Activity Title:	**USAID Climate Resilient Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (Climate Resilient WASH)**
Reference Number:	**720-663-21-RFI-00008**
Date:	**July 26, 2021**
Response Due Date and Time:	**August 16, 2021, 4:00 PM Addis Ababa Time**
Response Email Addresses:	**caddis@usaid.gov and tyifru@usaid.gov**

This is a Request for Information (RFI) issued solely for information and planning purposes. This is not a Request for Proposals (RFP) or a Request for Applications (RFA) and is not to be construed as a commitment by the U.S. Government to issue any solicitation or Notice of Funding Opportunity, or ultimately award a contract or assistance agreement on the basis of the RFI, or to pay for any information voluntarily submitted as a result of this request. Responses to this RFI shall not be portrayed as proposals and will not be accepted by the U.S. Government (USG) to form a binding agreement. Responders are solely responsible for all expenses associated with responding to this RFI. It should be noted that responding to or providing comment on this RFI will not give any advantage to any organization in any subsequent procurement.

The RFI is a preliminary call for expressions of interest for a potential activity to support accelerated access to inclusive and resilient water supply, sanitation, and hygiene services in the lowlands of Ethiopia as described in the Attachment. **The purpose of this RFI is to solicit public feedback on the attached draft concept of the Climate Resilient Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (CR WASH) Activity, which is expected to be a five-year activity with an estimated total value of $30-$40 million, subject to the availability of funds.** Interested parties, including government, non-government organizations, academia, and the private sector are invited to provide responses to support this potential activity.

In particular, USAID seeks feedback on the following key questions:

1. Are the objectives described in the draft concept feasible to achieve? If not, how could it be better designed?
2. Sanitation and hygiene gains, including menstrual health and hygiene, have been particularly hard-won in the lowlands. What is the primary bottleneck?
3. Are there additional approaches to consider to ensure sustainability that should be considered within this activity?
4. What can be done to ensure more diversity and gender inclusivity in the implementation of this activity?

5. What opportunities exist within this activity to incorporate disaster response approaches, emergency actors and humanitarian financing to support long-term sustainable WASH service delivery?
6. What opportunities and constraints exist to private sector WASH service provision in the lowlands? Are there specific capacity, policy, financial, and/or institutional bottlenecks that must be addressed in order to unlock additional private sector participation?

Comments and feedback on the draft concept note of the Climate Resilient WASH Activity should not exceed five (5) pages.

Responding to this RFI is strictly voluntary. USAID/Ethiopia will not provide answers to any questions submitted in response to this request. USAID posts its competitive business opportunities on https://beta.sam.gov and www.grants.gov. It is the potential offeror's/applicant's responsibility to monitor these sites for announcements of new opportunities. Responses may be used by USAID without restriction or limitation.

All comments and recommendations to the aforementioned questions must be submitted electronically to Ms. Tigist Yifru at tyifru@usaid.gov with a copy to caddis@usaid.gov with the subject title: "**RFI: USAID/Ethiopia Climate Resilient WASH**", no later than August 16, 2021 4.00 pm Addis Ababa time Hard copy submissions will not be accepted nor will phone inquiries be entertained.

Thank you for your assistance and interest in USAID.

Regards,

Kevin Sampson
Office Director, Office of Acquisition and Assistance
USAID/Ethiopia

ATTACHMENT: DRAFT CONCEPT
USAID Climate Resilient WASH Activity

INTRODUCTION

For a decade, USAID has heavily invested in supporting sustainable water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services in the pastoral regions of Ethiopia, including through two major El Niño events. First through WASH Transformation for Enhanced Resiliency (WaTER) and subsequently USAID Lowland WASH, USAID has worked together with regional governments and other partners to expand WASH services and simultaneously promote water resources management in the lowlands of the Afar, Oromia, Somali, and Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples regions. This Climate Resilient WASH activity is intended to build off of these prior investments, as well as the USAID Transform WASH activity's market-based sanitation work in the highlands, and serve as USAID's flagship WASH investment in the lowlands.

BACKGROUND

With 60% of the land area and 12-14% of the national population mostly in pastoral or semi-pastoral communities, the lowlands lag behind the rest of Ethiopia in terms of most social and economic indicators.[1] Access to sustainable WASH services in the lowlands lags behind much of the country. According to the Government of Ethiopia (GoE), "Access levels for water and sanitation in pastoralist regions and woredas ranges from 39.5% to 61%, and from 6.5% to 21% respectively, while in the other parts of the country water and sanitation coverage ranges from 62% to 95% and 41% to 76%, respectively."[2] And where access is a nonissue, often functionality is a challenge. For instance, in South Ari, 31% of water supply schemes were found to be nonfunctional and a further 16% only partially functional, while in Mile 13% of schemes were nonfunctional and 6% partially functional.[3]

The Climate Resilient WASH activity seeks to address core, systemic, barriers to sustainable, climate resilient WASH service delivery, so as to bring WASH access and non-functionality rates in the lowlands towards convergence with the national average. The USAID Climate Resilient WASH activity will complement the One WASH National Program's (OWNP) climate resilient approach focused on complex, multi-village water services. It will also build on learning from USAID's investments under Lowland WASH and WaTER, and as relevant, Transform WASH. It will be geographically layered and coordinated with USAID's Lowland Resilience Project activities, particularly the Feed the Future Resilience in Pastoral Areas activities and emergency WASH programming across Afar, Somali, SNNPR and Oromia, and will work at the woreda,

[1] World Bank. International Development Association Project Appraisal Document on a Proposed Credit in the Amount of SDR 125.2 Million and a Proposed Grant in the Amount of SDR 125.2 Million to The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia for the Lowlands Livelihood Resilience Project. May2, 2019.
[2] One WASH National Program - Phase II, Program Document, One WASH/National WASH Coordination Office, November 2018.
[3]USAID Lowland WASH Activity and USAID Sustainable WASH Systems Learning Partnership Briefing Note, Costs and Gaps in the Financing of Water Services in the Ethiopian Lowlands, November 2018.

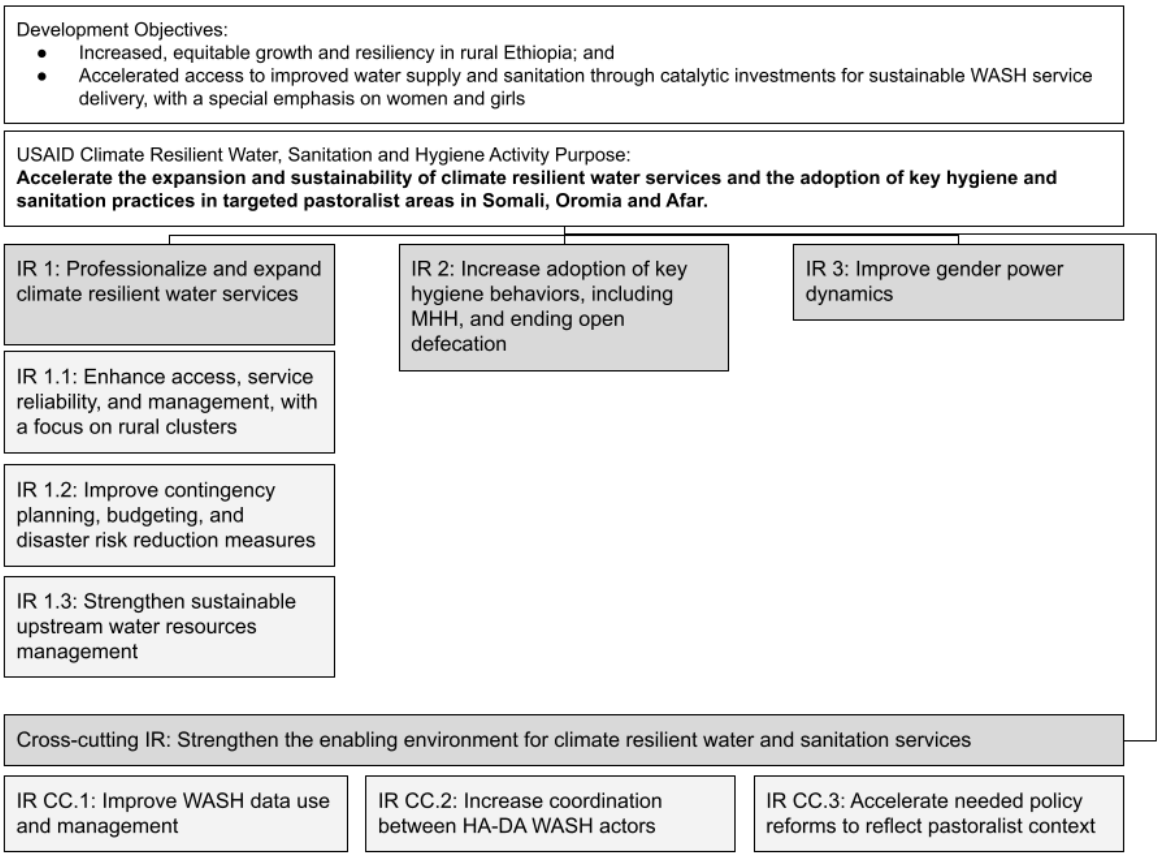
regional, and national levels. Work to reform governance, improve water service delivery models, and sanitation and hygiene behavior change approaches will serve as an example nationally, and build upon GoE commitments to focus beyond new infrastructure.

PURPOSE

The overall purpose of the Climate Resilient WASH Activity will be to accelerate the expansion and sustainability of climate-resilient water services and the adoption of key hygiene and sanitation practices in targeted pastoralist areas in Somali, Oromia, SNNPR, and Afar. The Activity will work to fulfill this purpose through four complementary intermediate results (also fee Figure 1):

1. Professionalize and expand climate-resilient water services;
2. Increase adoption of key hygiene behaviors, including MHH, and ending open defecation;
3. Improve gender power dynamics; and
4. Strengthen the enabling environment for climate-resilient water and sanitation services.

Figure 1. Climate Resilient WASH Results Framework (draft)



DRAFT CONCEPT

The activity will take systems strengthening approach to accelerate the expansion and sustainability of climate, resilient water services and the adoption of key hygiene and sanitation practices in targeted pastoralist areas. It will rely on four primary pathways, or intermediate results, to achieve the activity purpose. The first pathway will focus on a range of efficiency, effectiveness and water service delivery expansion approaches grounded in financial and technical sustainability in order to improve not only access to water services, but also resilience to climate shocks. The second pathway will work towards eliminating open defecation, improving menstrual health and hygiene (MHH) and identifying innovative approaches to improve sanitation-related behaviors that are deeply entrenched. The third pathway will seek to address, while doing no harm, gender-based inequities. The final pathway cuts across the others and will focus on the enabling environment. This pathway encompasses everything from policy reform and data availability, quality and use, to coherent action across humanitarian and development WASH actors. Throughout the activity, it is crucial that approaches are tailored to address specific challenges related to the pastoral and semi-pastoral way of life across the lowlands. Further descriptions of how the activity will advance these pathways and achieve these results are described in this section.

IR 1: Professionalize and expand climate-resilient water services

Despite persistent challenges, Ethiopia has made substantial gains in professionalizing climate-resilient water service delivery in the lowlands. These gains have been realized through a concerted focus on augmenting community-based management (via legal recognition and capacity building on everything from financial management to procurement), as well as through pilot rural utility schemes. USAID seeks to complement the OWNP climate-resilient program component by focusing investment in three areas to professionalize and expand climate-resilient water services:

- **Enhance access, service reliability, and management, with a focus on rural clusters.** Functionality and financial viability are two key challenges to WASH service delivery in the lowlands. Water system development and management must be accompanied by lifecycle costing to ensure managers understand long term financing needs. This activity will seek to scale pilot efforts to cluster communities into rural utilities in order to develop economies of scale for operation and maintenance of water infrastructure. USAID will explore development of business models, supply chains, and technologies aimed at increasing the quality and availability of services, improving efficiencies, and generating greater cost recovery. While focusing on systems strengthening and sustainable operations and maintenance, the Activity will make targeted infrastructure investments, such as new or rehabilitated water schemes or extensions to piped networks, prioritizing connections to health facilities and schools.
- **Improve contingency planning, budgeting and disaster risk reduction measures.** Given that the lowlands are prone to recurrent emergencies, more resilient and responsive

approaches to water programming are vital to prevent excess mortality, minimize disruptions in water service delivery, or adverse environmental impacts. USAID seeks to provide technical support to service providers, regulators and local governments to develop business continuity plans and build rapid response capacity, including budgets, contingency plans and personnel to manage proactively and respond to acute shocks and restore water services when crises strike.

- **Strengthen upstream sustainable water resources management.** The sustainable provision of drinking water is dependent on the availability of water resources and their resilience. Nowhere is that need greater in the water stressed regions of the lowlands. The activity will work with a wide range of actors to protect source waters, and conserve, restore and change land use practices in source watersheds, such as through the establishment of a payment for ecosystem services scheme or water fund, if appropriate.

Expected results

- *Increased climate resilience of water services*
- *Improved access to reliable and sustainable water services, including during a disaster*

IR 2: Increase adoption of key hygiene behaviors, including MHH, and ending open defecation

Sanitation behavior change is a notoriously complex intervention. In the harsh, remote environment of the Ethiopian lowlands, this is particularly so. Community-Led Total Sanitation and Hygiene (CLTSH) interventions, while successful in Ethiopia's densely populated highland areas, have never been implemented at scale in the lowlands. Through prior investments, USAID has learned that in pastoralist communities the operating conditions for effective, sustained behavior change are highly variable and require a different approach.[4] USAID/Ethiopia seeks scalable approaches to increase the adoption of key hygiene behaviors, including MHH, and to end open defecation that are tailored to the Lowlands context and address established bottlenecks to behavior change. Expected results and activity components would be developed collaboratively and finalized at the end of the first-year, inception phase of the activity.

IR 3: Improve gender power dynamics

Like the GoE, USAID recognizes that the durability of WASH gains are often enmeshed with gender dynamics. In fact, evidence has shown that when women are included in leadership roles within WASH projects, more inclusive and sustainable service delivery is achieved. The GoE has ambitious gender inclusion targets and mandates within the OWNP: "In compliance with the GTP II, women membership of WASHCOs shall be increased to 50% or more and the training of

[4] Nikita Salgaonkar, USAID/Ethiopia & AECOM, "2018 CLA Case Competition: The Scoop on Poop: How Open Defecation Free Data Led to Activity Program Pivots in Ethiopia's Lowlands."

women artisans, higher and medium professionals shall be increased to 25% or more."[5] Yet despite these policy and program provisions, modalities to increase female participation, mechanisms for enforcing gender equity policy, and program requirements for monitoring implementation are lacking. In addition, women's participation is still poor because of restrictive cultural norms, low interest among women, and limited availability of female engineers.[6] USAID/Ethiopia seeks lasting, scalable approaches to improve gender power dynamics tailored to the lowlands context. Expected results and activity components would be developed collaboratively and finalized at the end of the first-year, inception phase of the activity.

CC IR: Strengthen the enabling environment for climate resilient water and sanitation services

USAID recognizes that the success of these intermediate results is predicated on improvements in the broader enabling environment for WASH service delivery in the lowlands. Climate-Resilient WASH will use catalytic investments in the lowland regions as a learning laboratory for broader sector reform. Specifically, USAID/Ethiopia seeks to strengthen the enabling environment by:

- **Improving WASH data use and management.** Information systems are needed to both track key performance indicators (KPIs) and provide information on water facility assets for operational decision-making, including information on boreholes, generators, switchboards, pumps, storage and distribution infrastructure, and management details. To manage the information, the National WASH Inventory and Management Information System will track performance against KPIs, while supporting regional databases would provide detailed asset management data such as the Somali Functionality Inventory and the Afar Regional Water Bureau's Water Service Asset Management System. Such databases need to be updated regularly at least with respect to critical indicators like functionality, and officials need to use the information regularly and systematically for it to be of use.
- **Increasing coherence between humanitarian and development WASH responses and actors operating in target geographies.** Humanitarian assistance focused WASH responses, including water trucking are significantly more expensive than developing climate-resilient infrastructure, operation and maintenance systems. UNICEF analysis indicates that climate-resilient WASH service provision is up to 35 times cheaper than supplementing less resilient systems with humanitarian responses.[7] Different budgetary sources, mandates, and long term governance structures pose challenges to coordination between humanitarian and development focused Ethiopian and international actors.

[5] OWNP, 2018.
[6] Gender Analysis for Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH), Presentation to USAID/Ethiopia, Social Impact, Ethiopia Performance Monitoring & Evaluation Service, Project Design Team, Sept. 25, 2019
[7] OWNP, 2018.

- **Accelerating needed policy reforms to reflect pastoralist context.** The GoE recognizes that pastoralist settings require tailored WASH solutions that address water scarcity, while recognizing the interconnectedness of household, agriculture, and livestock needs.[8] Additionally, traditionally male-dominated clan governance structures impede the inclusion of women in decision making processes, as required in existing GoE policies.

Expected results

- *Improved data use for decision-making and management*
- *Enhanced coherence and systems to facilitate emergency WASH response when needed*
- *National WASH policy tailored to address specific constraints in the lowlands*

[END OF RFI]

[8] Ibid.