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Learnings from media advocacy for WASH in Amhara Region

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IRC WASH, in collaboration with the Amhara Region Water and Energy Bureau and Amhara Media Corporation, has produced and aired eight 30-minute WASH-focused programs on Amhara Television. This initiative, part of the Hilton Renewal Project funded by the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation in Amhara region. The programs, which feature contributions from various experts, cover topics such as sustainability, finance, monitoring, water tariffs, urban sanitation, coordination, water loss, pollution, and solarisation. This learning note documents the processes, messages, and impacts of this media advocacy effort on WASH sector stakeholders, with the objective of providing insights and lessons for future similar initiatives.

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Abbreviations

NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
HE	His Excellency
ODF	Open Defecation Free
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy
WASH	Water Sanitation and Hygiene

Introduction

IRC WASH, in collaboration with Amhara Region Water and Energy Bureau, has partnered with Amhara Media Corporation to disseminate advocacy messages about water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH). Over the past few months, Amhara Television has produced and aired eight 30-minute programmes focused on WASH. The three organisations (IRC WASH, Amhara Region Water and Energy Bureau and Amhara Media Corporation) have signed a tripartite agreement and have successfully broadcast these programmes.

This media advocacy activity is part of the Hilton Renewal Project, funded by the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation. It targets three Woredas/Districts in Amhara region: Dera, North Mecha, and Farta, as well as the Regional Water and Energy Bureau. The initiative covered various topics focusing on WASH, with contributions from experts in both government and non-government organisations. The television programmes addressed issues such as sustainability, finance, monitoring/digitisation, water tariffs, urban sanitation, coordination among sector actors, water loss and pollution, and solarisation.

This learning note captures the main processes, messages crafted and disseminated as well as its impact on the WASH sector stakeholders and will serve as a learning document for future similar endeavours.

Objective

The main objective of this learning note is to capture the learnings from the media advocacy engagement.

Specific Objectives

- Identify the key WASH messages crafted and broadcast via Amhara Television.
- Assess the impact of these messages on the target audience.
- Recommend the best approaches for future media advocacy initiatives.

Methods

This learning note primarily utilised content analysis to identify the messages contained within media communications and key informant interviews to assess the impact of media advocacy. The interviews included people featured in television programmes, journalists, leadership from the Amhara Region Water and Energy Bureau, and individuals who watched the television programmes.

Findings of the study

Media channels used

Since the Hilton Renewal Grant supports the WASH systems strengthening efforts in the Amhara region, IRC and the Regional Water and Energy Bureau used Amhara Television to disseminate the messages. Amhara Television is a regional state-owned broadcaster mainly aimed at serving to the region's public. Initially, the plan was to use Amhara Radio, the Education Bureau's educational media as well as the social media pages of the Amhara Regional Water and Energy Bureau. However, due to the high cost for additional channels, the Regional Water and Energy Bureau and IRC decided to use Amhara Television, assuming that it is widely viewed by both local leadership and the public. In addition to Amhara Television, the programmes have been uploaded on to the Amhara Media Corporation's YouTube channel and the links (the links are listed in the Annex) have been shared through the Regional Water and Energy Bureau's social media pages.

Engaging with the media

One of the activities of the Hilton Renewal Grant involved advocating for WASH messages through media channels, aiming to influence leadership, sector professionals and the general public to think and act towards WASH systems strengthening. Therefore, IRC WASH began developing a media advocacy plan aimed at sharing the knowledge gained from the three implementation woredas (Dera, Farta and North Mecha) with other woredas. This to influence decision-makers, partner organisations, and the community by leveraging the evidence gathered in the three implementation woredas and pave the way to achieving SDG 6 by 2030.

The advocacy strategy outlined the key messages and focused on ensuring universal, safe, equitable and sustainable WASH services through long-term WASH planning (master planning), monitoring, resource mobilisation, and ways to extend the experience to other woredas in the region.

Specific key messages were:

- For WASH services to be universal and sustainable, life cycle costed master planning is essential.
- Building infrastructure alone will not ensure the sustainability of WASH services; a strong monitoring and maintenance mechanism must be put in place.
- There is a significant funding deficit in the WASH sector, and participation from the government, development partners and the community is essential.
- The planning, monitoring, and resource mobilisation methods used by the Dera, Farta, and North Mecha woredas should be adopted by other woredas in the region.

Coordination

To maximise the impact of the messages, IRC WASH collaborated with the Amhara Region Water and Energy Bureau, making it the owner of the television programmes to be produced and broadcast. The draft media advocacy plan was shared with the Director of the Public Relations Directorate of the Amhara Region Water and Energy Bureau. By that time, the Bureau was already planning to purchase airtime from Amhara Television to broadcast water and sanitation related messages. The Bureau appreciated IRC's efforts, viewing it as additional support for their

initiative to disseminate WASH messages through the media. They planned to purchase airtime for 14 television programmes, while IRC planned to disseminate 13 WASH-focused messages.

However, the Bureau's plan was delayed due to the government procurement process and regional conflict, which led the regional government to restrict expenditures on media-related activities. Consequently, IRC and the Regional Water and Energy Bureau agreed to select similar topics from both plans and proceed with signing an agreement with Amhara Media Corporation to produce and disseminate messages through Amhara Television. The available resources from the Hilton Renewal Grant could only purchase about seven 30-minute television programmes, but the media organisation agreed to contribute 150,000 ETB, increasing the number of programmes to eight.

A tripartite agreement was signed between IRC, the Amhara Region Water and Energy Bureau, and Amhara Media Corporation, and the production of the television programmes began. Due to the conflict in the region, most of the programmes were designed as studio-recorded discussions on identified topics.

Roles and responsibilities

The roles of each organisation were outlined in the tripartite agreement:

- Amhara Region Water and Energy Bureau: Responsible for providing television programme plans (with IRC WASH), facilitating locations and guests for interviews, reviewing the final television programmes, and approving them before broadcasting.
- IRC WASH: Co-develops the television programme plans with the Bureau and manages payments to the media organisation after all programmes have been broadcast.
- Amhara Media Corporation: Responsible for producing eight television programmes and broadcasting them on a bi-weekly basis. The media organisation agreed to produce a news item for each programme and broadcast it via Amhara Television. The corporation is also responsible for producing promotional messages about the upcoming programmes prior to their broadcast.

IRC aimed to ensure that the Bureau would be the owner of the messages and dissemination, making them advocates of the messages. This process took longer than anticipated, involving discussions and a purchase request letter from the Bureau Head to the media organisation.

Once the agreement was signed, IRC facilitated a discussion on the planned topics, involving participants from Amhara Media Corporation, the Regional Water and Energy Bureau, Health Bureau, the Bureau of Finance, Education Bureau, the Regional WASH Coordination Office, and Abbay Basin Development Office. Participants learned about the initiative's objectives and the main topics planned for production and broadcasting. They were positive about the planned topics and identified areas where they could contribute information based on their expertise and responsibilities.

Messages

The Regional Water and Energy Bureau and IRC identified eight topics for production and broadcasting via Amhara Television. These topics focused on WASH sustainability, WASH financing, WASH monitoring/digitisation, urban sanitation, water loss and pollution, coordination for WASH, solarisation, and a successful watershed management experience in

Lalibela town. Subsequently, the two organisations developed an action plan that incorporated the topics, activities, timeline, and organisations proposed for interviews, and shared it with the media organisation to facilitate the production and broadcasting of television programmes.

Table 1: Action plan for media engagement

No.	Programme idea/topic	Activities	Timeline	Organisations Proposed for interviews
1.	Discussion on the improved service delivery model, professionalisation, community participation, tariff setting, and other relevant factors in establishing sustainable WASH services .	Identifying people for the interview and informing them to prepare	22/01/2024	IRC, BoWE, Bahir Dar city water utility
		Conducting the interview	25/01/2024	
		Developing a promotional message on the upcoming programme and broadcasting a few days in advance	TBD	
		Developing a promotional message on the upcoming programme and broadcasting three days in advance	28/01/2024	
		Developing a news item from the recorded programme	TBD	
		Broadcasting the recorded programme	TBD	
2.	Discussion on the value of coordination for strong and sustainable WASH services. WASH needs the coordination of government, non-government organisations, the community, and the private sector. The programme will focus on the need for integration and coordination among these actors and it will entertain recommendations from all.	Identifying people for the interview and informing them to prepare	06/02/2024	Abbay Basin, BoH, BoWE, Private WASH actor, one person from the community/WASHCO/WUA, One WASH Coordination Office, & MWA
		Conducting the interview	10/02/2024	
		Broadcasting the recorded programme	TBD	
3.	Discussion on improving WASH Financing . Showing the gap in finance and recommending other means of finance to improve the service. The role of government, partners, and the public, and private sector is to improve the WASH service.	Identifying people for the interview and informing them to prepare	16/02/2024	BoF, BoWE, BoH, Private sector, IRC, WUA/community representative
		Conducting the interview	22/02/2024	
		Developing a promotional message on the upcoming programme and broadcasting a few days in advance	24/02/2024	
		Developing a news item from the recorded programme and broadcasting	26/02/2024	
		Broadcasting the recorded programme	TBD	

4.	Electric power interruptions caused by power cuts and fuel supply shortages pose a significant challenge to WASH services in the region. To tackle this issue, the Regional Water and Energy Bureau, in partnership with partners implementing solar energy solutions to enhance the water service. Once installed, this alternative energy source is cost-effective.	Identifying people for the interview and informing them to prepare	06/03/2024	BoWE, beneficiaries (it could be through a telephone interview), Supporting partners like WV
		Conducting the interview	12/03/2024	
		Developing a promotional message on the upcoming programme and broadcasting a few days in advance	15/03/2024	
		Developing a news item from the recorded programme and broadcasting	21/03/2024	
		Broadcasting the recorded programme	TBD	
5	There is a successful watershed management experience in Lalibela town. Due to the intervention by the government, partners, and the community, the water yield has increased, and farmers in the area are producing fruits and vegetables which helps them generate income.	Identifying people for the interview and informing them to prepare	06/04/2024	Woreda Water and Energy Office, Woreda Agriculture Office, Community representatives, Regional Water Bureau
		Conducting the interview	10/04/2024	
		Developing a promotional message on the upcoming programme and broadcasting a few days in advance	13/04/2024	
		Developing a news item from the recorded programme and broadcasting	15/03/2024	
		Broadcasting the recorded programme	TBD	
6.	There is a successful experience in improving urban sanitation in towns like Bahir Dar and Debrebirhan , mainly in constructing public latrines. The participation of the partners, government, and the community in the construction and service provision is good so far. The ownership and sustainability of these public latrines will be discussed in the programme. Additionally, the contribution of the private sector (market-based sanitation) in improving sanitation and hygiene services will be discussed.	Identifying people for the interview and informing them to prepare	23/04/2024	BoH, BoWE, Bahirdar City Hygiene and Sanitation directorate, the user community representative
		Conducting the interview	28/04/2024	
		Developing a promotional message on the upcoming programme and broadcasting a few days in advance	30/04/2024	
		Developing a news item from the recorded programme and broadcasting	31/04/2024	
		Broadcasting the recorded programme	TBD	
7	Water wastage is the biggest challenge in the region, according to the Water Bureau. It is creating water shortage, and pollution, and impedes service delivery in general. Therefore, the Bureau is trying to identify the level of water wastage and provide a solution in some urban areas, Bahir Dar is one of the towns trying to prevent water wastage.	Identifying people for the interview and informing them to prepare	10/05/2024	BoWE, Abbay Basin, Bahir Dar City Water Utility, BoH
		Conducting the interview	17/05/2024	
		Developing a promotional message on the upcoming programme and broadcasting a few days in advance	20/05/2024	
		Developing a news item from the recorded programme and broadcasting	21/05/2024	
		Broadcasting the recorded programme	TBD	

8	The Bureau of Water and Energy is applying digitisation of data management to improve service delivery. There is a project management system in place to be shown in the programme. Additionally, with the support of IRC and other MWA members, there is a cloud-based monitoring system/support being applied in Dera, Farta, and North Mecha woredas and it will also be incorporated into the programme. The best ways to improve the region's WASH data management will be recommended.	Identifying people for the interview and informing them to prepare	01/06/2024	BoWE, IRC, BoH (since they have
		Conducting the interview	05/06/2024	relatively better data management system, One WASH
		Developing a promotional message on the upcoming programme and broadcasting a few days in advance	08/06/2024	Coordination Office, Data expert in Farta
		Developing a news item from the recorded programme and broadcasting	10/06/2024	
		Broadcasting the recorded programme	TBD	

Implementation

The first television programme on [WASH sustainability](#) featured three discussants from the Bureau of Water and Energy and IRC WASH, namely Mamo Yalew, Scheme Management Director; Ephraim Minishir, Water Supply Director and Girmachew Addisu, Monitoring and Learning Advisor at IRC WASH. The programme highlighted several key messages essential for sustainable water service delivery:

- *Sustainable water service delivery*: Emphasised the importance of providing a sustainable water service that meets standard quality and quantity requirements.
- *Effective planning and integration*: Highlighted the need for effective planning, financing, water resource management, monitoring, and collaboration among various stakeholders.
- *Evidence-based approach*: Stressed the necessity of having evidence of water quality and quantity to ensure sustainability.
- *Community participation*: Underlined the importance of community involvement in financing and managing water schemes to foster a sense of ownership and ensure sustainability.
- *Capacity building*: Discussed the need to build the capacity of the community on scheme management and to have trained maintenance professionals at the Kebele level.
- *Monitoring and support*: Mentioned the role of IRC in providing monitoring support to help the region identify and maintain non-functional water schemes.
- *Government initiatives*: Highlighted the regional government's efforts to establish maintenance and spare part supply enterprises and collaborate with partner organisations to improve water service delivery.
- *Awareness and ownership*: Addressed the perception among the rural community that water is a free good emphasising the need to raise awareness about financial contributions and community involvement in the planning, construction, and service delivery of water schemes.



Figure 1: Participants of the first television programme broadcast

The television programme was a valuable opportunity to share important messages for sustainable WASH service delivery with the community, the government, and development partners. Having discussants from different organisations highlighted the need for collaboration to address WASH-related issues. Discussing the topic through the media reaches millions and educates the community, reinforcing the importance of similar media discussions.

I received feedback from three directions: my colleagues, people who know me, and our woredas and zones. The feedback from the Bureau was to continue similar awareness creation programmes through the media. The feedback from the zones and woredas was that talking about water schemes through media is encouraging and should be continued. People who know me appreciated our discussion on the topic.

For future initiatives, it would be beneficial to allocate more time for similar programmes and go beyond studio discussions to include documentary formats. Instead of limiting these programmes to a short duration, it would be better to make them continuous.

- Mamo Yalew, Scheme Management Director at the Amhara Water and Energy Bureau

Implementing the production according to the plan presented several challenges. Arranging studio recording times that suited all discussants was difficult, as their availability often changed, leading to cancellations even after the media corporation had made arrangements. To address this, the media organisation, the Regional Water and Energy Bureau, and IRC WASH discussed and adopted a flexible approach based on the availability of discussants.

The second programme focused on [replacing diesel pumps with solar power](#), featuring Adugnaw Tadesse from CARE Ethiopia and Tesfaw Mewded, Water Construction Supervision Team Leader at the Bureau of Water and Energy. The key messages discussed included:

- **Cost-effectiveness:** Due to the lack of electric power and rising fuel costs, replacing diesel pumps with solar pumps is cost-effective for sustainable water services in rural areas.

- *Maintenance challenges*: Frequent breakdowns of diesel-powered generators result in high operation and maintenance costs, compounded by a lack of skilled maintenance professionals.
- *Power fluctuations*: Identified power fluctuations as the main cause of water pump breakages.
- *Proven effectiveness*: The effectiveness of solar-powered pumps has been tested in various areas, showing minimal operation and maintenance costs once installed.
- *Viability of solar power*: CARE Ethiopia assessed the viability of solar-powered pumps in different areas, finding them to be the best alternative, especially for Ethiopia, which benefits from year-round sunshine.
- *High solar intensity*: The high intensity of solar energy in the Amhara Region is advantageous for solar power implementation.
- *Successful conversions*: In 2016 Ethiopian Calendar, the Bureau, in partnership with other organisations, converted the power source of 26 water schemes to solar.
- *Community demand*: The community is actively requesting solar-powered water pumps recognising the sustainability benefits.
- *Hybrid systems*: Solar power can be installed in a hybrid system, together with grid or diesel power.
- *Maintenance support*: The Regional Water Bureau has standby maintenance professionals for solar power.
- *Community involvement*: Emphasised the need for community participation in the planning, installation, and management of solar-powered water pumps to develop a sense of ownership, which requires a series of awareness campaigns.
- *Private-sector engagement*: Highlighted the importance of significant private-sector engagement.
- *Future plans*: The Regional Water and Energy Bureau is exploring the integration of solar energy into both under-construction and newly planned water schemes.

The third television programme focused on the [coordination](#) required for effective WASH service delivery. The discussants included Selamawit Tiruneh from Millennium Water Alliance, Asrat Kasse, the Coordinator of the One WASH Coordination Office at the Amhara Region Water and Energy Bureau, and Zewdu Zegeye, the Coordinator of the One WASH Coordination Office at the Health Bureau. The programme highlighted the following key messages:

- *Collaborative responsibility*: Emphasised that WASH is not the responsibility of a single organisation. It requires collaboration among water, health, and education bureaus, as well as other organisations such as urban planning and finance.
- *Government and NGO collaboration*: Highlighted the efforts of health and water and energy bureaus working with various governmental and non-governmental organisations to improve WASH service delivery.
- *Identifying and filling gaps*: Stressed the importance of non-governmental organisations in identifying the main gaps in government efforts and coordinating with the government to fill these gaps.
- *Coordination platforms*: Discussed the role of the One WASH Regional Coordination Office in working with both government and non-governmental organisations to identify gaps and coordinate tasks to address them.
- *Maintaining momentum*: Although there are different coordination platforms from the federal level to the kebele level, it is crucial to maintain momentum in implementing

plans, especially at the national level. Coordination at the woreda and kebele levels is generally more effective.

Explained the structure of the national WASH steering committee led by the ministries of water, health, education, and finance, and the existence of steering committees at the regional, woreda, and kebele levels. At the water point level, there is a WASH committee.

- *Periodic meetings*: Highlighted the need for regional and national steering committee meetings to be conducted periodically, bringing stakeholders together to discuss gaps in the sector and find the best possible solutions.
- *Primary responsibility*: Urged government organisations such as health, education, environment, finance, and urban planning to consider WASH as their primary responsibility.
- *Community involvement*: Emphasised that the community should be part of every WASH implementation process.

I shared the Health Bureau's contributions as it is one of the responsible organisations for sanitation and hygiene, emphasising the need for collaboration with the Water and Energy Bureau and other government bodies. Preparing for the television programme helped me understand our current efforts, identify areas for improvement, and present our work to the public concisely.

The time allocated for the programme was very limited. For future initiatives, it would be beneficial to allocate more time.

The feedback from the audience was positive and insightful. They appreciated the honest reflection on the challenges and gaps in the sector.

For similar future initiatives, it would be helpful to inform the discussants in advance to allow for proper preparation.

- Zewdu Zegeye from Amhara Health Bureau One WASH Coordination Office

The fourth television programme focused on [WASH financing](#), featuring Abera Tsegaye from WaterAid Ethiopia and Tilahun Shimeles, Deputy Head of the Amhara Water and Energy Bureau. The programme highlighted several key messages crucial for sustainable WASH service delivery:

- *Diverse funding sources*: Explained that funding for the WASH sector comes from the government, development partners, and the user community.
- *Crucial financial resources*: Highlighted the importance of financial resources for planning, construction, operation, and maintenance of sustainable water, sanitation, and hygiene services.
- *Non-functionality challenge*: Identified non-functionality as the biggest challenge in the WASH sector, necessitating dedicated funds for operation and maintenance.
- *Tariff collection*: Explained that in rural areas, tariff collection should at least cover operation and maintenance costs, while in urban areas, it should also reimburse investment costs, underscoring the significant role of the user community.

- *Role of development partners*: Highlighted the crucial role of development partners, especially in emergency response.
- *Costed WASH master plans*: Discussed the importance of developing costed WASH master plans to identify the resources needed to achieve universal WASH access, as demonstrated in Farta, Dera, and North Mecha woredas.
- *Addressing resource constraints*: Tilahun noted that 26.5% of the community in the Amhara region lacks basic drinking water services due to resource constraints, and the government's efforts to work with development partners to address this gap.
- *Cost-effective maintenance*: Stressed that focusing on the maintenance and management of existing water schemes is more cost-effective than constructing new ones.
- *Community training*: Highlighted that water schemes often fail when communities are not trained in water scheme management.
- *Community responsibility*: Urged communities not to expect the government to maintain schemes when they fail and to ensure proper tariff payments to cover maintenance costs.
- *Protection from theft*: Emphasised the need for communities to protect water schemes from theft.
- *Collecting tariffs*: Suggested that producing enough water and properly collecting tariffs can help fill the finance gap.
- *Strategic planning*: Highlighted the necessity of developing a WASH financing strategic plan for the region to identify the financial contributions needed from each stakeholder.

I had the opportunity to participate in one of the programmes and managed to watch most of them. The message on the community's role in managing water, hygiene, and sanitation facilities and services is crucial. The programmes highlighted the importance of post-construction management as being essential for sustainable service delivery. They also emphasised the need for integration between the government, the community, and partner organisations.

Our organisation benefited from the programmes in terms of raising community awareness. People gave me feedback after seeing me in a television programme where I was one of the discussants. From this initiative, we learned the value of media in awareness creation and advocacy. For future similar initiatives, it would be good to consider other media options, such as radio, to reach rural communities. Our organisation is planning to collaborate with media outlets to disseminate WASH messages, and we have already identified the types of messages we want to share with the audience.

- Tilahun Shimeles, Deputy Head of the Amhara Water and Energy Bureau

The fifth television programme focused on [urban sanitation](#), featuring Tesfaw Akalneh, Second Urban WASH Project Coordinator at Bahir Dar City, Yibeltal Bere, WASH Technical Advisor at the Amhara Region Health Bureau, and Ewnetu Gedif, Urban Water and Sanitation Project Coordinator at the Amhara Region Water and Energy Bureau. The programme highlighted the following key messages essential for improving urban sanitation:

- *Awareness and education*: Emphasised the importance of raising awareness about proper hygiene and sanitation, with active efforts from the urban health extension programme.
- *Guidelines and proclamations*: Discussed the established guidelines and proclamations for proper solid and liquid waste management in urban areas.
- *Collaborative efforts*: Highlighted the collaboration between regional health and water and energy bureaus with development partners to improve urban sanitation by constructing public toilets in communal areas such as open markets, bus stations, and low-income neighbourhoods.
- *Long-term programmes*: Detailed a six-year programme led by the regional steering committee and town mayor offices in Bahir Dar, Gonder, Desse, and Debrebirhan to enhance water and sanitation services, funded by the World Bank, with regular meetings to review progress and address challenges.
- *Infrastructure development*: Outlined plans to construct an 84.7 km sewerage line with two large treatment plants and six pumping stations for Bahir Dar.
- *Public facilities*: Noted the construction of 102 new public latrines in Bahir Dar as part of a project to build 124 new public toilets and maintain 84 existing ones in three phases, with efforts to provide water for these facilities.
- *Water contamination risks*: Urged cities to consider water contamination risks when constructing sanitation facilities.
- *Community responsibility*: Stressed the need for the community to take responsibility for properly managing and disposing of solid and liquid waste from their homes.
- *Economic opportunities*: Highlighted the creation of opportunities for small and medium enterprises in the construction, maintenance, and management of sanitation facilities.
- *Expansion plans*: Mentioned plans to implement similar urban sanitation programmes in other cities and towns in the region.

It was a great opportunity to inform the community about the Regional Health Bureau's efforts to improve hygiene and sanitation, and what is expected from the community. There was a promotional message about the programme ahead of its broadcast, and many people gave me positive feedback, saying the message was educational.

It's important to allocate ample time to convey these kinds of messages and to assess if the community is learning from the programmes. Media organisations should take responsibility and work on these important topics independently, without relying on support from development partners.

– Yibeltal Bere, Amhara Region Health Bureau

The sixth television programme focused on [water loss and pollution](#), featuring Netsanet Chalachew, a Water Quality Expert at the Amhara Region Water and Energy Bureau, and Zelalem Zewdu, Head of Enjibara Town's Water Utility. The programme highlighted several key messages:

- *Types of water pollution*: Water pollution can occur in three primary ways: ecological, chemical, and physical.

- *Main pollutants*: The primary pollutant for drinking water is solid waste from homes, which contaminates the water source. Liquid waste from industries and farmlands also significantly contributes to water pollution.
- *Water loss*: Defined as water lost before it is metered and billed or due to unauthorized usage, which is illegal. The largest share of water loss is due to illegal water usage.
- *Physical water loss*: This can occur due to overflow from reservoirs, line breakage due to aging, explosion of water meters, and other reasons. Enjibara experiences more than 50% water loss due to old water lines.
- *Relationship between loss and pollution*: There is a direct relationship between water loss and water pollution, as pollution often occurs when there is loss. Water pollution caused by pipe breakage can lead to waterborne diseases.
- *Health impact*: Out of ten people who visit health facilities, three or four are due to waterborne diseases.
- *Community responsibility*: The community should pay tariffs for sustainable water service delivery and report any leakage or breakage of water pipes to the responsible authorities as soon as possible.
- *Equitable water service*: Water loss restricts the government from providing equitable water services, forcing people without access to clean drinking water to use water from unsafe sources.
- *Awareness and tariffs*: People who believe water is a free good should understand the operation and maintenance costs and pay tariffs.
- *Coordination and integration*: There should be coordination and integration among water, electricity, road, and telecommunication services, as infrastructure construction by these organisations often leads to disruptions.
- *Data management*: The data about old pipelines should be accurately recorded and managed as well, as recent pipes are well documented. There should be technology in place to track the condition and location of old pipelines.



Figure 2: Discussion taking place on water loss and pollution

The seventh television programme focused on the [digitisation of WASH services](#), presented in a documentary format. It featured interviews with individuals from various organisations and

locations, highlighting the digitisation efforts in three woredas (Farta, Dera, and North Mecha) in the Amhara region. Key messages from the programme included:

- *Support from IRC:* IRC is supporting the digitisation efforts in Farta, Dera, and North Mecha woredas.
- *Government leadership:* Although IRC has provided technical support, the government has led the digitisation process.
- *Training and data collection:* The three woredas were trained to collect up-to-date WASH data and upload it to mWater, ensuring they have current information on functional and non-functional schemes.
- *Operation and maintenance:* An operation and maintenance team in the woredas uses data from the newly installed system to update the status of water schemes.
- *Accessibility and transparency:* The data from the three woredas, updated in the system, is accessible by the zone and the region, which is beneficial for saving time and enhancing transparency.
- *Overcoming technological barriers:* The lack of technology and digitisation had previously prevented the region from assessing the status of water schemes.
- *Expansion plans:* The Regional Water and Energy Bureau has learned from the successful digitisation efforts in the three woredas and is now working with IRC to expand it across the region.
- *Training and equipment:* IRC has conducted a series of training sessions for the Water and Energy Bureau on digitisation and has supplied 15 tablets and two desktop computers to support these efforts.
- *Identifying service gaps:* The data will be vital for identifying service gaps and preparing proper plans.
- *Pilot in Bahir Dar:* The region plans to pilot digitisation in Bahir Dar city.
- The Regional Water and Energy Bureau has developed an action plan for digitisation.
- *Information exchange:* There should be a mechanism to exchange information among service providers, users, and regulators, with digitisation being the best means to achieve this.
- *Government commitment:* The government should commit to improving WASH data management and give due attention to WASH, as it is related to health, education, and the overall economy.
- *Evidence-based decision making:* Having credible and timely information is vital for evidence-based decision making.

In addition to the digitisation efforts with IRC WASH, the Regional Water and Energy Bureau is implementing four digital systems for human resource management, resource management, water construction project management, and water licensing.

Due to security issues in the region, it was not possible to travel to Lalibela town to record a success story of watershed management around Lalibela town. Consequently, the Regional Water and Energy Bureau decided to produce a television programme focused on the launching ceremony of the [bureau's digitisation systems](#). The event took place at the Regional Water and Energy Bureau, attended by the Deputy Prime Minister of Ethiopia, H.E. Temesgen Tiruneh, the Amhara Regional Government Head, H.E. Arega Kebede, and other high-ranking officials. The programme featured interviews with staff members of the Water and Energy Bureau and speeches by Mamaru Ayalew (PhD), Head of Amhara Region Water and Energy Bureau, H.E.

Temesgen Tiruneh, and H.E. Arega Kebede. Key messages disseminated in the programme included:

- *Human resource management digital system*: Implemented in collaboration with Bahir Dar University, this system eases human resource services and saves time and resources.
- *Digital ID*: Launched to track staff attendance, improving the service provided by the Bureau.
- *Addressing water demand and supply gap*: Digitisation is seen as the best approach to solve the region's water demand and supply gap.
- *Paper reduction plan*: There is a plan to make the Regional Water and Energy Bureau's system only 40 percent paper-based by the end of the 2017 Ethiopian Calendar.
- *Technology development*: Recognised digitisation as a pillar of economic development.
- *Commitment to policy and action*: The Amhara Region Water and Energy Bureau's commitment aligns with government policy and groundbreaking action.
- *Sustainability of digital systems*: Emphasised the need to ensure the sustainability of the launched digital systems.
- *Call for digitisation*: Other government organisations are encouraged to follow in the footsteps of the Water and Energy Bureau in their digitisation efforts.
- *Trained manpower*: Highlighted the necessity of having trained personnel to manage these digitised systems.
- *Collaboration with developers*: Stressed the importance of close collaboration with software programme developers for sustainability.
- *Proactive data security*: The Bureau should be proactive in ensuring the security of data.
- *Data compatibility*: The Water Bureau's data should be shared and compatible with the data from other bureaus.
- *Progress dashboard*: There should be a dashboard for the regional government's head to monitor the progress of each Bureau in the region.
- *User training*: Users should understand the system, and training should be provided to them.
- *ICT bureau support*: The region's Information Communication Technology Bureau should closely work with and support the Bureau.

Previously, we lacked experience in reporting on WASH. Through producing these programmes, I learned about the necessity of coordination to achieve sustainable WASH services, the major challenges in the sector, and that WASH is not the responsibility of a single organisation. The topics covered were valuable and important for the community, as well as for the responsible government and non-government organisations. The involvement of various organisations, including the media, in the programmes and discussions about gaps and best solutions is vital to strengthening the WASH system.

Since we started broadcasting the programmes, there have been positive comments about focusing on these topics, which are vital but not widely reported so far. The programme's time slot (6:30 PM) was convenient, and we believe that most people were able to watch the broadcast, though we were not able to track the exact number of viewers. Additionally, the programmes were shared on our media organisation's YouTube page, creating further opportunities to reach additional audiences. The Regional Water and Energy Bureau has also been sharing the YouTube links of the programmes through their social media pages.

The media organisations should give due attention to WASH topics and allocate a significant portion of the timeslot for programmes focusing on WASH.

-Tsadiku Alamirew, Amhara Media Corporation

Challenges

The main obstacle during the media advocacy was the security situation in the region. Due to these security issues, it was not possible to travel to the woredas to observe and produce success stories. For the same reason, some discussants were unwilling to appear on government media, fearing they might be perceived as government cadres.

Additionally, competing government assignments made it difficult for the responsible person from the Regional Water and Energy Bureau to follow up and facilitate the media advocacy. This also caused delays in aligning with the Regional Water and Energy Bureau and signing the media agreement. Due to the limited resources allocated to the programmes, the time was limited, and discussants were not able to share additional messages.

Lessons learned

Using media to communicate WASH messages is crucial. Despite the security challenges in the region, the decision to record most of the programmes in a studio has proven to be successful. As a result, WASH-focused messages were brought to discussion through the regional media. Including responsible government and non-government actors in the programmes created an opportunity to revisit their efforts, challenges, and solutions.

Putting the Regional Water and Energy Bureau at the forefront created an opportunity to convince most of the discussants to participate in the programmes and own the messages conveyed through the media. The collaboration between the media corporation, IRC WASH, and the Regional Water and Energy Bureau provided a platform to discuss and solve any challenges encountered during the process.

Following this initiative, in September Bahir Dar University sponsored the 9th studio-level panel discussion on collective action for integrated management and development of water resources linked with WASH service challenges.

Conclusion

The Hilton Renewal Grant has played a pivotal role in supporting WASH systems strengthening efforts in the Amhara region. By utilising Amhara Television, IRC and Amhara Water and Energy Bureau effectively disseminated crucial WASH messages to the regional public, adapting the media strategy to fit budget constraints and target influential viewers.

The media advocacy plan developed by IRC and co-implemented with Amhara Region Water and Energy Bureau aimed at extending the knowledge and successful practices in different initiatives, influencing political decision-makers, partner organisations, and the community.

Despite challenges such as regional security issues and limited resources, the initiative successfully engaged key stakeholders and facilitated important discussions through mainly studio-recorded television programmes. These programmes covered various aspects of WASH including sustainability, financing, coordination, monitoring/digitisation, urban sanitation, and solarisation.

The collaboration between IRC, the Amhara Water and Energy Bureau, and Amhara Media Corporation not only enhanced the impact of the messages but also fostered a sense of ownership and advocacy among the regional leadership and responsible bureaus. This initiative has also sparked interest from other organisations, such as Bahir Dar University, to broadcast WASH-focused messages, further amplifying the reach and impact of the advocacy efforts.

Recommendations

Based on the outcomes of media engagement, here are some recommendations:

- Continue leveraging Amhara Television for its regional reach and influence.
- Explore additional media channels, such as radio and social media, to broaden the audience.
- Maintain and strengthen collaboration with the Amhara Water and Energy Bureau, Amhara Health Bureau, and other organisations to ensure alignment and ownership of WASH messages.
- Until the conflict in the region is resolved, continue using studio-recorded discussions to mitigate the impact of regional security issues on fieldwork.
- Develop contingency plans to ensure the continuity of advocacy efforts during periods of instability.
- Document and share success stories from Dera, Farta, and North Mecha woredas to inspire other woredas in the region.
- Build partnerships with media organisations, NGOs, and private sector entities to amplify advocacy efforts.
- WASH sector bureaus should allocate a budget every year for media advocacy.
- The Amhara Water and Energy Bureau together with other government bureaus working on WASH should convince the One WASH National program, civil society organisations and bilateral programmes to advocate for sustainable WASH services using media.
- Incorporate lessons learned into future initiatives to enhance effectiveness and impact.

Annex

Links to the television programmes:

<https://youtu.be/c7c8b-FpWAg?si=C1zZCGDc5C1CaES5>

<https://youtu.be/78mmuOpmjWk?si=ErKLbOZS6MrQ6Kws>

<https://youtu.be/XWddO1LIi8?si=4C8TOWg4ofDXvasI>

<https://youtu.be/ztx1eFZnGKI?si=ZrDGPOiMdLaUn76->

<https://youtu.be/RGHdGGQ73FI?si=Tlu9cFVHBZ5ctofu>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K_8uRgtGdWk

<https://youtu.be/fRRweCKQAD8?si=-taW1pR7OEGx7MXM>

https://youtu.be/q7CwwRMYIdQ?si=J0nMACHfBdW_6PBi

https://youtu.be/LK7MtYU_zCQ?si=ezR5RgR-m6l3EIgs

<https://youtu.be/fGgCjCDnk0I?si=peZ6khtyKFQkpNDc>

https://youtu.be/c6U8bJrcpQU?si=75vKBG_1XwRHHWcl

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