



Environmentally Sound and Climate Resilience Transformation of Humanitarian WASH

Impact Report

2025-2026

A girl washes her hand in Ethiopia.
Photo: OWDA

Funded by:





Project participants during emergency response in Indonesia.

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Water is running in
Somaliland

Foreword

from Global Program Manager of ECT WASH

Last year, as we presented our first ECT WASH Impact Report, we marked an important milestone for the program. It was a moment to step back from daily implementation and reflect on what environmentally sound and climate-resilient humanitarian WASH looks like in practice. The previous report captured early evidence and a growing conviction that humanitarian WASH must evolve to remain relevant in a changing climate. This year's report builds directly on that foundation.

The challenges we face continue to intensify, from climate-related disasters and protracted crises to water scarcity and environmental degradation. Yet, we are also seeing more clearly how locally led, inclusive and climate-sensitive approaches translate into tangible and lasting change. Across the program, partners and communities are not simply adapting to new approaches; they are shaping, owning and sustaining them.

What stands out in this reporting period is the increasing maturity of the program. Climate and environmental considerations are embedded in decision-making rather than treated as add-ons. Tools such as NEAT+ inform planning and accountability, while community-based governance structures, including women and persons with disabilities, strengthen both emergency response and long-term resilience.

Katja Laudemann
Global WASH Program Manager

This report reflects a deeper understanding of impact. Beyond infrastructure, we see strengthened local capacities, improved preparedness and reduced environmental footprints. Resilience is built through participation, trust and sustained partnership — not quick fixes. The progress documented here is the result of collaboration between international and local organizations, authorities and, most importantly, communities whose leadership continues to guide the program forward.

As the program progresses, we remain proud of what is being achieved and confident that the capacities strengthened and systems established will endure beyond its lifecycle. We hope the lessons shared here inspire continued commitment to climate resilience, inclusion and local leadership at the heart of humanitarian WASH.

Introduction

About the Program

Across multiple regions, communities face increasingly severe and overlapping crises driven by climate change, environmental degradation, conflict and protracted emergencies. These pressures undermine access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and expose long-standing gaps in preparedness, inclusion and local response capacity. Women, persons with disabilities, older people and other marginalized groups are disproportionately affected.

In response, the *Strengthening Local Climate-Sensitive and Universal WASH Capacities Using and Disseminating the Green Humanitarian Aid Approach (ECT WASH)* program is running between November 2023 and October 2026 across 13 countries in Africa, Asia, the Middle East and Central America. Led by **Arbeiter-Samariter-Bund Deutschland e.V. (ASB)** in partnership with **arche nova e.V. (AN)** and the **German Toilet Organization (GTO)**, together with local NGOs, the program moves beyond short-term service delivery by strengthening locally led, inclusive and climate-resilient humanitarian systems.

ECT WASH combines climate-adapted WASH infrastructure with investments in preparedness, early warning and anticipatory action. Through the

integration of the Green Humanitarian Approach, the program seeks not only to reduce vulnerability but also minimize environmental harm and support long-term resilience. Working closely with local authorities, civil society and communities, it prioritizes participation, institutional learning and the systematic generation and sharing of evidence to inform policy and practice.

This 2nd impact report, covering the period from April 1, 2025, to March 31, 2026, highlights how these approaches translate into tangible change for communities and institutions, and what lessons can inform more effective, locally led and environmentally responsible humanitarian action.

January 2024 - March 2026



129 villages are supported by the program in 13 countries



81,584 households are benefitting



486,947 people are reached through this program



Measuring Impact

Are our projects successful? This question is the focus of the ECT WASH Impact Report 2025-2026. This report examines whether the program is achieving meaningful and sustainable results. Our impact measurement is grounded in the program's logical framework, linking activities and outputs to outcomes in inclusive, climate-sensitive WASH and disaster preparedness.

Furthermore, a mixed-methods MEAL approach combines quantitative monitoring with qualitative and participatory methods. Quantitative data track progress in access to safe and inclusive WASH services, strengthened preparedness and anticipatory action systems, and enhanced institutional capacity of local actors. Data are collected using standardized digital tools through the mWater and are disaggregated by gender, age, disability and vulnerability status to assess who benefits and whether barriers are reduced. Functionality and sustainability indicators are prioritized over infrastructure alone.

To capture deeper dimensions of change, qualitative methods, including Most Significant Change stories, Photovoice, interviews and focus group discussions document shifts in confidence, agency, safety, dignity, and participation. Together, these approaches provide a comprehensive picture of both measurable results and the structural changes that underpin long-term resilience.



Impact

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)

Continue from the previous report, from April 2025 to March 2026, the ECT WASH program delivers WASH interventions focused on the construction, rehabilitation and upgrading of water supply systems, including boreholes, wells, pipelines, storage tanks, rainwater harvesting systems, treatment facilities and water kiosks. Many systems integrate renewable energy solutions – particularly solar power – to improve reliability, reduce environmental impact and strengthen sustainability in remote or crisis-affected areas. In drought-struck, displaced or disaster-impacted communities, emergency water provision complements longer-term infrastructure investments. These efforts are combined with the strengthening of community-based water management structures to operate and maintain systems, reinforcing local ownership, environmental responsibility and resilience to climate-related risks, while promoting the participation of women and persons with disabilities in governance and decision-making.

In term of sanitation services, it is strengthened by building and rehabilitating accessible, gender-responsive toilets in households, communities, schools and health facilities. These improvements reduce open defecation, improve hygiene conditions and enhance safety and dignity, particularly for women, girls and persons with disabilities. Meanwhile, hygiene promotion activities are expanded at household, school and community levels, focusing on handwashing, safe water handling, menstrual hygiene management, food hygiene and household water treatment. We adopt participatory and context-appropriate approaches during the promotions,

including community sessions, school-based activities such as street theater, peer educators and awareness campaigns, support sustained behavior change and reduce exposure to water- and sanitation-related diseases.

To align with the environmental sustainability and climate resilience agenda, all WASH intervention is systematically integrated through the Green Humanitarian Approach. It promotes energy-efficient technologies, nature-based solutions, water-saving and climate-resilient practices, watershed protection, ecosystem restoration, and improved solid waste management. All physical intervention is combined with community awareness activities to strengthen the understanding of environmental impacts and shared responsibility for protecting water resources. We believe that, together, these interventions enhance resilience to climate shocks, improve access to safe water and sanitation, and demonstrate how inclusive and environmentally responsible humanitarian principles translate into strengthened local capacity and long-term sustainability. The stories from the field presented in the following section illustrate how these approaches translate into tangible change in the daily lives of communities.



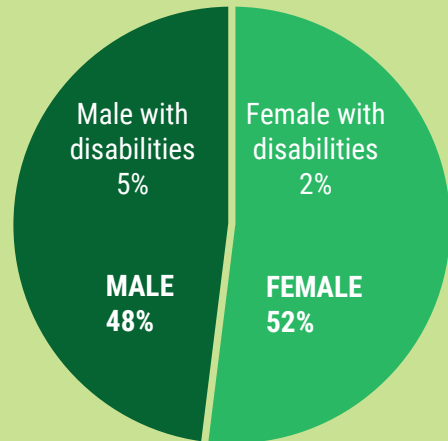
A girl practices hand washing with soap and running water in Nicaragua



January 2024 - March 2026



224 WASH training have been conducted, reaching **2,420 people**



2,153 households received chlorination



2,097 households received water filtration units



1,000 households received solar-powered water disinfection monitoring tools (WADI)



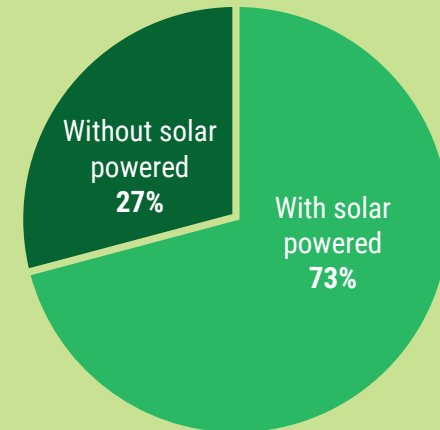
16 sky hydrants are installed



340 irrigation systems are built, benefitting **888,5 hectares** and **35 communal gardens**



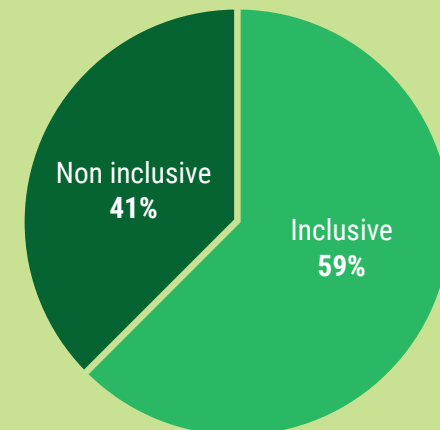
149 water supply systems are constructed,



6 existing water supply systems are rehabilitated with solar powered energy

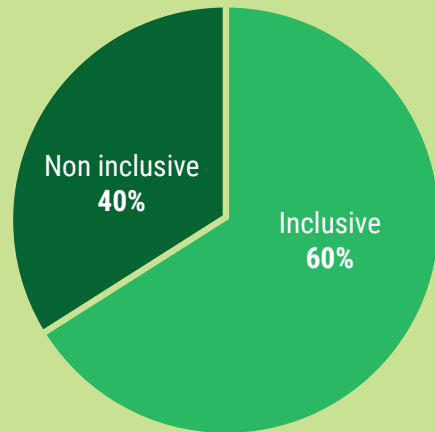


478 households received assistance with sanitation

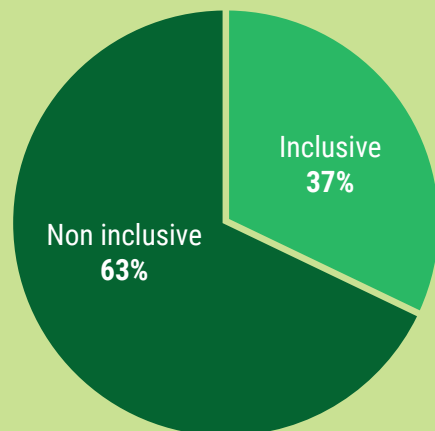




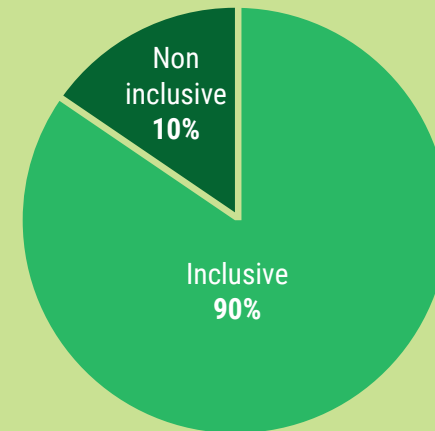
141 school toilets are constructed



102 public toilets are constructed, including in health facilities and for emergency purposes



123 hand washing facilities are constructed,



8,591 hygiene kits are distributed



163 menstrual waste disposal units, 168 general waste disposal units, 803 cleaning tools and incinerators are distributed



42 waste bank systems are developed



When Water Got Closer, Life Became Fairer in Ethiopia

Amina Abdi lives in the village of Bursaredo, Adadle woreda (district), Ethiopia, with her family. Like many households in the community, access to water shaped daily life in deeply unequal ways. Before the rehabilitation of the water supply system, responsibility for collecting water fell almost entirely on women and girls.

For Amina's household, this meant long and dangerous journeys to the Shabelle River. Fetching water required hours each day and exposed family members to serious risks, including unsafe riverbanks and crocodiles. This responsibility limited choices — especially for Amina and her daughters — by taking time away from school, rest, and other productive activities. Water access was not only a daily hardship; it reinforced unequal roles within the household.

Since 2024, the project worked with the community to rehabilitate the water system and establish a solar-powered water point and cattle trough in Bursaredo. Amina participated in community discussions where women were encouraged to speak about how water scarcity affected their lives, safety, and family dynamics. With clean water now available near the village, the burden of water collection has significantly declined.

Water is collected safely and more efficiently, and household routines have changed. Because water access no longer consumes hours of unpaid labor, responsibilities are more flexible and shared within the family. Amina's daughters attend school more regularly, and time previously

spent on water collection is now used for learning, rest, and social activities.

The most significant change for Amina is not simply that water is closer, but that her family now has choices. The constant pressure on women and girls has eased, and daily life is no longer organized around survival tasks that were once taken for granted as “women's work.” Livestock are watered at the cattle trough, reducing risks and improving animal health, while women no longer carry the physical and emotional burden of unsafe water access.

Although adapting to new systems required learning and cooperation, the community gradually shifted away from old practices. The program did not only improve infrastructure; it created space for new ways of organizing household responsibilities and valuing women's time, safety, and well-being.

Amina now shares her experience with other communities, emphasizing that access to clean water is not only a technical improvement, but a step toward fairness within households. She hopes the program will continue and expand so that other families can experience safer lives with more balanced responsibilities.



Amina Abdi is collecting water from the water point collection

“For me,” Amina explains, “this change means we are no longer forced to accept hardship as normal. Clean water has given us safety, time, and more equal opportunities within our family.”

Amina Abdi

Villager of Bursaredo, Adadle woreda (district), Ethiopia



Extending the Growing Season by Reworking Food Security in Honduras

In El Pintadillo, a farming community in southern Honduras, food production has long depended on rainfall. For José Aristides and other small-scale farmers, the agricultural calendar followed the rainy season. It means planting decisions relied on rainfalls. When rainfall was delayed or irregular, production paused. This was not an isolated shock but a recurring pattern that limited how households could plan, produce and recover. For him, food insecurity was less a sudden crisis than a cycle: months of cultivation followed by months of waiting. The challenge was not a lack of effort or knowledge, but a dearth of options as weather patterns became increasingly unreliable.

In 2025, drip irrigation systems were introduced through the project, and José joined six other farmers in testing a different approach. Instead of waiting for rainfall, they began planting beyond the traditional rainy season and maintaining crops more consistently. He received support through supplied materials and practical assistance. A technician worked side by side with the group during installation, demonstrating the process and using it together with them. Farmers installed the systems themselves, asked questions and repeated each step. As José understood it, the intention was clear: the system needed to function without permanent external support.

Over time, the group gained confidence in assembling, operating and maintaining the irrigation systems. *“Now we install it ourselves”*, José explains, describing how responsibility has shifted. Installation and upkeep are now embedded in the group’s shared practice. With

irrigation, production is no longer tied exclusively to seasonal rains. José’s household plants more flexibly, reducing prolonged gaps without food production.

He describes the outcome simply: food is more secure. Harvests have also improved. José reports better yields of beans and corn, and in plantain an increased production from three to seven hands per plant when irrigation is used. Yet beyond higher output, the more significant shift lies in the group’s strengthened capacity to adapt as conditions change.

Equally important is how the seven farmers now collaborate. José describes the group as functioning “like a family.” They share labor, exchange advice and support one another during difficult periods. Food circulates within the group: beans, corn or other crops, depending on who has harvested and who has not. What began as a production activity has evolved into an informal safety net rooted in reciprocity rather than dependency.

This intervention demonstrates that food security improves when farmers expand their choices instead of relying solely on fixed seasonal patterns. Drip irrigation does not eliminate risk but helps lessen dependence on a single climatic window and enables more active decision-making. In El Pintadillo, irrigation has become part of a locally managed system of learning, practice and mutual support by strengthening collective resilience beyond the limits set by rainfall alone.



José Aristides in his farm

“Now we install it ourselves”

José Aristides

Farmer from El Pintadillo, Honduras



From Construction to Service: Strengthening Community Water Management in El Chilamatal, Nicaragua

In El Chilamatal, a community in Nicaragua's Dry Corridor, water scarcity is not a temporary disruption but a constant condition shaping daily life. For Deisis Vázquez, secretary of the local community water committee (CAPS), this reality is visible in everyday routines. Most families rely on two wells, and when river water is available, some use it despite safety concerns. During the dry season, shortages intensify, long lines form, and access becomes uncertain rather than reliable.

Beside these challenges is a longstanding sense of being overlooked. For years, the community has managed water stress largely on its own, reinforcing the perception that practical solutions remain distant. Through ECT WASH, a new water supply system using electric pumping (MABE) is established to serve 45 households. The initiative includes trenching, installation of main and household pipelines, and the setup of essential infrastructure such as the pump, carried out with technical guidance and coordination with municipal authorities.

At the center of the process is CAPS, the local structure responsible for overseeing the system. For Deisis, governance evolves alongside construction. The committee organizes community participation, facilitates decisions and maintains communication with technicians and engineers. Rather than acting as controllers, CAPS members gradually assume the responsibilities required to support a functioning service.

Deisis describes the change in two connected ways. First, the community moves from shared

and limited sources towards household-level access. Currently, the system is nearing completion; soon after, water meters are installed and water begins reaching homes, reducing reliance on waiting in line and shared collection points. Second, and equally important, the community prepares to manage the system over time. For Deisis, construction marks the beginning rather than the end of the effort. She supports the introduction of water meters to promote fair and responsible use and highlights the need for practical operation and maintenance training, acknowledging that managing such a system is new for the community. Protecting the water source, including planting the trees around the well, is another priority she emphasizes.

Deisis speaks candidly about the realities of voluntary committee work. Expectations are high and feedback is not always positive. Nevertheless, she views governance as something that develops through experience. Mistakes are part of the process, she explains, but they create opportunities to adjust and strengthen collective practice.

This story reflects a broader transition from infrastructure delivery to locally managed service allocation. While the new system now supplies water to 45 households, its long-term reliability depends on everyday decisions about use, maintenance and source protection. In El Chilamatal, more consistent water access emerges not only from new infrastructure but also from a local institution steadily building the routines needed to sustain it.

“Mistakes are part of the process, she explains, but they create opportunities to adjust and strengthen collective practice.”

Deisis Vázquez

Secretary of the local community water committee (CAPS) in El Chilamatal, Nicaragua



Deisis Vázquez is in front of her house



Community Perspectives

The section of community perspectives reflects insights generated through a Photovoice process, in which community members documented their own experiences and concerns through photography and dialogue. By placing cameras in the hands of participants, the process seeks to shift representation from external observation to community-led storytelling, allowing local perspectives to guide understanding of impact.



The photo was taken by Jean, a water committee member in Tapion, Haiti.

“

Before, getting safe drinking water took time and money, and our children had to walk far to buy it. Now, we know where they can find safe water close to home. It is safer for them, less expensive for us, and better for the whole family.”



The photo was taken by Yahayra Elineth Sánchez Alvarado, a community leader in Chilamatal, Nicaragua.

“

Before the project began, this is what everyday life looked like for families in the community. In the mornings and again as evening fell, men, women, and children walked long distances to wells and rivers to carry the water they needed. With buckets in hand and shared effort, they searched for water to drink, bathe, and wash – turning every drop into work, communion, sacrifice, and hope.”



Impact

Disaster Risk Reduction

During the reporting period, the project makes significant progress in strengthening disaster risk reduction (DRR) and anticipatory humanitarian action (AHA) across diverse contexts. Through capacity strengthening, institutional engagement and community-led planning, it contributes to improved preparedness, earlier action and enhanced resilience among at-risk populations. Additionally, inclusive approaches remains pivotal, ensuring the meaningful participation and protection of women, persons with disabilities, displaced populations and other marginalized groups.

Across 13 countries, disaster management committees and local governance structures are established, revitalized and/or strengthened to coordinate preparedness, early warning and response. It starts with co-creation on vulnerability and capacity assessments, localized DRR and contingency plans, and integration of the climate and disaster risk considerations into existing frameworks. Furthermore, at national and sub-national levels, partners engage in policy dialogue and coordination mechanisms, collaborating with government institutions and civil protection authorities. In several contexts, they contribute

to the development of anticipatory action guidelines and climate-sensitive planning tools, including advocating for the explicit inclusion of persons with disabilities and other marginalized groups, thereby linking community practice with institutional systems.

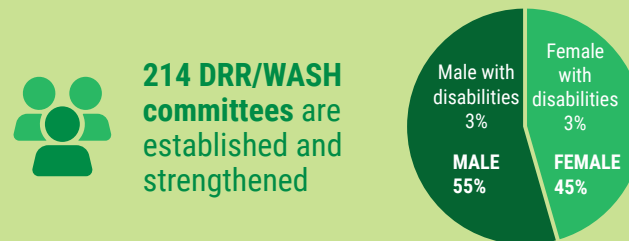
Moreover, capacity-building underpins these efforts. Training for community leaders, committee members, staff and government counterparts covered disaster preparedness, early warning systems, contingency planning, climate adaptation and protection principles. In parallel, anticipatory action is strengthened through the development of early action protocols, risk-informed planning and clearly defined triggers for hazards such as droughts and floods. Complementary measures, including community savings groups, early warning dissemination systems and agroclimatic monitoring, support timely action, helping to reduce the impact of shocks before they escalate into crises.


The field stories that follow provide concrete evidence of how DRR interventions are experienced by communities and contribute to lasting change.



Ramp for accessibility in the Prodiapon Cyclone Shelter, Bangladesh

January 2024 - March 2026



-  **124 DRR plans** are developed
-  **65 community early warning systems** are established
-  **55 anticipatory action protocols** are developed



Best Practice: Anticipatory Action, an Approach from Early Warning to Early Response in Indonesia and the Philippines

In Indonesia and the Philippines anticipatory approaches are increasingly transforming how climate risks are managed, shifting disaster response from reactive interventions to proactive, locally led action. Evidence from two contexts shows that when predictive information is paired with clear protocols, empowered local actors, and accessible financing, communities can act decisively before hazards escalate into crises.

In the Philippines, the activation of anticipatory protocols ahead of Typhoon Tino demonstrated the tangible value of preparedness. Early alerts provided sufficient lead time for communities across Padre Burgos municipality to evacuate safely, with all residents relocated within two days and without the need for forced evacuation. Food assistance was delivered the following day, illustrating not only operational readiness but also the power of coordinated planning. Critically, the early warning system functioned as intended — triggering concrete actions rather than remaining a purely informational tool.

Institutionalization has proven equally important for sustaining anticipatory action. In one municipality, a newly appointed mayor declined to lead emergency coordination due to limited training. Nevertheless, the response continued uninterrupted because trained staff followed established plans developed through the project. This underscores a key impact: anticipatory systems that are embedded within institutions can withstand leadership transitions and reduce reliance on individual champions.

Investments in resilient infrastructure further strengthened preparedness. A rainwater harvesting system became a critical lifeline for an isolated community during flooding, ensuring continued access to safe water when traditional supply routes were cut off. Such measures highlight how anticipatory thinking extends beyond protocols, embedding resilience directly into essential services so that communities remain functional during shocks.



Early warning in the Philippines during Typhoon Tino

“key impact: anticipatory systems that are embedded within institutions can withstand leadership transitions and reduce reliance on individual champions.”



Meanwhile, in Indonesia, progress is emerging through the contextualization of anticipatory action within early warning systems. By integrating repositioning mechanisms, local authorities in Magelang district already demonstrated the ability to release funds once warning thresholds were reached during landslides in January 2026. This marks a significant operational shift: Financing is no longer contingent on disaster impact but can be mobilized in anticipation of risk, enabling faster and more preventive interventions.

Notably, these advances are occurring despite the absence of strong national regulation on anticipatory action. Local actors are moving forward with practical solutions, suggesting that subnational innovation can serve as a testing ground for broader policy development. This bottom-up momentum signals growing ownership and confidence among local stakeholders to operationalize forward-looking risk management.

Collectively, these experiences point to a fundamental shift: anticipatory action is being practiced. **What makes this a best practice is not the early warning itself, but the system built around it.** Clear trigger thresholds linked to predefined actions, delegated roles within local institutions, pre-agreed financing mechanisms, and investments in shock-resilient infrastructure collectively ensure that warnings translate into timely response. The approach reduces dependence on ad hoc decisions, political leadership, or post-disaster appeals. Instead, it embeds anticipatory action into governance systems, enabling communities and local governments to act predictably, confidently, and early — before risks become full-fledged humanitarian crises.



Distribution of hygiene kits
in Magelang

“What makes this a best practice is not the early warning itself, but the system built around it.”



“This system has strengthened our ability to provide safe, continuous, and high-quality healthcare,” he noted. “Patients are treated in a cleaner and safer environment, and our staff can work more efficiently. It has improved not only our operations but also our readiness for future challenges.”

Abdihakim Mohamed Mohamoud
Director of Baligubadle Hospital, Somaliland

Abdihakim Mohamed Mohamoud
in his office



Strengthening Hospital Resilience Through Reliable Water Access in Somaliland

In the drought-prone district of Baligubadle, Somaliland, where climate shocks and water scarcity frequently threaten essential services, the Director of Baligubadle Hospital, Abdihakim Mohamed Mohamoud, understands that preparedness is not optional, but lifesaving.

In the past, the hospital operated under constant uncertainty. Its water supply depended entirely on trucks transporting water from a distant borehole. Deliveries were often delayed and sometimes never came. When this happened, the consequences extended far beyond inconvenience: maternity services risked interruption, sterilization processes were delayed, and infection prevention measures weakened. In a healthcare setting, such disruptions can quickly escalate into a secondary disaster. *“As a hospital, we were always managing risks,” Abdihakim explained. “Water shortages increased operational stress, raised costs, and threatened our ability to provide timely care.”*

Recognizing that reliable infrastructure is central to disaster risk reduction, the hospital partnered with the ECT WASH program to establish a sustainable water system. Abdihakim was actively involved in technical decisions, from selecting the pipeline route and storage location to supervising trench excavation and rehabilitating the internal distribution network. The process presented challenges: limited space within the compound complicated the placement of the storage facility, while pipeline construction meant negotiating with landowners to allow trenching across private and public land. Moreover, repairing the aging internal network demanded careful assessment to pinpoint defects embedded in fixed infrastructure. Yet these obstacles underscored a key lesson:

resilience is built through planning, coordination and community engagement.

Today, with a dependable water supply system in place, the hospital maintains uninterrupted services even during periods of scarcity. Essential departments, especially maternity, inpatient and outpatient care, operate with greater stability. Staff no longer delay procedures while waiting for water deliveries and hygiene standards are consistently upheld.

What may appear to be a technical upgrade is really a significant risk reduction measure. Reliable water access has strengthened the hospital’s ability to function during environmental stress, diminished financial strain from emergency water purchases and allowed health workers to focus on patient care rather than crisis management. The facility is better positioned to withstand future shocks, whether driven by drought, infrastructure disruption or rising demand.

For Abdihakim, the significance lies in preparedness. *“This system has strengthened our ability to provide safe, continuous, and high-quality healthcare,”* he noted. *“Patients are treated in a cleaner and safer environment, and our staff can work more efficiently. It has improved not only our operations but also our readiness for future challenges.”*

Looking ahead, his priority is sustainability — maintaining the system and building on the progress achieved so that the hospital remains prepared for future risks.



Community Perspectives

The section of community perspectives reflects insights generated through a Photovoice process, in which community members documented their own experiences and concerns through photography and dialogue. By placing cameras in the hands of participants, the process seeks to shift representation from external observation to community-led storytelling, allowing local perspectives to guide understanding of impact.



The photo was taken by Maryanesa E. Estillore, a villager in St. Bernard, the Philippines.

“

I was impressed by the walkie-talkie because it is very useful and helpful, especially during disasters or emergencies. It allows for instant communication, which is crucial in emergency situations. It can also be used to relay advisories and warnings, particularly during typhoons.”



The photo was taken by Abdi Ali Ileye, a villager in Ethiopia.

“

Moving with my family in search of pasture brings mixed emotions of exhaustion, sadness, and fragile hope. Leaving our home behind and walking long distances under harsh conditions has disrupted our sense of stability and belonging. The journey is uncertain, and each step forward carries concern for my children and the future of our livestock. At the same time, there is determination to endure and keep going, believing that somewhere ahead there will be water and pasture.”



The photo was taken by Katerin Pamela Ordoñez, a student in Laz Pozas, Honduras.

“

The rainbow is beautiful. It's like a bridge of light and hope that connects the sky and the earth, appearing after the storm to remind us that beauty and calm come after difficult moments. It's a sign that there is always a new beginning: hope, change, and transformation. It is the promise that after the rain and the hard times, light comes and a better future. A sign of rebirth and good energy.”



Impact

Green Humanitarian Approach

During the reporting period, the program makes strong progress in operationalizing the Green Humanitarian Approach, translating climate and environmental commitments into practical action at organizational, program and community levels. Across headquarters, regional and country structures, the Climate and Environment Charter provides a shared framework to strengthen accountability, guide decision-making and reduce the environmental footprint of humanitarian work. ASB and several country programs develop and formalize Climate Charter Action Plans, embedding environmental responsibility into internal operations, program design, procurement and field implementation. At country level, partners establish coordination mechanisms such as Green Teams, expand staff training and apply tools including NEAT+, the Humanitarian Carbon Calculator and ecosystem assessments to inform evidence-based, climate-sensitive planning.

In addition, environmental sustainability is increasingly mainstreamed across WASH, disaster risk reduction and livelihoods programming. Interventions prioritize

solar-powered systems, nature-based solutions, water-saving technologies, sustainable waste management and the use of local and recyclable materials. Communities engage in awareness-raising and training on conservation, ecosystem restoration and climate adaptation, reinforcing local ownership of environmentally responsible practices. At the same time, institutional engagement strengthens through promotion of Climate Charter commitments in national forums and sectoral platforms, including collaboration with government authorities, disability organizations and humanitarian networks. Operational practices also improve to lessen environmental impact through reduced single-use plastics, increased energy efficiency, responsible procurement and greater use of digital coordination, reflecting a growing organizational culture of environmental stewardship alongside humanitarian efficacy.

The following field stories illustrate how these environmental commitments translate into practical action and measurable change at community level.

January 2024 - March 2026



39 NEAT+ training have been conducted, **29 training** in the Climate and Environment Charter, and **19 training** in Green Humanitarian Approach have been done, reaching out **179 organisations**



82 vulnerability profilings are developed



24 environmental risk assessments are generated



2 headquarters, 16 implementation partners, 32 other organisations signed the Climate and Environment Charter



35 action plans are developed after the signature

Women work together to clean the area in Mali





Climate Charter Implementation – Example from Indonesia

From Commitment to Culture: How the Climate Charter is Reshaping Organizational Practice

Since signing the Climate Charter, ASB South and Southeast Asia (SSEA) has moved from acknowledging climate change as a contextual risk to embedding environmental accountability into the core of its humanitarian identity. Historically rooted in disaster risk reduction and emergency response, ASB SSEA has always prioritized speed, scale, and lifesaving action. However, the Charter catalyzed a shift: environmental impact is no longer secondary to humanitarian delivery. It is now part of how decisions are made.

This shift is visible at three levels:

1. Strategic Direction: Climate as a Core Portfolio Area

Climate action is now explicitly integrated into ASB SSEA's regional vision. Beyond DRR and socio-economic development, environmental considerations are embedded into program design, partnerships, and proposal development. Every new project is required to assess its environmental footprint at baseline and endline, using a newly developed environmental impact tool currently being tested.

This marks a significant evolution: from implicit awareness to measurable accountability.

2. Operational Trade-Offs: Balancing Speed and Sustainability

Humanitarian response often demands rapid procurement and logistics. The Charter has introduced a new layer of deliberation: carbon footprint versus operational efficiency.

For example, sourcing from the fastest or most comprehensive supplier may increase emissions due to long-distance transport. While life-saving priorities

remain paramount, ASB SSEA now consciously weighs these trade-offs and introduces compensatory measures, such as promoting lower-carbon travel options for staff and revising duty travel policies to prioritize rail over air where feasible.

The shift is not about perfection; it is about transparency, accountability, and continuous improvement.

3. Institutional Culture: From Policy to Daily Practice

The most meaningful change may be cultural. Environmental monitoring, such as paper use, energy consumption, material efficiency has become part of office practice. These actions send a clear signal: Climate responsibility is not abstract, but operational.

This cultural change also extends outward. ASB SSEA has actively supported local partners to become Climate Charter signatories and has integrated climate commitment sessions into regional learning events. Strengthening partner capacity ensures that climate responsibility is not personality-driven nor dependent on leadership continuity—it is institutionalized.

For ASB SSEA, ensuring sustainability beyond individual leadership remains a core priority of this initiative. Even in the event of leadership transitions, key practices are designed to endure, like integrating low-carbon approaches into emergency response (including reducing reliance on single-use plastics), institutionalizing dedicated climate discussions within partner learning spaces, and continuing hands-on support to partners as they translate climate commitments into practical action. Climate accountability is no longer treated as a sideshow; it is increasingly embedded as core organizational expertise and an operational standard that shapes decision-making, partnerships, and program delivery.

“For ASB SSEA, ensuring sustainability beyond individual leadership remains a core priority of this initiative”



Segregated solid waste in ASB South and Southeast Asia



Best Practice: Water That Gives Back: Financing Sustainability in Kosseye, Mali

In Kosseye, a village in the Rural Commune of Gounzoureye in the Gao Region, Mali, access to water once meant compromise. Despite living near the river, families relied on untreated well water, rationed their bathing and laundry, and shared limited sources with livestock. Illnesses linked to unsafe water were common, and schoolchildren often left class during recess to search for something to drink.

With this challenge, the project started to construct Simple Water Supply System (AES – Adduction d’Eau Sommaire) that ensure accessible water points for the communities. The construction does help the families, but the transformation does not stop there. What emerged was a locally owned, environmentally conscious system that reflects the principles of green humanitarian approach.

Under the leadership of the Water Point Management Committee, chaired by Boubacar Omarou Touré, the community agreed to introduce water user fees, an unfamiliar concept in a village where water had never been formally paid for. The shift was not easy. Yet as families experienced the benefits of safe water, including improved hygiene, fewer illnesses and lower medical expenses, they increasingly recognized that water has both value and a cost. Within a short period, the villagers gave more than EUR 765 in contributions.

Rather than allowing the project to remain a one-time external intervention, the committee reinvested the funds locally. Part of the revenue was used to plant 125 neem and 75 eucalyptus trees around the school and community spaces.

Tree planting was not symbolic; it was a deliberate step toward environmental restoration, shade creation, and climate resilience in a region facing increasing heat and environmental stress. Even after these investments, the committee maintained over EUR 650 in reserve, strengthening financial sustainability.

The impact rippled outward. Livestock no longer compete with people for water sources, reducing contamination risks. The school’s 790 students—more than half of them girls—now have access to a standpipe in the courtyard, eliminating the need to leave school grounds in search of drinking water. Attendance and learning conditions have improved. The management committee also contributes annually to the commune’s budget, linking water governance to local development structures.

What makes Kosseye a best practice is the integration of service delivery, financial sustainability, and environmental stewardship within a single community-led model. The water system is not treated as a free external asset but as a locally governed public good with clear accountability, user contributions, reinvestment mechanisms, and ecological co-benefits. By linking tariff collection to maintenance reserves, reforestation, and contributions to commune structures, the model moves beyond infrastructure provision toward circular, climate-conscious water governance. It demonstrates that humanitarian WASH interventions can simultaneously strengthen local institutions, restore ecosystems, and generate long-term sustainability without creating dependency.

“What makes Kosseye a best practice is the integration of service delivery, financial sustainability, and environmental stewardship within a single community-led model.”

Tree planting at school in Mali





One climate-smart investment helped secure a family's livelihood, protect productive land, and transform uncertainty into resilience in Lebanon

In the Akkar Region of Lebanon, the land tells the story of those who refuse to abandon it. To Omar Khalil, a retired backhoe operator turned full-time farmer, that land means dignity, stability, and his family's future. Since establishing his orchard in 2010, it has become the household's main source of income. His four sons manage daily labor, while his wife and daughter anchor the harvest seasons, carefully handling apples and aromatic roses. But the rhythms of farming began to change. Rainfall grew unpredictable, summers longer and hotter, and the natural spring Omar relied on increasingly ran dry. Climate pressure was no longer abstract, because it was reshaping what the land could provide and how long the family could endure.

When the water stopped flowing, Omar faced an impossible choice: buy increasingly expensive water or watch parts of his orchard wither. Purchasing water brought only temporary relief while adding financial strain. Each season became a risk assessment; each dry spell carried the quiet threat of loss. By 2023, he reached a breaking point. He considered cutting down the trees he had nurtured for over a decade and replacing them with less water-dependent cereal crops. It would have meant stepping back from years of patience and sacrifice—but survival sometimes demands painful decisions.

The turning point came in 2024, when Omar was selected as one of fifteen farmers supported through the ECT WASH Program. On his land, a green humanitarian approach took shape through the construction of a rainwater collection pond. Designed as a preparedness measure, the pond captures seasonal flows that would otherwise be

lost and stores them for peak dry months. A simple intervention, it reduced dependence on external water sources, improved resource management, and aligned his farming system with a changing climate.

Omar calls the pond "our lifeline." Beside water, something less tangible returned: certainty, where fear once shaped every planting decision, planning became possible again. The orchard no longer stands at the mercy of failed rainfall. The change is both technical and transformational. Omar has moved from survival mode to becoming an active steward of his environment. Conversations at home have shifted from questioning whether the orchard could survive to preparing to cultivate previously unused areas.

Beyond one farm, the pond shows that targeted, climate-smart investments help rural communities remain rooted. Green humanitarian action is not defined by the scale of infrastructure, but by its ability to secure futures while respecting ecosystems. Omar now shares a message grounded in lived experience: *"Do not give up. With proper planning and the right support, one intervention can change everything."* For his family, the pond did more than store water. It safeguarded years of labor and ensured that, as the climate grows more uncertain, leaving the land is not the only option.



Omar Khalil in his orchard farm

"Do not give up. With proper planning and the right support, one intervention can change everything."

Omar Khalil

A farmer in Akkar Region of Lebanon



From Water Scarcity to Regenerative Livelihoods: Greening Recovery in Dhardhar Village, Somalia

Dhardhar village, located approximately 80 km northwest of Galkayo, Somalia, is home to agro-pastoralist families whose livelihoods depend on livestock and small-scale farming. For years, the community—then around 750 households—struggled with severe water scarcity. Recurrent droughts, compounded by conflict over limited water resources, weakened agricultural production, reduced livestock productivity, and increased health risks linked to unsafe water sources.

For Abdirashid Mohamed Hirsi, a 50-year-old agro-pastoral and father of six children, water scarcity shaped every aspect of daily life. Long hours were spent searching for water for both household use and livestock. Women and children bore a disproportionate burden, sacrificing time for education, rest, and other productive activities. Crop cultivation was minimal, fodder was scarce, and livestock health deteriorated due to inconsistent water access.

The rehabilitation of the Kobciye Borehole marked a turning point. Rather than restoring water access alone, the intervention adopted an environmentally responsible approach designed to strengthen resilience while reducing ecological impact. The installation of a solar-powered pumping system replaced reliance on fuel-based energy sources, lowering operational costs and minimizing carbon emissions. Infrastructure improvements—including a submersible pump, elevated storage tank, water kiosk, operation room, and extended pipelines—ensured equitable and efficient distribution of safe water for domestic use and small-scale agriculture.

Currently, reliable water access has enabled families like Abdirashid's to shift from survival coping strategies toward regenerative livelihoods. With consistent

irrigation, the family now cultivates diverse crops such as bananas, onions, watermelons, papayas, cabbage, carrots, spinach, and tomatoes. They also grow fodder crops, strengthening livestock health and reducing environmental pressure from overgrazing in distant areas.

Livestock are now managed closer to the settlement, decreasing the need for long-distance migration in search of water. This has reduced resource-based tensions, improved animal productivity, and enhanced household income stability. The availability of clean water has also lowered the risk of waterborne diseases, improving overall community health outcomes.

Importantly, the community played an active role throughout implementation—contributing local labor, supporting construction, ensuring site security, and coordinating with project teams. This ownership reinforces long-term sustainability and responsible resource management of the water system.

The borehole rehabilitation not only improved water access: it catalyzed environmentally sustainable recovery. The village population has grown to an estimated 950 households, reflecting increased settlement stability and renewed economic opportunity. By integrating renewable energy, strengthening local governance, and enabling climate-adaptive agriculture, the intervention demonstrates how green humanitarian action can move beyond emergency response toward regenerative, community-led resilience.

For Abdirashid and many others in Dhardhar, access to water is no longer merely about survival—it is the foundation for sustainable growth, dignity, and long-term resilience in the face of climate uncertainty.

“Access to water is no longer merely about survival—it is the foundation for sustainable growth, dignity, and long-term resilience in the face of climate uncertainty.”

Borehole rehabilitation in the pastoral area





Smarter Water Use, Stronger Livelihoods in Salahadeen, Iraq

In Al Dour district, Salahadeen Governorate, Iraq 27-year-old agricultural engineer Omar Farouq cultivates a small family plot alongside his parents. Though modest in size, the land is vital to the household's food security. Seasonal vegetables and fruit trees—figs and pomegranates among them—help reduce market dependence and generate small but important supplemental income.

Until recently, irrigation relied on traditional surface flooding. The method consumed large volumes of water, demanded hours of labor and placed strain on both the land and the family. As a recent agricultural graduate, Omar understood that drip irrigation would dramatically improve efficiency, conserve water, and increase productivity. But without stable employment and with his parents retired, the upfront investment was out of reach.

The project provided training and a complete drip irrigation package, including a water tank and piping system. The shift from flood irrigation to drip technology has reduced water use, minimized labor demands, and allowed the family to irrigate more precisely and consistently.

For Omar, the support represents more than equipment. It bridges knowledge and practice—enabling a young professional to apply climate-smart agricultural techniques at household level. In a region facing increasing water stress, this transition demonstrates how targeted WASH interventions can strengthen both environmental sustainability and rural livelihoods.

Omar Farouq

Agricultural engineer in Al Dour district,
Salahadeen Governorate, Iraq

“For Omar, the support represents more than equipment. It bridges knowledge and practice—enabling a young professional to apply climate-smart agricultural techniques at household level.”





Community Perspectives

The section of community perspectives reflects insights generated through a Photovoice process, in which community members documented their own experiences and concerns through photography and dialogue. By placing cameras in the hands of participants, the process seeks to shift representation from external observation to community-led storytelling, allowing local perspectives to guide understanding of impact.

The photo was taken by Alwi Abdi Ahmed, a staff of Ministry of Climate Change and Weather Forecasting, Somaliland.



“

I have seen firsthand the challenges our village faces due to reliance on the birka (traditional rainwater harvesting system in Africa regions) as our main water source. The water is often contaminated with algae and other contaminants, making it unsafe for consumption. Unfortunately, it is the only source available, and we have no choice. The location of the birka exposes it to environmental elements, allowing pollutants to enter, and without adequate protection or management, algae growth worsens, further compromising water quality.”



Impact

Emergency Responses

Between April 2025 to March 2026, the ECT WASH Program responds to multiple humanitarian emergencies triggered by natural disasters, conflict and climate-related shocks, demonstrating its ability to adapt rapidly while maintaining quality and inclusion standards. For instance, In Myanmar, a major earthquake in Shan State leads to widespread destruction and displacement, and following an approved budget increase from GFFO, the program scales up to address urgent WASH needs. In the Philippines, election-related violence in Maguindanao del Sur displaces families into overcrowded shelters, prompting the rapid distribution of hygiene kits. Later, after a 6.2-magnitude earthquake strikes Cebu Island, a rapid needs assessment informs the timely distribution of prepositioned water and hygiene supplies.

Meanwhile, in Haiti, continued insecurity in Port-au-Prince drives displacement towards southern communes, increasing pressure on water and sanitation services; despite access constraints, activities continue to support both exiled and host communities. In Honduras and Nicaragua, prolonged rainfall deficits affect water availability, agriculture and food security, while the project-supported agroclimatic monitoring network strengthens early warning systems and informs local decision-making. In Indonesia, severe flooding in three provinces in Sumatra results in significant destruction, and the program offers non-food assistance and installs SkyHydrant systems to restore access to safe water in affected districts.

The following field experiences highlight how the program responds to crises while maintaining resilience and inclusion at the center of action.

Early Warning Messages
Announcement by a Person with
Disability during Cyclone Remal
2024



January 2024 - March 2026



540 days of water trucking



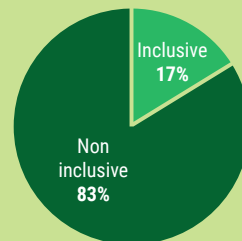
1,569 emergency water services are distributed (water purification tablets, water containers, rain water harvesting)



8,591 hygiene kits are distributed



39 emergency toilets are constructed





Lesson Learned: Meaningful Participation of Persons with Disabilities in Emergency Response, in Indonesia

In late November 2025, extreme rainfall triggered by Cyclone Senyar causes widespread flooding and landslides across Aceh, North Sumatra and West Sumatra, Indonesia. As communities evacuate, those most at risk, particularly persons with disabilities, face layered vulnerabilities, including limited access to information, inaccessible evacuation routes, and the persistent assumption that they are only recipients of aid.

The emergency response from ASB South and Southeast Asia unfolds differently. When the organization deploys its Emergency Response Team, disability inclusion is embedded from the outset. Rather than positioning persons with disabilities as passive beneficiaries, the team creates space for them to take part in the response.

Asrofi, who has mobility limitations, Kasihan, who has limited use of his right hand, and Fadli, who experiences hearing and communication barriers, join the emergency water supply operation. Amid damaged roads and disrupted systems, they work together with other responders to restore access to clean water. Their participation changes the dynamics of the intervention. They identify households that might otherwise be overlooked, highlight barriers at distribution points and draw attention to communication gaps affecting people with hearing or mobility challenges. What could have been a standard distribution becomes more targeted and equitable.

This approach is intentional. From the outset, emergency budgets and operational policies allow for accessibility and reasonable accommodation. Transport, field posts, communication support, appropriate tools, insurance and safety procedures

are designed to facilitate equal participation, including for volunteers with disabilities. Inclusion is integrated into financial and operational procedures rather than treated as an exceptional cost.

Data practices further reinforce this commitment. Early in the response, the team compiles disaggregated projection data using village records and disaster reports to estimate affected populations by sex, age and disability status. On the ground, inclusive rapid assessments combine observation, short interviews and focused discussions, including with persons with disabilities. By applying Washington Group Questions and the Humanitarian Disability Needs Estimation Screening Tool, the team identifies functional limitations and access barriers often missed in general statistics. Findings directly inform distribution strategies and service locations.

Challenges remain, particularly the limited availability of disability-disaggregated data across the wider emergency system. Inclusive data collection requires additional effort and coordination. Yet the most significant change is visible in community perception. Persons with disabilities are no longer seen solely as recipients of aid; their participation demonstrates capability, strengthens ownership and challenges stigma.

For replication, the lesson is clear: inclusion must be intentional. It requires policy commitment, accessible budgeting, disaggregated data systems, and most importantly, the willingness to open operational roles to those who have too often been left at the margins of crisis response.

“For replication, the lesson is clear: inclusion must be intentional.”



Fadli is helping the construction of water point in Pidie Jaya District



Impact

Investing in Gender, Disability and Social Inclusion (GEDSI)

Gender equality, disability inclusion and broader social inclusion are central to the program's approach. Rather than treating inclusion as a cross-cutting issue, GEDSI is positioned as a core driver of effectiveness, accountability and sustainability across humanitarian WASH, disaster risk reduction and climate adaptation. This approach recognizes that crises and climate impacts affect communities unevenly, and that structural inequalities often determine who is most exposed to risk and least able to access services or influence decisions.

Across all countries of implementation, a rights-based and participatory approach ensures that the voices, capacities and leadership of women, girls, persons with disabilities, older people and other marginalized groups are prioritized throughout the program cycle. In several countries, at community level, gender-responsive and disability-accessible WASH facilities improve safety, dignity and usability in households, schools, health facilities and evacuation centers. Water management and disaster risk reduction committees are established or strengthened with explicit targets for

the participation of women and persons with disabilities, reinforcing inclusive governance and accountability. Also, hygiene promotion, preparedness and climate adaptation activities are adapted through accessible communication and culturally appropriate spaces to reach those most at risk.

Furthermore, engagement in coordination platforms and technical working groups contributes to more inclusive disaster risk reduction and anticipatory action frameworks, while advocating for the systematic inclusion of persons with disabilities and other marginalized groups in policies and protocols. The stories that follow illustrate how these commitments translate into lived experiences and tangible change at community level.



Hygiene kit distribution
in Iraq



Best Practice: Menstrual Health as a Catalyst for Gender Equality and Inclusion in Asia

In the ECT WASH program, menstrual health is not treated as a stand-alone activity but as a core component of Gender Equality, Disability, and Social Inclusion (GEDSI). Across Indonesia, the Bangladesh and Myanmar, the project integrates menstrual health (MH) into school WASH improvements and community engagement processes, combining infrastructure, education, social norm change, and economic empowerment.

In most countries, schools constructed or rehabilitated MH-friendly toilets that ensure privacy, water access, and safe disposal facilities. These improvements were paired with menstrual health education for both girls and boys, reinforcing that menstruation is a shared social responsibility, and not a “women’s issue.” The dual approach of hardware and behavior change, helped reduce stigma, improve attendance, and foster more supportive school environments.

Specifically, the project in Bangladesh illustrates how MH can move beyond awareness toward sustainable inclusion and local ownership. Women—with and without disabilities—received training on safe and improved menstrual hygiene management, combined with entrepreneurship skills to produce and sell reusable menstrual pads. By intentionally including women with disabilities, the program shifted them from beneficiaries to economic actors within the local MH value chain.

The initiative reached more than 500 women and girls in the education session and menstrual pads distribution, addressing immediate affordability barriers. Trained women entrepreneurs subsequently began selling reusable menstrual products within their communities, extending the impact beyond direct project support. This model demonstrates a strong GEDSI-aligned practice: linking dignity and health education with women’s economic participation, thereby strengthening sustainability.

“Linking dignity and health education with women’s economic participation, thereby strengthening sustainability.”



Menstrual health
education in school
in Indonesia



A cross-country learning point emerged around social norms and safe participation. In Bangladesh, women participants expressed discomfort discussing menstruation in mixed-gender courtyard sessions, particularly when male participants were present. Rather than viewing this as resistance, facilitators adapted. They created women-only safe spaces for sensitive discussions, used smaller group formats, and gradually introduced mixed dialogues over time. This culturally adaptive facilitation ensured that inclusion efforts did not unintentionally silence women's voices.

Another innovation in communication methods to strengthen impact is further foreseen. In Myanmar, menstrual health education was delivered via interactive puppet shows for girls and boys. This creative approach made sessions engaging, age-appropriate, and easier to understand, helping to break taboos in a culturally sensitive way. By using storytelling and humor, facilitators ensured that key health messages were retained while reducing embarrassment around the topic. The puppet shows also created a shared learning experience, reinforcing that menstruation education can be informative without being intimidating.

What makes this approach a best practice is its systems-based integration of infrastructure, education, leadership, and social norm change within menstrual health programming. Under ECT WASH, menstrual health-friendly facilities are not delivered as stand-alone outputs but are paired with age-appropriate and gender-inclusive education that equips both girls and boys with knowledge, confidence, and shared responsibility.

The approach further strengthens sustainability by positioning women—including women with disabilities—not merely as beneficiaries but as leaders, facilitators, and entrepreneurs, linking menstrual health initiatives to livelihood pathways that enhance agency and economic resilience. At the same time, culturally adaptive communication strategies, such as creating safe spaces for dialogue, phased engagement with men and boys, and creative tools like puppet theater, ensure that sensitive topics are understood, accepted, and embedded within community norms. By combining service provision with empowerment, inclusion, and norm transformation, the model demonstrates that menstrual health becomes not only a WASH output, but a catalyst for gender equality and inclusive community resilience.

“What makes this approach a best practice is its systems-based integration of infrastructure, education, leadership, and social norm change within menstrual health programming.”



A Bangladeshi girl holds a reusable menstrual pad



When Indigenous women lead preparedness efforts, entire communities become safer in the Philippines

In the geographically isolated and hazard-prone community of Bantawon in Southern Leyte, the Philippines, disaster risks intersect with longstanding barriers to information and services for Indigenous Peoples. For women in particular, opportunities to participate in community decision-making and preparedness efforts have often been limited.

For Michelle Hubasan Bulan, a 32-year-old Barangay Health Worker and member of the Mamanwa community, the ECT WASH program became a turning point — not only in strengthening her technical knowledge on hygiene, sanitation, and waste management, but also in expanding her role as a trusted Indigenous woman leader.

Motivated by a desire to support her community, Michelle joined multiple program activities focused on handwashing, sanitation, and public health. While some concepts were familiar, the training enhanced her confidence to communicate life-saving information in culturally relevant ways, ensuring that Indigenous families, youth, and elders could better understand and apply safe practices.

“I really wanted to join because this is a big help for our community.”

By intentionally engaging local actors like Michelle, the program helped reduce information gaps that often exclude remote Indigenous communities from disaster preparedness efforts. More importantly, it created space for women’s leadership in strengthening community resilience.

The impact became evident when a recent typhoon struck the area. Drawing on preparedness messages reinforced through the training, Barangay officials quickly advised residents to secure essential items

and prepare for evacuation. When floodwaters entered homes before dawn, fear spread rapidly, but this time, the community responded with greater coordination and awareness. *“It was really frightening, but this time, we know what we have to do.”*

Michelle observed a critical shift: preparedness was no longer viewed as the responsibility of authorities alone, but as a shared commitment across the community — including women and Indigenous households who are often disproportionately affected by disasters.

Even after the storm passed, Michelle continued to demonstrate leadership. With water sources damaged and livelihoods temporarily disrupted by landslide risks, she supported families in cleaning flooded homes and consistently promoted hygiene practices to prevent disease outbreaks.

Her actions reflect a broader transformation supported by the program: Indigenous women are not only participants in humanitarian action — they are agents of change who strengthen inclusive preparedness and response systems.

“We are more prepared now. We are no longer easily caught off guard.”

Michelle’s story illustrates how integrating GEDSI into WASH **programming can shift power, participation, and access at the community level.** When Indigenous women are equipped with knowledge, recognized as leaders, and supported to share information, the benefits extend far beyond individual capacity, contributing to safer, more responsive and more inclusive communities.

“We are more prepared now. We are no longer easily caught off guard.”

Michelle Hubasan Bulan

Barangay Health Worker and member of the Mamanwa community in Bantawon, Southern Leyte, the Philippines



Michelle Hubasan Bulan
in the village office



Including persons with disabilities in water governance transforms services from competitive to equitable, ensuring no one is left behind in Indonesia

For much of her life, Tukiyah — a woman with a physical disability — faced daily barriers that limited her mobility, economic opportunities and participation in community life in Onggosoro Hamlet, Giritengah Village, Indonesia. While supporting her family through small money-making activities, she struggled most with access to clean water. During the dry season, scarcity created a system that favored those who could move quickly. Persons with disabilities, older people and pregnant women were often left behind. For instance, Tukiyah often collected water late at night from relatives or walked across uneven terrain carrying heavy containers, sometimes risking injury when they slipped from her hands. When water systems are not designed inclusively, they can deepen existing vulnerabilities.

In 2025, ECT WASH partnered with the village government, the organization of persons with disabilities (Fidakama) and the wider community to construct safe water facilities. The initiative prioritized participation from groups often excluded from decision-making. Encouraged by a neighbor, Tukiyah began attending community meetings and training sessions on water management and anticipatory action. For the first time, she was not only a beneficiary but an active contributor. Safe water now flows directly to her home, eliminating hours of physically demanding travel and reducing protection risks. More significantly, she has stepped into leadership.

Tukiyah now serves as a household water meter reader on the local water management team and as a supervisory board member of the village disability group set up through the program. She records usage, manages payments and supports fair distribution, particularly for residents at higher risk of exclusion. When households question water fees, she explains that regular contributions sustain the system and prepare the community for future dry seasons. *“For me, this is a form of worship,”* she shared, emphasizing her commitment to ensuring others do not face the hardships she once endured.

The structured water system has strengthened community cohesion: disputes have declined, conservation awareness has improved, and children no longer miss school to fetch water. Tukiyah also experienced personal transformation, expanding her confidence and public engagement. Recognized beyond the village, she has spoken at district-level events and received an award as an inspirational mother. Her journey shows that disability inclusion is not only about rights, but a strategic investment in stronger and more responsive community systems.

“For me, this is a form of worship.”

Turkiyah

A woman with a physical disability in Onggosoro Hamlet, Giritengah Village, Indonesia.

Tukiyah is in front of her house





Impact

Locally Led Resilience

Resilience is often described in terms of infrastructure, systems or technical capacity. Yet in many contexts where ECT WASH operates, the most transformative shift begins with local ownership, collective decision-making and the confidence to act. Locally led resilience recognizes that sustainable water and sanitation services cannot rely solely on external support; they require municipalities that assume responsibility, communities that organize collectively and local actors who move from waiting for assistance to shaping their own solutions.

In environments marked by climate stress, fragile service systems and prolonged resource constraints, this strengthening of agency is as significant as any physical investment. Across countries, ECT WASH supports not only the construction and rehabilitation of water systems but also the development of governance structures, community management mechanisms and inclusive dialogue spaces that enable local authorities and communities to identify risks, mobilize resources and sustain services beyond project timelines. The stories that follow demonstrate how this shift towards locally led resilience takes shape in practice, as communities turn vulnerability into collective strength and lasting progress. The following stories and documentation demonstrate the efforts in presenting and advocating resilience.



Hygiene kit distributed
in Bangladesh



We Stopped Waiting and Started Collective Action: A Story from Indonesia

Gebang hamlet, in Gunung Kidul, Indonesia sits in a karst landscape where access to water has always been a challenge. Ironically, abundant water exists nearby, deep inside Wuluh Kumet Cave. The source is close in distance, but for decades it remained physically unreachable, lying far below ground level. For the community, this contrast has been painful: water was available but inaccessible.

Over the years since 1998, multiple attempts were made to bring water from Wuluh Kumet Cave to the village. Technical designs were completed, management groups were established, proposals were submitted, and approvals were secured. However,

despite repeated planning efforts and renewed expectations, implementation consistently stalled due to operational, administrative and external constraints, leaving the community in a prolonged cycle of hope and disappointment.

And during that time, families in Gebang were forced to purchase water at a cost of EUR 10 per tanker truck just to meet basic daily needs. In this context, water was not about convenience. It was about survival and being trapped in a cycle of waiting: **waiting for external programs, waiting for budgets, waiting for approvals.** A critical shift occurred when the village began asking a different question: *“How long will we keep waiting?”*

Through a series of discussions involving the village government, community members, and the project, space was created for more open reflection. Together, they reviewed what had happened in the past, discussed the risks ahead, and mapped the resources that were already available within the village. These conversations did not provide instant answers, but they helped rebuild confidence. Gradually, the focus shifted. Instead of waiting for certainty from outside, the community began to explore what could realistically be done with their own strengths and collective commitment through the support of the program. The question slowly changed from *“When will help arrive?”* to *“How can we help ourselves?”*

In the long process of discussion and advocacy, the community shows their power that they were no longer passive. Solidarity strengthened because people understood this was their collective effort. As one resident later said, *“Before, we were just waiting. Now, even though it's hard, we feel that this is our shared struggle.”*

In January 2026, a major milestone was finally achieved. Water was successfully lifted from the depths of Wuluh Kumet Cave for the first time. For the community, the true impact is not only in lifting water from the cave. Real impact will be achieved when families no longer need to buy expensive tanker water, mothers no longer worry about running out of cooking water and children can grow up in healthier conditions. The community no longer asks, *“When will we be helped?”* They now ask, *“What can we build together?”* The shift from waiting to collective action, may be the most meaningful change of all.





“Everyone was exhausted by their own struggles. We did not care about collective matters. It was total individualism.”

“Today we see strong civic mobilization and restored social cohesion.”

Harouna Kanbarso

A member of the Community Early Warning and Emergency Response System (SCAP-RU) committee in the Tahoua region of Niger



Harouna Kanbarso with other community members in Tahoua region, Niger

Rebuilding Social Cohesion as a Foundation for Resilience in Niger

In the Tahoua region of Niger, where insecurity, displacement and climate shocks overlap, resilience is a daily necessity. Floods have damaged water points, population movements have increased pressure on scarce resources, and communities often face crises with limited external support. In Kouka-Kamé, a village of nearly 4,000 people, these pressures once led to division rather than unity.

“Before the project, we were not organized at all,” recalls Harouna Kanbarso, 50, a member of the Community Early Warning and Emergency Response System (SCAP-RU) committee in charge of food security. *“Everyone was exhausted by their own struggles. We did not care about collective matters. It was total individualism.”* Although committees had been created in the past, they were inactive as it is existing more on paper than in practice. When floods or shortages occurred, each household coped alone. Social cohesion had eroded, and with it, the community’s capacity to anticipate and respond to risks collectively.

The turning point came during a general assembly facilitated by the ECT-WASH program. Rather than imposing a structure, the process placed decision-making in the hands of the community. Residents chose to revitalize their SCAP-RU and committed to making it functional. Harouna was elected as a member, symbolizing renewed trust and shared responsibility.

Infrastructure improvements followed, but this time as part of a broader system. Wells were rehabilitated, durable public toilets with access ramps were constructed, and a school sanitation

block with a dedicated menstrual hygiene management room restored dignity for girls. Forty vulnerable households were supported to build family bathrooms and waste pits. These investments strengthened health and protection, and more importantly, they strengthened collective management.

Today, the water management committee and SCAP-RU are trained, equipped, and active. They monitor risks, coordinate responses, and mobilize residents for hygiene campaigns and maintenance activities. Community members now know where to seek information and how to request support during crises.

“Today we see strong civic mobilization and restored social cohesion,” Harouna explains.

The most significant change is not only improved water and sanitation but the agency itself. Kouka-Kamé has moved from reactive survival to organized preparedness. Neighboring villages now visit to learn from their model of community organization and resource management.

Challenges remain, including sustaining volunteer motivation and securing additional water infrastructure. The community hopes for a functional borehole and increased livelihood support to reinforce long-term stability.



Ending 30 Years of Water Insecurity in Tapion, Haiti

For more than three decades, families in Tapion, Saint-Jean-du-Sud, had to travel to neighboring communes such as Torbeck and Les Cayes to access drinking water, facing high costs, safety risks, and recurring water quality concerns documented by National Directorate of Drinking Water and Sanitation (DINEPA). In 2025, the ECT WASH project supported the construction of a community water point serving 13,025 people across 2,605 households, developed in consultation with municipal authorities and managed by a local water committee. For the commune, this marks a long-awaited structural improvement in water access and local service governance.

“For our community, this water point is not just a facility. It ends years of uncertainty, reduces costs for families, and protects our children. It is the most important change we have seen in Tapion in a long time.”

Marie Christa Clotaire

Mayor of Saint-Jean-du-Sud, Haiti



“The advocacy message was clear: localization requires structural change, not symbolism.”

A woman from Myanmar shared her perspective during the conference



Regional Advocacy in Action: From Voice to Influence in Asia

In December 2025, community representatives and partners from Indonesia, the Philippines, Myanmar and Bangladesh stood not as beneficiaries but as advocates and decision-makers at the Regional Humanitarian Partnership Week (RHPW) in Bangkok. Through the session “**Here Us – Hear Us: Voices from the Margins to Realize Inclusive, Climate-Resilient WASH**”, led by Arbeiter-Samariter-Bund South & Southeast Asia with ACCORD in the Philippines, The Centre for Disability in Development in Bangladesh, and arche noVa in Myanmar, the ECT WASH program demonstrated what meaningful power redistribution looks like in practice. Yet the most significant impact extended beyond the forum itself, shaping the confidence, leadership and actions participants carried home.

For many, it was their first regional platform. The experience shifted their sense of identity from local project participants to contributors to regional humanitarian discourse. In Indonesia, Edi, a community leader with a disability, initially doubted his ability to speak on a multilingual panel. After sharing his lived experience on inclusive financial mechanisms and anticipatory action, his hesitation turned into confidence. Returning home, he began participating more actively in village forums. His presence at RHPW reinforced that lived experience is not anecdotal, but a form of expertise.

In Bangladesh, Hossain Mahamud’s role as a storyteller strengthened both dignity and visibility for disability-inclusive early warning practices. His contribution influenced internal discussions on stronger localization and anticipatory action

triggers. In the Philippines, Dionalyn Johnson described her participation as recognition of her competence and leadership. Across countries, representatives reflected on a shared shift: communities must lead planning and implementation, not simply receive assistance. Likewise, in Myanmar, Daw Seng Mai, the forum offered an opportunity to connect local realities with global humanitarian discussions.

These reflections translated into action. In the Philippines, dialogue on gender gaps led to more deliberate inclusion of women in decision-making processes in Buenavista village. In Indonesia, discussions on power redistribution validated partnerships with local actors and Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs), strengthening commitment to more equitable distribution of capacity and funding. Additionally, arche nova Myanmar and its partner began integrating lessons from the forum into programmatic work. The advocacy message was clear: localization requires structural change, not symbolism.

Perhaps most powerful was the horizontal exchange among community leaders themselves. Women leaders, persons with disabilities and ethnic minority representatives shared experiences directly, appreciating common struggles around exclusion and climate vulnerability. The storytelling approach fostered solidarity and demonstrated that affected communities belong at regional platforms. Their presence challenged the pattern of forums dominated by project staff and affirmed that sustainable, climate-resilient WASH must be shaped by those most affected.



Community Perspectives

The section of community perspectives reflects insights generated through a Photovoice process, in which community members documented their own experiences and concerns through photography and dialogue. By placing cameras in the hands of participants, the process seeks to shift representation from external observation to community-led storytelling, allowing local perspectives to guide understanding of impact.



The photo was taken by Monowara Begum, a housewife, in South Southkhali Union, Bagerhat District, Bangladesh.

“

If everybody used sanitary toilets, our local environment would improve. Due to unsanitary toilets, many people of our village face frequent illness and social humiliation, especially women, whose dignity is often undermined.”



The photo was taken by Sai Naw, villager from Laika Zupja Village, Myanmar.

“

I now learn about the harmful effects of burning trash and was introduced to safer, more sustainable practices for handling waste. This knowledge has helped the community find solutions to long-standing challenges related to garbage disposal.”



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