

MULTISECTORAL COORDINATION IN ETHIOPIA

IMPACT + ACTIVITIES REPORT

Ethiopia Ministry of Health | NALA |
Sightsavers International | The END Fund



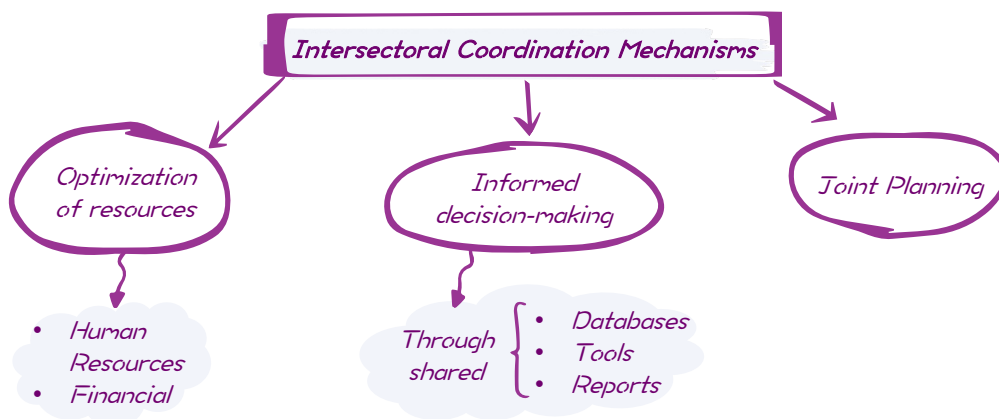
PROBLEM

Neglected tropical diseases (NTDs) are a public health crisis that Ethiopia has targeted heavily for the last decade. These diseases are common amongst poorer populations exposed to unhealthy water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) conditions and practices. Preventive chemotherapy has been the primary intervention for years, as it is relatively cheap and effective in reducing disease prevalence in the short-term. However, studies have shown that preventive chemotherapy alone will not eliminate the diseases as reinfection is common due to continued exposure to unsafe WASH. With the goal of disease elimination, in 2016 (and again in 2021) the Ethiopian government placed a stronger emphasis on WASH access and behaviors as they are critical to the prevention and treatment of multiple NTDs, including soil-transmitted helminthiasis (STH), trachoma, schistosomiasis, lymphatic filariasis (LF), and Guinea worm. *However, WASH interventions had been largely coordinated outside the health sector, and a lack of coordination between the WASH and health sectors had resulted in reduced efficacy of interventions and prolonged disease prevalence.*

Need for coordination between WASH & health sectors

SOLUTION: MULTISECTORAL COORDINATION

Multisectoral collaboration is essential for the elimination of NTDs, especially between the health and WASH sectors but also inclusive of the education and finance sectors. The World Health Organization (WHO) highlighted the need for WASH-NTD coordination in its global strategy documents for 2015-2020¹ and 2021-2030². These documents stipulate that better targeted intersectoral efforts can lead to simpler, more cost-effective and efficient interventions. Furthermore, developing intersectoral coordination mechanisms allows for optimization of resources (both human and financial), fosters informed decision-making through shared databases, reports and tools, and enables joint planning.



The WHO also published a global WASH-NTD toolkit³ with specific guidelines for coordination between the WASH and the health sector. Ethiopia was selected as one of four countries to test the toolkit. Since 2017, NALA has worked alongside the Ethiopian Ministry of Health (MoH) to launch WASH-NTD coordination platforms across the country, with the support of END Fund and Sightsavers International. *This document highlights this work over the last five years.*

BACKGROUND

In the Second NTD Master Plan for 2016-2020⁴, the Ethiopian Ministry of Health (MoH) included a goal toward strengthening collaboration and coordination between relevant sectors and stakeholders in order to create an enabling environment for sustainable disease reduction. In continuation of the 2016 masterplan, and in coordination with the global strategy for NTD elimination, the Third NTD masterplan (2021-2025)⁵ continues to place a heavy focus on the need for improved multisectoral coordination, proposing a holistic approach for targeting NTDs.

Notably, when the MoH first published its plan in 2016, there were limited platforms and resources available to bring the sectors together on a regular and organized basis. The MoH requested technical support from NALA to develop coordination and facilitation tools to be used at all levels, from the district level (wereda) to the national.

*2016-
Limited platforms
& resources for
coordination*

*2017-
Efforts to develop
WASH-NTD
coordination
began*

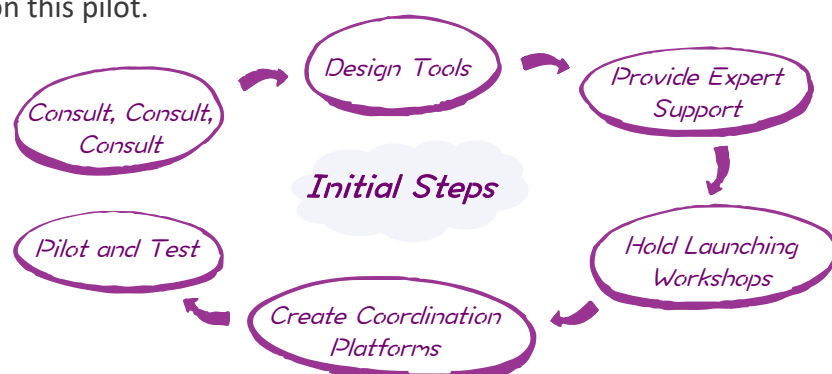
INITIAL STEPS

From 2017, NALA along with the MoH conducted an intensive and ongoing process that included:

- 1) Consultations-** In 2017, NALA and the MoH launched the initiative with a consultative workshop attended by the main actors in the WASH and NTD sectors in Ethiopia. Following this, the NALA team conducted targeted focus group discussions and in-depth interviews with relevant government, donor, and NGO representatives. This consultative process was launched to map stakeholders and better understand the current work, needs, and interdependencies of the different sectors.
- 2) Design of tools-** A preliminary set of advocacy tools was created to spark interest in coordination efforts, followed by tools to be used by the district level in launching WASH-NTD platforms and implementing joint projects in their area.
- 3) Expert Support-** NALA recruited and trained WASH-NTD coordination experts to be positioned in the MoH and regional health bureaus, initially in Amhara, Oromia, SNNPR, and Tigray. These experts were tasked with working closely with both the WASH and NTD sectors to promote joint activities, arrange cross sectoral meetings, and closely follow up on coordination efforts.
- 4) Launching workshops-** Launching workshops were held in the pilot regions with the goal of introducing the initiative and building momentum for it.
- 5) Creating coordination platforms-** In the pilot areas, WASH-NTD task forces (TF) and technical working groups (TWG) were established as platforms for coordination. These groups included representatives from the health and WASH sectors, as well as education, finance, and administration officials and NGOs. These joint platforms were set up to discuss gaps and needs related to WASH and NTDs, review data and projects, identify areas for collaboration, and plan joint actions.
- 6) Piloting and testing-** The district level pilot began in 2018, with 99 highly endemic districts selected from four regions in Ethiopia- Amhara, Oromia, SNNPR and Tigray. The toolkit was tested and modified based on this pilot.

2018

*18-month pilot
launched in 99
districts across 4
regions*



PILOT

The pilot was officially launched in October 2018 with the first round of toolkit workshops and ended in February 2020. For this pilot, 99 highly NTD endemic districts were chosen. These districts were chosen from five zones across the four largest regions of Ethiopia: Amhara, Oromia, SNNP, and Tigray. The key elements of this pilot included:

- 1) District-level toolkit-** The district-level toolkit⁶, created by the MoH and NALA, aims to address the lack of guidelines and policy for multisectoral coordination at the lower level, where most activities are carried out. The toolkit and its associated training provides the scaffolding for structured intersectoral meetings, improved resource utilization, and project buy-in.
- 2) WASH-NTD secondees-** NALA-trained secondees were positioned within the regional health bureaus of implementing regions as well as at the national level within the NTD team. These staff, hired to address the lack of WASH-NTD coordinators within government structures, provide technical support to the zones and districts within their regions. They are responsible for the cascading of trainings in their regions alongside the follow-up that is crucial for the platforms to be sustainable.
- 3) Coordination platforms-** WASH-NTD Task Forces (TF) and Technical Working Groups (TWG) were established at the national level and in all four regions. Sectors represented include health, water, education, finance, administration, and NGOs. The TWG is in charge of planning and executing joint work plans and reporting quarterly to the Task Force. The TF assumes a leadership position and approves action plans and decisions, as well as monitors the progress of their execution.
- 4) Follow up-** To maintain the momentum, follow up is essential. Joint supportive supervision visits to the districts provided a good opportunity for sectors to jointly monitor and assess together.

PILOT SUMMARY



Toolkit revised, finalized, and translated to 3 local languages. It was endorsed by the MoH as a national policy in 2019.

2019

Toolkit revised, translated, & endorsed by MoH



A national framework for integrated WASH-NTD programs⁷ was adopted by the State Health Minister in 2019. It includes joint indicators for WASH and NTD.

2019

National framework for integrated programs adopted by MoH

District Results by Zone



% of districts that launched coordination platforms

North Wollo, Amhara



East Harage, Oromia



Sidama, SNNPR



Hadiya, SNNPR



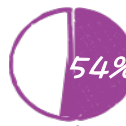
South Tigray, Tigray



% of districts that prepared WASH-NTD action plans



% of districts that conducted 3+ meetings during pilot period



TOOLKIT

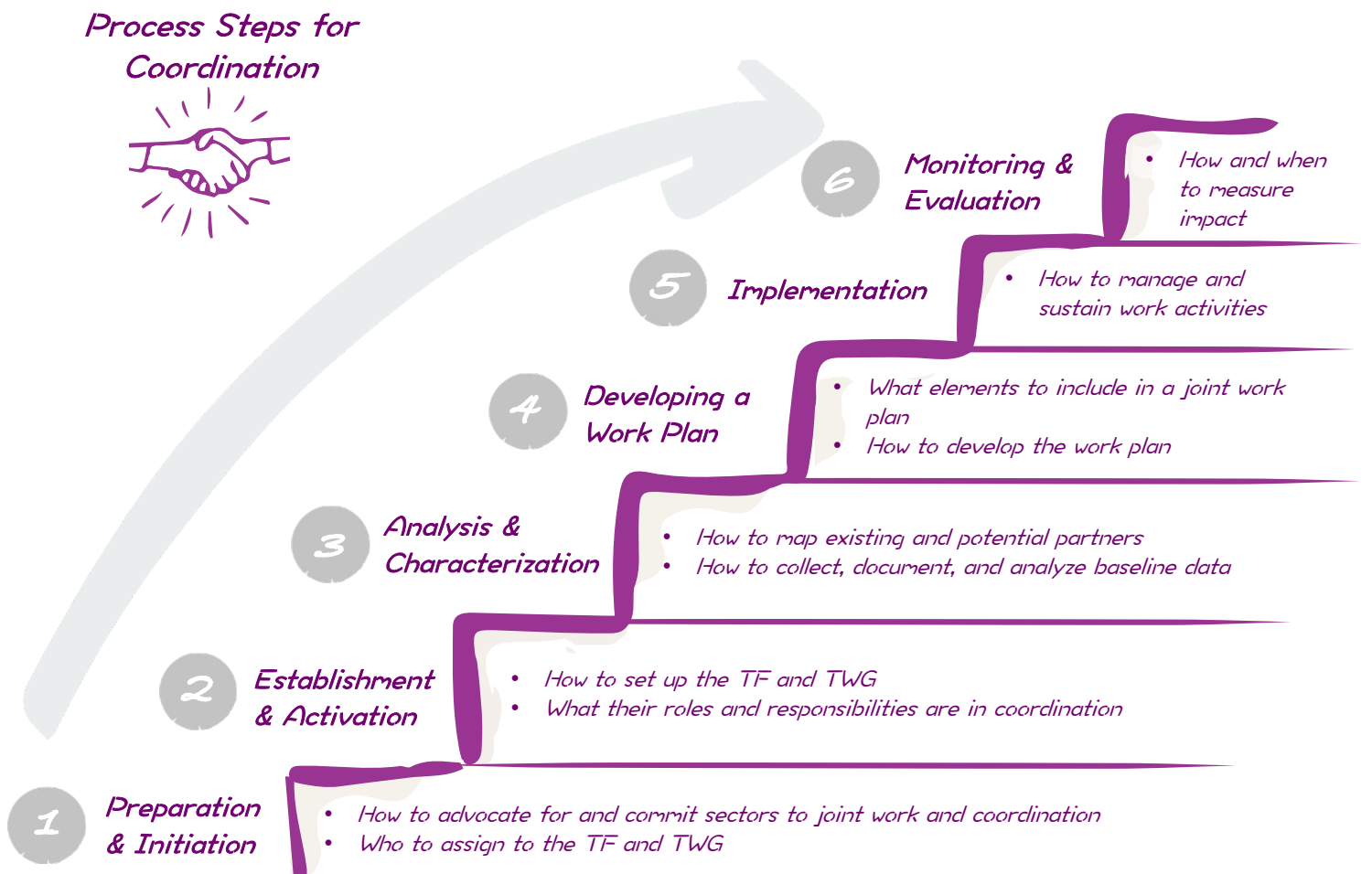
Major gap: Lack of clear roadmap and guidelines for implementing at ground level

At the start of the pilot, several tools for guiding coordination at the global and national levels were already in development; however, a practical guide for district level coordination, which is where activities are manifested and executed, did not exist. In fact, during the inception phase of the project, stakeholders identified the lack of a clear roadmap and guidelines as a major gap to actualizing intersectoral coordination at the ground level. With the aim of closing the gap, NALA worked with partners to develop the toolkit as a hands-on guiding document for coordination, enabling theoretical concepts to become practical and usable tools for professionals in the field. By creating a guide focusing on the district level key sectors, high impact at the ground level could be achieved.

The WASH-NTD coordination toolkit aims to establish a shared vision between sectors through common goals and objectives and a comprehensive coordination strategy for achieving them. Clear leadership roles and financial responsibilities are included. Each district was encouraged to modify the recommendations as they see fit in order to suit their unique circumstances and needs.

SUMMARY OF PROCESS STEPS

The toolkit includes 17 tools to guide the coordination process. It provides recommended actions and steps to take at each stage of the process. *An overview of the process steps is below:*



PROGRESS SINCE PILOT

In 2020, the coronavirus pandemic threatened to undo the progress from the pilot. An online WASH-NTD coordination training (available via washntd.org) was designed and launched in 2020 as a way to continue to scale the coordination efforts across the country in a safe and effective manner. This training reached dozens of NGO and government officials who were not in the original pilot areas. Also in 2021, a secondee was hired and trained to represent the high-need and remote regions of Afar and Somali. In 2022, a second online course in using WASH-NTD data for decision-making was launched with an emphasis on using WASH data in the DHIS2 health management platform. *Since the launch of the toolkit in 2018, the project has been implemented in approximately 300 districts across Ethiopia, including the 99 pilot districts, and has reached even more areas via online training.*

2020-
Online WASH-NTD training launched

2021-
Regional secondee hired for Somali & Afar

2022-
Second online course on data for WASH-NTD launched

ONLINE TRAINING

The online WASH-NTD training was designed in 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic as a way to continue to scale the coordination efforts across the country. The training covers intersectoral advocacy, the setup of coordination platforms, the process of joint work, and tips on facilitation. It closely follows the content from the district-level coordination toolkit that NALA published with the Ethiopian MoH in 2019. The course is self-paced and available via desktop and mobile app, and it can be downloaded for offline completion.

The second online course was launched in 2022 and covers how to access and use WASH and NTD data for decision-making. This course follows the integration of WASH indicators into the DHIS2 health management platform, which is used by the health ministry and bureaus in Ethiopia. For both courses, students receive a certificate of completion endorsed by the Ethiopian MoH.

Online Course Summary

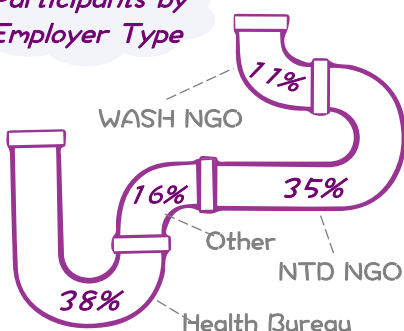


202 people enrolled.



98 people completed and received certificates.

Participants by Employer Type



Feedback by Course



% who said the course increased their confidence to do the work

Course 1- Foundations of WASH-NTD



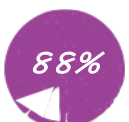
Course 2- Data for Decision-Making



% who would recommend the course to others



Average course rating by participants



EXAMPLES OF SUCCESS

Between April 2021 and April 2022, data was collected on 108 districts across 3 regions through the process of integrative supportive supervision (ISS). This follow-up is conducted in areas that have been trained on WASH-NTD coordination as a way to assess progress and provide further support as needed. A multisectoral team conducts these visits. *The data collected by the ISS teams is below.*

Impact 2021-2022



At least 27 joint projects launched

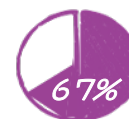
Hadiya & East Shoa Zones, Oromia- Water office now considers NTD burden in project design

WASH-NTD teams also addressed COVID-19, cholera, and Tigray humanitarian crisis

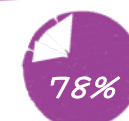
Feedback from Districts



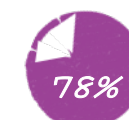
% of districts that included WASH-NTD activities in their annual plans



% of districts that used WASH-NTD data for decision-making



% of districts that used an integrated monitoring tool in activities



LESSONS LEARNED

- 1) Embed joint activities into ongoing routines of each sector as a way to increase sustainability and streamline work.* Examples of this integration include adding joint indicators to the existing checklists used by various sectors, and performing joint supportive supervision visits with multisectoral representatives instead of each sector performing their own.
- 2) Commitment of the district administrator is a crucial factor.* As the leader of the district and the person mandated to approve budget allocations and prioritization of initiatives, the buy-in and commitment of the district administrator is invaluable for the success of the program. The most successful districts had a strong and supportive administrator, who included joint activities in the district's annual plan, ensuring that they received attention and financial means to be carried out.
- 3) Budget sharing between sectors is weak in most districts, as the system is accustomed to sectors operating separately.* In many districts, there was no evidence of proper budget sharing between sectors. This issue can be attributed to the existing structure of operations and practice of each sector operating independently with their funding sources. As an example from a successful district, costs were shared between sectors with the agreement to rotate funding for joint visits.
- 4) WASH-NTD platforms can be mobilized to address other cross-cutting issues.* Some areas activated their multisectoral teams to address COVID-19, a cholera outbreak, and the Tigray humanitarian crisis.
- 5) Training of sector technical experts is as important as training sector heads.* The technical experts are the ones actively carrying out the joint activities through the TWG and should also have knowledge of the initiative to bolster its success.
- 6) The water sector was insufficiently involved.* Despite the important role of the water sector in WASH-NTD coordination, the health office often took the lead in joint activities. Also, many joint activities were coordinated between the health and education offices without the water office.
- 7) Close follow up is a key factor to success.* Many districts did not have sufficient motivation or initiative after the toolkit launching workshop to begin the process in their districts. In absence of phone calls/visits by higher officials, the progress in many of the cases was slow or nonexistent. District officials themselves mentioned that close supervision motivated them to act.

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*Visit the WASH-
NTD online
course at
www.washntd.org*