



December 2024

Learnings from the establishment and facilitation of the Amhara Region IWRM-WASH Coordination Forum

Girmachew Addisu

Prepared by Girmachew Addisu on behalf of IRC, with input from full name of Gezahegn Lemecha. This report was edited by Tettje van Daalen and laid out by Tsegaye Yeshiwas. For questions or clarifications, contact IRC here: www.ircwash.org/contact-us

In 2022, IRC WASH, the World Resources Institute, the MWA Secretariat, and other stakeholders proposed the establishment of an Integrated Water Resources Management – Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (IWRM-WASH) Forum in Amhara Region. In establishing the forum, these organisations aimed at uniting various sectors for consultation, networking, policy dialogue, and collaborative planning. The initiative began with stakeholder mapping in February 2023, leading to the formation of the joint IWRM-WASH Forum. Extensive discussions resulted in a unified Terms of Reference, attracting organizations like UNICEF and Plan International. The Amhara Region IWRM-WASH Coordination Forum was officially launched on December 26, 2023, in Bahir Dar, with support from regional and international NGOs. This learning document captured the main lessons learned during the establishment and facilitation of the forum.

Visiting address
Golagul Towers Building
Bole Sub-city
Woreda 4
House No. 813/814
Addis Ababa
Ethiopia

Ethiopia@ircwash.org
www.ircwash.org/ethiopia

Contents

ABBREVIATIONS	5
INTRODUCTION	6
GENERAL OBJECTIVE	7
Specific Objectives.....	7
METHODOLOGY	7
STAKEHOLDERS MAPPING AND ASSESSMENT SURVEY	7
TERMS OF REFERENCE (TOR) DEVELOPMENT	10
ENHANCING SYNERGY THROUGH IWRM-WASH COORDINATION FORUMS	10
STAKEHOLDER SURVEY ON THE SUSTAINABILITY OF THE FORUM	12
Stakeholder engagement in the regional IWRM-WASH Coordination Forum	12
Thematic focus and implications for sustainability.....	13
Attendance and commitment to forum activities	13
Contributions and collaborative roles	13
Coordination roles and efforts.....	14
Participant feedback on knowledge sharing and agenda timeliness.....	15
Feedback on venue and workshop topics.....	16
Proactive communication and efficient event management	16
Inclusiveness.....	17
Consensus on committee representation.....	18
Collective planning and engagement.....	18
Engagement in agenda setting.....	19
Clarity of platform objectives among members	19
Relevance and inclusivity of forum discussions.....	20
Institutionalization	21
Ensuring continued participation and leadership focus.....	21
Evaluation of facilitators' capacity and future planning.....	22
Finance	22
Challenges	23
KEY LEARNINGS AND PATH FORWARD	24
RECOMMENDATIONS	25

Figures

Figure 1: Interest of stakeholders	8
Figure 2: Stakeholders' area of engagement	9
Figure 3: The contribution of stakeholders	9
Figure 4: Mamaru Ayalew(PhD), Head Water and Energy Bureau in Amhara Region delivering an opening speech	11
Figure 5: Participants of the third IWRM-WASH coordination forum.....	12
Figure 6: Type of organizations who responded to the survey	13
Figure 7: Participant feedback on event organization.....	15
Figure 8: Participant feedback on learning and knowledge sharing and the timeliness of agenda sharing	16
Figure 9: Survey result on venue of the workshop and topics discussed	16
Figure 10: Feedback on platform accessibility and engagement.....	18
Figure 11: Feedback on committee representation.....	18
Figure 12: Members' participation on agenda setting	19
Figure 13: Feedback on clarity of objectives.....	20
Figure 14: Feedback on thematic topics discussed.....	20
Figure 15: Feedback on leaders' attention and stakeholder's interest.....	21
Figure 16: Facilitators capacity in planning	22
Figure 17: Availability of sufficient budget.....	23
Figure 18: challenges rated by respondents	24

Abbreviations

ABAO	Abay Basin Administration Office
BoWE	Bureau of Water and Energy
CNHF	Conrad N. Hilton Foundation
GO	Government Organization
IWRM	Integrated Water Resources Management
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MSF	Multi-Stakeholder Forum
MWA	Millennium Water Alliance
MWA SWP	Millennium Water Alliance Sustainable WASH Program
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
ToR	Terms of Reference
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
WASH	Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene
WRI	World Resources Institute

Introduction

From 2019 to 2024, IRC WASH has been supporting three woredas in the Amhara region through the Sustainable WASH Program (SWP), led by the Millennium Water Alliance (MWA). The program focuses on strengthening government-led monitoring, tracking WASH budgets and expenditures, and supporting the implementation of District WASH Master Plans. During this period, IRC WASH Ethiopia has identified gaps in different parts of the system, including water quality monitoring, coordination, resource mobilization, and advocacy. To address these challenges, IRC WASH Ethiopia has secured funding from the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation for a three-year initiative (2022-2024) aimed at supporting the region's WASH efforts. IRC WASH Ethiopia, in collaboration with regional government bureaus, has launched a project to strengthen WASH systems, addressing gaps identified in the Amhara region. The project has also aimed to scale up the learnings from the SWP in Farta, Dera and North Mecha woredas to the Amhara regional level. One of the major areas of support has been the establishment and operationalization of a regional WASH working group, linked to the national Water and Energy Sector Working group, to enhance coordination and learning among WASH actors at the regional level.

In 2022, IRC WASH, the World Resources Institute, the MWA Secretariat, and stakeholders proposed establishing an Integrated Water Resources Management – Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (IWRM-WASH) Forum. The forum aims to bring together different sectors and stakeholders for consultation, networking, policy dialogue, experience sharing, partnership, conflict resolution, integration, and coordination. It also seeks to link to the national level existing Water and Energy sector working group. In addition, the multi-stakeholder forum can provide a platform for collaborative planning, implementation, and monitoring of sustainable water resources management and WASH service delivery.

The process started with stakeholder mapping in February 2023. Key regional institutions, such as the Abay Basin Administration Office (ABDO) and the World Resources Institute (WRI), showed an interest in creating a regional IWRM forum. Meanwhile, the regional Water and Energy bureau and MWA consortium members, including WaterAid, IRC WASH, and the MWA secretariat showed interest in establishing a WASH coordination platform. This led to discussions and formation of the joint IWRM-WASH Forum, with a shared understanding between ABDO, Bureau of Water and Energy, WRI, IRC WASH, and all regional stakeholders on the importance of the platform.

The extensive discussions from March to July 2023, resulted in a unified Terms of Reference for the joint IWRM-WASH Forum. This collaboration also attracted the attention of other organizations, such as UNICEF and Plan International, expanding the regional partnership and increasing resources for IWRM-WASH initiatives. Consequently, the Amhara Region IWRM-WASH Coordination Forum was launched on December 26, 2023, in Bahir Dar. The forum has been organized by Amhara Region Water and Energy Bureau, Abay Basin Administration Office with technical and financial support from NGOs working in the region; IRC WASH, WRI, UNICEF and Plan International. All government and NGO actors have signed membership agreements coordinated by the Abay Basin Administration Office and Amhara Region Water and Energy Bureau (read more in the blog [Unlocking the potential for IWRM-WASH collaboration](#)).

General Objective

The general objective is to assess the status and sustainability of the IWRM-WASH coordination platform, providing insights and lessons learned to guide future planning and enhance the continuation of the platform.

Specific Objectives

- To evaluate the achievements of the regional IWRM-WASH coordination platform based on stakeholder feedback, event reports, and the platform's Terms of Reference (ToR).
- To identify key lessons and challenges from the platform's operations and stakeholder engagement processes to inform strategic improvements.
- To provide actionable recommendations for enhancing the platform's sustainability and its role in fostering collaboration among stakeholders.

Methodology

The methodology used to prepare this learning paper included reviewing the stakeholder mapping report, platform ToR, meeting reports, and post-establishment stakeholder feedback surveys on the status and sustainability of the IWRM-WASH coordination platform. These inputs were used to develop this paper.

Stakeholders mapping and assessment survey

The process of establishing the IWRM-WASH coordination platform started with a stakeholder mapping. Subsequently, a survey was developed on mWater to gauge stakeholder interest and distributed to those based in Bahir Dar, including regional government bureaus, NGOs, and research institutes working on IWRM and WASH. Of the 32 respondents, 75% were NGOs, 19% government entities and the remaining were research institutes and UN organizations. All respondents expressed interest in becoming members of the regional coordination platform (survey report).

Majority of the respondents were working on the WASH and WRM sector development and management functions as well as system strengthening in WASH.

Of the respondents, 70% were interested in WASH, with most focusing on rural WASH, reflecting the priority of many NGOs in this area. The remaining 30% were engaged in water resources management. Additionally, some respondents selected a mix of thematic interventions based on their organizations' areas of engagement.

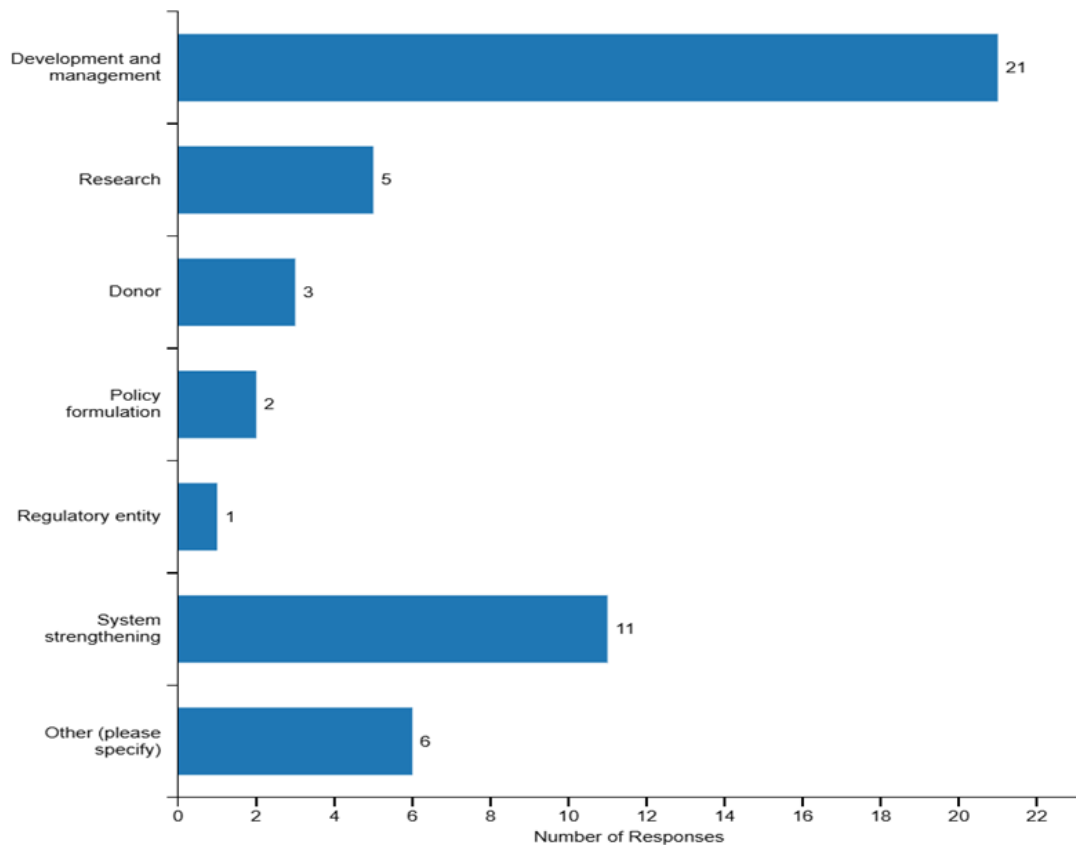


Figure 1: Interest of stakeholders

The graph below illustrates the distribution of responses from participants regarding their involvement in various WASH thematic areas, with some selecting more than one category. Rural WASH received the highest interest, with 58%, indicating a strong focus on addressing water and sanitation needs in rural communities. Emergency WASH followed with 36%, reflecting significant attention to providing immediate services during crises. Both climate-resilient WASH and sanitation and hygiene recorded 33% each, highlighting the growing emphasis on integrating sustainable practices to adapt to climate change and improving hygiene to prevent diseases. Urban WASH, with only 21%, had the least interest, suggesting a lower priority for urban WASH services among participants compared to other areas. These results emphasize the predominant focus on rural and emergency WASH while pointing to potential gaps in urban service delivery and opportunities to enhance cross-cutting approaches like climate-resilient WASH.

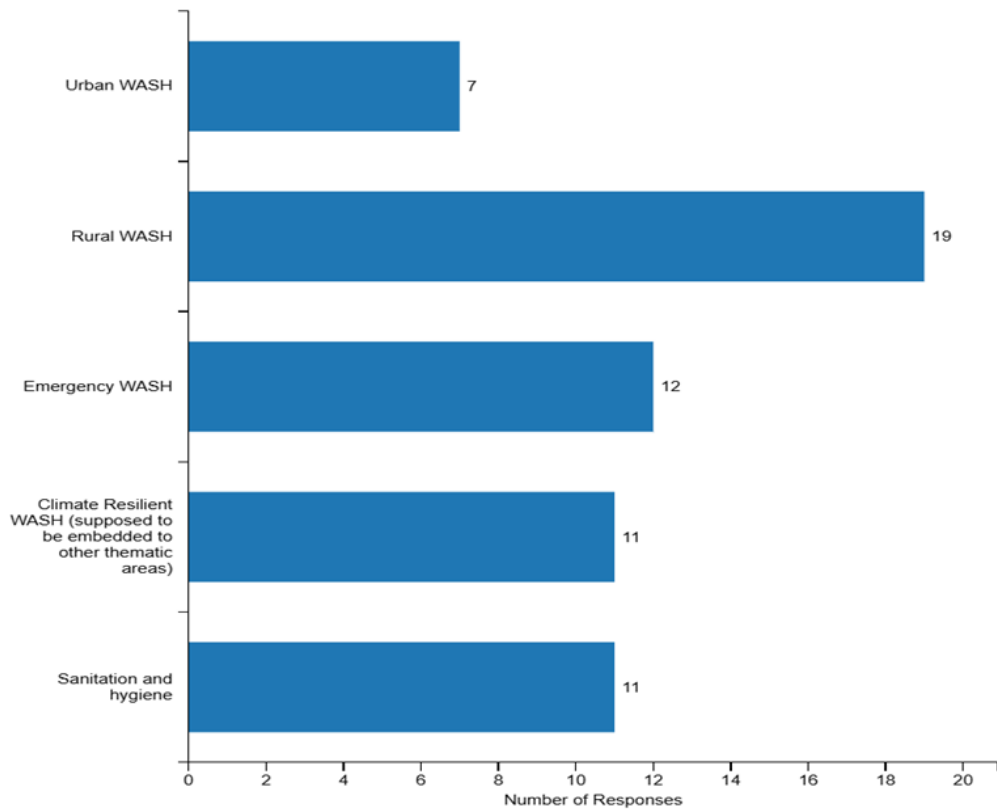


Figure 2: Stakeholders' area of engagement

One of the survey questions focused on potential contributions from stakeholders. As shown in the graph below, 84% of respondents expressed interest in sharing and learning within their capacity and scope of work. Additionally, 27% expressed interest in volunteering as committee members, while 14% indicated a willingness to provide financial support.

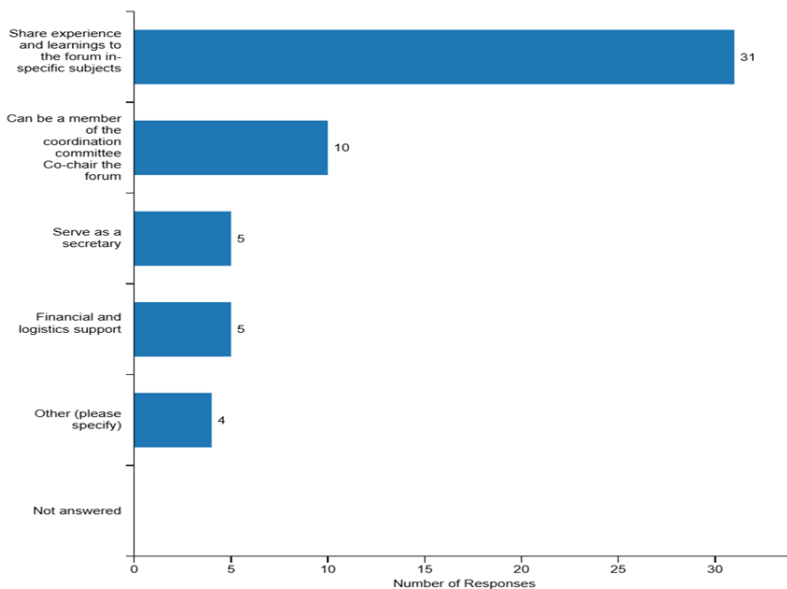


Figure 3: The contribution of stakeholders

Terms of Reference (ToR) development

The development of the joint ToR for the IWRM-WASH coordination platform has been initiated to address the interconnected challenges of water resources management and WASH service delivery in the region. The primary objective has been to cascade the Water and Energy Sector Working Group from the national level to the regional level. IRC WASH's primary support has focused on linking rural WASH working groups at the regional level with the national level working groups. Stakeholder mapping and consultations initiated in February 2023 have set the stage for an inclusive forum. Despite initial challenges, such as BoWE's preference for integrating the platform into annual review meetings, extensive discussions from March to July 2023 have led to a consensus on establishing a separate, dedicated forum. The ToR has been developed to integrate IWRM principles into WASH initiatives, fostering multi-sectoral coordination and addressing pressing issues such as water scheme non-functionality and climate impacts.

Enhancing synergy through IWRM-WASH Coordination Forums

The first launch event was held in Bahir Dar on December 26, 2023, and attended by 82 participants from GOs, NGOs and research institutes/universities. Three participants from the Ministry of Water and Energy attended to link the national-level platforms with the emerging regional platform and to share learnings. Participants were welcomed by Mamaru Ayalew (PhD), Head of the Amhara National Regional State Water and Energy Bureau. The main aims of establishing the IWRM-WASH coordination forum were to provide a platform for enhanced cross-sectoral coordination and planning, and to build collaboration among members for a greater collective impact in the IWRM and WASH sectors. It seeks to avoid silos in WASH and WRM, and between basin/sub-basin authorities, regional bureaus, and other sub-national offices in the development and management of water and other natural resources. Additionally, the forum aims to share data and information, engage in regular learning and promotion of best practices and good experiences, and enhance coordination among relevant programs and/or projects undertaken by government agencies, development partners, NGOs and universities. Mamaru Ayalew (PhD), underscored the platform's vital role in tackling pressing regional challenges through collaborative solutions. Presentations provided insights into the platform's structure, emergency WASH interventions, basin planning within the Abbay Basin, and the objectives of the ONE WASH National Programme (OWNP). Participants also addressed critical challenges such as financial constraints, data deficiencies, weak institutional coordination, the adverse effects of COVID-19, and regional conflicts. Group discussions focused on refining the Terms of Reference (ToR), exploring avenues for platform sustainability, mobilizing financing, and fostering better stakeholder integration.

Key reflections from the workshop emphasized the need for greater stakeholder involvement, improved coordination mechanisms, and strengthened resource mobilization efforts. Suggestions included creating structured committees, engaging absent organizations such as NGOs, involving government bodies and research institutions, and aligning platform objectives with existing legal frameworks and regional policies. Future priorities will involve convening stakeholder meetings, formalizing commitments, and revising implementation strategies to ensure the platform's sustainability and effectiveness. By fostering partnerships and leveraging collective expertise, the platform aims to harmonize efforts in IWRM-WASH to overcome regional challenges and drive sustainable development.



Figure 4: Mamaru Ayalew(PhD), Head Water and Energy Bureau in Amhara Region delivering an opening speech

The second coordination forum was conducted from February 19 -20, 2024, for two days in Bahirdar at the Abbay Basin Development office, and attended by 54 participants from GOs and NGOs. Mr. Arega Kassa, Deputy Head of the Amhara National Regional State Water and Energy Bureau welcomed the participants. He acknowledged the organizers in his opening speech and mentioned that the coordination platform is key to creating synergy among actors in the sector through joint planning and implementation. Additionally, he stated the interest of BoWE in collaborating with all actors for successful continued collaboration. Various GOs and NGOs gave presentations on WASH, IWRM practices, regional status on scheme management and gaps. Additionally, IRC WASH also presented on WASH systems approaches, the life-cycle cost approach, and WASH Management Information Systems. The second day was dedicated to group work, discussions and assigning leadership for the coordination platform. Government bureaus, including the Abbay Basin Development Office, Water and Energy Bureau and Bahirdar University, were assigned as chairs, co-chairs and secretary. Meanwhile, Plan International and the Development Bureau, Amhara National Regional State Environment, Forest and Wildlife Protection and Development Authority and the Health Bureau were assigned to manage knowledge for the coordination forum. NGOs, including MWA, IRC WASH and WRI were assigned to support the working group through consultations.

The third regional IWRM-WASH coordination forum was held on June 5, 2024, in Bahirdar. Ninety-eight participants from the regional WASH and WRM sectors came together. Mr Tilahun Shimels, Deputy Head of the Amhara National Regional State Water and Energy Bureau delivered an opening speech. Mr. Tilahun acknowledged the efforts of the organizers in his opening speech and mentioned that the government will support the coordination platform.

The main agenda points of the meeting were the progress of establishing the coordination forum and the development of a sustainable sector dialogue in the region, which can serve as a hub for knowledge and experience sharing of IWRM and WASH. Experts from the sector and universities presented on the sustainability of the platform, water quality improvement options, pollution prevention, water supply infrastructure, and scheme management. At the meeting, Michael, Mehari (PhD), Head of the National Water and Energy Sector Working Group Secretariat , shared experiences from the national-level forum and presented how to align or link the national platforms with the regional platform to support each other and create synergy.

The main challenges raised regarding the sustainability of the platform included a lack of resources, institutionalization and ownership. The coordination forum has been supported solely

by partners' budgets, with no budget allocation from government yet allocated. The meeting concluded with action points and recommendations, including strengthening the enabling environment, promoting and encouraging the participation of all concerned actors in the sector, working towards getting political buy-in, and the need to prepare detailed multi-year action plans that clearly stipulate the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders. Moreover, setting clear timelines and focused agendas for annual multi-stakeholder forums, as well as frequent (quarterly or as needed) subgroup meetings, to bring forward the undertakings and ideas that can feed into the larger forum. The regional multi-stakeholder forum should also set up a platform that can be used as a learning, research and knowledge management tool, as well as ensure the participation of the private sector. Finally, the national Water and Energy Sector Working Group secretariat invited the regional IWRM-WASH coordination facilitators to participate in the 12th MSF (national Multi-stakeholder Forum) in Addis Ababa held from July 11-12, 2024. IRC WASH supported two regional coordination facilitators to participate and share their experiences there.



Figure 5: Participants of the third IWRM-WASH coordination forum

Stakeholder survey on the sustainability of the forum

Stakeholder engagement in the regional IWRM-WASH Coordination Forum

To enhance its operations, the forum conducted a feedback survey with 25 stakeholders, facilitated by IRC WASH. Stakeholders were encouraged to provide insights that could strengthen coordination and impact, with a commitment from the forum to share the findings and use them to inform its future strategies.

The survey respondents represented a diverse group of actors. Notably, 68% were experts from regional government bureaus, highlighting the public sector's active leadership in driving water resources management and WASH initiatives. NGOs comprised 28% of the respondents, reflecting their critical partnership with the government in addressing regional water and sanitation challenges through project implementation and community engagement. The remaining 4% included representatives from research institutions, universities, and bilateral organizations, whose contributions of evidence-based insights, technical expertise, and innovative solutions are vital for sustainable outcomes.

Type of organization?
25 responses

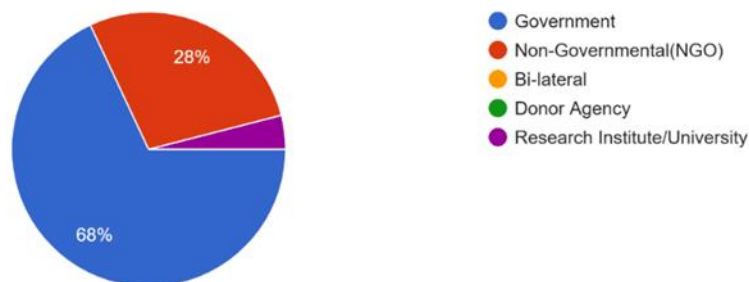


Figure 6: Type of organizations who responded to the survey

Thematic focus and implications for sustainability

The survey revealed a balanced distribution of thematic focus among stakeholders. Approximately 20% of organizations concentrated solely on WASH, addressing issues like sanitation, hygiene, and clean water access. Meanwhile, 24% focused exclusively on IWRM, dealing with sustainable water management, conservation, and equitable resource allocation. Importantly, 56% worked across both areas, emphasizing the interconnection between water management and sanitation services. This synergy is essential for ensuring that water resources are managed sustainably while meeting the region's growing sanitation and hygiene demands.

This multi-sectoral composition, with robust involvement from government, NGOs, research institutions, and universities, enhances the forum's ability to address complex water and sanitation challenges. By integrating feedback from this diverse group, the forum can refine its strategies, strengthen collaboration among stakeholders, and foster sustainable solutions that address the region's pressing needs effectively.

Attendance and commitment to forum activities

All respondents of the survey had participated in at least one of the coordination forum events, demonstrating a strong level of engagement within the group. Sixty-eight percent attended all three events, reflecting a high commitment to the platform's objectives and activities. Another 16% participated in two out of the three events, while the remaining 16% attended just one. These attendance figures indicate a solid core group of participants who are consistently involved, helping to build continuity, and strengthen the collaborative efforts of the forum.

Contributions and collaborative roles

Participants were not merely passive attendees; they actively engaged in various capacities. Many participants took on responsibilities as facilitators, helping to guide discussions, and ensures that the events ran smoothly. Others assisted with logistical support, which is crucial for the efficient management of workshops and meetings, ensuring that everything from venue setup to timing is handled effectively.

In addition to logistical and facilitation roles, participants actively shared their own experiences, adding valuable insights to the discussions. They engaged in panel discussions, bringing different perspectives and expertise to the table, which enriched the content of the events. Some participants presented verbally, contributing to the learning and information-sharing goals of the forum. Others created poster presentations to visually communicate specific projects, research findings, or case studies, making complex information accessible and engaging for attendees.

These diverse forms of participation demonstrate the collaborative spirit of the forum. By contributing in these various ways, participants helped to create a dynamic and interactive environment, where knowledge exchange and problem-solving could take place effectively. The active involvement of stakeholders at multiple levels enhances the forum's value, fostering a sense of collaboration and shared purpose among the participants.

Coordination roles and efforts

Led by the Amhara Region Water and Energy Bureau and the Abay Basin Administration Office, key regional stakeholders played a significant role in facilitating and coordinating the IWRM-WASH Coordination Forum. These two primary government organizations work in close collaboration with other IWRM and WASH sector actors in the region, creating a robust network of expertise and resources. This collaborative approach allows the platform to leverage local knowledge and institutional support to address the region's pressing water resources management and water and sanitation challenges.

Overall, most participants provided high ratings, with approximately 70-80% giving a 4 or 5 across all categories, indicating strong satisfaction with the platform's organization efforts. Specifically, most respondents agreed that meetings were properly planned, and agendas were focused, reflecting effective preparation and alignment with participant expectations. However, a smaller group, approximately respondents around 20-24%, rated certain aspects, particularly agenda focus and email communication, as average (3). Only a few participants, approximately less than 5%, gave lower ratings (2), particularly for agenda focus. These responses suggest that while the platform performs well overall, there is room for improvement in areas such as agenda refinement and communication strategies to better meet the needs of all participants.

In summary, the success of the IWRM-WASH Coordination Forum is significantly supported by the effective collaboration and diligent efforts of its facilitators and coordinators. Their organized approach, proactive communication, and thoughtful agenda-setting create a foundation for productive engagements, which in turn contributes to the platform's overall goals. Continued refinement of these processes, informed by participant feedback, will help sustain high levels of satisfaction and ensure that the platform remains a valuable space for addressing water resources management and water and sanitation issues in the region.

The bar chart below presents feedback from 25 respondents regarding how well-organized the events, agendas, focus, and content were for a specific coordination platform.

A significant proportion of participants, 40% gave the highest rating of 5, indicating that they found the events exceptionally well-organized. Additionally, 36% rated the events with a 4, reflecting a high level of satisfaction with the coordination. Combined, these ratings show that 76% of participants viewed the organization as strong and effective.

Meanwhile, 24% provided a rating of 3, suggesting that they found the organization to be average. While these participants did not express dissatisfaction, their feedback points to potential areas for improvement to better meet their expectations.

Notably, there were no ratings of 1 or 2, signifying that none of the participants found the events poorly organized. This absence of low ratings underscores the platform's success in ensuring that the events were structured, focused, and relevant. However, the feedback from those who rated the organization as average highlights an opportunity for further refinement to increase overall satisfaction.

How organized were the events/agenda, focus and contents?

25 responses

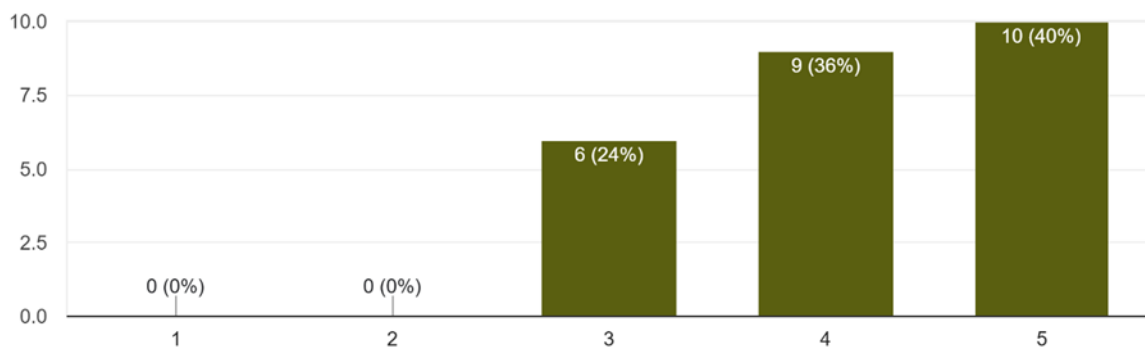


Figure 7: Participant feedback on event organization

Participant feedback on knowledge sharing and agenda timeliness

The bar chart illustrates participant feedback on learning and knowledge sharing and the timeliness of agenda sharing for comments and suggestions. For learning and knowledge sharing, most respondents rated it positively, with 36% giving a 5 (excellent) and 32% rating it 4, while 24% rated it 3 (average), and only 4% rated it 2. Similarly, for the timeliness of agenda sharing, most participants provided high ratings, with 40% giving a 4 and 28% rating it 5, while around 20% rated it 3, and 4% gave lower ratings (1 or 2). Overall, the feedback indicates strong performance in both areas, though there is some room for improvement to further enhance participant satisfaction and engagement.

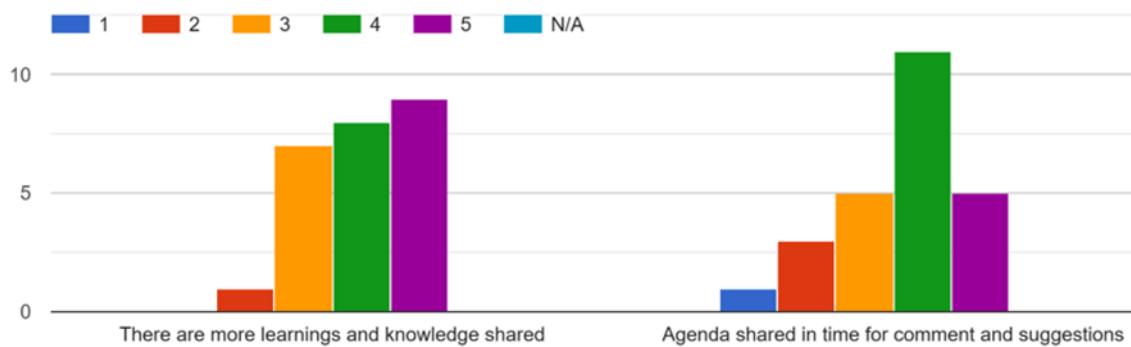


Figure 8: Participant feedback on learning and knowledge sharing and the timeliness of agenda sharing

Feedback on venue and workshop topics

This bar chart evaluates two categories: "Venue" and "Topics sufficiently addressed," rated on a scale from 1 to 5, along with an "N/A" option. For the "Venue", most respondents gave it a rating of 5 (60%), followed by 4 (24%), while 8% gave it a rating of 3. No one gave ratings of 1, 2, and "N/A". Regarding "Topics sufficiently addressed", the majority rated it as 4 (52%), followed by 3 (16%) and 5 (8%). No responses were recorded for ratings 1, 2, or "N/A." This suggests strong satisfaction with the venue and moderate satisfaction with how topics were addressed.

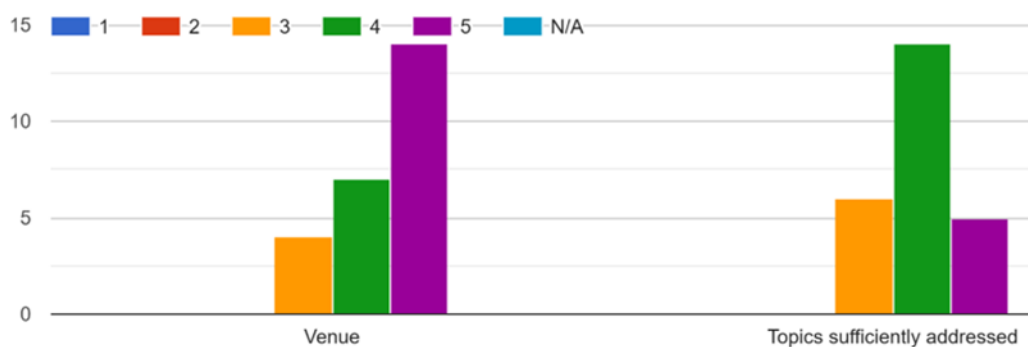


Figure 9: Survey result on venue of the workshop and topics discussed

Proactive communication and efficient event management

The organizers also maintain strong lines of communication with stakeholders not only before but also after the events. Before the workshop, they communicate effectively to set expectations, gather input, and share necessary information. A dedicated Telegram channel is also used to facilitate ongoing communication, enabling stakeholders to stay updated and engage in real-time discussions. After the event, organizers follow up with stakeholders, typically by distributing a detailed report that captures the key discussions, insights, and action items from the workshop. This report ensures that even those who may not have attended remain informed and provides a valuable record for reference and future planning. The use of the Telegram channel, along with timely communication both before and after each event, contributes to a transparent, well-coordinated process that strengthens trust and engagement among all participants.

The workshops organized by the IWRM-WASH Coordination Forum have been arranged to last for one or two days at the most. This duration is considered sufficient by both organizers and participants to effectively meet the workshops' primary goals, which include sharing their experiences on selected topics, engaging in dialogue around sectoral issues, and addressing specific targets set for each event.

Following each workshop, a follow-up meeting is organized by a smaller group, the IWRM-WASH coordination committee. The purpose of this follow-up meeting is to consolidate the key takeaways, discussions, and decisions from the workshop. This smaller group is responsible for compiling a comprehensive report that captures the workshop's main outcomes, insights, and any agreed-upon actions. The finalized report is then shared with a broader group of stakeholders, ensuring that all relevant parties, including those who were not able to attend the workshop, are kept informed and up to date.

For the category "Workshop days were enough," most participants rated it as 4 (28%) or 5 (24%), indicating broad agreement that the one- to two-day format was sufficient to achieve the workshop objectives. Lower ratings (2 and 3) received fewer responses, while 1 and "N/A" were not selected.

For "Reports shared in time," most participants rated this aspect highly, with 40% giving a 5 and 20% rating it a 4. Fewer participants gave lower ratings (2 and 3), and no responses were recorded for 1 or "N/A." These ratings reflect participants' appreciation for timely sharing of reports, which helps them apply insights effectively while maintaining a streamlined workflow.

Inclusiveness

Collective action relies on the establishment of a shared, agreed-upon goal and clear objectives that can unite and drive engagement from all actors within a sector. This coordination platform aims to fulfil this need by providing an inclusive space for all interested parties in the WASH and WRM sectors. The platform is designed to be open to a variety of participants, including government bodies, NGOs, private sector, and research and development institutions. This inclusivity aims to foster a broad coalition, where each actor contributes their expertise and resources toward the sector's common objectives.

To ensure transparency and inclusiveness, information about the creation and purpose of the coordination platform has been shared widely among all potential stakeholders. Many experts involved agree that communication efforts have been effective, as they believe most actors in the sector have been adequately informed about the platform's existence and purpose. This wide dissemination has helped establish a foundation of awareness and involvement, essential for fostering collective action.

One notable point from the feedback, however, is the emphasis on the need for more private sector involvement. The lack of private sector participation is seen as a missed opportunity, as private sector could contribute significantly to resource mobilization, technical innovation, and sustainable solutions in the sector. Addressing this gap will require targeted outreach and strategies to actively involve private sector actors, ensuring they feel welcomed and see value in participating. Encouraging private sector representatives to join the forum and contribute to its activities could strengthen the platform's capacity to meet its goals and improve sector-wide outcomes.

The majority of respondents (60%) agrees that the platform is open and shares information effectively to engage all actors. A minority (10%) strongly agrees, emphasizing satisfaction with inclusivity and openness. The absence of disagreements suggests consensus, although there is room for stronger endorsements.

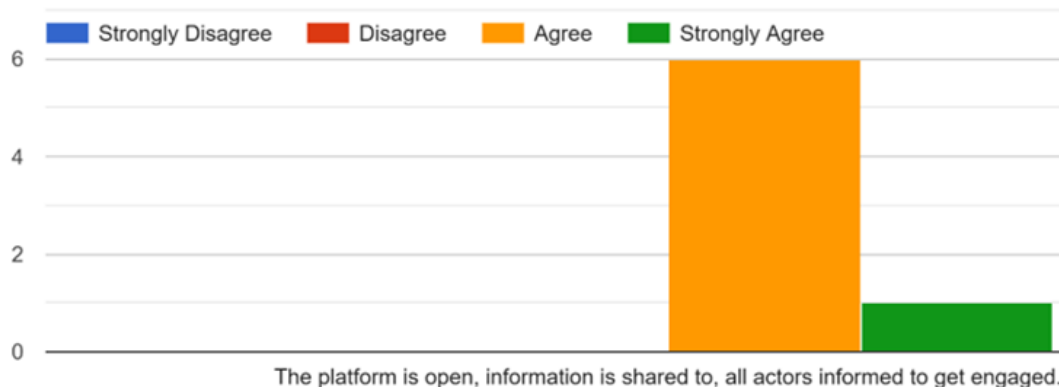


Figure 10: Feedback on platform accessibility and engagement

Consensus on committee representation

The bar chart below highlights the respondents' views on whether the committee is well-represented with a mix of different bureaus, sectors, and stakeholders. A significant majority (90%) strongly agree, while 10% agree with the statement. No responses indicate disagreement or strong disagreement, showcasing the committee's representation is inclusive and comprehensive.

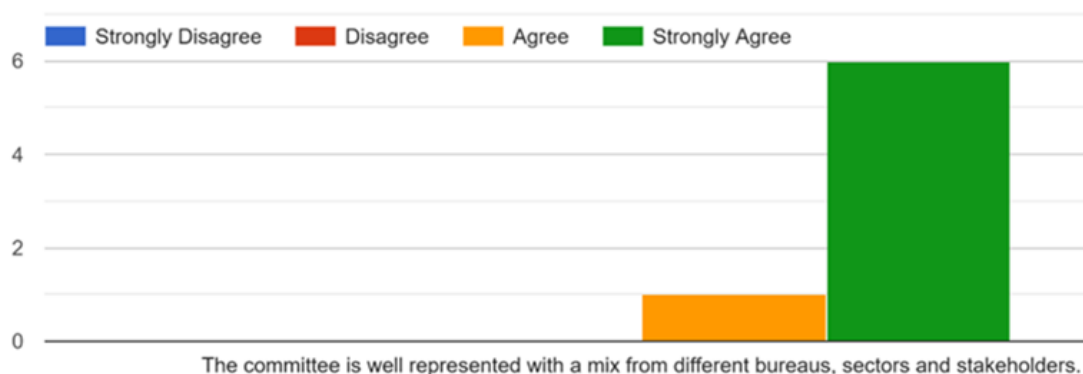


Figure 11: Feedback on committee representation

Collective planning and engagement

The facilitators of the IWRM-WASH Coordination Forum have taken several steps to ensure that all members are well-informed and engaged with the platform's purpose and operations. They have shared the platform's terms of reference (ToR), outlined its objectives, and provided shared agreements, such as the member agreement database form, with every member. These

agreements are formally signed, and members are kept informed via a Telegram group. The Telegram group enables instant discussions and provides an ongoing, informal means of communication for supplementary updates and dialogue, enhancing accessibility and inclusivity among stakeholders.

Engagement in agenda setting

The bar chart below illustrates respondents' views from 9 respondents on whether platform members engage in setting agendas or whether the committee solicits agenda proposals from members. Out of the total responses, 44% agree with the statement, 22% disagree, and 12% strongly agree. No responses indicate strong disagreement. This distribution highlights a majority leaning towards agreement, though some reservations are expressed by the 22% who disagreed. Overall, the chart suggests that while member engagement is acknowledged by most, there is room for improvement in fully involving all participants.

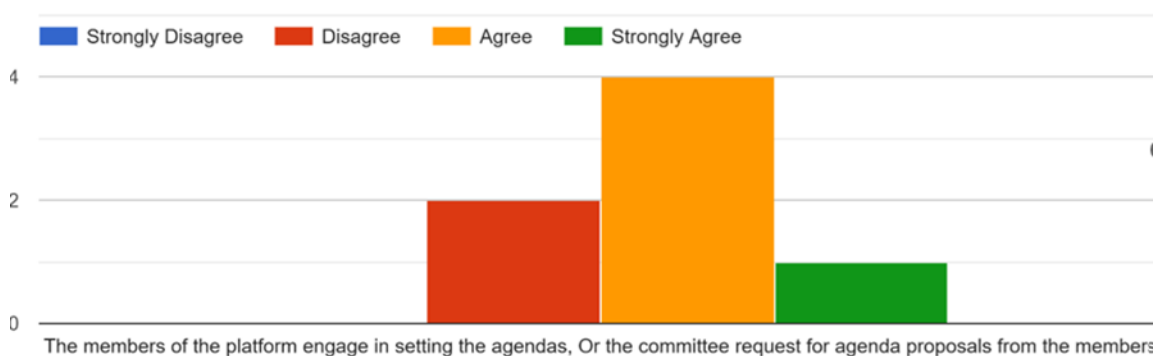


Figure 12: Members' participation on agenda setting

Clarity on platform objectives among members

All members clearly understand the objectives of the platform, ensuring alignment with the forum's goals. To maintain this clarity for new members joining in the future, it is suggested to share the ToR, MoU, and other essential documents. This will help to onboard new participants smoothly, ensuring they are well-informed and integrated into the ongoing activities.

The bar chart below illustrates respondents' views about the clarity on objectives among the members. Out of the total responses, 56% agree with the statement, and 22% strongly agree. There are no responses indicating strong disagreement. This distribution highlights a majority leaning towards agreement.

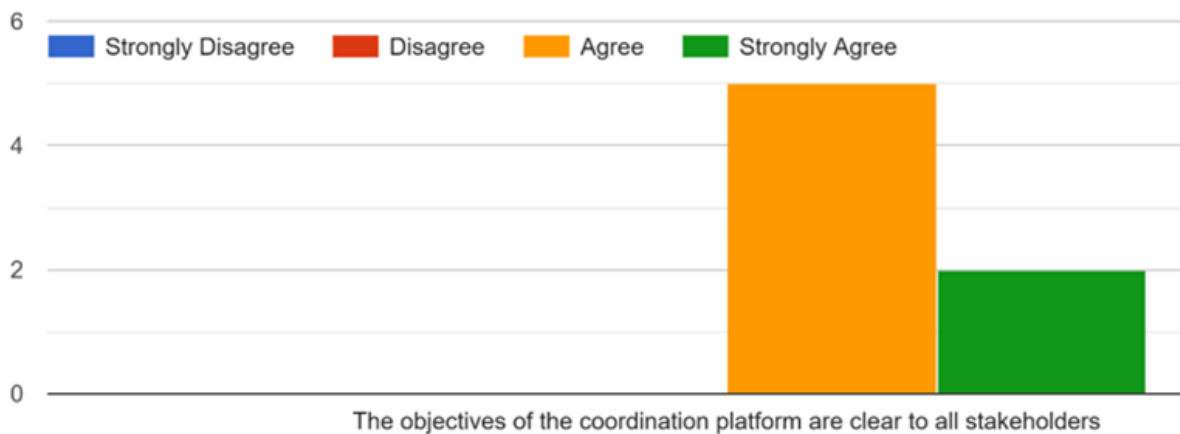


Figure 13: Feedback on clarity of objectives

Relevance and inclusivity of forum discussions

The topics discussed the forum cover a wide range of issues relevant to the IWRM-WASH sector. These discussions include success stories, sectoral insights, challenges, and possible solutions, allowing participants to share experiences and learn from each other. Presentations are followed by interactive sessions that focus on identifying challenges and exploring pathways forward on diverse topics. Of the total respondents, 11% strongly agree, 44% agree, and 22% disagree and some replied that the thematic areas covered are highly relevant, both in content and scope, and that the discussions effectively address key issues within the IWRM-WASH sector.

However, participants have suggested some improvements to enhance the forum's effectiveness and inclusivity. One suggestion is to improve agenda-setting processes before the workshops. By distributing draft agendas in advance, stakeholders could have an opportunity to review and provide input, which would make the process more participatory. Additionally, ensuring that comprehensive content is collected, relevant topics are selected, and the overall structure is collaborative would make discussions more focused and inclusive. This approach could help tailor the sessions more closely to participants' needs and encourage greater engagement and preparation from all stakeholders.

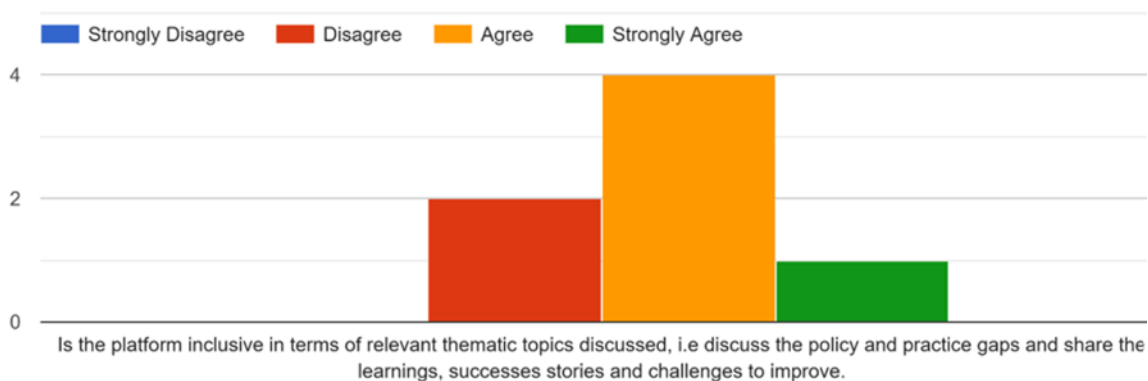


Figure 14: Feedback on thematic topics discussed

Institutionalization

The success of an effective multi-stakeholder forum largely depends on well-coordinated planning, with activities integrated into the government’s annual plans, securing leadership commitment, and ensuring active engagement from all actors involved. Survey respondents consistently agree that government entities, NGOs, and other stakeholders show interest in regularly contributing, participating, and exchanging knowledge, as well as learning from each other. This demonstrates a strong foundation of cooperation and willingness to participate in the forum.

Additionally, the forum appears to have sufficient coordination and facilitation capacity, with a good number of experts willing to contribute. The next steps and action plans for the forum are clearly outlined, and a committee has been formed, and tasked with responsibilities such as developing reports. This structured approach provides a solid basis for the forum’s future activities and objectives.

Ensuring continued participation and leadership focus

While top leadership is participating in these forums, there is a need for deeper commitment beyond merely attending events. To ensure sustainability and effective integration, leaders should allocate resources, assign dedicated staff, and provide ongoing support to the forum. This level of commitment is essential for embedding coordination activities within the government's routine annual plans.

However, securing budgetary support for the forum remains a major challenge. Government offices have not allocated funds to support the forum’s activities, and instead, NGOs have provided funding on an ad-hoc basis at the request of facilitators. This lack of consistent financial backing from government sources poses limitations on the forum’s ability to fully integrate its activities into the government’s regular annual plans, which is crucial for achieving long-term, coordinated impact.

The bar chart below illustrates 25 respondents’ views on leaders' engagement and attention, as well as stakeholders' interest in continuing the platform. Of the total responses, 48% agree with leaders' attention to the coordination platform, 24% strongly agree, 24% disagree, and 4% strongly disagree. Regarding the interest in continuing the IWRM-WASH coordination forum, 40% strongly agree, 56% agree, and 4% disagree

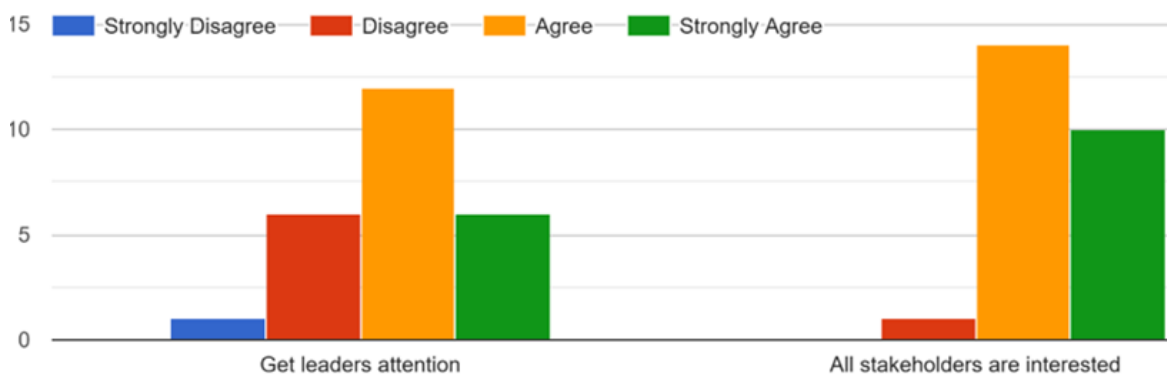


Figure 15: Feedback on leaders' attention and stakeholders' interest

Evaluation of facilitators' capacity and future planning

The graph below evaluates facilitators' availability and capacity as well as the adequacy of future planning. For the category "facilitators' availability and capacity," most participants rated it as 4 (48%) or 5 (32%), indicating broad agreement that the facilitators are proactive, though some improvements are suggested. Only 4% of respondents gave lower ratings.

Regarding the proper planning of the next actions, 88% agree, 8% strongly agree, and 4% disagree. These ratings reflect the facilitators' capability and the effectiveness of planning for upcoming actions.

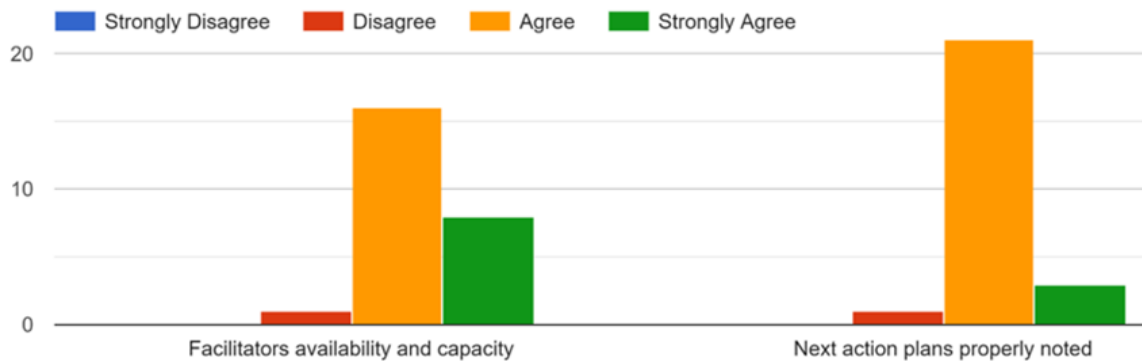


Figure 16: Facilitators capacity in planning

Finance

The bar chart below presents feedback from 25 respondents on whether there is sufficient budget and commitment to cover the costs of organizing forums. The responses show a noticeable spread, with a tendency towards neutrality or disagreement on the adequacy of funding and commitment.

The most common responses were 1 and 3, chosen by 36% of respondents. In addition, 12% chose 2, suggesting some doubt, while 12% selected 4, indicating moderate agreement. Only 4% strongly agreed (5). This minority view suggests that very few respondents feel confident that there is sufficient budget and commitment for these activities. This lack of consensus, especially with a majority leaning towards disagreement or neutrality, may indicate concerns or hesitation about the financial support and dedication needed to successfully organize forums and workshops.

Overall, the data indicates a need for clearer communication or reassessment of budget allocations and commitment levels to address the doubts or neutral perceptions of the stakeholders. The organization may need to explore ways to increase transparency and ensure that the necessary resources and commitment are in place to build broader trust in their support for these initiatives.

Based on 16 responses, several potential sources of finance were suggested to support the platform's goals. Many respondents recommended NGOs as a key source of funding, along with fund-raising activities and initiatives aimed at attracting financial support. Additionally, respondents suggested that specific funding agencies should be encouraged to finance the platform, especially to help achieve the Sustainable Development Goals in areas such as IWRM-WASH. Another suggestion included securing funding through projects, with government

involvement being emphasized. Respondents proposed that the government should allocate a specific budget for the platform, potentially by assigning a unique program code to ensure dedicated resources. To increase financial sustainability, some suggested institutionalizing the program to make it a permanent and recognized part of the regional agenda. Furthermore, the Regional Water Bureau, Abay Basin Administration Office as well as other bureaus were recommended to set an example by allocating budget for the platform within its annual fiscal plan, which could encourage other stakeholders to follow suit and provide similar financial support.

There is sufficient budget and commitment to cover the costs to organize forums and workshops
25 responses

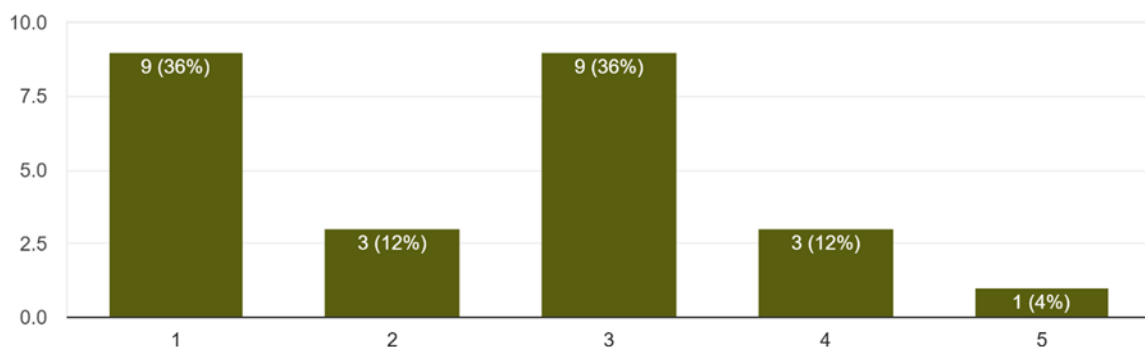


Figure 17: Availability of sufficient budget

Challenges

The chart below shows responses from 25 participants on the challenges faced by the coordination forum and potential future issues. The most cited challenge, identified by 96% of respondents, is a lack of resources. Following this, two challenges are equally noted by 68% of respondents, i.e., the platform is not institutionalized and there is a lack of accountability, with roles and responsibilities not clearly defined. Lack of government commitment is also significant, as mentioned by 76% of the respondents. Other notable issues include enabling environment (56%), private sector engagement (52%), and donor mapping (48%). Meanwhile, long-term plans are a concern for 28% of the respondents. Lastly, a smaller concern, cited by 4% of the respondents, is the fragile security situation.

This data shows that the coordination forum primarily struggles with resource shortages, lack of institutionalization, and governmental support. Additionally, there are also challenges related to accountability, stakeholder engagement, and strategic planning.

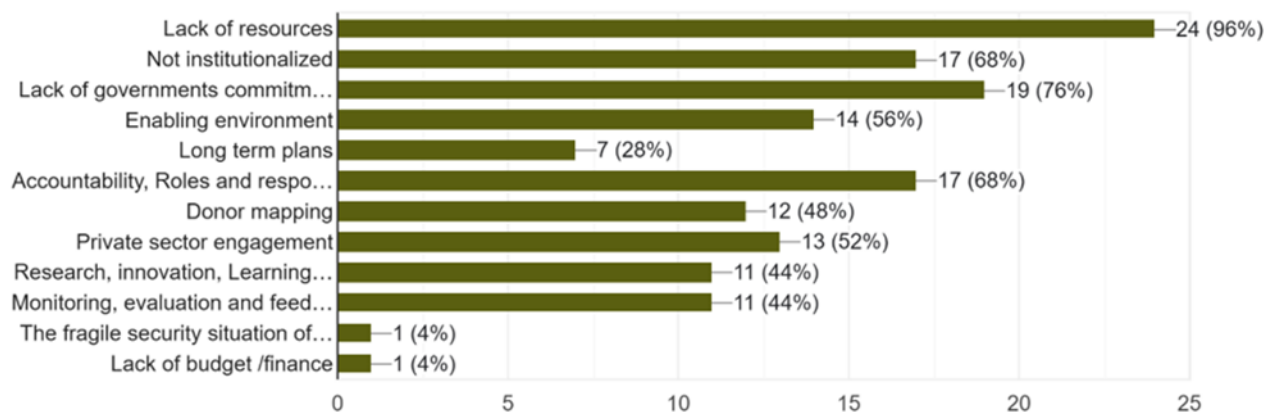


Figure 18: challenges rated by respondents

Key learnings and way forward

The IWRM-WASH coordination platform in the Amhara region exemplifies strong organizational efforts, fostering collective action among stakeholders such as government agencies, NGOs, and research institutions. Workshops are well-structured, with clear agendas and objectives, allowing for effective discussions. However, while the platform has succeeded in promoting information sharing and collaboration, gaps remain in areas like private sector engagement, leadership commitment, and resource mobilization. Enhancing agenda-setting processes, securing sustainable funding, and institutionalizing the platform within government systems are essential steps to ensure its long-term impact. Stakeholders emphasized the importance of advocacy, capacity building, and broad-based participation, recognizing that these improvements will bolster the platform's role in advancing sustainable IWRM-WASH efforts and achieving long-term sectoral goals.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the IWRM-WASH Coordination Forum in the Amhara region has demonstrated strong organization and collaborative efforts thanks to active facilitators, including the Amhara Region Water and Energy Bureau, the Abay Basin Administration Office, and other key stakeholders such as IRC WASH, UNICEF, WRI, Plan International and Bahir Dar University. Feedback from event participants indicates that workshops are well-planned, with focused agendas that align with the platform's objectives. Most respondents found the workshops effective, with adequate time given for discussions and post-event reporting.

The platform encourages collective action, bringing together a wide range of stakeholders, including government agencies, NGOs, and research institutions. While information sharing has been effective, there is a noted gap in private sector engagement, which stakeholders have identified as crucial for the platform's success. The coordination forum has also established clear terms of reference and objectives, which are communicated to all members and stakeholders through various channels.

However, there is room for improvement. Stakeholders suggest refining the planning process, particularly by ensuring more comprehensive and participatory content selection. The platform's success is strongly linked to ongoing coordination with government annual plans, leadership buy-in, and active engagement from all sector actors. While the forum has seen good participation, the involvement of leadership at a higher level, particularly in terms of resource allocation and integration into regular planning processes, remains a key area for growth. To fully realize the potential of the platform, these areas of improvement will need to be addressed for continued success in driving sustainable IWRM and WASH coordinated efforts.

Recommendations

1. **Institutionalization and clear roles:** The platform should be institutionalized within the government system, with clearly defined roles, responsibilities, and communication channels for all stakeholders. This clarity will ensure alignment with common goals, avoid duplication of efforts, and reduce inconsistencies in implementing IWRM-WASH initiatives. A well-structured coordination framework will foster effective collaboration, knowledge sharing, and efficiency among stakeholders.
2. **Sustainable budgeting and resource mobilization:** Secure a dedicated and sustainable funding source, with a clear budget plan allocated by all government agencies involved. Secure strong financial support from regional and national government bodies, and through partnerships with donors. Prioritize advocacy for budget allocation at the regional bureau level to ensure long-term financial sustainability.
3. **Capacity building and knowledge sharing:** Organize regular capacity-building training and experience-sharing sessions to strengthen stakeholder engagement and enhance knowledge exchange. Collaborate with local universities to ensure the platform is supported by a knowledge base, fostering a centre of excellence in IWRM and WASH. This will promote continuous learning and ensure the platform remains responsive to emerging challenges in the sector.
4. **Advocacy and leadership buy-in:** Conduct high-level advocacy meetings with regional leadership to secure their commitment to the platform, including budget allocation and resource support. Ensuring that government authorities take ownership of the platform is crucial for its sustainability and long-term success. Government leadership is key to integrating the platform into the annual planning processes.
5. **Long-term donor engagement:** The government will lead efforts to secure long-term funding, with support from donors and NGOs. Research on the links between IWRM, WASH, and climate resilience will inform policy and attract sustained donor engagement, ensuring financial stability and lasting impact.
6. **Regular forum events and clear planning:** Establish a set schedule for the forum events and ensure that meetings are well-planned, with focused agendas that align with the platform's objectives. Meetings should allow for regular reporting and feedback, enabling continuous learning and strategy refinement. Follow-up on previous action points and ensure that outcomes are communicated effectively to all stakeholders to maintain accountability and momentum.
7. **Private sector engagement:** Increase private sector involvement in the platform, recognizing their importance as key stakeholders in achieving IWRM-WASH solutions. Their expertise and resources can play a crucial role in driving innovation and supporting long-term sustainability.

8. **Monitoring and accountability:** Ensure that the outputs of discussions and workshops are properly documented, shared with the relevant entities, and followed up in subsequent meetings. Regular updates on progress and challenges allow stakeholders to assess what is working and adjust strategies accordingly. Feedback loops should be incorporated into the platform activities to foster a culture of learning, adaptation, and informed decision-making.
9. **Awareness and advocacy:** Raise awareness among government and key stakeholders about the importance of the IWRM-WASH coordination platform. Highlight the platform's role in achieving long-term water and sanitation goals and emphasize the need for sustainable funding. A well-structured communication strategy will help build support and encourage broader stakeholder participation.

Visiting address

Golagul Towers Building

Bole Sub-city

Woreda 4

House No. 813/814

Addis Ababa

Ethiopia

Ethiopia@ircwash.org

www.ircwash.org/ethiopia