. Furthermore, the number of active masons also fluctuated over the years with an increase in 2022 followed by a decrease in the second half of 2023. This drop is mainly because of security concerns in the Amhara and Oromia regions towards the end of 2023 which reduced the number of mason/installers that were able to do door-to-door visits.

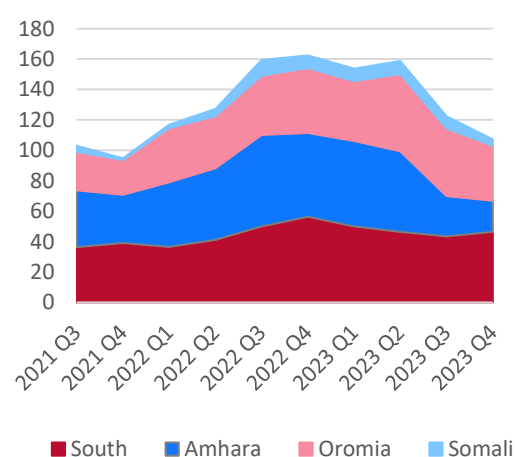


Figure 2: Number of mason/installers with sales in the past week (average per quarter)

The average number of active masons per *woreda*, according to the business partner database, was about five, ranging from one to twelve active mason/installers across different *woredas*. According to the weekly special numbers, about three mason/installers were active per *woreda* each week, which is similar for all regions, and ranging from 1.2 to 6.0 at the *woreda*-level (Figure 3).

<sup>2</sup> Number of active masons = sum of maximum number of masons with sales per *woreda*. Number of total masons = maximum number of masons per *woreda* from either the business partner database or number of active masons as per the weekly special numbers. Weekly special numbers for any week between October to December 2023, business partner database only for the 46 *woredas* for which weekly special numbers are available.

<sup>3</sup> "South" includes all masons in the former Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples Region which is now divided into four new regions: Central Ethiopia, South West Ethiopia, South Ethiopia, and Sidama.



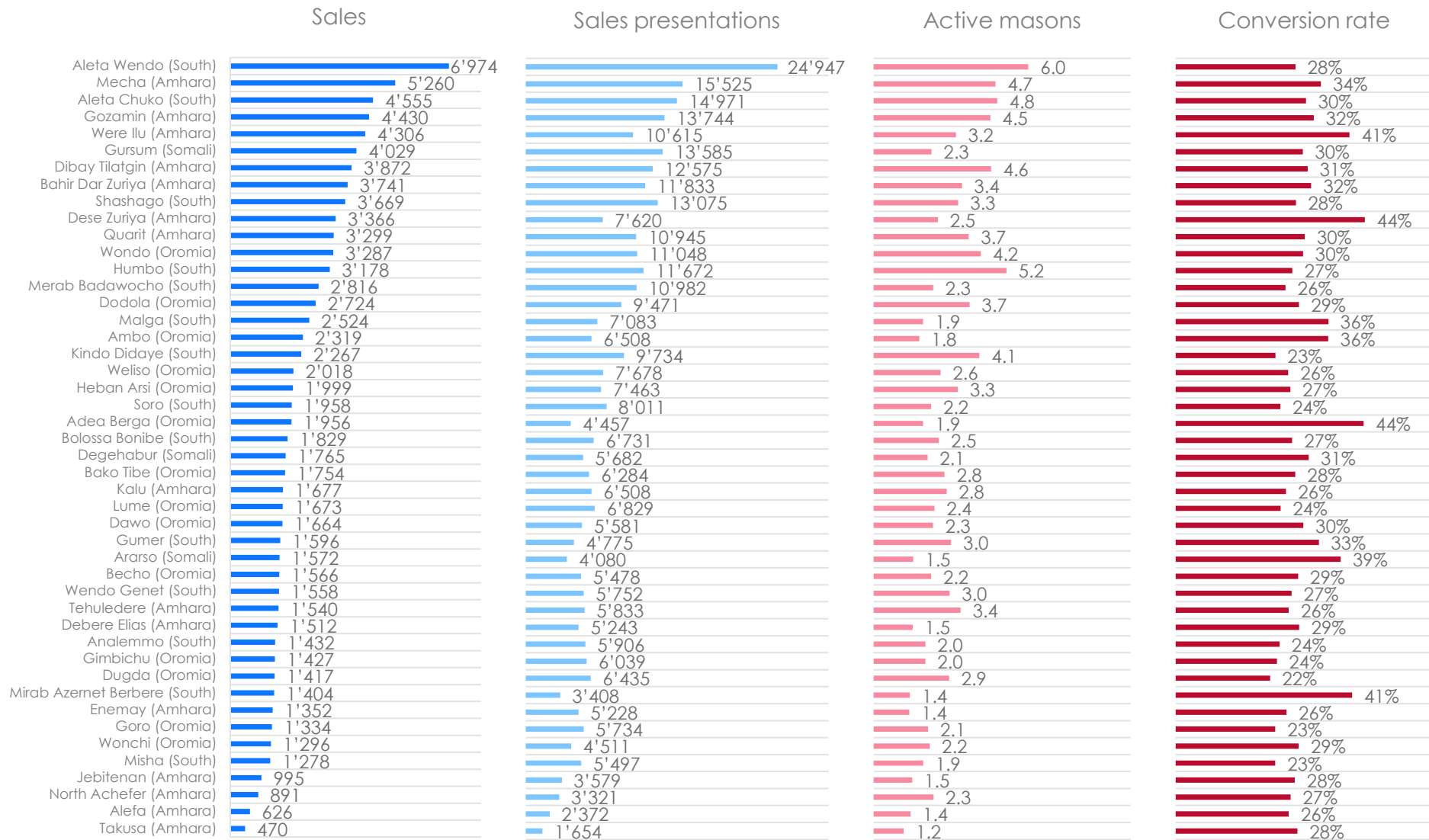


Figure 3: Total sales and sales presentation, and average number of active mason/installers and conversion rate (2021 to 2023)

## Limitations

As highlighted in the previous paragraph, the research team identified some discrepancies when comparing the business partner database with the weekly special numbers, and also identified inconsistencies with the observations from the field assessment:

- Weekly special numbers are only available for 46 *woredas*. Of these, two do not have any mason/installers according to the business partner database. On the other hand, four *woredas* have mason/installers listed in the database that are not included in the weekly special numbers.
- In 20 *woredas*, the number of mason/installers who made sales in the past week is higher than the total number of mason/installers listed in the business partner database for those same *woredas*.
- During the field assessment in Wondo *woreda*, it was found that the mason/installers reported as active in the database were no longer available and had been replaced by newly recruited mason/installers.
- For West Badawacho, only three mason/installers are listed in the business partner database and the weekly numbers. However, during the field assessment, four mason/installers were introduced to the research team.

Some of these discrepancies can be explained because some businesses registered as another business type (e.g., manufacturer) in the database, meaning they may also occasionally work as mason/installers. Additionally, some masons may work in two adjacent *woredas* but are only recorded under one *woreda* in the database.

## 3.2. Sales performance

Sales performance was assessed using weekly special numbers for the 46

*woredas* for which data was available from 2021 to 2023.

## Sales presentations

From 2021 to 2023, the mason/installers conducted a total of 365,489 sales presentations (or sales conversations). This equates to nearly 8,000 presentations per *woreda*, reaching approximately one-third of all households. At this rate, it would take around 10 years to reach each resident at their doorstep.

While the average number of sales presentations per mason/installer per week (Table 2) is similar across the four regions (Amhara, Oromia, South, and Somali), there are significant variations between *woredas*. For example, in Aleta Wondo over 24,000 sales presentations were reported, whereas in Takusa, there were about 1,600 (Figure 3).

The weekly special numbers show that mason/installers, when active in a given week, perform about 20 sales presentations (Table 2), which is slightly below the target of 25 presentations per week.

Table 2: Weekly sales presentations and sales per active mason/installer, and conversion rate disaggregated by region (average per year).

	2021	2022	2023	Average
<b>SALES PRESENTATIONS</b>				
Amhara	16	20	19	19
Oromia	21	17	18	18
Somali	29	31	26	29
South	16	22	23	21
<b>Total</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>SALES</b>				
Amhara	4.6	6.0	6.8	6.1
Oromia	4.6	4.9	5.4	5.1
Somali	14.0	7.9	8.7	8.8
South	4.8	5.7	6.7	5.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>5.0</b>	<b>5.7</b>	<b>6.4</b>	<b>5.9</b>
<b>CONVERSION RATE</b>				
Amhara	29%	29%	35%	31%
Oromia	22%	29%	30%	28%
Somali	48%	25%	33%	31%
South	31%	26%	29%	28%
<b>Total</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>29%</b>

## Conversion rate

On average, an active mason/installer made 5.9 sales per week - resulting from the 20 sales presentations. This means that 29 out of 100 households that received a sales presentation decided to invest in their sanitation facilities (e.g., to install a SATO skirting or retrofit, or to buy a SATO pan). The average conversion rate (the percentage of successful sales out of the sales presentations) consistently hovered around 30 percent. At the *woreda* level, this rate ranged from 22 to 44 percent according to the weekly special numbers.

Mason/installers sold a total of 115,838 sanitation products from 2021 to 2023, with sales per *woreda* ranging from 470 to almost 7,000 (Figure 3).

When comparing sales by mason/installers (as per weekly special numbers) with total sales by T/WASH business partners (Transform WASH, 2024c) in the 46 *woredas*, it was found that 65 percent of all sales could be attributed to the efforts of the mason/installers. There is significant variation between *woredas*, with some reporting only 20 percent of sales by mason/installers, while in others, all sales were made by them (Figure 4).

## Limitations

The analysis also revealed potential data quality issues. In some *woredas*, the number of sales reported through the weekly special numbers exceeds the number of products sold according to the T/WASH general sales tracking (Transform WASH, 2024c). This discrepancy may be due to services provided by the mason/installers that were not captured in the sales tracking data for products.

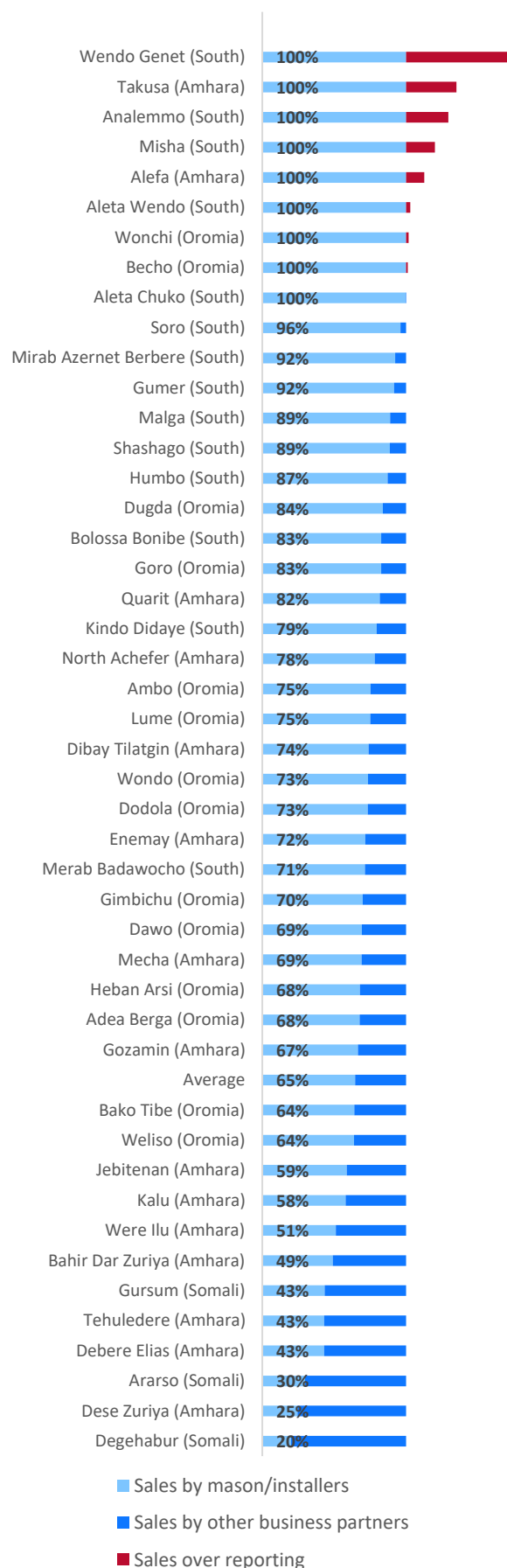


Figure 4: Percentage of sales by mason/installers of sales by all business partners

### 3.3. Mason/installers' DQ implementation quality

As part of the field assessment, 18 mason/installers were observed during door-to-door visits to 126 households. The research team used a checklist to evaluate adherence to DQ operational standards.

Table 3: Sales performance observed by the research team during field assessment

	Sales presentations	Sales	Conversion rate	Adherence to DQ (% of components observed to be fulfilled)
Wondo	32	11	34%	64%
Wondo Genet	24	3	13%	39%
West Badawacho	32	10	31%	86%
Shashego	27	11	41%	69%
Gursum	11	0	0%	38%
<b>Total</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>63%</b>

#### Adherence to the DQ sales approach

The majority of sales conversations (at least 75 percent) complied with the following aspects: properly greeting the customer, selecting a suitable location for the sales conversation, delivering an engaging and informative presentation, demonstrating confidence, ending the conversation on a positive note, and explaining the impacts of the proposed solution (on social, economic, and health issues), as well as providing details on product features and values. During household visits, the research team also observed that all mason/installers carried the "sight seller" – a flip book to support the sales conversation.

Only some sales conversations (50 to 75 percent) included proper explanations of pricing and installation, obtaining permission, visiting the toilets, engaging in active listening, and making proper introductions.

Overall, mason/installers least complied with the following aspects (less than 50 percent): applying appropriate strategies to resolve objections, identifying and prioritizing obstacles to purchasing, asking relevant questions, seeking referrals from customers, appreciating the customer's time and interest, and importantly, addressing the customer's primary concern. Notably, only nine out of the 18 observed mason/installers consistently visited and observed the toilet, only 10 practiced active listening (while the others dominated the sales conversation), and only four consistently addressed the household's primary concern during the sales conversation.

Figure 6 illustrates the masons' adherence to various components of the DQ sales approach.

#### Key areas for improvement

The observations showed that mason/installers often take control of the sales conversation. While the sight seller effectively served as a teaching guide and captured the attention and interest of customers, the conversation was not always driven by the problems and concerns raised by the visited households.

The findings also suggest that roughly half of the mason/installers were applying the DQ sales approach effectively, meaning there is room for improvement for the other half.

Additionally, not all mason/installers brought sample products for the sales visits. Carrying both SATO and plastic slabs is challenging for most of them, so they often prefer to carry only one SATO pan.

Furthermore, focus group discussions and field observations revealed that territory management is often not conducted as systematically as outlined by the DQ sales approach. Masons/installers tend to approach households based on their perception of capacity to pay, social

proximity, and household ownership status. For instance, rental houses are often skipped because tenants are believed to be less committed to investing. Additionally, customers who are not available at the time of the initial visit are not necessarily revisited later.

### Impact of DQ sales approach

Overall, the mason/installers made 35 sales out of 126 visits. This results in a 28 percent conversion rate, which is consistent with the average conversion rate over the past three years. The conversion rate varied greatly between *woredas*, which is expected given the limited sample size.

The field assessment findings show that mason/installers who better adhered to the DQ sales approach generally achieved higher conversion rates. Plotting adherence to the DQ sales approach by individual mason/installers (measured as the percentage of confirmed compliance on the observation checklist) against the conversion rate shows the high effectiveness of the DQ sales approach (Figure 5). Although 100 percent adherence does not guarantee a conversion rate exceeding the expected 25 to 30 percent, the data suggests that mason/installers who follow the operational protocol are generally more successful in their sales.

Furthermore, most HEWs confirmed that working in close collaboration with mason/installers using the DQ sales approach to promote sanitation products

and services was effective. For example, in Aleta Wondo *woreda*, both HEWs and mason/installers confirmed that working together on DQ improved their conversion rates and ensured timely payments by households.

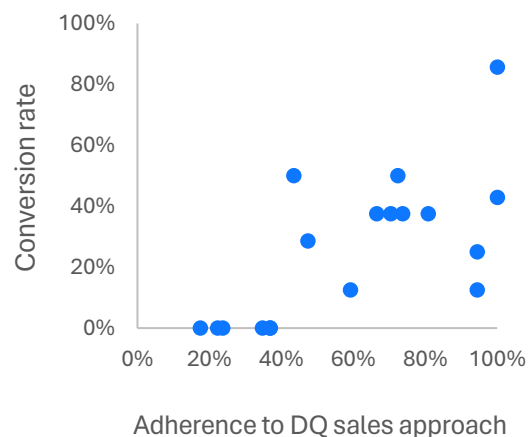


Figure 5: Adherence to the DQ sales approach against conversion rate for individual masons

### Limitations

The sales numbers reported in the weekly special numbers need to be taken with caution. Observations showed that masons report a sale if any prepayment has been made. In some instances, masons/installers may receive a prepayment of 100 birr but then fail to deliver the product and complete the installation, while still reporting the sale to the T/WASH business facilitator.

Furthermore, some mason/installers spent considerable time preparing sales materials and sample products, suggesting they might not always use these materials when not being observed.



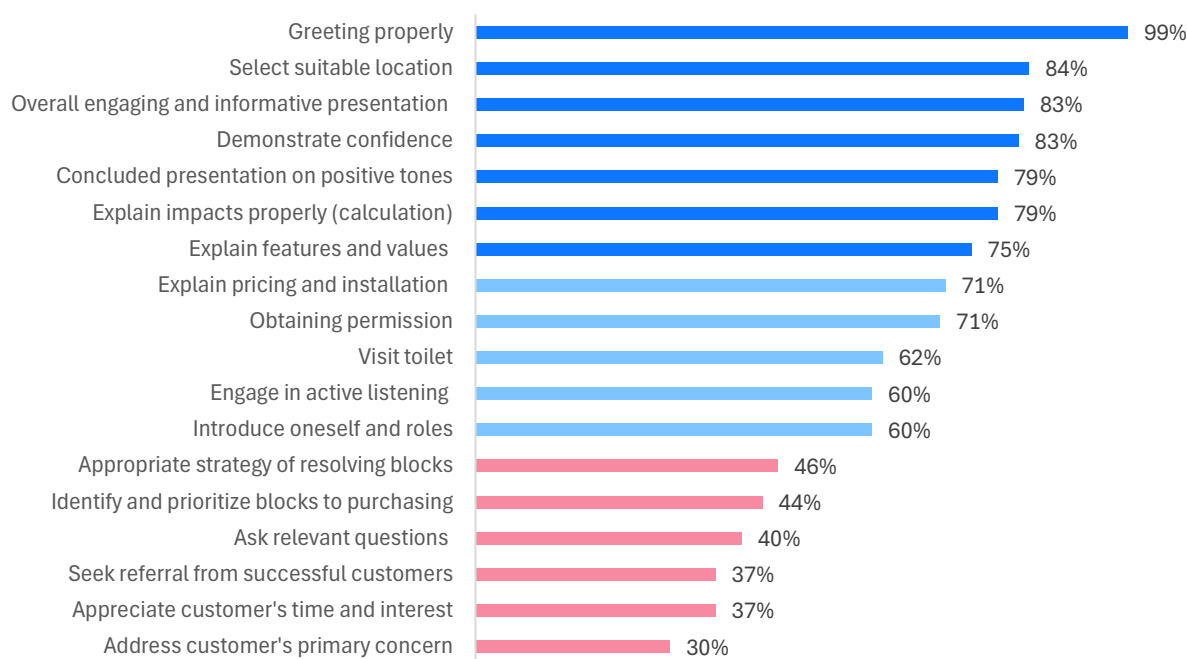


Figure 6: Adherence to the DQ sales approach – percentage of components observed to be fulfilled

### 3.4. Business facilitators' capacity and perspectives

Business facilitators are field-level staff employed by T/WASH, responsible for training and coaching the mason/installers. An online survey was deployed to capture the understanding and perspectives of these facilitators, yielding 21 responses.

#### Understanding of the DQ sales approach

Almost all business facilitators (19 out of 21) reported that they could provide a detailed explanation of the DQ sales approach. However, when asked three basic multiple-choice knowledge questions (see below), only 10 out of 21 facilitators answered all questions correctly.

- Question 1: Which option states the correct order of the DQ conversation or implementation approach at household level by mason/installers? Correct answer (problem, cost,

solution, value) provided by 13 out of 21 business facilitators.

- Question 2: In the context of DQ sales approach, Result (R) is equal to...? Correct answer (Attitude + Competence + Execution) provided by 17 out of 21.
- Question 3: What do you understand by the term "precision listening" in the context of DQ approach? Correct answer (listening attentively to customer needs and concerns, and playing them back to the customer) provided by 18 out of 21.

Notably, 5 out of 21 business facilitators reported that "precision listening" is the art of persuading customers to carefully listen to the mason/installers during sales presentations, and 2 out of 21 believed that the DQ conversation is structured as "Problem, Solution, Cost, Convincing". This indicates a gap in comprehending the optimal and effective strategy for engaging clients in DQ sales conversations among some of the business facilitators.

## Perspectives on DQ sales approach

Overall, the business facilitators provided very positive feedback about the DQ sales approach, with a clear majority indicating that it helps customers make good decisions and helps mason/installers increase their sales (Figure 7). Despite recognizing the positive aspects of the sales approach, 9 out of 21 business facilitators noted that it is challenging for the mason/installers to properly implement the DQ sales approach.

About three-quarters of the business facilitators believed that the DQ sales approach significantly increased demand, as it helps customers see the value of these products and promotes ethical, customer-centered sales practices. The remaining quarter was skeptical, suggesting that, in field conditions, the DQ sales approach does not differ much from other door-to-door sales approaches and

that those would have resulted in a similar number of sales.

The main challenges indicated by the 21 business facilitators include the resistance of mason/installers to fully adopt the DQ sales approach (11) and their difficulty in engaging customers in problem-led conversations (9), see Figure 8. This suggests that the training and the implementation of the DQ sales approach and/or the criteria for how local masons are selected may need further refinement.

Other key challenges identified by the business facilitators are the large geographic area to be covered by business facilitators (11), lack of support by higher management (6), time gap between training and coaching sessions (5). These challenges are rather operational and need to be taken into account when designing scalable support systems for mason/installers.



Figure 7: Statements about the DQ sales approach perceived to be true by 21 business facilitators



Figure 8: Main challenges reported by 21 business facilitators for implementing the DQ sales approach

### Perspectives on coaching needs

The majority (12 out of 21) of business facilitators believed that regular support and coaching for mason/installers is essential, while others (7 out of 21) thought support is only needed during the initial months. This raises questions about how to establish, sustain, and finance such a support system over time, especially if support is required beyond the initial months after training.

Generally, the support provided by business facilitators was quite intensive: 18 out of 21 reported having phone calls with the mason/installers at least once a week, and 20 out of 21 conducted in-person reflection meetings and joint household visits at least once a month. Despite the intensive coaching, only 8 out of 21 believed that the mason/installers have a very good understanding of the DQ sales approach and implement it accordingly. However, 11 believed that the masons have a good understanding but implement it with some deviations based on their context and level of understanding.

### Perspectives on territory management

Half of the business facilitators believed that the masons/installers visit all households, while the other half (11) thought they focus on well-to-do households within the village. Both approaches have their merits: visiting all households ensures equal opportunities for all residents to be offered a toilet upgrade, and the resulting conversion rate can be applied to the whole population (i.e., a conversion rate of 30 percent means that 30 percent of all households invested in a toilet upgrade). On the other hand, focusing on wealthier households (e.g., by assessing the building materials of their homes) saves time for the masons/installers, as they visit fewer households with a higher conversion rate.

Responses of the business facilitators suggest that few mason/installers only work within the *kebele* where they live; however, most of them are also active in adjacent *kebeles* within the *woreda*. Only four business facilitators reported that the masons complete all work in one *kebele* before moving to the next one, and only six reported that there is meaningful coordination between masons regarding territory. There is room to improve these two aspects.

### Perspectives on job satisfaction

Almost all business facilitators (17 out of 21) believed that the masons/installers were "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with this business opportunity. The remaining four business facilitators rated the level of satisfaction as "neutral," and none reported that the masons were "not satisfied." This finding aligns with a previous T/WASH survey showing that 74 percent of the mason installers were 'satisfied' with the profit from selling WASH products and services, while 21 were 'neutral' and 5 percent were 'dissatisfied' (Transform WASH, 2022).

## 4. Lessons Learned and Recommendations

**Door-to-door sales by masons/installers have significant scaling potential. Through the T/WASH network, more than 360,000 households were reached at their doorstep, with over 110,000 agreeing to invest in upgrading their toilet facilities (conversion rate of 30%).** To reach all households in Ethiopia within a few years, there is a need for a network of three to five trained local masons per woreda. However, additional measures, such as sanitation loans and targeted subsidies, need to be considered to achieve universal sanitation coverage.

**The DQ sales approach shows promising results, with indications that mason/installers adhering to the operational standard achieve higher sales. However, implementation quality varies across woredas, indicating the need for continuous tracking and support for masons/installers to ensure all households in a woreda are reached at their doorstep and that a high conversion rate is achieved.** The findings of this assessment suggest that roughly half of the masons/installers are applying the DQ sales approach effectively, while there is room for improvement for the other half. Specific areas for improvement include more careful listening and less active persuading, visiting existing toilets to identify current problems, taking sufficient time to demonstrate the solution, and clearly laying out the prices and installation process.

**The most frequent barrier to sales is the lack of cash on hand during the household visit. Most masons/installers tend to put little effort into helping households find alternatives.** In some instances, masons/installers encourage households to pay a small portion of the total amount, so they can report the household visit as a "sale" (even if the total payment and installation may never

happen). Overcoming financial barriers by strengthening the masons' skills and possibly adding financial solutions, such as installment payments, needs further refinement.

**Sales conversions are often dominated by masons/installers using the sight seller (a flip book to support the sales conversation) as a teaching guide rather than engaging customers.** One mason referred to the sight seller as "the bible when it comes to sanitation promotion at the household level." The visualizations draw attention and provide a clear structure to the sales conversation; however, many masons/installers misunderstand this as the entire DQ sales approach. This misunderstanding leads masons/installers to dominate the sales conversation. To improve sales conversations, masons should ask more questions to identify and strategically address barriers that hinder households from investing in their toilets.



**Key recommendations:**

- 1) Scale door-to-door sales by masons/installers to all woredas in Ethiopia by building a strong recruitment and support system for mason/installers.
- 2) Use the DQ sales approach for sales conversations and continue to explore ways to increase the adherence of masons to this approach. Emphasize the role of the sight seller as a tool for facilitating dialogue, understanding household concerns, and guiding customers towards informed decisions.
- 3) Explore and assess different ways for local stakeholders to take over the role of business facilitators, e.g. by health extension workers, private sector, woreda health offices, or woreda labor and skill offices. Integrate support activities to and by these new business facilitators into annual budgets.
- 4) Continue to focus on selling toilet installation services (rather than just products) to ensure quality installations that meet the threshold for “improved” sanitation.
- 5) Explore the possibility of adding sanitation loan packages to the masons/installers' offerings. If masons can directly offer financial solutions to overcome affordability issues, the conversion rate can likely be further increased.
- 6) Explore ways to adjust the sales approach to be more resilient to the current security situation, which is currently impacting the ability of masons to do house-to-house sales.
- 7) Implement a monitoring system to reliably track the number of active masons (including dropouts), sales conversations, and sales. Understanding the progress in reaching all households, conversion rates, and dropout rates can inform effective planning and improvements.
- 8) Implement a systematic quality control system to check the accuracy of monitoring numbers provided by local teams, with a focus on territory management (ensuring all households are being approached), effective sales conversations (adherence to the DQ sales approach), and good installation quality (meeting the “improved sanitation” status).

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