Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC

OXFAM CONSULTS

Evaluation of the Comprehensive Water Supply and Sanitation Project in Rural Areas of the Sughd Region, Tajikistan

Final Evaluation Report

Prepared for SDC and CoWaSS

By Oxfam Consults

Date 30/04/2025

INTERNATIONAL SECRETARIAT FOR WATER
SIE-ISW-SIA

CAIC CONSULTING

HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation

CoWaSS
COMPREHENSIVE WATER SUPPLY & SANITATION IN RURAL AREAS OF SUGD
ISW • HELVETAS • CAICO

Table of Contents

Acronyms and Abbreviations 3
Executive Summary 5
This Report 5
Summary of Findings 5
A Way Forward 6
Introduction 7
About this Report 7
Background 7
Logframe targets 9
Objective and Scope of the Evaluation 10
Intended audience 11
Deliverables 11
Evaluation Process 11
Commencement 11
Methodology 12
Desk review 12
Key informant interviews 12
Country visits 13
Analysis 13
Findings 14
Findings According to OECD DAC Criteria 14
Relevance 14
Coherence 16
Effectiveness 17
Efficiency 22
Impact 24
Sustainability 26
Considerations for Phase 2 31
Conclusions 33
Overall Rating of Project Performance 33
Lessons Learnt 36
Discussion 37
Recommendations 38
Recommendations for Phase 1 38
Recommendations for Phase 2 39
Annex A: CoWaSS Logframe 41

Annex B: Evaluation Matrix 54
Annex C: Key Informants 60
Annex D: Country visit schedule 65
Annex E: Stakeholder Feedback 69
Annex F: Technical Observations from The Evaluation 71
Annex G: Bibliography 72

Table 1: Summary of key evaluation deliverables 11
Table 2: List of documents reviewed 12
Table 3: Key informant interviews and focus groups interviewed 12
Table 6: Status of Water Supply Systems in CoWaSS Phase 1 20
Table 9: Summary of findings 34
Table 10: CoWaSS logframe indicators, updated December 2024. 41

Figure 1: Map of Sughd Region in Tajikistan 7

Acronyms and Abbreviations

CU	Consumers Union
DEQ	Detailed Evaluation Questions
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
EQ	Evaluation Questions
IWRM	Integrated Water Resource Management
JMP	Joint Monitoring Programme
KII	Key Informant Interview
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MoEWR	Ministry of Energy and Water Resources
MoH	Ministry of Health and Social Protection
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
O&M	Operation and Maintenance
RWSS	Rural Water Supply and Sanitation
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SDP	Sanitation Development Plan
SNIP	Tajikistan Unified System of Building Regulations
SUE KMK	State Unitary Enterprise Khochagii Manzilliu Kommunali
SUCE	State Unitary Communal Enterprise
TajWSS	Tajikistan Water Supply and Sanitation Project
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WHO	World Health Organisation
WUA	Water Users Association

Acknowledgements

Thanks are due to all those who participated in this work, whether as key informants or interested stakeholders, including those who enjoy the benefits of improved water supply, sanitation and hygiene practices. Special thanks to ISW, Helvetas, CAICO, SDC, and Tajikistan government partners.

Executive Summary

This Report

This is the final report for an evaluation of the Comprehensive Water Supply and Sanitation (CoWaSS) Project as it nears the end of Phase 1. The review has been funded by the Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation (SDC) and undertaken by a team of three evaluators from Oxfam Consults. The review was undertaken between January and May 2025.

CoWaSS began in 2021 and is being led by three consortium partners, namely the International Secretariat for Water (ISW), Helvetas and CAICO. It is focussed on supporting the achievement of a district-wide approach for water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services in Jabbor Rasulov and Kanibadam districts in the Sughd region of northern Tajikistan. CoWaSS aims to provide 42,500 people in Sughd Oblast with access to clean drinking water and help them benefit from better access to sanitation and hygiene services. The project is promoted as being 'comprehensive' in its approach and encompasses all aspects of WASH[1], which includes water resources management, water supply, faecal sludge management, hygiene promotion, and systems strengthening work. The project also engages in higher-level systems strengthening work, which is designed to improve governance across the WASH sector and increase the prospect for sustainable service delivery.

WASH is an integral part of SDC's portfolio of development work and within Tajikistan it has a long track record of supporting rural water supply programmes. This includes the previous Tajikistan Water Supply and Sanitation Programme (TAJWASS), Decentralised Wastewater Treatment Systems and improvements in National Water Resources Management. The CoWaSS project has inter-linkages with these other development projects, and there is the opportunity to learn from past experiences. The evaluation team also has relevant experience in these initiatives, and this was considered during the country visit to Sughd Region and Dushanbe in February 2025.

Summary of Findings

On the positive side,

1. Our judgement is the CoWaSS project is highly relevant to the needs of communities and local government institutions in Sughd Region. Once all the water supply systems are complete, we believe they will be effective in extending access to safe and assured water supply services.
2. CoWaSS engages with a wide range of partners, and it works at national, regional, district and sub-district levels, which means it engages in a coherent manner with a wide range of stakeholders as part of its systems strengthening work.
3. In general, CoWaSS strives to undertake its work in a cost-efficient manner, and it has modest operating costs and support services, preferring to utilise its budget for programme work.
4. There is evidence that CoWaSS is trying to address the challenge of financial sustainability head on, engaging with communities to pay a much higher tariff rate (fourfold increase) in return for improved service levels.
5. There is also evidence that CoWaSS is active in supporting policy reforms, working closely with the Ministry of Energy and Water Resources.
6. CoWaSS also works effectively with Helvetas and CAICO, however there is evidence that some partners feel their inputs are underutilised and the consortium could strike a better balance with regards roles and responsibilities.

[1] Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)

7. There is evidence that there have been programme delays and some activities, notably the water supply systems are still under construction and yet to be commissioned.

However,

8. CoWaSS is having to focus attention on its own service delivery work as well as wider systems strengthening at multiple levels and promoting the adoption of a district-wide approach. There is a corresponding risk that it is focussed on many different initiatives, and it needs to retain a focus on where it can maximise impact. Issues were raised by communities concerning the quality of construction of water supply and sanitation services, while many systems strengthening initiatives will need to be government-led.
9. CoWaSS works routinely with government institutions as part of its systems strengthening work, but it has no conceptual framework as to how the different component parts of the wider WASH systems inter-link. This means it can be difficult to visualise how the WASH system is being transformed. True sustainability will require government institutions to have increased capability, and it is less clear how these persistent weaknesses are being addressed through CoWaSS, with improvements measured systematically.
10. Overall, we found no evidence of the WASH sector working to a district-wide plan in a systematic manner. Inevitably, lots of important work is taking place but it is unclear how different organisations are working towards district-wide coverage and how this will be sustained through government and Private Operator systems.
11. CoWaSS is invisible to other key sector players, including donors. If it is terming itself as 'comprehensive' it. Should be generating important learning and engaging with others to show what does and does not work in different contexts.
12. The documentation of learning, reflection and insights could be improved significantly.

A Way Forward

Considering the foregoing, we believe the CoWaSS project needs to place more emphasis on process. On the one hand it needs to take corrective measures to ensure its own water and sanitation work is implemented to the highest professional standards. This requires a greater focus on how quality planning, design, construction and supervision of WASH services. It also needs to develop a clearer roadmap showing what CoWaSS will achieve in a phased manner. This needs to be specific in terms of how coverage will be extended, but also how the capability of government institutions will evolve. CoWaSS is engaged in complex systems work, which means it also needs to proceed iteratively, acting, generating learning, reflecting what works and undertaking follow up corrective work in a series of iterative cycles. Engaging with others and demonstrating a viable process for achieving impact will serve to support the upscaling of district-wide approaches.

Introduction

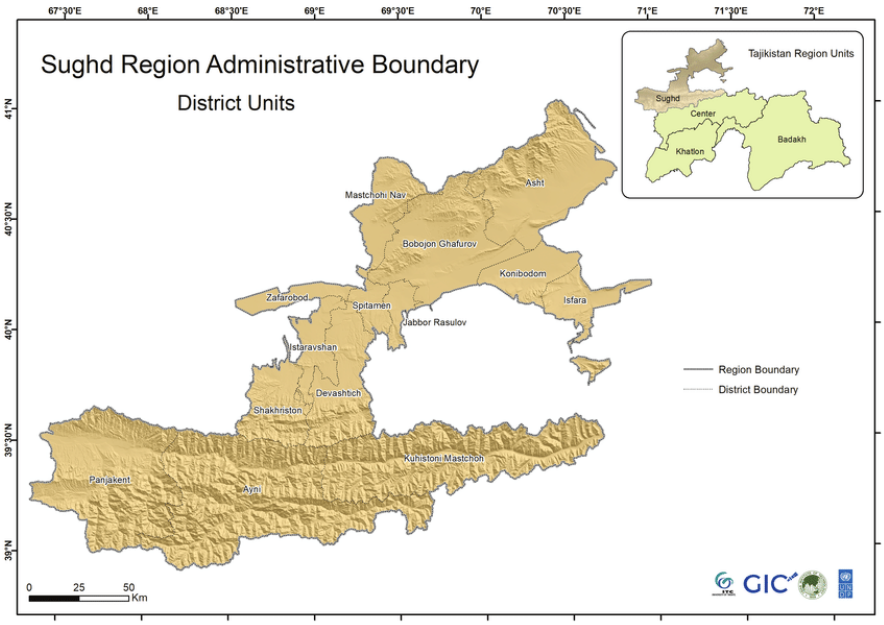
About this Report

This is the final report for an evaluation of the Comprehensive Water Supply and Sanitation Project (hereafter termed 'CoWaSS'). The review has been funded by the Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation (SDC) and undertaken by a team of three evaluators from Oxfam Consults. The review was undertaken between January and Mayl 2025.

Background

The CoWaSS project is a multi-year project (2021-2025[2]), with a substantial budget of CHF 7.7 million Swiss francs. It is serving rural communities in Jabbor Rasulov and Kanibadam districts in the Sughd region of northern Tajikistan (see Figure 1). The CoWaSS project aims to provide 42,500 people in Sughd Oblast[3] with access to clean drinking water and help them benefit from better access to sanitation and hygiene services. The project is promoted as being 'comprehensive' in its approach and encompasses all aspects of WASH[4], which includes water resources management, water supply, faecal sludge management, hygiene promotion, and systems strengthening work. It is also being undertaken at scale, attempting to implement a district-wide approach.

Figure 1: Map of Sughd Region in Tajikistan



The **district-wide approach** focuses on the district as the geographical entry point. The desired outcome is to ensure the district has the systems, plans, finances, human resources, skills, knowledge, coordination and accountability mechanisms to achieve sustainable universal WASH access. District-wide approaches are gaining traction in the WASH sector

[2] Phase 1: 2021-2024 with the possibility of Phases 2 and 3 to follow.
[3] Refers to an area or zone with a region.
[4] Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)

globally[5], and there are examples of WaterAid and the Agenda for Change pursuing such approaches. They aim to promote a more harmonized approach across a district and achieve greater impact at scale. As well as incorporating a strong service delivery component they adopt a systems strengthening approach that attempt to tackle policy, financing and institutional issues that hinder progress in the WASH sector. They also work nationally to ensure all districts can reach everyone and maintain services indefinitely. This means that when programme partners leave the district, the mandated authorities will (in theory) have the capacity and capability to perform essential functions routinely and sustain services.

The CoWaSS project aims to provide safe drinking water, sanitation facilities, and promote better hygiene practices for 270,000 people, including 65,000 schoolchildren, through the provision of new WASH infrastructure and behaviour change campaigns. Moreover, the project aims to support the ongoing national water-sector reform by clarifying roles and responsibilities across various Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs), and ultimately strengthening mandated WASH institutions at district level. The project collaborates widely and involves all concerned stakeholders at district level (such as Hukumat authorities and Tojikobdehot) for planning the investments in water supply and sanitation infrastructure as well as managing those services.

CoWaSS is being implemented through a partnership of the International Secretariat for Water (ISW), Helvetas and CAICO. The programme structure is briefly described as follows:

- Helvetas and ISW are collaborating with the Ministry of Energy and Water Resources to implement water sector reforms and influence policy at the national level. Much of this work is about advocating for national government leadership, so that better WASH systems are established to drive progress. This means a focus on policy reform, better planning, coordination structures, financing mechanisms, institutional arrangements and performance monitoring.

- ISW is collaborating with government authorities to create district-wide and town-wide WASH plans. This means delivering high-quality services and establishing systems so that all aspects of water supply service delivery and sanitation chains are addressed. It is also about ensuring that local institutions (such as KMK) have greater finance and capability, so they can work more effectively in providing support to local service providers and operators. In addition, ISW and project partners are working with the private sector and academic institutions respectively to build market-based approaches and to generate evidence as to what works.

- ISW are also directly involved in providing improved water and sanitation services, working with local contractors. The provision of these services will inevitably involve recurrent costs. Moreover, these systems will require regular operation, maintenance, and asset replacement. ISW and CAICO are working to establish tariff structures that will better reflect the true cost of service delivery.

Phase 1 of the CoWaSS programme began in 2021 and will conclude in 2025, with Phases 2 and 3 expected to continue until 2030. Interventions will vary between rural and urban areas but will seek to address the following factors across all contexts. First, they will be working to ensure there is real demand for improved water and sanitation services and hygiene behaviour change in Sughd Region at both community and household levels. Second, ISW and its partners will need to ensure the design and implementation of these services are of high

[5] The Agenda for Change Alliance comprises of 14 INGO's that are committed to district-wide approaches and systems strengthening work. See (https://washagendaforchange.org/about-us/)

quality. Next, the proposed community and operator management structures must be sufficient and functional to sustain services as government WASH systems increase their own capability and capacity. Fourth, to ensure long-term sustainability, local government entities must evolve to be capable of fulfilling their roles once CoWaSS programme partners withdraw. These foundational elements are considered crucial for achieving a district-wide approach and nationwide adoption.

Logframe targets

The full CoWaSS project logframe is shown in Annex A. The key targets that the project looked to achieve in Phase 1 are summarised below with our initial comments following.

Overarching goal: to ensure the well-being of the [target] population in Tajikistan is improved thanks to effective, equitable and sustainable decentralised water, hygiene and sanitation services.

Outcome 1: People in the target areas make use of sustainable and safely managed water and sanitation services and adopt good hygiene practices.

This requires all water supply and sanitation systems to have been constructed to high professional standards and to be operational. Monitoring data must be collected and analysed to compare it with baseline service level information.

Outcome 2: Local, district and oblast authorities and service providers manage drinking water, sanitation and hygiene services under a district-wide approach efficiently, effectively and sustainably.

This means mandated authorities have adequate resources and capability to perform essential functions routinely.

Outcome 3: Policies and implementation guidelines are conducive to effective and financially viable district-wide water supply and sanitation services.

This forms part of the CoWaSS project's systems strengthening work. It will be necessary for policy reform work to lead to better planning, which in turn leads to increased and assured funding for district actors and increased capability.

Objective and Scope of the Evaluation

The terms of reference for this assignment stated as its core purpose to *'validate the achievement of the project outcomes as well as to give some foundation to concepts for strategic orientation and fresh ideas from an external point of view for increasing the effectiveness and guidance for quality assurance of drinking water and sanitation facility solutions'.*

The main scope and objectives of this evaluation are threefold:

- First, to provide insights into the **overall performance** of the project's performance during Phase 1 (2021-2025) following the OECD- DAC criteria of relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability.
- Second, to analyse the project **performance in mobilising key new approaches**, notably the "**comprehensive approach**".
- Third, to formulate recommendations useful for the preparation of the **next phase (Phase 2)**.

During the inception phase it was agreed the evaluation will provide, in roughly equal measures, a looking back or evaluative component and a looking forward contribution. It was also agreed the evaluation will look for evidence of the project's relevance and fulfilment of project outcomes, development efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability of the Swiss support. This is in accordance with OECD-DAC criteria.

In the inception report the consultants' made comments about the extent to which the extensive number of evaluation questions could be answered rigorously. The final evaluation questions are provided in Annex B and discussed in the findings section.

For the looking forward aspect, the terms of reference also asked for several other questions to be considered. These are outlined below:

- Was the project's theory of change valid and realistic? Shall it continue being used as a guiding framework in Phase 2?
- Are there recommended adjustments to the logical framework (outcomes and outputs) and approaches for the next phase?
- Were there changes in the context (particularly regarding the policy framework) during the first phase that represent opportunities or challenges to the project? What are the recommendations to use or address them in the second phase?
- Are there already (if any) elements that need to be replicated and / or scaled up for the next phase? Are there specific elements that need to be documented or developed in this regard?
- What are the recommendations for stronger involvement of the national, regional and local authorities (and potential scaling up through them) in the next phase?
- What elements of the comprehensive approach need particular attention in phase 2? What are the strategies, implementation modalities, tools, etc. that would be needed?
- What are the recommendations regarding the strategy for increasing access of households to safely managed sanitation services that could be included in the next phase?

- What are the recommendations to achieve the overall end of project system level changes (scale up of decentralised full cost recovery WASH supply, change in institutional arrangements for water service provision)?
- What are the recommendations (if any) to increase the internal (i.e. coordination and cooperation with other projects and implementing partners of SDC and SECO) and external compatibility (i.e. further coordination and cooperation with the World Bank, EBRD and other IFIs) in the next phase?

These additional 9 questions are discussed at the end of the findings section.

Intended audience

The intended audience and readership for the review is the: SDC/SCO, the consortium partners ISW, Helvetas, and CAICO, together with the other donors active in the sector, implementing partners as well as with the main Tajik government counterparts.

Deliverables

The timeframe for all deliverables is shown below in Table 1.

Table 1: Summary of key evaluation deliverables

Deliverable	Timeframe	Brief comment
Inception Report	Early February.	A final inception report, outlining the data collection approach and methods.
Initial findings presentation	End of February	A presentation to consortium partners distilling the initial findings. This was to be undertaken at the end of the country visit.
Final evaluation report	By mid-May	The report was to be submitted to SDC HQ and Swiss Cooperation Office in Dushanbe within two weeks after return from the mission. The revised final report is expected two weeks after SDC/SCO staff has commented the draft.
Final presentation	By the end of May	A presentation, summarising the key findings and main recommendations

Evaluation Process

Commencement

The first assignment meeting was held online on January 28th with the evaluation team and project partners. This provided an opportunity for introductions and an opening presentation by ISW. Visits to Tajikistan followed at the beginning of February 2025.

Methodology

Desk review

A review of key programme documents was undertaken that included the following documents.

Table 2: List of documents reviewed

Document name	Brief description
CoWaSS Theory of Change	A logic model for how the CoWaSS programme will achieve higher level impacts.
CoWaSS Programme Log frame	Details the intended activities, outputs, intermediate outcomes and overarching goal.
Data files	Details of water and sanitation services implemented or under construction.
CoWaSS baseline date	Outlines initial needs assessment in Sughd Region.
Background documents	CoWaSS programme rationale; progress reports and mid-term reviews.
SDC Strategy for central Asia	Outlines the donors' key intentions across multiple sectors for the central Asia region
CoWaSS stakeholder lists	Details project partners and key informants
CoWaSS Programme partners	Provides background information on the programme and its intentions
Safe Drinking Water and Sanitation Project reports	Mid-term reports

Key informant interviews

Several groups of key informants were identified. These are set out in Table 3. Full names are provided in Annex B.

Table 3: Key informant interviews and focus groups interviewed

Key Informant Category	Number Interviewed	Description
Donor partners (SDC)	3	Representatives from the funding donor SDC
Government representatives at national level	5	Representative from key government Ministries based in Dushanbe

Government representatives at regional level	17	Government representatives based in Sughd Region, who oversee support to district authorities.
Government and partner representatives at district level	43	Including local district and partners directly engaged in the CoWaSS project.
Implementing partners	5	Members from ISW, Helvetas and CAICO
WASH sector and development partners	6	Including members from other NGOs.
International Finance Institutions	5	Representatives from other finance institutions

Country visits

The terms of reference called for a visit to Tajikistan and Sughd Region. The evaluation team took the view to visit as many locations as possible over a three-week period. The budget enabled the team to spend just under two-weeks in Sughd Region with a further week spent interviewing project partners and government counterparts in Dushanbe. A full visit schedule and itinerary is shown in Annex C.

Analysis

Within the overarching evaluation matrix, interview transcripts were distilled and aligned to the main OECD-DAC criteria and the key Evaluation Questions. The feedback and issues arising were then grouped and discussed between the Evaluation Team so they could be distilled into key findings.

Findings

Findings According to OECD DAC Criteria

Relevance

The main evaluation questions for this section are as follows:

EQ1: To what extent is the CoWaSS programme design a good fit for the local context and the identified needs of target beneficiaries?

The evaluation finds that CoWaSS is rooted in the districts, as part of the district-wide approach, and ISW has a long-term presence in Sughd Region. The CoWaSS project's design is, in our opinion, a good fit for the local context and needs of target beneficiaries. There is a high demand for better WASH services in Sughd Region and communities are willing to pay higher tariffs for improved service levels. This is a key feature of the CoWaSS programme's design. The Sughd region is also acknowledged to be highly vulnerable to the effects of climate change and earthquakes, and the CoWaSS project's 'comprehensive' approach is designed to take these wider environmental factors and external risks into consideration. The project's approach also emphasises the importance of achieving impact at scale. This fits with the needs of target beneficiaries across the wider Sughd Region and is important because high poverty levels exist in Tajikistan, compared to other former Soviet Republics.

EQ2: To what extent is the CoWaSS programme aligned to national policy and strategy?

A key strength of CoWaSS is that it focuses on both service delivery and systems strengthening components, which are designed to help address and contribute to solving key problems that undermine sustainable WASH service delivery. CoWaSS works with national and local government institutions and is designed to involve the relevant MDAs in the delivery of its programmes. This includes the Ministry of Energy and Water Resources, as well as those institutions responsible for health and WASH in schools. This national level engagement is important because it is understood that local institutions are under-resourced and struggle to provide effective external support to communities and institutions, such as schools and health centres.

The evaluation found that CoWaSS is aligned with key national level initiatives. For example, at national level, the project fits with the Tajikistan State Program for Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation[6]. The primary purpose of this new strategic plan is to increase water supply and sanitation coverage across all states by 2032. This is to be achieved through a mix of state corporations, such as KMK, and the establishment of Drinking Water Organizations in more remote and rural areas. This corresponds to the approach being applied by CoWaSS.

Beyond the alignment with national policy and strategy, the CoWaSS project also collaborates with district, regional and national level authorities. At a local level CoWaSS aims to support the performance of the State Unitary Enterprise (SUE) Khojagii Manziliyu Komunali (KMK) who are the main 'WASH' actor in the sector. KMK's mandate is WASH service provision in urban and rural areas at district level, covering the entire country. However, like many government institutions, KMK faces severe financial challenges, has inefficient procedures, lacks accountability mechanisms and has limited ability to invest in infrastructure from its own

[6] The State Programme on Water and Sanitation 2032 is the strategic framework that is designed to help Tajikistan achieve SDG6, but it still pending approval.

resources or from the central budget. The CoWaSS project's engagement in national policy and strategy work is designed to help address this issue.

EQ3: To what extent will the CoWaSS programme remain relevant if circumstances change?

CoWaSS has been able to adjust in response to policy changes and institutional reforms. For example, the project now engages with the Committee on Housing and Communal Services (CoHCS), which reflects its ability to remain relevant. By presidential decree CoHCS was created in 2024, with the revised mandate for policy and regulation of the drinking water and sanitation sectors. At the time of writing, CoHCS was still in its infancy. However, moving forward CoHCS will now be the mandated government entity for policy and regulation in Tajikistan as well as the management of investments in the drinking water and sanitation sector. This is an example of the projects ability to evolve and align with changing policy and strategy – even if these new institutional arrangements are still taking shape.

CoWaSS also remains highly relevant because it is rooted in local level action, while also emphasising the importance of government-led systems strengthening. This is important given the current decline in Overseas Development Assistance (ODA), where there have been recent cuts by the United States Administration as well as others, such as the UK, German and Swiss Governments. CoWaSS focuses on addressing real needs at household, community and institutional levels, and the project encourages better compliance and coordination across several actors at local and national levels. CoWaSS remains relevant because it also encourages communities and government to invest more to support their own WASH development. This approach is designed to ensure WASH services can continue to function as intended, while 'higher-level' reforms are underway.

Specific sub-questions:

Are the roles and needs of communities and village organisations relevant and considered?

The evaluation found the project aims to address WASH problems that communities experience, while also focussing on professionalising service delivery arrangements. It also encourages government institutions to provide effective external support to community and village-level organisations. These are both positive aspects of the projects design. However, it is too early to determine if community-level roles and needs have been adequately addressed because the water supply systems are not yet operational.

Are the assumptions made, particularly regarding the involvement of local actors and their willingness to engage in trying new and changing their roles (e.g. provision of technical assistance to rural water operators by Tojikobdehot) and approaches (e.g. engage in life cycle cost reflections) still valid?

In discussions with national and regional level government stakeholders, 'alternative models', such as those being proposed through the CoWaSS project, are seen as valuable mechanisms for increasing overall water supply coverage in rural areas - with the caveat that the systems are correctly built and managed by a responsible legal entity.

The creation of 'Public Organisations (POs)' under the CoWaSS project are recognised in law, while at the same time allowing communities and village level structures to play a decisive role in developing sustainable service delivery. POs however require external support for two key areas: The first concerns financial sustainability & legal issues. If WASH services do not perform well, and service levels decline, there is the distinct possibility that people's willingness to pay higher tariffs will decline. The second issue concerns technical support, particularly around the continuous maintenance and repair of borehole pumping equipment (pumps, control panels and floats). Government structures (such as Tojikobdehot) are currently unable to provide adequate external support, and, unless significant institutional

improvements are made, a more feasible option may need to be considered, such as developing interim partnership with national NGOs or the private sector. A key finding from the evaluation is the evolving roles of new institutions are being supported by CoWaSS, but there needs to be greater recognition that these management arrangements will take time to mature and become effective. The CoWaSS project's own monitoring is light in detail as to how these transitions and systems strengthening arrangements will be achieved in practice. Furthermore, there should be far greater clarity regarding the essential (basic), intermediate and advanced functions the government institutions should be performing. There is no evidence this is documented as part of a continuous capacity building plan, which in-turn should be feeding into a district-wide WASH plan.

Coherence

EQ4: To what extent is the CoWaSS programme compatible with the other policies and strategies of SDC and SECO?

CoWaSS is highly compatible with the overarching strategies of SDC, SECO and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD). These organisations are all investing significant sums of money to provide improved access to water supply and wastewater infrastructure and strengthen Tajikistan's resilience to climate change impacts. For example, the EBRD has supported more than 168 projects in Tajikistan at a cost of 900 million Euros. SECO have invested more than 200 million Euros to support the construction and supervision of critical infrastructure. These approaches fit well with the aims and intents of CoWaSS, which is supported by SDC and providing water and sanitation infrastructure at scale.

A key finding is that more documented learning and reflection should be generated by CoWaSS, showing how large infrastructure programmes can be delivered efficiently through government systems. For example, WASH services in Sughd Region are constrained by limited management capacity within local government institutions. Reforms are ongoing but it is unclear what local institutions (such as KMK) are doing now that they were not doing before to support infrastructure delivery. In our opinion, the CoWaSS project needs to be more transparent as to what reform initiatives are achieving. The evaluation finds that in-situ learning and practical experience should be informing the thinking and practices of EBRD, SDC and SECO.

As an example, the evaluation found the EBRD has limited knowledge and appreciation of CoWaSS, and that coherence between donor partners and project implementers could be strengthened considerably. Engagement with key donors who are active in Tajikistan should be an integral part of the CoWaSS project's core mission, given that further infrastructure investment will be required to achieve a district-wide approach. We found little evidence of donor partner meetings being held to generate learning and insights to attract further WASH investment.

EQ5: To what extent is the CoWaSS intervention compatible with national WASH systems in Tajikistan?

CoWaSS aims to make WASH systems more effective at national and local levels. However, the evaluation found it is less evident as to what specific system weaknesses the project is addressing in a systematic manner. A key finding is the project needs to better conceptualize Tajikistan's WASH systems, such as its policies, laws, institutions and finance that inter-link to form the wider system. Specific barriers to progress need to be identified and it should be clear as to what action and corrective measures have been taken by CoWaSS, to report against progress achieved. The process being applied should be more evident.

With regards to alignment and compatibility with other WASH actors (particularly donors), discussions with Asian Development Bank (ADB), the EBRD and the World Bank (WB), show there is limited knowledge of CoWaSS. This suggests compatibility with others has not been adequately planned for. These International Finance Institutions (IFIs) differ in their modus operandi, as they operate entirely within government structures at different levels. For example, EBRD has focussed on urban water and sanitation in district centres, while WB tends to focus on larger water supply schemes, in major urban centres. During this evaluation ADB suggested a learning event is required to share knowledge and learning across the WASH sector, which would be a useful precursor to CoWaSS Phase II. On a positive note, the full cost-recovery concept being applied by CoWaSS is of particular interest to these IFIs.

Effectiveness

EQ6: To what extent has the CoWaSS programme been implemented well in accordance with best practice for district-wide approaches?

When considering effectiveness, it is important to note that some aspects of the programme sit within the control of the consortium partners, while others lie outside, such as the programme's wider systems strengthening work, which must be government-led.

A key constraint in assessing effectiveness is that the construction of CoWaSS water supply systems was incomplete during our country visit. None of the water supply systems are functioning, which makes it impossible to judge their operational performance, nor the capability of the operators and any attempts to collect tariffs and generate revenue.

We have little doubt the water supply systems under construction have the potential to provide significant benefits for the target communities and households. However, some examples of poor-quality construction were identified during our visits, and it is our judgement that better construction supervision is required. The problems identified need to be addressed before people are willing to pay for these new services. Issues raised are shown in Annex X.

During our site visits it was also observed that sanitation systems do not address all aspects of the sanitation chain, which suggests the 'comprehensive' approach envisioned is yet to be achieved. It was found that systems for treating and disposing of human sludge safely do not yet exist, which represents a risk to the environment.

A further constraint on effectiveness is that it will also take time before government institutions are fully effective. It is our judgement that capacity building is still very much in progress and district level institutions still lack human, equipment and financial resources. A key finding from this evaluation is that the CoWaSS project needs to be generating learning and demonstrating what capability changes are taking place. For example, financial sustainability is a challenging aspect of rural water supply. CoWaSS project beneficiaries are encouraged to pay higher tariffs for improved service standards. However, it is yet to be seen whether all life-cycle costs will be covered, and it is much less clear how the programme's policy influencing work will lead to increased and assured budgets from national government to local institutions.

There was no evidence of a documented district-wide plan existing, against which progress is being measured. If it exists it was not made available to the evaluation team. This inevitably means it is difficult to determine what the original baseline situation was, what incremental and final WASH targets have been set and whether progress is advancing as intended. Best practice for district-wide approaches emphasises the need for all actors to be working to a single WASH plan, or roadmap, in an open and transparent manner. This appears to be lacking at the end of Phase 1, and robust monitoring systems should be in place with implementing agencies and decision-makers reviewing progress and generating learning routinely.

A further key finding is the CoWaSS programme has no conceptual framework for how the district-wide approach or 'comprehensive' approach will be achieved. This is likely to be more

complex than ISW implementing their planned activities and other consortium partners providing training on tariffs or engaging in higher-level policy discussions. The CoWaSS project should be much clearer as to what it is prioritising and where it can maximise impact. In our opinion the process being applied is fundamental to the achievement of success and needs to be evident.

EQ7: To what extent has the CoWaSS programme achieved its intended impacts?

The CoWaSS programme aims to ensure *the well-being of the population in Tajikistan thanks to equitable, effective and sustainable decentralised water supply, sanitation and hygiene services.* In the previous Evaluation Question, we highlight there are many aspects of the CoWaSS programme that remain work in progress. This inevitably has a direct impact on the programme achieving its desired impacts. However, its intermediate outcomes are described below with our findings following.

Outcome 1: People in the target areas make use of sustainable make use of sustainable and safely managed water supply and sanitation services and adopt good hygiene practices.

The evaluation finds that CoWaSS has the potential to bring about improved access to water supply and sanitation services, as well as the adoption of sound hygiene practices. However, this is yet to be achieved. Water supply systems are still under construction. Sanitation services have been constructed at household and institutional level, but overall demand for sanitation services appears low and sanitation marketing has not gained traction. Additionally, all components of the sanitation chain need to be addressed to prevent faecal sludge continue being disposed untreated to the environment. Overall, the project partners need to take stock as to why progress has been slower than intended and reach agreement as to what should be done next.

Outcome 2: Local, district and Oblast authorities and service providers manage drinking water, sanitation and hygiene services under a district-wide approach efficiently, effectively and sustainably.

The evaluation finds that local, district and oblast authorities are currently under-resourced and often struggle to perform essential functions routinely. However, there is little evidence that the CoWaSS project is giving due attention to process as well as activity. For example, the way in which district and national level authorities are planning together, undertaking joint monitoring and working collaboratively to determine how a district-wide approach can be achieved, sustained and replicated elsewhere. A District WASH Plan or document was not available during the country visit. Instead, District Development Plans remain the formal socio-economic plan applied at the district level. On the positive side, these plans are costed, and there is some evidence of specific budget lines for drinking water provision. However, technical leads interviewed (for health, environment, economic development etc.) highlighted planning meetings were few and irregular. Some were even unaware of the District WASH Plan, which suggests more needs to be done to promote a district-wide approach. The evaluation finds the journey ahead to be undertaken by local, district and oblast authorities needs to be better mapped out so progress can be measured and corrective action taken as necessary. For example, in Phase 1, what are the essential functions these entities need to perform and how will they transition in Phases 2 and 3 to become more advanced?

Outcome 3: Policies and implementation guidelines are conducive to effective and financially viable district-wide water supply and sanitation services.

The CoWaSS projects intervention at national level, primarily with the Ministry of Energy and Water Resources, assumes that policy change will lead to better planning and budgeting. The CoWaSS Theory of Change (ToC) implies that policy reform will lead to institutional change and 'the new role and responsibilities of KMK and Tojikobdehot are developed and agreed with all stakeholders and reorganization is successfully implemented at the national and

regional level. This forms a key part of CoWaSS systems strengthening work. However, it is unclear whether this government-led change will be forthcoming and whether it will gain momentum. Some progress has been made, such as the creation of a new committee on Communal Services. The evaluation found the prospects for increased and assured budgets for KMK at district level, decentralised governance and increased resources remains uncertain.

The CoWaSS ToC also includes a set of risks and assumptions as to how higher-level changes will be achieved. In our opinion, the existing ToC should be reviewed and updated based on practical experience and learning. This evaluation identifies this needs to happen as there may be a significant lag before improvements in district level governance are evident. This needs to be factored into CoWaSS planning.

Overall, the evaluation found that all these intermediate outcomes and intended impacts remain work-in-practice as progress on CoWaSS has been slower than planned. This is reflected in Tables 6, which summarises the status of water supply systems under construction.

Table 4: Status of Water Supply Systems in CoWaSS Phase 1

District	Location	Construction Period	Target population	Cost	Brief description	Traffic light rating
J. Rasulov	Villages of Mehrgon, Gulafshon, Kavsar, Navruz (Jamoat Hayoti Nav)	2022-2023	7013	663,722.81	Under construction	
	Villages of Uzbeqkishloq and Zarafshon (Jamoat Somoniyon)	2023-2025	18572	1,245,664.38	Under construction	
Kanibadam	Villages of Niyozbek and Madaniyat (Jamoat Kuhandiyor)	2024-2025	14596	786,916.56	Under construction	
	Pahlavonqalla (Jamoat Kuhandiyor)	2024-2025	1160	76,522.08	Under construction	
	Kuchak system (group of the villages Kuchkak, Khamirjuy, Somoniyon, Faizbor, Bekobod)	2025-2025	30000	1,231,751.82	Under construction	
		Totals	71,341	4,004,577.65		

EQ8: To what extent has the CoWaSS programme been able to adjust to circumstances and any unintended impacts?

We have noted in the previous EQs that there are many aspects of the CoWaSS project that remain work-in-progress. Furthermore, there are some issues with the quality of construction. While the project has acknowledged these issues in its internal reporting there probably does need to be a better process for measuring progress, reflection and taking corrective action. A key finding from the evaluation is that routine monitoring of the project's progress should better link to the ways of working between CoWaSS partners and there should be corresponding adjustments in roles and approaches. As an example, for delays or construction quality issues, the project should take appropriate action and document project adjustments or corrections clearly.

Likewise, in supporting water sector reforms and systems strengthening work there should be a clear process of learning and reflection with further detail or revisions being made to the initial ToC. The evaluation found that reviews should be undertaken between consortium partners and with government counterparts and there should be clear agreements documented as to what adjustments and revisions to strategic approaches are required.

Specific sub-questions:

To which extent are the approaches of the project, particularly the comprehensive approach and system strengthening approach, being applied in the implementation? What is working well? What are points of improvement in view of the next phase?

It is worth reiterating that CoWaSS has no conceptual framework to determine how the comprehensive approach and its systems strengthening work is being applied in practice. This means it is difficult to understand what are the essential factors that need to be considered so that progress can be measured. This is not fully consistent with district-wide approaches and the evaluation identifies three areas for potential improvement. The first is requirement to measure improvements in physical WASH service coverage at district level between 2021 and 2025.The second is to determine how government institutional capability has increased since 2021. A third requirement is to understand what learning is being generated to understand how Tajikistan is making the journey from a district-wide approach in Sughd Region to nationwide coverage.

Are there existing and available methodologies, tools, end products, etc., supporting the implementation of the comprehensive approach (e.g. regarding district WASH plans) and other key approaches of the project (e.g. regarding sanitation marketing, capacity strengthening, policy dialogue, etc.)? Are they sufficient to reach the outputs and outcomes? If not, what adjustments are recommended?

Except for the application of higher tariff rates to achieve full cost recover, the evaluation found no evidence of the CoWaSS project using specific tools and approaches. In the communities visited many of the approaches being applied appear 'conventional' and we found no evidence of the programme doing anything radically different to other WASH programmes that have gone before.

In our opinion there needs to be a better explanation as to how the comprehensive approach being applied differs to other WASH programmes. There should be greater transparency and evidence of the tools and products being applied that are leading to better sanitation marketing and demand for sanitation or the adoption of a district-wide approach. Consequently, CoWaSS needs to better articulate its own ways of working and better monitor its own performance.

Is the project able to take an effective role in the policy dialogue? Are there key success and challenges? What adjustments are recommended?

The evaluation identified that the CoWaSS consortium plays an active role in policy dialogue and the consortium model is nicely balanced between service delivery and policy work. Helvetas is actively engaged in national policy dialogue at a national level and are a respected organisation in Tajikistan. This represents a positive aspect of the project's policy dialogue and systems strengthening work.

Nevertheless, many of these systems strengthening efforts must be driven by the government. In order to demonstrate progress the project does need to document successes and challenges, and this should be reflected by revising the current programme ToC. The realities are that policy change can take time and policy change does not necessary lead to corresponding improvements in planning, budgeting and institutional behaviour. The CoWaSS partners should emphasize and better demonstrate how the current actions of institutions have evolved. CoWaSS should also demonstrate how policy change happens in Tajikistan, based on documented successes during Phase 1.

To what extent are the approaches and activities considering transversal aspects of gender and good governance? What adjustments are recommended?

Feedback received from key informants suggests the key to success is to ensure inclusive, participatory, and transparent approaches are applied during the selection process by all stakeholders (including women). This enables them to feel heard and to provides them with a genuine sense of ownership throughout all phases of the process. Discussions with stakeholders (including women), highlighted gaps in consultations around infrastructure designs (water systems and sanitation facilities), and limited inter-actions between project stakeholders and contractors during the construction phase. Some government stakeholders also raised concerns about transparency, particularly around the choice of contractors and knowledge of overall infrastructure investment costs. One national organisation expressed surprise that their rich history and knowledge of social accountability in Tajikistan was not harnessed by the CoWaSS project.

To improve participation and transparency, key elements should be adopted from a previous SDC funded project "Tajikistan Water Supply & Sanitation (TajWSS) Project[7].The Water Trust Fund process outlines eight key stages over the course of approximately two years from inception to completion of water supply system. All stages are sequential and bring together a broad range of stakeholders who are active in the rural drinking water and sanitation sector at district level to establish a shared coordination/decision making body, which not only includes representatives of local government, but also private, civil society organisations and community members (including women).

Efficiency

EQ9: To what extent will the CoWaSS programme intervention deliver, or is likely to deliver results in an economic and timely way?

On the positive side we understand CoWaSS has tried to strike a good balance between project costs and organisational overhead costs. It was reported by ISW that just 6% of the overall budget has been spent on overheads (excluding staff salaries).

Although a rigorous cost-effectiveness study has not been undertaken, we note that WASH infrastructure accounts for a significant component of the programme budget. However, many aspects of the programme's delivery are slower than originally anticipated. The delays in

[7] DESIGNING SUSTAINABLE WATER SUPPLY SYSTEMS IN TAJIKISTAN A step-by-step guide to design, construction and ownership: ORKHAN ALI, Oxfam Tajikistan

completing the water supply systems are the clearest example of delayed implementation. This implies there has been some loss in implementation efficiency. We also note that some of the construction work will need to be repeated to make good any deficiencies. This represents a further loss in efficiency.

The programme correctly focuses on strengthening WASH systems locally and nationally. This includes clarifying roles and responsibilities, as well as strengthening capability within key government institutions. However, the programme does not measure or quantify the efficiency of this work. Furthermore, even if it did, the programme needs to determine its own contribution to systems strengthening work.

As an example, progress has been made on sanitation during Phase 1, with latrines constructed at institutional and household levels. However, it is acknowledged by CoWaSS project partners that more time is needed to mobilise the commitment of the mandated authorities. This is required to increase demand for sanitation services, encourage uptake of sanitation marketing and better ensure that all aspects of the sanitation chain are being addressed. A constraint on efficiency therefore is the ability to determine exactly what the CoWaSS programme's contribution is to wider systems strengthening work.

Our overall impression is that significant planning has taken place in Phase 1, however progress towards the intended logframe outputs has been slower than planned and some corrective work will be required before water supply systems are commissioned and become operational in mid 2025. Furthermore, while the project has worked closely with government counterparts, bringing about actual changes in institutional capacity and behaviour takes time and there appears to be a lag before mandated institutions are able to fulfil their roles and responsibilities as intended.

EQ10: To which extent have management, monitoring and steering mechanisms supported efficient implementation (resource allocation, spending and redirection, risk management, logistics and procurement decisions, etc.)?

We noted during the country visit that the project's achievements in implementing all activities efficiently have been mixed. On the positive side, there is evidence of the CoWaSS project undertaking situational analysis and reporting on progress routinely. For example, ISW shared updates against its logframe, which is an indication of the project reviewing its own implementation challenges to keep progress on track.

The project has been affected by externalities that hindered progress and are beyond the direct control of project partners. Examples include the Covid-19 pandemic in 2021, and the ongoing conflict between Ukraine and Russia, which has impacted on the transfer of funds from Europe to Tajikistan. Project implementation has also been hindered within Tajikistan by the slow rate of progress made by government counterparts. The acceptance of proposed rural water supply management models by Tojikobdehot (TO), and government procurement systems were highlighted as two examples of issues that hindered progress.

In 2024, ISW reported that nine village water supply schemes were still under construction, which would serve an estimated 42,000 people. It also flagged the need for better follow-up monitoring and the need for further political engagement to drive through the necessary policy reforms. In 2024, the project requested a 1-year extension to ensure construction work can be completed and the budget fully utilised, this requires a spend of 1.9 million Swiss francs in 2025. Other than project extension requests, the evaluation found no evidence of Early Warning Notices being issued routinely by implementing partners to project donors, so changes can be made in real time. Our overall impression is that ISW's own project planning has tried to ensure efficient implementation. However, given the external challenges and the ambitious nature of the project it would be worthwhile reviewing the management mechanisms for subsequent phases to better understand the boundary line as to what lies within and outside the control of CoWaSS project partners (ISW, CAICO and Helvetas).

Specific sub-questions:

Is the project set-up (management, monitoring, and steering mechanism) supporting efficient implementation and adequate for implementing the promoted approaches?

The evaluation identified several areas where improvements could be made. Three stand out. The first is the necessity to ensure high quality construction, supervision and post construction testing of water supply and sanitation services. This is within the control of ISW, and this evaluation heard about several delays and inadequacies with the current water supply systems.

The second consideration concerns long-term performance monitoring that will be undertaken by KMK. This is necessary if a district-wide approach is to be realised, because government agencies will need to measure progress and understand the status of water supply and sanitation assets. This is one of the future objectives being set under the Committee for Housing and Communal Services (CoHCS) and may create an opportunity for CoWaSS to influence how the performance monitoring system is designed and implemented.

Third, the evaluation found secondary evidence that district authorities have received coaching and support to improve coordination mechanisms, with advice as to how these can operate. However, we found limited evidence of continuous monitoring regarding the performance of the new steering mechanisms nor how their performance is to be assessed in future.

Is the role and contribution of consortium members and their cooperation within the consortium favourable for the project implementation?

While the consortium partners are trying to bring about systems change within government systems there needs to be better recognition as to what outcomes are realistic and achievable. Consortium partners can contribute to change, but it is highly likely there will be a significant lag before the desired outcomes are evident and the attribution of consortium members will be indeterminate.

This means consortium partners need to identify where they can maximise impact in delivering water supply and sanitation services, where they can contribute to wider systems change and being realistic as to what lies outside their direct control.

On a day-to-day level some respondents felt that consortium partners could work together more closely and some, such as CAICO, felt their role on the project has been under-utilised and that they could provide more support to assist project implementation if their role were expanded. Helvetas highlighted the need for the increased participation of consortium partners in project planning, decision making and resource allocation.

The evaluation team was informed that a specific 'Consortium Governance Document' exists, governing how the consortium interacts both internally (between the Consortium members) and externally (vis-à-vis third parties). However, the document was not shared when requested by the evaluation team.

Impact

EQ11: To which extent were the intended (planned and, where applicable, revised) "higher-level effects" (i.e. lasting changes in the lives of beneficiaries) of the intervention (or are expected to be) achieved?

This section considers the direct impacts and changes the project has achieved against its proposed logframe targets (*Outcome 1: People in the target areas make use of sustainable and safely managed water and sanitation services and adopt good hygiene practices*).

The evaluation found that the water supply interventions that form a key component of the CoWaSS project have the 'potential' to deliver significant benefits for communities and households, reaching an estimated 95,000 people. Sanitation interventions should also benefit thousands more at home and in institutions (schools and health centres). These impacts will be significantly increased if broader WASH systems are reinforced, according to Outcome 2 and Outcome 3 of the log frame.

The evaluation found that all CoWaSS water supply systems are still under construction, and the intended impacts have not yet been realized. Physical construction work commenced in 2024 and is due to be completed by mid-2025. Furthermore, if the impact potential is to be realised and sustained, the quality of design, construction and supervision needs to the highest professional standards. Several 'quality' issues were identified during site visits this evaluation and are summarised below.

- In one Jamoat, concerns were also expressed about the risk of exposed main lines (bridging an irrigation canal) freezing in exceptionally cold weather.
- The Hukumat in one District highlighted there were construction defects with one water supply scheme & that they were not yet ready to sign-off on the work. Concerns were also raised about the high numbers of water meters (300) that froze during an exceptionally cold spell. This was experienced during an earlier testing of the water supply system.
- Households expressed their willingness to pay a higher Tariff for a reliable water supply, particularly those purchasing water from water vendors.
- Households expressed their willingness to invest in shower/bathing facilities inside the house, when a reliable water supply becomes available.
- Two CoWaSS *'villages'* Under construction highlighted their concerns about access to a reliable energy source in winter months (November – April). Both locations were considering the purchase of generators.
- One *'village'* disagreed with the water system design proposed by CoWaSS. The *'village'* preferred a water tower, while CoWaSS proposed high tech pumps to pressurize the network.
- Communities being served by one CoWaSS water system in were dissatisfied with several issues: 1) intermittent energy supplies in winter months; 2) poor quality of the pipe connections (many leaks); and 3) design of the water meter boxes (above ground) which are prone to freezing in winter (costly to replace the water meter).
- One community raised concerns regarding the absence of considerations for extreme cold weather in the design of the main water system, highlighting a lack of consultation.

Progress on sanitation is more advanced, in the sense of household and institutional latrines having been constructed, however there are also issues concerning construction quality, wider support and uptake by government entities and the need to address all aspects of the sanitation chain. This means interventions so far will deliver partial impacts until wider aspects of the sanitation chain are addressed. Specific issues identified as part of this evaluation include the following:

- One kindergarten expressed their satisfaction for improved sanitation facilities & addition of DEWATS unit (pre-CoWaSS). Desludging costs for the DEWATS unit are prohibitive, but contributions were collected from parents (twice) to de-sludge the unit.

- Several pre-CoWaSS visited schools expressed their satisfaction at receiving new sanitation blocks. Several concerns were however raised: 1) smell, particularly in summer; 2) lack of ceramic squat pans; 3) design of urinals (boys); 4) cost of desludging; and 5) maintenance costs.
- Several CoWaSS visited schools expressed their satisfaction at being selected to receive new sanitation blocks – the majority still under construction. Several concerns were raised: 1) lack of overall consultation; 2) availability of water; 3) cost of desludging; and 4) distance to sanitation block.
- One District Technical College expressed their satisfaction for improved sanitation facilities & the planned addition of DEWATS unit. However, concerns were raised about the lack of a plan for a reliable energy supply. Willingness to become a District entrepreneur for solar & pumping technology (repair & maintenance).

EQ12: To what extent is the CoWaSS programme 'contributing' to government-led systems change?

This section considers the impacts achieved in relation to Outcomes 2 and 3 of the logframe. Outcome 2 refers to the ability of *local, district and oblast authorities and service providers manage drinking water, sanitation and hygiene services under a district-wide approach efficiently, effectively and sustainably*. It is worth reiterating that this impact cannot yet be fully assessed because the water supply systems are not yet operational. There is evidence of pre-CoWaSS project interventions, which reported 14/14 systems achieving full cost recovery. However, this does not necessarily mean that local governance arrangements are in place and government-led systems change has been achieved. The impression from the evaluation is that substantial training and support has been provided by the CoWaSS consortium, but systems change does need to be government-led, and this is still an ongoing process.

Outcome 3 focuses on policy influencing work and in particular water sector reform in Tajikistan. However, in our opinion there appears to be a focus on policy reform and change, rather than what national and local institutions are doing now, compared to what they were doing before. For example, what increased and assured financial resources are local institutions receiving now, compared to before. Furthermore, what capability do they have to respond rapidly when service breakdowns occur and how is the district-wide approach being increasingly government-led. The evaluation found limited evidence that these system changes are being monitored and have taken place. Examples include the following:

If the CoWaSS interventions are to be sustained and up-scaled significant government-led contributions are required. Several conditions are expected to have been achieved, such as:

- Improvements in policy, now leading to better planning and budgeting, with corresponding rises in budget allocations for district level authorities.
- District level authorities having better governance arrangements in place to coordinate and manage a district-wide approach.

District authorities are now mandated to coordinate, monitor, and oversee the district-wide approach. The evaluation found no evidence of a written district-wide strategy or plan existing or having been approved by the mandated authorities in Sughd Region. There was also no evidence that district entities now possess asset registers, asset replacement plans, or undertake routine monitoring to ascertain performance levels across the different management entities.

Sustainability

The CoWaSS project must place a strong emphasis on solving the sustainability challenge, if services are to be delivered at scale. In other words, once the service has been delivered by ISW and their partners (or contractors), then communities and households should move up

the service ladder, but certainly not regress. The main evaluation questions are discussed below.

EQ13: Will the actors, other than ISW and its NGO partners, fulfil their roles in supporting sustainability, after the withdrawal of the NGOs?

The evaluation found that all the CoWaSS funded water supply systems are still under construction, which means the water is not yet flowing. During site visits, several construction issues were identified. Unless directly addressed by ISW and their team, these issues could jeopardize future sustainability prospects. The evaluation also found little evidence that mandated authorities have set aside sufficient resources to deploy their technical and professional staff, together with vehicles and equipment to carry out routine monitoring of the new water supply systems once they have been tested and commissioned.

CoWaSS partners are currently focused on building new water supply systems, creating professional operating models, and adjusting tariff structures to reflect actual operating costs. However, rapid external support from government entities, coupled with routine monitoring, will still be required and there is less evidence of government authorities being ready to fulfil this role. A key finding from the evaluation is that greater political support at national, and regional levels is required so that mandated institutions at district level have the skills, resources and finance to fulfil their mandate. They will also need increased government investment to expand and maintain service coverage as district-wide coverage increases. The evaluation found no details as to how district budget allocations should increase incrementally aligned to a district-wide plan.

Addressing the sustainability challenge in Sughd Region also requires an understanding of the availability and quality of local water resources and there is no evidence that surface water and groundwater monitoring and management is taking place through the CoWaSS project. The evaluation found little evidence this aspect is being addressed within the current programme.

EQ14: Are the Community- Based Maintenance Systems for rural water supply, and its equivalent for sanitation and hygiene, fit- for purpose?

The proposal for decentralised governance from national control to local governments should proceed fully and this fits well with the CoWaSS intentions. However, as well as receiving the responsibility, local institutions (such as KMK) need adequate financial, material and human resources, and full autonomy, to fulfil their mandate. This may take time to achieve, which means CoWaSS partners, local institutions and community-based management structures need to focus on key actions that will maximise impact and increase the prospect for sustainability.

EQ15: Will the manner of implementation of the CoWaSS programme result in the best possibilities of sustained outcomes?

The evaluation found there is high demand for improved water supply services. People want an improved level of service and are willing to pay for it through a higher tariff rate – 4 TJS per cubic metre as opposed to national tariff rate of 1 TJS per cubic metre. The willingness to pay more shows a desire to move away from local water vendors. However, the perception of improvement must be shared by all, or the achievement of sustainability will fail.

The evaluation identified some failings in the way in which services are implemented by contractors. The planning, design, selection of technology and the quality of implementation must all be to the highest professional standards, to avoid later breakdowns and service interruption.

Sanitation service demand is behind water supply. Households operate a basic pit latrine system and when pits are full, they simply dig another, or faecal sludge is collected by farmers in a gully sucker and disposed of to fields with no treatment or safe disposal methods.

Specific sub-questions:

Our responses to the specific sub questions are shown below.

Institutional capacities / capacity development of targeted actors

Has the capacity strengthening of targeted actors led (or is likely to lead) to new behaviours (i.e. adjusting their roles to deliver water, sanitation, and hygiene services more efficiently, effectively and sustainably)?

The logic of the systems strengthening work being undertaken by CoWaSS is clear, but the realities are often very different. Systems change is difficult, and the connection between capacity strengthening and sustained performance improvements by government entities is often uncertain. It is unclear how the institutional capacities (human, equipment and financial) have improved. For example, what targets have been set by government and how is the CoWaSS project contributing to strengthening institutional capacities. Government leadership is crucial, but more monitoring, reflection, and learning by CoWaSS to evaluate the achieved new behaviours and performance metrics is required. This appears to be a gap in the current project.

Is the ownership of the systems guaranteed? How is the issue of ownership/property of the water systems reflected in the national legislation?

Public Organisations (POs) are legally registered entities with the Department of Justice. They have the responsibility of filing Annual Reports and in paying any necessary Government taxes. In certain cases, the POs are the owners of key infrastructure (e.g. pumping stations) and in others, they 'lease' or have 'contractual agreements' with other government structures such as the State Railway Company or Vodokanal. Regarding the water distribution networks, POs are the beneficial owners of the networks

Are the property assets (property of water sources, property of terrains for infrastructure and pipe crossing) registered?

Where the PO is the beneficial owner of any water production facilities, then the assets are registered with Ministry of Justice. Similarly, when the PO is the beneficial owner of the water supply networks, these are also registered with the Ministry of Justice. There also need to be written agreements with the landowner, and it is our understanding that these are also recorded and registered.

Social sustainability

Are the water and sanitation technologies (e.g. urine-diverting-dry- toilets) and services constructed and promoted through the project used and accepted by the population (including women, children, and vulnerable populations)?

If constructed to high professional standards, communities and households accept the WASH services and technologies provided and there is evidence of people being willing to pay for higher standards of service. However, due to programme delays it has not been possible to evaluate the service levels that people are receiving, nor how responsive operators and government institutions are when problems arise. It was noted during the evaluation that a record of technology options for different groups in society is not maintained. This could outline the pros and cons and would potentially be useful if district-wide approaches are to be replicated elsewhere.

Are principles of good governance promoted?

We have no doubt the CoWaSS project is advocating for good governance, and local governance is vital for the CoWaSS project's success. This is about how local institutions manage their affairs, makes decisions, enact national WASH policy and supports programme implementation. While the CoWaSS programme is advocating for these changes, it is less clear what governance related changes have been realised and whether they are monitored. Our understanding is that many of the governance related weaknesses identified remain. The CoWaSS project should be documenting sustained improvements in performance and recording what local institutions are now doing that they did not do before.

Financial sustainability

Is the provision of water and sanitation services (in particular with regard to tariffs, billing systems and management set-up) financially sustainable?

At present financial sustainability is an uncertain issue. The project plans to increase tariffs to ensure the water supply systems are financially sustainable. A four-fold increase in the state tariff has been proposed and there seems to be a willingness and ability to pay for higher quality services. Operators have also received bespoke training on tariffs and revenue collection by CAICO. These are all positive steps taken by CoWaSS.

However, the water supply systems are not yet operating, which means it is not possible to evaluate the tariff impact, billing systems and revenue generation or how revenue is reinvested to sustain services. It will also need to be determined if the tariff is appropriate for different user groups, whether it achieves full cost recovery and what ongoing government subsidies are required to achieve a district-wide approach, especially if more remote and vulnerable populations need to receive pro-poor subsidies.

Do the development partners (at the operational level, the level of technical assistance and strategic planning) have the financial resources to maintain the intervention's benefit over time? Are the approaches taken by the project to increase financial sustainability (especially regarding technical support) showing results?

Government institutions at district level remain starved of financial resources and are likely to be constrained for the foreseeable, which is why the project needs to continue advocating for increased financial resource allocations. The evaluation found no evidence of increased and assured budgets across district entities, which means their contribution will most likely be rather limited. As the water supply systems are not yet operational it is not possible to see how operator revenues are being spent, for example on general overheads, personnel or asset management. The increased tariff rate proposed by CoWaSS should enable them to be more effective, but this is yet to be determined.

Technical sustainability

Are water and sanitation technologies constructed through the project of appropriate quality?

The quality of construction was flagged by communities and households as an issue of concern. The evaluators also observed shortcomings in the quality of construction during field visits. This is an issue the CoWaSS project needs to get right if water supply and sanitation systems are to perform as intended. Post construction support by government institutions and broader governance issues are known to be issues of concern in Tajikistan. This means the

single most important area for the CoWaSS project is to ensure the planning, design, construction, supervision and testing of water and sanitation technologies is high quality, because what happens in the implementation period will largely determine what transpires later. The main issue appears to be the supervision of multiple hired contractors by CoWaSS.

Are daily operation and maintenance adequate to ensure quality services to the users?

The suitability of daily operation and maintenance cannot yet be determined as the water supply systems are not operational. However, it was noted by the evaluators and highlighted by interviewees within government that technology options place a high reliance on imported equipment. One example cited is the adoption and use of Grundfos pumping equipment. Some interviewees felt that alternative and locally manufactured pumping systems may be more appropriate, because they are less expensive and easier to procure. The choice of high-tech Grundfos equipment for chlorine dosing has also been adopted by CoWaSS, while previously, simple drip chlorine dosing approaches were employed (see Annex F). In the evaluator's opinion, the simpler the technology the better. High tech equipment is difficult and costly to repair in remote rural areas without an established service provider close by. In a previous evaluation of decentralised wastewater treatment systems[8] in Tajikistan in 2024 a key finding is that simpler solutions that can be promoted by local actors should be pursued, rather than an over reliance on more expensive and complex processes working.

Environmental sustainability

Are climate change and disaster risk reduction (towards natural risks such as earthquakes, landslides, droughts, flooding, mudflows, etc.) sufficiently and adequately considered?

CoWaSS water supply systems have been designed with future population growth and increased demand in mind, but it is less certain how climate change and other natural disasters have been considered in the planning and design process. Although the likelihood and impact of future climate and disaster risks are difficult to determine, we found no evidence of these risks being conceptualised or any documents detailing necessary actions by government counterparts and service operators in the event of climate and natural disasters occurring. For example, flood and drought risk assessments or response plans were not available. Additionally, there was no evidence of groundwater sources being monitored to determine the environmental impacts of increased water abstraction. Measurement of rainfall and groundwater levels has not been factored into the management duties of the service operators.

Are the applied sanitation solutions environmentally sustainable?

Presently, sanitation solutions are not environmentally sustainable. The facilities provided in Phase 1 only address the issue of faecal sludge containment. This has been achieved with the construction of latrines at target households, schools and health care facilities. Other aspects of the sanitation chain, such as safe removal, transportation, treatment, safe disposal or reuse of faeces, are not addressed. Current waste management practices involve either households digging a new latrine pit, or local farmers removing faecal sludge from pits and disposing directly to neighbouring fields, resulting in contamination of surface water, groundwater, and agricultural land. Interviewees flagged this as high risk and not environmentally sustainable.

8

The overall demand for sanitation also lags water supply in Sughd Region. The uptake of sanitation marketing by government institutions has not been forthcoming and there has been limited progress. CoWaSS has presented itself as being 'comprehensive' and 'district-wide' and yet applied sanitation solutions have struggled to gain momentum. It is our judgement that barriers to progress should be reviewed, and constructive ways forward need to be found between the CoWaSS partners and key government institutions. The evaluation found no evidence of a costed district-wide sanitation plan, outlining how this issue can be addressed.

Knowledge management

Are there good practices that should be documented and communicated at national or international level?

The impression gained from the country visit is the CoWaSS programme is still very much in the planning and implementation phase of its work and, as a result, there are not major achievements in service delivery or systems strengthening work that can be shared more widely. This is not to downplay the programmes achievements, which have some promising initiatives, such as the higher tariff rates and planning for financial sustainability. However, at this stage water supply systems are not operational, and learning is not being generated to be shared more widely.

Considerations for Phase 2

In considering what needs to change for a subsequent Phase 2 the additional evaluation questions are summarised here with our response following.

Was the project's theory of change valid and realistic? Shall it continue being used as a guiding framework in Phase 2?

In our opinion the Theory of Change (ToC) should be reviewed and updated. A clearer explanation is now needed for why government-led outcomes will occur, based on project experiences so far in Phase 1. The current ToC simply says that new water policy will be updated, leading to new institutional arrangements and their successful implementation. This is an oversimplification of how change will happen. At the end of Phase 1, CoWaSS partners should assess the political feasibility of this work and whether policy changes will improve planning, budgeting, and capacity at the district level. In preparation for Phase 2, CoWaSS needs to prioritise where it should focus its efforts to maximise impact. At present, the project seems to refer to applying a comprehensive and district-wide approach, but this evaluation finds that there needs to be much greater scrutiny of progress that has been made.

Are there recommended adjustments to the logical framework (outcomes and outputs) and approaches for the next phase?

The purpose of the logframe is to measure progress and success. Given progress in CoWaSS Phase 1 has been slower than anticipated it is intuitive to think that activities and outputs need to be reviewed and updated to reflect actual progress. This will allow the project to identify whether the original outcomes and goals for Phase 1 are realistic and to demonstrate the corrective measures that need to be taken.

Were there changes in the context (particularly regarding the policy framework) during the first phase that represent opportunities or challenges to the project? What are the recommendations to use or address them in the second phase?

The rationale for updating the policy framework is because there are many aspects of the WASH system in Tajikistan that are poorly performing, and they need reforming and strengthening. While the CoWaSS partners are active in supporting policy reform it is less clear how the underlying causes of such weaknesses are being addressed. It would make sense to update the Theory of Change to reflect what change has been achieved and what actions were successful.

Overall, it is our opinion that there will be a lag before improvements in the WASH system are fully realised. CoWaSS partners can 'contribute' in a small way to this process, but ultimately it will need to be government-led. For this reason, CoWaSS should focus on actions at a local level that will maximise the prospect of sustained service provision. This involves recommending increased budget allocations for district-level institutions and the decentralisation of governance arrangements. Under the district-wide approach there should also be evidence of better compliance and coordination, so that donors, service providers and government entities are working to a single WASH plan. There also needs to be renewed focus on better monitoring and continuous learning.

Are there already (if any) elements that need to be replicated and / or scaled up for the next phase? Are there specific elements that need to be documented or developed in this regard?

More attention should be given to the process that is being followed to achieve a district-wide approach, as well as the activities implemented by the CoWaSS partners. This refers to the way in which government institutions and CoWaSS partners are working together (and with others) to implement a single cohesive plan, while also monitoring and reflecting on progress and adjusting as necessary.

What are the recommendations for stronger involvement of the national, regional and local authorities (and potential scaling up through them) in the next phase?

In the case of national, regional and local authorities there needs to be greater clarity as to how their leadership role and capability will be strengthened in a systematic way. When seeking help, service operators and communities should know what level of support they can expect. There should a monitoring framework and checklist that can determine how governance arrangements and national systems are being strengthened.

What elements of the comprehensive approach need particular attention in phase 2? What are the strategies, implementation modalities, tools, etc. that would be needed?

In our opinion government institutions and CoWaSS partners could more constructively approach the district-wide approach in the pursuit of better services for all. The programme should highlight specific aspects and clearly show the progress achieved that makes it comprehensive. A significant shift in approach is necessary to demonstrate that the political commitment, adopted strategies, and levels of professionalism are genuinely transformative rather than merely formulaic.

What are the recommendations regarding the strategy for increasing access of households to safely managed sanitation services that could be included in the next phase?

Sanitation marketing was proposed as the approach to deliver sanitation results at scale. This does not appear to have happened, and in our opinion CoWaSS partners and relevant government counterparts need to reflect as to why this is the case. The project should then

be prepared to take corrective action to address this problem. This may even require a redistribution of tasks (and budgets) between the consortium partners so that organisations like Helvetas can play a leading role on key initiatives.

What are the recommendations to achieve the overall end of project system level changes (scale up of decentralised full cost recovery WASH supply, change in institutional arrangements for water service provision)?

Given the steady progress made in Phase 1, the evaluation finds that CoWaSS is at a crossroads, and it needs to reflect on actual progress and decide what is realistic and achievable, A key recommendation, therefore, is the project needs to develop a roadmap demonstrating how the district-wide approach will be achieved in a phased and incremental manner.

CoWaSS partners may contribute positively to system level changes, but ultimately there are many aspects of the district-wide approach that need to be government-led. If these are not forthcoming, then measures need to be put in-place so services can be sustained while more difficult system level changes take place.

What are the recommendations (if any) to increase the internal (i.e. coordination and cooperation with other projects and implementing partners of SDC and SECO) and external compatibility (i.e. further coordination and cooperation with the World Bank, EBRD and other IFIs) in the next phase?

The CoWaSS project should join with others to influence change. Consortium partners have a strong track record in Tajikistan and at the end of Phase 1 the project should reflect on its progress working with government counterparts. There should be more extensive dissemination and promotion of practices that are working. This should also include advocacy for more effective implementation of government decentralised policies. The evaluation finds the consortium partners need to be able to tell a clear and evidenced-based story about what has been achieved in Phase 1 and combine this with more deliberate attempts to influence and the national WASH agenda. If CoWaSS wants to step up into a leadership role then it needs to engage more with IFIs with a clear vision.

Conclusions

Overall Rating of Project Performance

In the preceding sections the CoWaSS project has been evaluated against the OECD DAC criteria of relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability. The main rationale for this is to determine what progress has been made in Phase 1, whether the project is fit-for-purpose, and what changes are required in any future Phase 2. The conclusions and lessons learned follow on directly from the key findings and are summarised below (Table 9).

Table 5: Summary of findings

OECD-DAC Criteria	Traffic light score	Brief description
Relevance		A key strength off the CoWaSS project is its relevance to national policy and strategy and local needs.
Coherence		Strong evidence the CoWaSS project works with key mandated institutions at national, regional and local levels. However, it does need to engage with other IFIs and demonstrate the progress that is being achieved.
Effectiveness		Mixed progress so far. Key water supply systems are yet to become operational, and the project needs to better demonstrate the improvements in institutional capability that have been achieved since 2021.
Efficiency		The project strives to ensure efficiency but has experienced delays. There are also examples where corrective (remedial) work will be required for WASH systems.
Impact		The project's progress has been slow/steady and key outputs must be delivered before impact can be measured.
Sustainability		Will remain elusive unless challenges with implementation and construction quality are addressed. Measures also need to be put in place to ensure infrastructure can be sustained until government institutions can fulfil their mandate.

The CoWaSS project is highly **relevant** to the local water and sanitation needs of households and communities in Sughd Region. It also fits well with national policy and strategy in Tajikistan. CoWaSS aims to establish a District Wide Approach for WASH that can be replicated & upscaled nationwide by demonstrating sustainable service delivery & generating evidence as to what works and why. Project partners (notably Helvetas) actively engage in systems strengthening work at a national level, while ISW, with some support from CAICO, are active at regional & district levels. Different 'components' of WASH (such as water supply & water resources) are beginning to inter-link. The evaluation found there is strong evidence that different Ministries and Committees are 'open' to pursuing professionalized service delivery models, with more and better qualified personnel operating systems. This change focuses on enhancing service levels in rural areas, where government lacks capacity, moving away from community management.

With regards to **coherence**, CoWaSS fits with SDC's and SECO's policy and strategy intentions. It has also contributed to on-going and necessary reforms in the Tajik water sector, most notably through the National Water Sector Reform (2015-2025), and in establishing a promising policy framework. The Water Sector Reform Program for 2016-2025 was adopted to satisfy demands for sustainable and efficient management of water resources, as well as creating institutional and legal mechanisms for water management, recognized by government. The has resulted in several initiatives, the Water Code of the Republic of Tajikistan, the Law of the Republic of Tajikistan "On Drinking Water and Wastewater

Treatment" and the Law of the Republic of Tajikistan "On Water Users Associations", which have been adopted and are being implemented.

The CoWaSS project is currently not on track to achieve its intended output and outcomes by the end of Phase 1. This has directly impacted on the project's **effectiveness**. The construction of the main water supply systems, that are central to the CoWaSS model, need to be completed within the next 6 – 7 months. There are currently 5/5 water supply systems that are still under construction. High quality construction and supervision is key to a well-built water system, and the evaluation heard from several stakeholders who expressed concerns about 'quality issues' in relation to systems currently under construction. There is evidence that technically and financially sustainable water supply systems exist, built by ISW in pre-CoWaSS projects. But the problems identified do need to be corrected as a matter of urgency.

The evaluation found there is a high demand for improved sanitation facilities in institutions (schools, health houses[9], technical colleges). However, in some locations, users expressed concerns about certain design elements of the sanitation facilities, this included construction defects, smell (particularly in summer), difficulties related to cleaning, and concerns about emptying costs. It is felt that there is a lack of inter-active engagement between the project, the institutions, and contractors. School sanitation systems require better oversight & monitoring.

In rural areas, all aspects of the sanitation chain – containment, removal, transportation, treatment, disposal/reuse all require attention. Most alarmingly there is evidence that sludge removal services are unregulated and that untreated sludge from septic tanks is being actively discharged onto agricultural land, with the potential to contaminate surface water and groundwater. Government agencies and authorities share little awareness or knowledge of the current situation.

Our impression is the CoWaSS project strives to work cost-effectively both in terms of its overheads and WASH programme work. However, programme delays and the need to repeat construction work means that opportunities to ensure efficiency are lost. Every effort also needs to be made to record time spent on systems strengthening and policy advocacy work, to determine whether these activities are efficient.

The **impact** of the CoWaSS programme is still Work-In-Progress and yet to be realised. Three main issues in particular stand out. The first is that systems strengthening work will take time and there will likely be a lag before policy change leads to better planning, budgeting and improvements within local government institutions. Nevertheless, more could be done to measure the institutional changes taking place and determine contribution. Second, many of the water supply systems are yet to be completed. This means communities are yet to experience the intended benefits and impacts. Furthermore, there is strong evidence that corrective work is required to ensure water supply systems are implemented to the highest standards. The third factor concerns sanitation. While there has been some progress in constructing toilets and sanitation facilities in schools and communities, not all aspects of the sanitation chain are addressed which reduces wider impacts.

While acknowledging the important work that has been undertaken by project partners to increase tariffs, **sustainability** is likely to remain elusive unless construction quality issues are addressed. There are three broad areas to consider. First, systems strengthening work is likely to take time and there will be a lag before local institutions have adequate human, financial and material resources because of better policy, planning and national budget allocations. This means institutional weaknesses are likely to persist for some time. Second, even if there are improvements in national policy and guidelines, they may not always be adhered to and there can be political interference, which can undermine the best attempts of local institutions

9

to keep service working. Third, the CoWaSS project can take a few simple actions to improve the performance of WASH services and the single most important area for improvement should be on the planning, design, construction and supervision period. What happens in this period determines to a great extent what will happen later and it's an area over which CoWaSS project partners have some control.

Lessons Learnt

This evaluation acknowledges the challenging reality that CoWaSS faces in trying to implement and achieve a district-wide and comprehensive WASH plan. The project is trying to simultaneously extend sustainable WASH services in Sughd Region, while also strengthening government systems at national and local levels so this work can continue indefinitely. Challenges with government institutions has persisted for years in Tajikistan. This means the CoWaSS project needs to demonstrate progress, reflection and learning and it behoves the project to find ways that district-wide plans can be achieved. This also means the project needs to document its experiences and be transparent as to what is and is not working. These lessons need to be shared with others and the project needs to have a conceptual framework for how district-wide plans can be achieved, which is based on practical experiences.

In our opinion, progress in Phase 1, so far, is not fully consistent with the requirements mentioned above. Issues arising include the following:

- Steady progress but with delays and construction deficiencies in the water supply systems provided so far. These water supply systems are still not operational.
- The reasons why demand for sanitation is lagging water, and limited attention for all aspects of the sanitation chain need to be investigated.
- The relative improvements in government institutions are difficult to gauge and it is unclear what capability exists now that did not exist in 2021.
- There is the necessity for all WASH actors in Sughd Region to be working to a single district WASH plan.

Given these issues, CoWaSS needs to be cautious about calling itself 'comprehensive' and 'district-wide' and it behoves the project to demonstrate progress that is being made.

Several lessons have emerged from this evaluation that have been learned from other WASH evaluations over the past decade. Four stand out.

First, more emphasis needs to be given to the implementation of known good practice. All the water and sanitation services being provided as part of CoWaSS need to be implemented to the highest professional standards. This means attention to planning, design, construction and supervision, post construction testing and long-term monitoring. There are examples in the CoWaSS programme where progress has been slower than anticipated and construction quality has been raised as an issue of concern by the intended beneficiaries. Responsibilities for construction quality need to be addressed in Phase 1 as a matter of urgency.

Second, if the project is behind progress, then there needs to be clarity regarding the corrective follow up action that is being undertaken. This needs to be articulated in a clear and transparent manner and reflected in revised logframes and ToCs. A key requirement is the need to reflect on recent progress with government counterparts and ensure there is a shared vision for achieving progress.

Third, The CoWaSS consortium is relatively small, consisting of three main partners. However, there is evidence that more collaborative working is required to maximise the effectiveness of each organisation. Interviewees from some programme partners felt they were 'under-utilised' and it was unclear how the consortium reflects on progress and adjusts to maximise impact.

Fourth, WASH systems strengthening work in Tajikistan is still in its infancy and it is unclear how policy influencing work is likely to trigger better planning and budgeting, resulting in increased institutional capability at district level to sustain WASH services. The CoWaSS programme needs to have a vision as to what is possible, based on their collective experiences over the past four years. This means that future planning needs to be balanced with realism based on progress made so far in Phase 1. A phased could be developed that can better guide national and local organisations as to how progress can be made, with a particular focus on the most vulnerable communities and households. A key priority is to ensure improved water and sanitation services for all, with more effective arrangements for sustainable services. In turn this could then ensure that everyone at district scale has at least basic services with effective arrangements for sustainable services. Alongside this the CoWaSS programme should identify what are the fundamental conditions for progress to be made. Some of these are captured in the recommendations section.

Discussion

The evaluation found there are many good initiatives in the CoWaSS programme's design. These include the initiative to pursue a sector-wide approach, which provides a rich source of learning for the wider WASH sector, which also includes new trials of water supply management models and tariff structures. The project also looks to address barriers to progress and develop a candid understanding of sustainability challenges and performance issues within government entities. The project also has ongoing efforts to engage in higher-level systems strengthening work by reforming national water policy.

However, it is also important to be clear about the end goals, whether they remain realistic, and to understand the journey that has been undertaken since 2021. The programmes Theory of Change currently expresses the final vision as 'universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water and to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene'. Regardless as to how this is expressed the evaluation finds that the CoWaSS programme needs to be clearer about the key elements that must be in place to make progress. Now there appears to be a gap between the progress and change that has been achieved since 2021 and the ambitious goals that have been set. This means the programme needs to re-evaluate what is possible and then break the journey down into three realistic but pragmatic phases. For example:

- Phase 1: What are the essential actions that need to be undertaken to lay the foundations for a district-wide approach.
- Phase 2: While the CoWaSS programme and SDC will continue to play a key role, how will government leadership be more prominent and how will the WASH systems in Tajikistan evolve.
- Phase 3: With the groundwork provided in Phases 1 & 2, how will the WASH sector in Tajikistan reach maturity – with growing government leadership, finance and sector effectiveness.

This process is essentially a 'roadmap' approach that needs to be planned, monitored and discussed routinely involving CoWaSS partners and government entities. While acknowledging that CoWaSS has an overarching project document, the evaluation finds it needs to be clearer about the destination, whether it remains realistic, and whether the process or journey that CoWaSS is undertaking will be reached. It is a complex process and therefore the only way to proceed is iteratively, implementing actions, generating learning, reflecting to see what does and does not work and adjusting in a series of iterative cycles. This process needs to be clearer.

Recommendations

Our recommendations made here are in relation to two timescales:

- actions that can be taken in Phase 1.
- actions that can be started now and will support implementation in Phases 2 (and 3).

Recommendations for Phase 1

1. **Complete and monitor infrastructure works (R1). CoWaSS should complete remaining construction work and work with relevant actors to commission the water supply and sanitation services.** Any construction defects or concerns raised by communities should be addressed by ISW. Measures should also be put in place to improve the supervision of construction work delivered through various contractors. This is necessary because the quality of infrastructure design, construction and supervision will largely determine what transpires next with regards to service performance and sustainability. ISW should then work with Private Operators to measure service performance levels across all systems to obtain a true understanding of performance indicators, customer satisfaction and operating costs.

2. **Asset Management Planning. Linked to R1, ISW should support the establishment of Asset Management Plans to determine how the desired water supply service levels can be provided in the most cost-effective manner.** This will provide government institutions and operators with information on the asset base and the ability of different systems to meet user expectations. This should form a key component of a district-wide approach. Asset Management Plans will help determine if the higher tariff rates are adequate to cover operational and repair costs, and this information should make the WASH sector more attractive to potential investors. As a starting point, in addition to measuring service levels, the following data should be collected:
    - Location and complete information regarding the assets being provided.
    - Details of asset failures and repairs.
    - Cost of repairs
    - Cost of asset replacement.
    - Time taken to respond and repair assets.

3. **Clarify necessary actions before and in response to WASH services breaking down (R3). A simple logic model should be developed by CoWaSS partners and agreed upon that outlines responses and actions that 'will' be taken when WASH services breakdown.** Attention is needed to ensure the POs responsible for the management, operation, and maintenance of the water supply infrastructure under construction, are established and adequately trained to take on this role. Given many of the water supply systems are still under construction, this may require support activities being carried over into Phase II. CoWaSS should also continue to strengthen district level institutions focussing on the human and technical capacity at District and Jamoat levels required to sustain WASH services. The evaluation found no evidence these assistance plans currently exist.

4. **Develop costed District WASH Plans (R4). These plans should be developed by CoWaSS partners and outline a phased approach for providing WASH services at district scale.** They should be accessible and incorporate real time information from the Asset Management Plans (R2). They should also detail the evolving roles and

responsibilities of different actors as institutional capabilities are strengthened. Once started the development and refinement of a district-wide plan should be a continuous process to be updated routinely by government entities. This information should be fed upwards to inform national budget allocations.

5. **Document evidenced learning and share with others (R5). Before the end of Phase I, CoWaSS partners should hold a learning event that takes stock of CoWaSS progress in Phase 1.** This learning workshop should be undertaken in collaboration with other district WASH stakeholders. This not only serves as an opportunity to increase visibility of the project, but it is also an opportunity to engage with the new Government WASH Sector Lead (CoHCS), other WASH Sector organisations, donors, UN Agencies and the IFI's. Such an event could be jointly funded, and it would be helpful in determining where to focus attention at the outset of Phase II. After the learning event, CoWaSS partners should develop a prioritisation matrix to identify where the project can maximise impact in Phase II. This will help to prioritise and redistribute tasks. This is also required because the project currently refers to itself as being comprehensive, but there are clearly some aspects that are not yet gaining traction (such as sanitation marketing), and progress has been limited.

6. **Strengthen the capability and social accountability of CoWaSS (R6). Ahead of Phase II, all partners should review composition of the consortium and revisit the '*Consortium Governance Document*' to ensure a more equal representation of CoWaSS partners in decision making and activity.** CoWaSS should have detailed discussions between partners to reflect on progress and to understand organisations desirability to do more. The addition of a national partner to the consortium with capacities in Social Accountability will provide a much-needed bridge between civil society, POs, and government. A key role could be to improve the community engagement component of the project to ensure water system user are consulted about design preferences for their systems. Sanitation users should be consulted to identify user friendly designs/preferences. Women, youth, girls, boys and minority groups also need to be included in decision-making processes, alongside those ultimately responsible for managing institutional facilities.

Recommendations for Phase 2

In Phase 2 there should be clear evidence of a district-wide approach being rolled out. This is likely to be a more challenging phase, because intuitively more activities should be led by government institutions, and there should be clear evidence that district planning is coming to fruition.

7. **Advocacy, influencing & visibility at the national level needs to be strengthened to both raise the profile of the CoWaSS project model and share sector wide learning (R7). In Phase 2 CoWaSS needs to better demonstrate its impact and the process that is being applied.** Advocacy work should not only focus on acceptance of the model or process being applied but also seek to create a network around 'replicability' by engaging with financial institutions, donors, and government. There is also an opportunity to engage with the newly created CoHCS, responsible for WASH related policies and regulation (guide CoHCS on financing, monitoring, performance indicators, etc.).

8. **Develop and articulate a roadmap for future progress (R8). CoWaSS (led by ISW) should develop roadmaps for the target districts of Kanibadam and Jabbor Rasulov, with the aim of achieving full WASH coverage.** This will map out the systems strengthening and infrastructure (Capital Expenditure) journey ahead and

help CoWaSS to articulate the process that can be replicated and adapted by other districts. The roadmap can also be used to attract sector investment. This is important given further CoWaSS requires further investment and engagement with other potential finance mechanisms (replicability), government and the private sector. Elements of the roadmap can also be based on learning from Water Trust Funds, particularly around financial transparency, and social accountability.

9. **Institution building (R9). In terms of systems strengthening work CoWaSS partners need to build institutional capability in such a way that it will outlive the CoWaSS project.** These reforms need to be identified, and they need to be significant so they do not stop or can be reversed when CoWaSS ends. A possible example is to ensure there is a district level mechanism for 3rd party quality assurance for water supply & sanitation system construction. This requires qualified 3rd party monitoring for major infrastructure components (water pumping sites, reservoirs, water treatments, etc.), blended with social accountability mechanisms for distribution network pipe networks.

10. **Generate a significant body of evidenced learning (R10). Documenting learning & evidence of what works is vital if the 'comprehensive' approach is to be upscaled successfully.** Lessons learnt and relevant recommendations need to be systematically documented by all partners and disseminated to not only influence best practice, but to also serve as an engagement point for replicating the CoWaSS model.

    CoWaSS should also be undertaking its own targeted research into specific issues. For example, conducting further research into faecal sludge management practices in target districts would link directly to the other groundwater management and water resources work being undertaken by Helvetas, and funded by SDC. This could also serve to demonstrate the comprehensive nature of CoWaSS if there is direct crossover with other projects working on similar issues.

Annex A: CoWaSS Logframe

The CoWaSS logframe is reviewed below with the evaluation team having applied a traffic light scoring of progress at the end of Phase 1. Brief comments are also provided with respect to lessons and challenges, before proposing priority actions.

Table 6: CoWaSS logframe indicators, updated December 2024.

Hierarchy of objectives Strategy of Intervention	Key Indicators with traffic light scoring	Lessons and challenges	Future priorities
Impact (Overall Goal)	**Impact Indicators**		
The well-being of the population in Tajikistan is improved thanks to effective, equitable and sustainable decentralised water, hygiene and sanitation services	1. % of population (Women/Men) affected by water-borne diseases. *Baseline: 20% (20%/20%). Target: 10% (10%/10%)* 2. % of girls' school attendance. *Baseline: 67%. Target: 75%* 3. Number of water-related conflicts per year. *Baseline: 10. Target: 5*		
Outcomes	**Outcome Indicators**		
Outcome 1: People in the target areas make use of sustainable and safely managed water and sanitation services and adopt good hygiene practices	1.1. Number of people (W/M) & % of the population having access to a drinking water service[10] 1.1a Number of people (W/M) and % of the population having access to a safely managed drinking water service. *Baseline: 50,000 (25,500, 24,500) (18%). Target: 92,500 (47,200, 45,300) (34%).*	Water supply systems are not yet operational. Performance can only be assessed once the water is flowing.	Of great importance that water supply systems are completed to high professional standards, tested, commissioned and subsequent performance is measured.

[10] In order to meet the criteria for a **safely managed** drinking water service, people must use an improved source meeting three criteria: 1) accessible on premises (private connection), 2) water should be available when needed, and 3) the water supplied should be **free from contamination**. If the improved source does not meet any one of these criteria but a round trip to collect water takes 30 minutes or less, then it will be classified as a **basic** drinking water service (public tap stand). JMP definition.

Hierarchy of objectives Strategy of Intervention	Key Indicators with traffic light scoring	Lessons and challenges	Future priorities
	1.2 Number of people & % of the population having access to a sanitation service[11] 1.2a Number of people (W/M) and % of the population having access to a **safely managed sanitation system at home**. *Baseline: 165,300 (84,300/81,000) (60%). Target: 185,000 (94,000/91,000) (65%).* 1.2b Number of people (W/M) and % of the population having access to **safely managed sanitation in schools.** *Baseline: 0 (0/0) (0%). Target: 18,500 (9,435/9,065) (100%).* 1.2c Number of people (W/M) and % of the population having access to **safely managed sanitation in health centres.** *Baseline: 0 (0/0) (0%). Target: 2,750 (1,925/825) (100%).* 1.3 Number of people & % population using handwashing facilities[12] 1.3a Number of people (W/M) and % of the population using handwashing facilities. *Baseline: 137,500 (80,000/57,500) (50%). Target: 275,000 (140,000/135,000) (100%).*	Sanitation facilities constructed but not all are complete. Some deficiencies in construction quality observed that need to be rectified. Sanitation facilities do not yet have flowing water.	Complete sanitation facilities at households and institutions. Provide handwashing facilities and measure corresponding changes in hygiene and user satisfaction.

[11] There are three main ways to meet the criteria for having a **safely managed** sanitation service (SDG 6.2). People should use improved sanitation facilities which are not shared with other households, and the excreta produced should either be: 1) treated and disposed in situ, 2) stored temporarily and then emptied and transported to treatment off-site, or, 3) transported through a sewer with wastewater and then treated off-site. If the excreta from improved sanitation facilities are not safely managed then people using those facilities will be classified as having a **basic** sanitation service. JMP definition.

[12] Households that have a handwashing facility with soap and water available on premises will meet the criteria for a **basic** hygiene facility. JMP definition.

Hierarchy of objectives Strategy of Intervention	Key Indicators with traffic light scoring	Lessons and challenges	Future priorities
Outcome 2: Local, district and oblast authorities and service providers manage drinking water, sanitation and hygiene services under a district-wide approach efficiently, effectively and sustainably	2.1 % functionality of water supply systems[13]. *Baseline: 18%. Target: 90%.* 2.2 % Tariff collection. *Baseline: 0 Target: 85%*. 2.3 % of water supply systems for which operation and maintenance costs are covered through tariff collection[14]. *Baseline: 0%. Target: 100%.* 2.4 % increase in investments in water and sanitation services[15] 2.4a % increase in investments (total). *Target: 5%* 2.4b % increase in investments (water). *Target: 5%* 2.4c % increase in investments (sanitation). *Target: 5%* 2.5 % of users (W/M) satisfied with water and sanitation service. *Baseline: N/A. Target: 75% (80%/70%).*	Water is not yet flowing, and systems need to be operational. No evidence of wider sanitation investment plans existing at district scale and no evidence of new investment. Sanitation services need to be completed.	Develop a district wide sanitation plan, outlining what investment priorities are required.
Outcome 3: Policies and implementation guidelines are conducive to effective and financially viable district-wide water supply and sanitation services	3.1 A shared vision[16] for roles and responsibilities of key actors (incl. KMK/Tojikobdehot at district/regional level) for district-wide water and sanitation services is developed. *Target: consensus on a future vision for district-*	No evidence of a single document outlining shared roles and responsibilities, against which different institutions (such as KMK)	There needs to be clarity for roles and responsibilities at district level, such as a formal MoU in the short term.

[13] Functionality is defined as follows: a system might break down during the reporting period (i.e. does not function any more at all or deliver less than 50% of its capacity). However, if the system has been repaired within a week, the system is considered as functional.
[14] This includes operation, minor maintenance, capital maintenance, and cost of capital (cost of interest payments on micro-finance and any other loans)
[15] This is the increase in fund mobilisation by the local/regional authorities to cover the costs of implementing the district WASH / Water Use Master Plans (e.g. combination of people's contribution, government fund allocation, micro-finance or bank credits, donors)
[16] The vision mainly refers to the long-term vision for an effective and sustainable WASH system (in which actors perform their functions effectively, gradually reducing dependencies from external actors). Shared means that the project strives to facilitate a process enabling key actors such as MEWR, MoH, KMK, representatives from the local and regional authorities to gradually shape this future vision based on evidence generated in the project districts

Hierarchy of objectives Strategy of Intervention		Key Indicators with traffic light scoring	Lessons and challenges	Future priorities
		wide water and sanitation services by local and central-level actors such as MEWR and KMK 3.2 Sanitation strategies or implementation plans (e.g. State Sanitation Development Plan) highlight promising sanitation approaches based on the evidence generated within the framework of the project *Target: At least 2 sanitation approaches included in national sanitation strategies or implementation plans* 3.3 Lessons from piloting tariff setting regulations are fed in reflections on payment responsibilities. *Target: consensus on payment responsibilities*	have committed/signed up to working collaboratively. As an example, CoWaSS was previously working with MEWR, but new institutions have now emerged (such as the Committee of Housing), which suggests roles remain blurred. No evidence of a state sanitation plan, with clearly defined roles. New tariff rates proposed and evidence of willingness and ability to pay but unclear how this is feeding into wider tariff policy and regulation.	This needs strong commitment from all institutions rather than a passive tolerance for CoWaSS. Highly relevant and should form part of a district-wide WASH plan. CoWaSS needs to generate evidence and lessons to influence wider tariff policy and water sector regulation.
Outputs (per outcome) and costs		**Output Indicators**		
For outcome1: People in the target areas make use of sustainable and safely managed water and sanitation services and adopt good hygiene practices				
Output 1.1	**Water supply and sanitation systems** are constructed or rehabilitated	1.1.1 # of water supply systems constructed or rehabilitated. Baseline 0 *Target: 8.* 1.1.2 # of latrines / sanitation facilities constructed or rehabilitated in institutions (e.g. schools, medical points, hospitals, jamoats, hukumats). Baseline 0 *Target: 20.* 1.1.3 # of latrines / sanitation facilities constructed or rehabilitated in communities (household level).Baseline 0 *Target: 100.*	All Work in Progress and important not to confuse pre-CoWaSS work with what has been achieved since 2021. DEWATS systems, for example, have not yet been constructed as part of CoWaSS.	Focus on getting the water supply systems operational.

Hierarchy of objectives Strategy of Intervention		Key Indicators with traffic light scoring	Lessons and challenges	Future priorities
		1.1.4 # of sanitation treatment facilities constructed or rehabilitated (blackwater, greywater, faecal sludge) at decentralised (e.g. group of households, neighbourhood) or institutional level. Baseline 0 *Target: 10.*		
Output 1.2	People in the target area are aware of good **hygiene practices**	1.2.1 # of people reached by behaviour change campaigns (hygiene, sanitation, water quality).Baseline 0 *Target: 270,000 people, 65,000 school children.*	Work in Progress	
Output 1.3	People have the capacity to **demand safely managed water and sanitation services** and monitor the service quality	1.3.1 % of new water supply systems for which a water user's association or a Drinking Water Organisation[17] is operational[18]. *Target: 80%.* 1.3.2 % of water user's associations in which a woman is involved in decision-making (president, vice-president). *Target: 50%.*	Work in Progress – Water User Associations not yet functioning. Mixed performance and women's involvement could be strengthened.	Develop a strategy to maximise the role of women in water management.
Activities (per output)		**Inputs**		
List of activities for output 1.1: - Training and coaching of key actors from the identification of needs to the construction / quality control of infrastructure (the EAWAG sanitation compendium will be used as an important tool for coaching and identification of options). **Those activities are listed under Outcome 2** - Financial contribution to the implementation of the District WASH Plans				
List of activities for output 1.2: - Identification / validation of key behaviour change factors - Coaching the Health Department (network of behaviour change promoters), local authorities, Youth Groups, and other actors (media, etc.) in developing, implementing, and monitoring the results of behaviour change campaigns - Coaching the Education department, schools' direction and parents' associations, and youth groups in integrating hygiene education at school				

[17] In case a DWO is in charge of operating the water supply system, it also plays the role of user's association. In case of other management models such as KMK/Tojikobdehot or a private operator, a user's association is set up

[18] Operational=a general assembly or a meeting is conducted annually in which activities and accounts are presented and discussed with users

Hierarchy of objectives Strategy of Intervention		Key Indicators with traffic light scoring	Lessons and challenges	Future priorities
List of activities for output 1.3: - Support in setting up and organisational development of user's associations, mainly through the coaching of local authorities, KMK/Tojikobdehot (Technical Assistance).				
Costs of outputs for outcome 1: *5,800,000 CHF*	In case of joint projects: 1) amount of SDC contribution:		2) in % of total cost:	3) Total cost:
For outcome 2: Local, district and oblast authorities and service providers manage drinking water, sanitation and hygiene services under a district-wide approach efficiently, effectively and sustainably				
Output 2.1	**Oblast, district and local authorities** have the capacity to plan, finance, and monitor water, and sanitation services, gradually reaching full coverage	2.1.1 A guide for the development of District WASH Plan considering all water uses, water protection and climate resilient aspects is available. *Target: 1 guide available.* 2.1.2 # of District WASH Plans developed in an integrated and participatory way. Baseline 0 *Target: 2 district WASH plans available.* 2.1.3 % of proposals prepared by the district authorities and accepted for funding (by donors, banks, micro-finance institutions). *Target: 50% proposals (for the 2 project districts).* 2.1.4 % tender processes led by the district authorities and supervised by an ad-hoc tender commission incl. representatives of users, KMK/Tojikobdehot, etc. *Target: 100% processes (for the 2 project districts).* 2.1.5 % Districts having a monitoring system in place enabling to report on coverage (JMP indicators) and functionality. *Target: 100% project districts.*	No evidence of district-wide WASH plans. Work is incomplete. Still at a very early stage and CoWaSS needs to better clarify the processes that are taking place to complete this work. Tender processes appear led by CoWaSS rather than district authorities. Work in Progress and both 2.1.5 and 2.1.6 need to be better evidenced to demonstrate these activities have been completed – lack of documentation.	Establish asset management plans as part of a district-wide approach.

Hierarchy of objectives Strategy of Intervention		Key Indicators with traffic light scoring	Lessons and challenges	Future priorities
		2.1.6 % Jamoats having a water and sanitation inventory in place. *Target: 100% project Jamoats.*		
Output 2.2	**KMK/Tojikobdehot** (regional / district branches) have the institutional and operational capacity to provide technical assistance to rural water supply operators	2.2.1 A review of the technical capacities of KMK/Tojikobdhot is carried out, gaps are identified and training plan is defined and implemented 2.2.2 A model agreement between rural water supply operators (DWOs) and KMK/Tojikobdehot as a Technical Assistance provider is available. *Target: 1 model agreement.* 2.2.3 % DWOs which have a signed agreement with KMK/Tojikobdehot for the provision of Technical Assistance. *Target: 50% of DWOs sign an agreement.* 2.2.4 % DWOs assessing the Technical Assistance support by KMK/Tojikobdehot as good or very good. *Target: 60 %.* 2.2.5 A business model for KMK/Tojibobdehot (district/regional level) is established. *Target: 1 business model available.* 2.2.6 # KMK/Tojikobdehot district/regional offices calculate tariff on the basis of life-cycle costs data and analysis. *Target: KMK regional office & 2 district offices.*	Lack of clarity – CoWaSS needs to better evidence what has been done. This applies to 2.2.1 – 2.2.4 inclusive. A business model exists to buy bulk water transfers, but there is no business model for daily operations. KMK wants to assume control of some of the constructed water supply systems – no evidence of a district-wide plan.	Evidence of a Capacity Needs Assessment and corresponding systems strengthening plan. A general observation throughout the log-frame is for CoWaSS to focus on getting the water supply and sanitation facilities operational, measure performance and develop stronger evidence as to how the comprehensive and district-wide approaches are being applied. Presently the project seems to be trying to do many things, and they are either partially completed or lack documented evidence as to what has happened. The process for how this is being achieved needs to be better documented and CoWaSS needs to be clear where it can maximise impact – better prioritisation and resourcing with clear timeframes.

Hierarchy of objectives Strategy of Intervention		Key Indicators with traffic light scoring	Lessons and challenges	Future priorities
Output 2.3	**Rural water operators** and **sanitation service providers** have the capacity to manage water supply and sanitation services effectively	2.3.1 # rural water operators (e.g. DWOs, private operators) newly operational having a signed delegation contract with the District authorities). *Target: 8 new recognised rural water operators.* 2.3.2 # rural water operators (Tojikobdehot, DWOs, private operators) trained and coached in technical aspects of O&M, commercial management, customer orientation, accounting, juridical aspects, etc. *Target: 8 rural water operators trained.* 2.3.3 # rural water operators with accountability mechanisms in place (e.g. yearly presentation of financial and operational reports, user's satisfaction survey, complaint mechanism). *Target: 8 rural water operators with an accountability system.* 2.3.4 # sanitation service providers trained and coached in sanitation marketing (e.g. business models along the sanitation chain), and sanitation systems and technologies. *Target: 8 sanitation service providers.* 2.3.5 # agreements signed between faecal sludge pit emptiers and KMK/Tojikobdehot (Vodokanals). *Target: 2 signed agreements.*	DWOs are registered with the Department of Justice. But no evidence of formal operating contracts. Training provided by ISW and CAICO but not by government entities, remains Work -in -Progress. Systems not yet operational Sanitation marketing yet to gain traction, CoWaSS acknowledges slow uptake by government entities. No safe systems in place for removal, treatment and disposal of faecal sludge.	

Hierarchy of objectives Strategy of Intervention		Key Indicators with traffic light scoring	Lessons and challenges	Future priorities
		2.3.6 % sanitation facilities with functional O&M in place. *Target: 90%.*		
Output 2.4	A **federation of DWOs** is set up and has the capacity to represent the voice of users at local, regional and national level	2.4.1 # DWOs in the federation. *Target: 8.* 2.4.2 # local and national sector discussions in which the federation participated. Baseline N/A *Target: 1 sector discussion per year.* 2.4.3 % propositions brought in by the Federation accepted. Baseline N/A *Target: 80%.*	Better evidence required of a functioning federation of DWOs. Greater clarity required as to what has happened.	
Output 2.5	**Health, Education and Environment authorities** at Oblast and district level have the capacity to promote the development of innovative sanitation models and raise awareness about sanitation and hygiene behaviours	2.5.1 Regional sanitation strategies - guiding the District WASH plans - are established by the Health Department using sanitation planning approaches such as Sanitation Safety Planning. Baseline N/A *Target: 1 regional sanitation strategy.* 2.5.2 A yearly sanitation innovation award managed by the Department of Health and rewarding promising sanitation models (management models, financing mechanisms, technologies) and technologies is operational. Baseline N/A *Target: 1 sanitation innovation per year.* 2.5.3 A network of behaviour change promoters is established (by the Health Department). *Target: 1 network in place.* 2.5.4 The schools' curricula integrate hygiene education. *Target: 2 districts have adapted curricula.*	No evidence of these existing. No evidence of this existing. Unclear what exists and what is attributable to CoWaSS. Although we acknowledge this has happened on pre-CoWaSS work, so should be feasible.	

Hierarchy of objectives Strategy of Intervention	Key Indicators with traffic light scoring	Lessons and challenges	Future priorities
Activities (per output)	**Inputs**		
List of activities for output 2.1: - Carry out a review of capacity and a training needs assessment (TNA) of KMK/Tojikobdehot - Implementation of the training plan - Coaching of the regional authorities in sectoral coordination and steering - Establish methodology and coach district authorities in developing District WASH Plan, considering all water uses - Support District authorities in establishing coordination and cooperation mechanisms with RBO and in advocating for prioritising drinking water use - Support District authorities in preparing good quality proposals and mobilising funds: people's contribution (through Jamoats), budget allocation, project funding, accessing bank credits - Support setting up an ad-hoc tender commission (district level) and coach the tender process for design and construction of new water supply systems - Support Jamoats in prioritizing needs and developing their water and sanitation strategies			
List of activities for output 2.2: - Raise awareness of KMK/Tojikobdehot in the region/districts on the subsidiarity principle (choice of citizen for a management model) - Develop model agreement for KMK/Tojikobdehot's (district office) provision of Technical Assistance to rural water operators - Train and coach KMK/Tojikobdehot's (regional/district office) in providing Technical Assistance: e.g. management, customer orientation, organisational development, social mobilisation, technical aspects of O&M, facilitator of a network of independent rural water supply operators - Facilitate reflections on KMK/Tojikobdehot's business model - Support KMK/Tojikobdehot in tariff calculation and negotiation			
List of activities for output 2.3: - Training and coaching DWOs in technical aspects of O&M, commercial management, customer orientation, accounting, juridical aspects, etc. - Support private enterprises in sanitation systems and technologies considering the entire sanitation chain, incl. blackwater, greywater and faecal sludge treatment, sanitation marketing - Support DWOs in tariff calculation - Support DWOs in enhancing accountability (e.g. user's monitoring, complaint mechanisms)			
List of activities for output 2.4: - Support in setting up the Federation			

Hierarchy of objectives Strategy of Intervention		Key Indicators with traffic light scoring	Lessons and challenges	Future priorities
- Organise CSPM training for the Federation - Training and coaching in advocacy for the Federation				
List of activities for output 2.5: - Train MoH/SES on sanitation systems and technologies, and on sanitation planning approaches - Coach MoH in setting up a sanitation innovation award - Support MoH in facilitating the development of a network of behaviour change promoters - Organise a refresher training on water quality for MoH/SES - Support MoE in integrating hygiene education in school curricula				
Costs of outputs for outcome 2: cost:1,000,000 CHF	In case of joint projects: 1) amount of SDC contribution:		2) in % of total cost:	3) Total
For outcome 3: Policies and implementation guidelines are conducive to effective and financially viable district-wide water supply and sanitation services				
Output 3.1	A **district-wide approach for water supply service delivery** is analysed, documented, and shared in local, regional, and national policy discussions	3.1.1 # of documented key features of the district-wide approach (e.g. related to roles and responsibilities, governance instruments, gender, District WASH planning). *Target: 5 documents.* 3.1.2 # sector dialogue meetings/events at regional and national level in which elements of the approach are presented. *Target: 5 events.*	No evidence of this documented evidence existing presently. Work in Progress, requires better documentation as to what has been achieved.	
Output 3.2	A set of complementary approaches contributing to **effective full chain sanitation services** are analysed, documented, and shared in local, regional, and national policy discussions	3.2.1 # of documented sanitation initiatives or good practices (e.g. related to institutional sanitation, greywater management or neighbourhood wastewater management practices). *Target: 5 documents.* 3.2.2 # sector dialogue meetings/events at regional and national level in which sanitation experiences are presented. *Target: 5 events.*	Work in Progress, requires better documentation as to what has been achieved. Work in Progress, requires better documentation as to what has been achieved.	

Hierarchy of objectives Strategy of Intervention		Key Indicators with traffic light scoring	Lessons and challenges	Future priorities
		3.2.3 # Sanitation training modules (e.g. Universities, Technical Schools) updated based on recent sector developments and project findings (e.g. alternative to sewer systems). *Target: 2 modules.*		
Output 3.3	Approaches towards **financial viability of water supply and sanitation services** are analysed, documented, and shared in local, regional, and national policy discussions	3.3.1 # of documented financing initiatives or good practices (e.g. tariff setting modalities, lessons related to developing bankable projects). *Target: 2 documents.* 3.3.2 # sector dialogue meetings/events at regional and national level in which experiences related to financing mechanisms are presented. *Target: 5 events.*	Strong focus on new tariff models is evident. Work in Progress, requires better documentation as to what has been achieved.	
Activities (per output)		**Inputs**		
List of activities for output 3.1: - Facilitate reflections on a future vision for the (rural) WASH system: actors' roles and responsibilities, coordination and cooperation mechanisms - Analyse and document learning resulting from piloting the district-wide approach (future vision) in the project districts - Participate actively in dialogue platforms and events at local, regional and national levels to disseminate lessons learned related to the development of this approach - Join hands with influential actors such as EBRD, SECO to shape the sector dialogue agenda and ensure the project key topics such as roles and responsibilities of key actors for an effective decentralised water management are taken up at national level - Contribute to ResEAU reflections at regional and global level				
List of activities for output 3.2: - Initial assessment that will help build consensus and also limit the number of potential sanitation systems and technologies options (e.g. find more on soil conditions, provide information on implication of each option in terms of water consumption, maintenance requirements and costs) - At scale piloting of sanitation approaches incl. institutionalising awareness raising actions in partnership with the Health and Education authorities; enhancing understanding of sanitation systems and technologies; promoting sanitation marketing; promoting innovation particularly with regard to greywater management and decentralised FSM - Analyse and document the findings of piloting different approaches in the project districts at household/community/neighbourhood and institutional level				

Hierarchy of objectives Strategy of Intervention	Key Indicators with traffic light scoring	Lessons and challenges	Future priorities
- Participate actively in dialogue platforms and events at local, regional and national levels to disseminate lessons learned from different experiences in the region related to sanitation - Contribute to the State Sanitation Development Plan, and the establishment of sanitation norms and standards - Establish cooperation with selected Universities and technical schools (including potentially with the German-Khazakh University, which has developed a WASH module with support of BPCA) - Support Universities and technical schools in adapting their curricula to the sanitation sector needs - Provide inputs to update curricula on selected issues such as on sanitation systems and technologies - Offer opportunities for internships (particularly for women)			
List of activities for output 3.3: - Pilot implementation of the new Decree on the approval of the procedure for the development of tariffs for drinking water supply and sanitation services, incl. training different actors; enhancing accountability particularly of water operators (e.g. public audits); facilitating a dialogue on payment responsibilities (household investment, tariff, tax, transfer) - Analyse and document learning resulting from piloting those approaches in the project districts - Participate actively in dialogue platforms and events at local, regional and national levels to disseminate lessons learned from the tested financing mechanisms			
Costs of outputs for outcome 3:	In case of joint projects: 1) amount of SDC contribution:	2) in % of total cost	3) Total cost:800,000

Annex B: Evaluation Matrix

Criteria	Existing EQs in the terms of reference	Proposed EQs
Relevance	**1.1 – Responsiveness to needs, policies and priorities.** Do the objectives (at output, outcome, and impact levels) of the intervention respond to the needs and priorities of the beneficiaries (target group), involved stakeholders (involved in funding, implementing and/or overseeing the intervention) and, when relevant, to indirectly affected stakeholders (e.g. civil society, etc.)? *Specific sub-questions:* • Are the roles and needs of communities and village organisations relevant and taken into account? • Are the assumptions made, particularly regarding the involvement of local actors and their willingness to engage in trying new and changing their roles (e.g. provision of technical assistance to rural water operators by Tojikobdehot) and approaches (e.g. engage in life cycle cost reflections) still valid? **1.2 – Sensitiveness and responsiveness to the context and capacities of the beneficiaries and involved stakeholders.** To which extent is the context considered in the planning and implementation, particularly aspects of political economy and capacities of the main actors involved/targeted in the project? **1.3 – Quality of design.** To which extent are core design elements of the intervention (such as objectives and their related indicators, logical framework, theory of change including related assumptions, choice of services and intervention partners, exit strategy) reflecting the needs and priorities of the target group, appropriate, realistic, clearly defined, measurable and feasible (technical, organisational and financial feasibility)? **1.4 – Adaptation over time.** To which extent has the intervention meaningfully adapted to changes over the course of its lifespan (e.g. evolving policy and economic contexts, change of funding, new	EQ1: To what extent is the CoWaSS programme design a good fit for the local context and the identified needs of target beneficiaries? EQ2: To what extent is the CoWaSS programme aligned to national policy and strategy? EQ3: To what extent will the CoWaSS programme remain relevant if circumstances change? *Specific sub-questions:* • Are the roles and needs of communities and village organisations relevant and taken into account? • Are the assumptions made, particularly regarding the involvement of local actors and their willingness to engage in trying new and changing their roles (e.g. provision of technical assistance to rural water operators by Tojikobdehot) and approaches (e.g. engage in life cycle cost reflections) still valid?

Criteria	Existing EQs in the terms of reference	Proposed EQs
	opportunities, outbreaks of conflict or pandemic, etc.)?	
Coherence	**2.1 – Internal policy alignment:** To which extent does the intervention align with the wider policy frameworks of the Swiss Development Cooperation, including the most recent Swiss international cooperation strategy overall and at country level, as well as to relevant international norms and standards to which Switzerland adheres (international law, international agreements, etc.)? **2.2 – Internal compatibility:** To which extent is the intervention compatible with other interventions of Swiss development cooperation (both of SDC and SECO) in the same country/region and thematic field (consistency, complementarity, synergies, avoiding duplication of efforts, subsidiarity)? **2.3 – External compatibility:** To which extent is the intervention compatible with interventions of other actors in the country and thematic field (complementarity, synergies, overlaps and gaps, value-added, use of existing systems and structures for implementing activities, harmonisation, coordination, etc.)?	EQ4: To what extent is the CoWaSS programme compatible with the other policies and strategies of SDC and SECO? EQ5: To what extent is the CoWaSS intervention compatible with national WASH systems in Tajikistan?
Effectiveness	**3.1 – Achievement of objectives.** To which extent did the intervention achieve (or is expected to achieve) it's intended objectives (outputs and outcomes) as originally planned (or as modified during the phase to cater for changes in the environment), including its transversal objectives (e.g. gender, climate)? *Specific sub-questions:* • *To which extent are the approaches of the project, particularly the comprehensive approach and system strengthening approach, being applied in the implementation? What is working well? What are points of improvement in view of the next phase?* • *Are there existing and available methodologies, tools, end products, etc., supporting the implementation of the comprehensive approach (e.g. regarding district WASH plans) and other key approaches of the project (e.g. regarding sanitation marketing, capacity*	EQ6: To what extent has the CoWaSS programme been implemented well in accordance with best practice for district-wide approaches? EQ7: To what extent has the CoWaSS programme achieved its intended impacts? EQ8: To what extent has the CoWaSS programme been able to adjust to circumstances and any unintended impacts? *Specific sub-questions:* • *To which extent are the approaches of the project, particularly the comprehensive approach and system strengthening approach, being applied in the implementation? What is working well? What are points of improvement in view of the next phase?* • *Are there existing and available methodologies, tools, end products, etc., supporting the implementation of the comprehensive approach (e.g.*

Criteria	Existing EQs in the terms of reference	Proposed EQs
	strengthening, policy dialogue, etc.)? Are they sufficient to reach the outputs and outcomes? If not, what adjustments are recommended? • *Is the project able to take an effective role in the policy dialogue? Are there key success and challenges? What adjustments are recommended?* • *To what extent are the approaches and activities considering transversal aspects of gender and good governance? What adjustments are recommended?* **3.2 – Unintended effects.** To which extent did the intervention respond adequately to the potential benefits/risks of the positive/negative unintended results? **3.3 – Differential results.** To which extent were the intervention results (outcomes) inclusive and equitable amongst beneficiary groups and were the key principles such as non-discrimination, accountability, and leave-no-one- behind taken into account during the implementation?	*regarding district WASH plans) and other key approaches of the project (e.g. regarding sanitation marketing, capacity strengthening, policy dialogue, etc.)? Are they sufficient to reach the outputs and outcomes? If not, what adjustments are recommended?* • *Is the project able to take an effective role in the policy dialogue? Are there key success and challenges? What adjustments are recommended?* • *To what extent are the approaches and activities considering transversal aspects of gender and good governance? What adjustments are recommended?*
Efficiency	**4.1 – Economic efficiency:** To which extent did the intervention deliver the results (inputs→ outputs; inputs→ outcomes) in the most cost-efficient way possible (including allocation of resources between target groups and time periods; available options for purchasing inputs according to market conditions, etc.)? **4.2 – Timeliness**: To which extent did the intervention deliver the results (outputs, outcomes) in a timely manner (within the intended timeframe or reasonably adjusted timeframe) and to which extent were efforts made to mitigate delays. **4.3 – Operational efficiency:** To which extent have management, monitoring and steering mechanisms supported efficient implementation (resource allocation, spending and redirection, risk management, logistics and procurement decisions, etc.)? *Specific sub-questions:* • *Is the project set-up (management, monitoring, and steering mechanism) supporting efficient implementation and adequate for implementing the promoted approaches?*	EQ9: To what extent will the CoWaSS programme intervention deliver, or is likely to deliver results in an economic and timely way? EQ10: To which extent have management, monitoring and steering mechanisms supported efficient implementation (resource allocation, spending and redirection, risk management, logistics and procurement decisions, etc.)? *Specific sub-questions:* • *Is the project set-up (management, monitoring, and steering mechanism) supporting efficient implementation and adequate for implementing the promoted approaches?* • *Is the role and contribution of consortium members and their cooperation within the consortium favourable for the project implementation?*

Criteria	Existing EQs in the terms of reference	Proposed EQs
	• *Is the role and contribution of consortium members and their cooperation within the consortium favourable for the project implementation?*	
Impact	**5.1 – Intended impacts.** To which extent were the intended (planned and, where applicable, revised) "higher-level effects" (i.e. lasting changes in the lives of beneficiaries) of the intervention (or are expected to be) achieved? Also consider the extent to which the intervention contributed to "holistic and enduring changes in systems or norms" and transformational change (addressing root causes or systemic drivers of poverty, inequalities, exclusion and environmental damage). **5.2 – Contribution to intended impacts.** To which extent did intervention contribute (or is expected to contribute) to the intended higher-level effects? **5.3 – Unintended impacts[9].** Has the intervention brought about (or is it expected to bring about) any unintended (positive and/or negative) higher-level development results? If yes, to what extent have these higher-level effects been positive (or are likely to be positive)? **5.4 – Differential impact:** To which extent were the intervention's intended and unintended higher-level results (impacts) inclusive and equitable amongst beneficiary groups (or to which extent are they expected to be so)? To which extent were key principles such as non-discrimination, accountability, and leave- no-one-behind taken into account during the implementation?	EQ11: To which extent were the intended (planned and, where applicable, revised) "higher-level effects" (i.e. lasting changes in the lives of beneficiaries) of the intervention (or are expected to be) achieved? EQ12: To what extent is the CoWaSS programme 'contributing' to government-led systems change?
Sustainability	**6.1 – Capacity and resilience development.** Were the capacities (at the individual, community, or institutional level) of the beneficiaries and development partners strengthened? Do they have the resilience to overcome future risks and external shocks that could jeopardise the intervention's results? **6.2 – Financial sustainability.** Do the development partners have the financial resources to maintain the intervention's net benefits over time (e.g. increased national, and where applicable subnational, financial, or budgetary commitments)? **6.3 – Contextual factors.** To which extent is the context conducive to maintain the	EQ13: Will the actors, other than ISW and its NGO partners, fulfil their roles in supporting sustainability, after the withdrawal of the NGOs? EQ14: Are the Community Based Maintenance Systems for rural water supply, and its equivalent for sanitation and hygiene, fit for purpose? EQ15: Will the manner of implementation of the CoWaSS programme result in the best possibilities of sustained outcomes? *Specific sub-questions:*

Criteria	Existing EQs in the terms of reference	Proposed EQs
	intervention's net benefits over time (e.g. policy or strategy change, legislative reform, institutional reforms, governance reforms, increased accountability for public expenditures, improved processes for public consultation in development planning). <u>*Specific sub-questions:*</u> *Institutional capacities / capacity development of targeted actors* - *Has the capacity strengthening of targeted actors led (or is likely to lead) to new behaviours (i.e. adjusting their roles to deliver water, sanitation, and hygiene services more efficiently, effectively and sustainably)?* - *Is the ownership of the systems guaranteed? How is the issue of ownership/property of the water systems reflected in the national legislation?* - *Are the property assets (property of water sources, property of terrains for infrastructure and pipe crossing) registered?* *Social sustainability* - *Are the water and sanitation technologies (e.g. urine-diverting-dry- toilets) and services constructed and promoted through the project used and accepted by the population (including women, children, and vulnerable populations)?* - *Are principles of good governance promoted?* *Financial sustainability* - *Is the provision of water and sanitation services (in particular with regard to tariffs, billing systems and management set-up) financially sustainable?* - *Do the development partners (at the operational level, the level of technical assistance and strategic planning) have the financial resources to maintain the intervention's benefit over time? Are the approaches taken by the project to increase financial sustainability (especially regarding technical support) showing results?* *Technical sustainability* - *Are water and sanitation technologies constructed through*	*Institutional capacities / capacity development of targeted actors* - *Has the capacity strengthening of targeted actors led (or is likely to lead) to new behaviours (i.e. adjusting their roles to deliver water, sanitation, and hygiene services more efficiently, effectively and sustainably)?* - *Is the ownership of the systems guaranteed? How is the issue of ownership/property of the water systems reflected in the national legislation?* - *Are the property assets (property of water sources, property of terrains for infrastructure and pipe crossing) registered?* *Social sustainability* - *Are the water and sanitation technologies (e.g. urine-diverting-dry- toilets) and services constructed and promoted through the project used and accepted by the population (including women, children, and vulnerable populations)?* - *Are principles of good governance promoted?* *Financial sustainability* - *Is the provision of water and sanitation services (in particular with regard to tariffs, billing systems and management set-up) financially sustainable?* - *Do the development partners (at the operational level, the level of technical assistance and strategic planning) have the financial resources to maintain the intervention's benefit over time? Are the approaches taken by the project to increase financial sustainability (especially regarding technical support) showing results?* *Technical sustainability* - *Are water and sanitation technologies constructed through the project of appropriate quality?* - *Are daily operation and maintenance adequate to ensure quality services to the users?* *Environmental sustainability*

Criteria	Existing EQs in the terms of reference	Proposed EQs
	the project of appropriate quality? - *Are daily operation and maintenance adequate to ensure quality services to the users?* *Environmental sustainability* - *Are climate change and disaster risk reduction (towards natural risks such as earthquakes, landslides, droughts, flooding, mudflows, etc.) sufficiently and adequately considered?* - *Are the applied sanitation solutions environmentally sustainable?* *Knowledge management* - *Are there good practices that should be documented and communicated at national or international level?*	- *Are climate change and disaster risk reduction (towards natural risks such as earthquakes, landslides, droughts, flooding, mudflows, etc.) sufficiently and adequately considered?* - *Are the applied sanitation solutions environmentally sustainable?* *Knowledge management* *Are there good practices that should be documented and communicated at national or international level?*

Annex C: Key Informants

Name	Organisation	Designation	Evaluation Questions (EQs)[19]
Swiss Cooperation Office in Tajikistan			
	Swiss Consular Agency in Tajikistan Swiss Cooperation Office in Tajikistan	Deputy Director	EQ1, EQ2 EQ4
		National Programme Officer Rural Water Supply & Sanitation	
		Regional Advisor on DRR	
National institutions in Dushanbe			
	Ministry of Energy & Water Resources of the Republic of Tajikistan	Head of the Department of Energy & Water Resources Policy	EQ1, EQ2 EQ3 EQ5, EQ6 EQ7 EQ9 EQ12, EQ14 EQ15
	Committee of Housing & Communal Services under the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan	1st Deputy Chairman	
	State Sanitary & Epidemiological Supervision Service	Deputy Head	
	Tajik Technical University named after academician M.S. Osimi	Dean of the Faculty of Engineering & Technology	
Regional partners based in Khudjand			
	Sughd region	Deputy Chairman of the region for economy and finance	EQ1, EQ2 EQ6 EQ7 EQ9
	Investment & State Property Management of Sughd region	Head of the Department	
	Department of Antimonopoly Agency office in the Sughd region	Head	EQ1, EQ2, EQ3 EQ9
		Deputy Head	
	Department of Justice of the Sughd region	Deputy Head	EQ1, EQ2, EQ3 EQ9 EQ12
		Chief specialist of the accounting department of public organizations	
	Sanitary & Epidemiological Supervision Service of the Sughd region	Specialist	EQ1, EQ2

[19] See Annex B for the full list of evaluation questions and their sub-questions. The interviews were semi-structured and so they flow and are adapted based on stakeholder responses, and what the evaluators are hearing or not hearing. The language/vocabulary of questioning is also adapted to the stakeholder grouping.

Name	Organisation	Designation	Evaluation Questions (EQs)[19]
	Methodological Center under the Department of Education of the Sughd region	Director	EQ1, EQ2
	Subsidiary enterprise for water supply & sewage of cities & districts of Region 1 of Sughd region	Head & team	EQ1, EQ2, EQ3 EQ5, EQ6 EQ12, EQ13
	Department of Water Resources of the Syr Darya River Basin within the Ministry of Energy & Water Resources of Tajikistan	Head	EQ1, EQ2 EQ6 EQ12
	Basin Women Forum's Secretariat	Members	EQ1 EQ13
	Khujand State University named after academician Bobojon Gafurov, Department of Ecology & Environmental Protection	Head of the Department	EQ1 EQ6 EQ13
	Laboratory at the "Center for Ecological diagnostics with educational laboratory"	Head	
	Mining-metallurgical institute of Tajikistan, Department of Natural Sciences	Head of the Department	
	PO "Youth Group on Protection of Environment/Aarhus Centre"	Director	EQ1 EQ6 EQ13
District partners: Konibodom city, Jabbor Rasulov & Spitamen districts			
	Hukumat of Konibodom city	Head & representatives from various departments	EQ1 EQ6, EQ7 EQ9, EQ10 EQ14, EQ15
	Primary Health Care of Konibodom city	Head	EQ1 EQ6 EQ8 EQ14
	Healthy lifestyle center of Konibodom city	Director & team	
	SES of Konibodom city	Deputy Director	
		Epidemiologist; Lab specialist	
	Hospital #3, Hamroboev jamoat, Konibodom city	Chief doctor	
	Rural Health Center, Hamroboev jamoat, Konibodom city	Chief doctor	EQ1 EQ6 EQ14
	Hamroboev jamoat, Konibodom city	Deputy of jamoat	
	Kuhandiyor jamoat, Konibodom city	Deputy of jamoat	
		Deputy director	EQ1

Name	Organisation	Designation	Evaluation Questions (EQs)[19]
	School #33, Niyozbek village, Kuhandiyor jamoat, Konibodom city	Teacher of educational work at school	EQ6 EQ14
		Cleaning technician	
		School housekeeping manager	
	School #36, Niyozbek village, Kuhandiyor jamoat, Konibodom city	Deputy director	EQ1 EQ6 EQ14
		Teacher & head of pioneer school committee	
		Cleaning technician	
	School #15, Madaniyat village, Kuhandiyor jamoat, Konibodom city (under construction)	Director	EQ1 EQ6 EQ14
	School #53, Kuchkak village, Hamroboev jamoat, Konibodom city (on the waiting list)	Director	EQ1
		Deputy director	
	School #2, Konibodom city (under construction)	Deputy Director	EQ1 EQ6 EQ14
		Deputy Director	
		Deputy Director	
	Contractor LLC “Kand-Sohtmon” of the sanitation facility of school #2	Director	EQ1
	Niyozbek village, Kuhandiyor jamoat, Konibodom city	Head of mahalla	EQ1 EQ6 EQ13, EQ14
	Niyozbek village, Kuhandiyor jamoat, Konibodom city	Citizens	
	Pahlavonkala village, Kuhandoyor jamoat, Konibodom city	Citizens	
	Madaniyat village, Kuhandiyor jamoat, Konibodom city	Citizens	EQ1 EQ6 EQ14
		Head of Mahala	
	Hukumat of Jabbor Rasulov district	Head	EQ1 EQ6, EQ7 EQ9, EQ10 EQ14, EQ15
		Deputy	
	Hayoti Nav jamoat, Jabbor Rasulov district	Head	EQ1 EQ6 EQ13, EQ14
	Kavsar village, Hayoti Nav jamoat, Jabbor Rasulov district	Citizens	
	Navruz village, Hayoti Nav jamoat, Jabbor Rasulov district		

Name	Organisation	Designation	Evaluation Questions (EQs)[19]
	School #7, Mehrogon village, Hayoti Nav jamoat, Jabbor Rasulov district (under construction)	Director	EQ1 EQ6 EQ14
	SES, PHC, Hospital, Education department, KMK, Construction & building unit	Representatives	EQ1 EQ6 EQ8 EQ14
	PO “Obi Dusti”, Somoniyon jamoat, Jabbor Rasulov district	Member	EQ1, EQ2 EQ5, EQ6 EQ7, EQ8, EQ9 EQ12, EQ14
	School #12, Zaravshon village, Somoniyon jamoat, Jabbor Rasulov district (under construction)	Director	EQ1 EQ6 EQ14
	School #11, Uzbekqishloq village, Somoniyon jamoat, Jabbor Rasulov district	Director	
	School #26, Uzbekqishloq village, Somoniyon jamoat, Jabbor Rasulov district	Deputy Director	
	State Educational Institution of Engineering Pedagogical College of Jabbor Rasulov District	Director	EQ1 EQ6 EQ14
	PO “Obi Istiqlol”, Safedteppa village, Istiqlol jamoat, Spitamen district	Director & team	EQ1, EQ2 EQ5, EQ6 EQ7, EQ8, EQ9 EQ12, EQ14
	DEWATs system in childcare, Safedteppa village, Istiqlol jamoat, Spitamen district	Director	EQ1 EQ14
Implementing partners			
	International Secretariat for Water	Director & team	EQ1, EQ2, EQ3 EQ4 EQ5, EQ6, EQ7 EQ8, EQ9, EQ10 EQ11, EQ12, EQ13 EQ15
	Helvetas in Tajikistan	Country Director	
		Policy Consultant	
		Adviser	
	CAICO Consulting	Managing Director	
Development partners			
	Consumers Union of Tajikistan	Executive Director	EQ1, EQ2, EQ3

Name	Organisation	Designation	Evaluation Questions (EQs)[19]
	Bremen Overseas Research & Development Association (BORDA)	Country Director	EQ5, EQ6 EQ12, EQ13
	Equitable Development (Equidev)	Chief Executive Officer	
	Helvetas Tajikistan in Sughd region	Project Manager/Team Leader for NWRM & team	EQ1, EQ2 EQ4, EQ6 EQ12
		Project Manager	
	Skat Consulting Ltd.	Water and Sanitation Specialist	
International Finance Institutions			
	Asian Development Bank	Country Director	EQ1, EQ2, EQ3 EQ5, EQ6 EQ11, EQ12 EQ15
	The World Bank	Senior Water Resources Management Specialist	
	European Bank for Reconstruction & Development	Representatives	
	International Finance Corporation	Project Lead	

Annex D: Country visit schedule

CoWaSS Evaluation Schedule – Week 1 in Dushanbe

	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
	8th Feb	9th Feb	10th Feb	11th Feb	12th Feb	13th Feb	14th Feb
08h00 – 10h00				Faculty Dean (TTU Osimi)			
10h00 – 12h00				CD Consumers Union	SDC - Deputy CD & National Programme Officer	1st Deputy Chair CoHCS	
12h00 – 13h00							
13h00 – 15h00				SES, MoHSP	Helvetas Country Office		
15h00 – 17h00						Head of the Department of Energy & Water Resources Policy, MoEWR	BORDA CD
Notes			Arrive 2h00 Dushanbe				

CoWaSS Evaluation Schedule Khujand – Week 2 in Konibodom

	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
	15th Feb	16th Feb	17th Feb	18th Feb	19th Feb	20th Feb	21st Feb
08h00 – 10h00			Meeting ISW Team	Anti-monopoly services of Sughd. Tarif specialists.	District Authorities Konibodom city Chairman	Visit to Konibodom city Visit: Jamoat Kuhandiyor	Meeting ISW Team
10h00 – 12h00			Meeting ISW Team	Department of Justice in Sughd: Specialist of DWO legal registration & monitoring	WASH Plan Working Group members – community & government		Meeting ISW Team
12h00 – 13h00							
13h00 – 15h00			Meeting with First Deputy Governor & Head of Investment Department of Sughd	SES Sughd	Visit to the project sites. Meeting Jamoat "Kuhandiyor" authority, Communities of Niyozbek, Madaniyat villages, school administration	Hospital and Rural Health Center of Hamraboev jamoat Association of Drinking Water Organizations "Pahtakor" (multi-villages)	Meeting with Khujand Faculty of Geo-ecology & tourism, Laboratory "Center for Ecological diagnostics with educational laboratory" Meeting with MMIT
15h00 – 17h00				Methodological Center under the Department of Education of the Sughd region			
Notes					Translator: Khurshed Azimjonov	Translator: Khurshed Azimjonov	

CoWaSS Evaluation Schedule Khujand – Week 3 in Jabbor Rasulov

	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
	22nd Feb	23rd Feb	24th Feb	25th Feb	26th Feb	27th Feb	28th Feb
08h00 – 10h00	Meeting with Youth Group Organization (YGPE)		Meetings in Konibodom city: - District SES - PHC Manager - District HLSC - School #2, sanitation facility in Konibodom city & Contractor	Meeting district authorities	Meeting with district departments Somoniyon Jamoat	Meeting with NWRM & GWM projects (Helvetas office) Meeting with Region 1 (KMK) Meeting with RBO Syrdarya	Debrief with ISW Team
10h00 – 12h00				Meeting Hayoti Nav Jamoat, DWO & community	Meeting with DWO & community		
12h00 – 13h00							
13h00 – 15h00			Meeting Konibodom city Communities	Sanitary Zone Hayoti Nav system School sanitation	San zone of Somoniyon system visit School sanitation	Meeting with Association “Woman and Society” (Basin women forum)	
15h00 – 17h00				Household connections	Household connections Visit DEWATS in pedagogical college	Trip to Spitamen Meeting with DWO in Safedteppa Household connections DEWATS in the kindergarten	
Notes							Return to Dushanbe

CoWaSS Evaluation Schedule – Week 4 in Dushanbe (Feedback)

	Saturday	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
	1st March	2nd March	3rd March	4th March	5th March	6th March	7th March
08h00 – 10h00						World Bank – Senior Water Specialist	
10h00 – 12h00	Equidev – Country Director			ADB – Country Representative			
12h00 – 13h00							
13h00 – 15h00			Alisher, Carlos Munos (Regional Advisor on DRR) & SKAT			MEAL Specialist - Secretariat of National Development Council	
15h00 – 17h00					BORDA – Country Director	ERBD – Senior Water Specialist	

Annex E: Stakeholder Feedback

Feedback from stakeholders highlighting progress or issues that need to be addressed with CoWaSS.

Government (National & Regional)	**Government (District & Jamoat)**	**Donors & International Organisations**
- A national committee commented *'alternative models'* contribute to increased water supply coverage. - A Ministry commented *'alternative models'* are an acceptable model to increase access to water. Field visits are important to understand the model, and construction quality needs to be verified by a 3rd party to ensure infrastructure is built to the required standards. Concerns were expressed about high construction costs for both water supply systems & sanitation facilities. - National health partners highlighted their satisfaction with work done around DEWATS & provision of sanitation systems in hospital/health centre settings. - A Regional structure of the above Ministry highlighted the role CoWaSS had played in improving inter-sectoral coordination in relation to water. - A Regional structure of the Ministry of Justice highlighted the need to register Public Organisations only when functional & in a position to submit annual financial reports. - A Regional Agency highlighted the general acceptance of *'alternative models'* setting higher Tariff above the National Tariff, however, with time there is a tendency for communities to question why they are paying a higher Tariff, and in certain cases to change statute & migrate to Vodokanal (KMK). - Over-reliance on costly Grundfos pumps was raised by several national/regional bodies, high prices compared to other options available on market.	- Hukumat's highlighted the planning process for the selection of communities benefitting from CoWaSS investments. This included representatives from Hukumat, technical heads (health, environment, economic development, etc.), Jamoat's and Mahala Heads. A District WASH Plan document was not available. - District Development Plans remain the formal socio-economic plan applied at the district level. These plans are costed, and there is some limited evidence of specific budget lines for drinking water provision. - Technical heads (health, environment, economic development, etc.) highlighted planning meetings were few & irregular. Some were unaware of District WASH Plan. - The Hukumat in one District highlighted there were construction defects with one water supply scheme & that they were not ready to sign-off on work. Concerns were also raised about the high numbers of water meters (300) that froze during an exceptionally cold spell. - The same Hukumat expressed concerns about the project, stating they were unaware of costs associated with the water systems & the selection of contractors. - In one Jamoat, concerns were also expressed about the risk of exposed main lines (bridging an irrigation canal) freezing in exceptionally cold weather. Concerns were also expressed that children might play on the exposed pipes.	- Development Banks in general had little knowledge of CoWaSS project or its model/approach. - A Development Bank expressed interest in the Tariff model, particularly the success in setting the Tariff above the National Tariff. - Development Banks indicated there is no formal mechanism or platform for coordination. Opportunities to share experiences and learning are currently limited. - One National NGO (non CoWaSS partner), with 20-years' experience in WASH accountability highlighted their experience & willingness to be a partner in CoWaSS. - WB IFC (SECO) are planning to support CoWaSS with loans to improve household level sanitation. This is through a 'sanitation marketing' approach, work currently in progress.

Service Providers (Operators)	**Communities & Household**	**Institutions**
- Two pre-CoWaSS *'Public Organisations'* highlighted the need to review & adjust their Tariffs due to increased operating costs & increased government taxes. - The pre-CoWaSS *'Public Organisations'* highlighted support from CAICO was beneficial in developing revised Financial Business Cases to assist in developing a new Tariff. - One pre-CoWaSS 'Public Organisation' highlighted difficulties in getting timely technical support from Grundfos Dushanbe for pump, control panel & tank float switches. Technical support from Dushanbe is slow and costly. New Grundfos pumps purchased in Tashkent are far cheaper than through Grundfos Dushanbe.	- Households expressed their willingness to pay a higher Tariff for a reliable water supply, particularly those purchasing water from water vendors. - Households expressed their willingness to invest in shower/bathing facilities inside the house, when a reliable water supply becomes available. - Two CoWaSS *'villages'* Under construction highlighted their concerns about access to a reliable energy source in winter months (November – April). Both locations were considering the purchase of generators. - One *'village'* disagreed with the water system design proposed by CoWaSS. The *'village'* preferred a water tower, while CoWaSS proposed high tech pumps to pressurize the network. - Communities being served by one CoWaSS water system in were dis-satisfied with several issues: 1) intermittent energy supplies in winter months; 2) poor quality of the pipe connections (many leaks); and 3) design of the water meter boxes (above ground) which are prone to freezing in winter (costly to replace the water meter). - One community expressed concerns about extreme cold weather not being considered in the design of the main water system (lack of consultation).	- One kindergarten expressed their satisfaction for improved sanitation facilities & addition of DEWATS unit (pre-CoWaSS). Desludging costs for the DEWATS unit are prohibitive, but contributions were collected from parents (twice) to de-sludge the unit. - Several pre-CoWaSS visited schools expressed their satisfaction at receiving new sanitation blocks. Several concerns were however raised: 1) smell, particularly in summer; 2) lack of ceramic squat pans; 3) design of urinals (boys); 4) cost of desludging; and 5) maintenance costs. - Several CoWaSS visited schools expressed their satisfaction at being selected to receive new sanitation blocks – the majority still under construction. Concerns were raised: *1) lack of consultation*; *2) water availability*; *3) desludging costs*; and *4) distance to sanitation block*. - In some schools, concern was expressed about the lack of consultation at the design phase. - One District Technical College expressed their satisfaction for improved sanitation facilities & the planned addition of DEWATS unit. Concerns were raised about the lack of a plan for a reliable energy supply. Willingness to become a District entrepreneur for solar & pumping technology (repair & maintenance). - University partners expressed satisfaction for support provided through CoWaSS. This includes planned ISO Certification Nationally. However, there are few 'clients' for laboratory services. Initial work on costs for services has been done, but a more detailed business plan is preferable. Tests rely heavily on costly, imported reagents for tests.

Annex F: Technical Observations from The Evaluation

https://oxfam.box.com/s/swn5mnibqbd170ebqqafue0u32jc8hxv

Annex G: Bibliography

Bibliography

1. Swiss Cooperation Programme for Central Asia 2022–2025 (2021).
2. Comprehensive Water Supply & Sanitation in Rural Areas of Sughd Region (CoWaSS), Tajikistan (2024).
3. CoWaSS Maps & Baseline: Selected Project Districts - Jabbor Rasulov District (Located in the NWRM Watershed). Population Data by Gender, Rural and Urban Areas (2020) (2024).
4. Economic and Financial Analysis (EFA) Report of the CoWaSS Project (2023).
5. Progress on Rural Sanitation (2024).
6. Technical Component – Water Supply: Stakeholders and Steering Committee Meeting, Gulistan (2024).
7. National Water Strategy of the Republic of Tajikistan for the Period up to 2040 (2024).
8. Shukhrat B. Policy Review: Establishment of a New State Entity – The Committee for Housing and Communal Services (CoHCS) under the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan (2024).
9. WASH Improvements in the Engineering and Pedagogical College and Faculty of Khujand State University (2024).
10. Mid-Term Review of Safe Drinking Water and Sanitation Management in Tajikistan (SWSMT), Phase II (2024).

Management response to the External Review of the Phase I of the Comprehensive Water Supply and Sanitation in rural areas of the Sughd Region project (CoWaSS)

Management Response

The Management Response (MR) states the position of the SDC on the recommendations of the External Review of the Phase I of the Comprehensive Water Supply and Sanitation in rural areas of the Sughd Region project (CoWaSS) project. The MR provides basis for further definition of actions for improving the project performance and strategic decision-making.

Overall assessment of the evaluation

The evaluation was conducted by a team of three experts, T. Forster, S. Yarbaeva and S. Day, in accordance with international standards. The overall evaluation process was accompanied by the SDC's reference group comprising of Alisher Shabdolov, NPO Rural Water Supply and Sanitation, and SCO Water Backstoppers from SKAT Consulting.

The main objectives of the evaluation – to validate the CoWaSS project outcomes, as well as to review the original project concepts for strategic orientation and fresh ideas for increasing the effectiveness of WASH service delivery in Sughd region – have been partly met by the evaluators.

While SDC acknowledges the efforts invested by the evaluation team to meet all the SDC's requirements, it needs to be stated that the final evaluation report still lacks comprehensiveness and provides only limited analysis of key elements related to the performance of the CoWaSS project.

Main findings

The overall evaluation process experienced significant delays, primarily due to the lower-than-expected quality of the initial drafts of the report, which required numerous exchanges with the consultants and feedback loops by SDC and the Water Backstoppers, leading to repeated revisions of the document. From the SDC's point of view the consultants struggled to grasp the project's full complexity, resulting in a too narrow, infrastructure-focused analysis and subsequently in an unsatisfactory assessment of the LogFrame related achievements (outcome and outputs).

Key contextual factors – such as regional political instability (i.e. the Tajik-Kyrgiz armed conflicts near project target areas), policy shifts (e.g. adoption of the National Water Strategy 2040, delays in the adoption of new the Drinking Water and Sanitation Program 2032), and institutional developments (i.e. creation of a new committee of housing and communal services) – were insufficiently addressed. The desk review and field investigation also overlooked critical elements like the District WASH Plan Guide, policy work, academic collaboration, and the project's role in SDC's broader water resource management efforts in the Syrdarya River Basin.

Although the evaluation presents a series of actionable recommendations to improve current operations and implementation within the project, the report provides only minimal insights and guidance for the project's broader future strategic direction.

Further details on the perceived shortcomings of the external evaluation can be found in Annex 1 to this MR.

Despite these shortcomings, the evaluation's findings and recommendations are appreciated. The evaluation finds that the CoWaSS project is well-designed to meet the needs of local beneficiaries and aligns closely with national policies and strategies. The project remains relevant in light of institutional changes (e.g., establishment of the Committee on Housing and Communal Services) and the reduction of ODA assistance. The project's approach demonstrates adaptability and responsiveness to the evolving context.

CoWaSS is commended for its cost-efficiency, maintaining modest operational costs while prioritizing programmatic activities. It directly tackles the issue of financial sustainability by engaging communities to accept significantly higher tariffs in exchange for improved services. Additionally, the project plays an active role in driving policy reform, collaborating closely with the Ministry of Energy and Water Resources to influence and support systemic change.

The evaluation underscores the urgent need to ensure that infrastructure components of the project are completed both on time and to a high standard of quality. It also highlights the importance of systematically documenting lessons learned and capturing project deliverables – such as policy papers and strategic reports – in a clear and accessible manner. Additionally, the evaluation points to the necessity of enhancing the internal coordination and organizational efficiency of the consortium to optimize performance. These recommendations have been well received and will be carefully considered and integrated into the planning and implementation of future project activities to strengthen overall impact and sustainability.

The detailed recommendations of the evaluation are mainly directed towards the project implementation consortium partners and national counterparts at various levels. Of the ten recommendations, five are *fully agreed* (green), four are *partially agreed* (orange), and one is *not agreed* (red) — see the table below for details.

The SDC will ensure a close follow-up with project partners on effective and timely implementation of the agreed measures.

Overview of recommendations, management response and timeframe of measures

Recommendation by evaluators: 1. Complete and monitor infrastructure works (R1). CoWaSS should complete remaining construction work and work with relevant actors to commission the water supply and sanitation services. *SDC MR:* Fully agree; CoWaSS will develop a detailed action plan for the remaining time of the CoWaSS Phase 1, highlighting the pending works and their implementation. Timeframe: immediately	
Recommendation by evaluators: 2. Asset Management Planning. Linked to R1, ISW should support the establishment of Asset Management Plans to determine how the desired water supply service levels can be provided in the most cost-effective manner. *SDC MR:* Fully agree; CoWaSS will develop a detailed action plan for the remaining time of the CoWaSS Phase 1, highlighting the pending works and their implementation. Timeframe: immediately	
Recommendation by evaluators: 3. Clarify necessary actions before and in response to WASH services breaking down (R3). A simple logic model should be developed by CoWaSS partners and agreed upon that outlines responses and actions that 'will' be taken when WASH services breakdown.	

SDC MR: Disagree; A logic model exists already but requires operationalisation. CoWaSS will develop a detailed action plan for the remaining time of the CoWaSS Phase 1, highlighting the pending works and their implementation. Timeframe: summer 2025.	
Recommendation by evaluators: 4. Develop costed District WASH Plans (R4). These plans should be developed by CoWaSS partners and outline a phased approach for providing WASH services at district scale. *SDC MR:* Fully agree; CoWaSS will develop a detailed action plan for the remaining time of the CoWaSS Phase 1, highlighting the pending works and their implementation. Timeframe: immediately	
Recommendation by evaluators: 5. Document evidenced learning and share with others (R5). Before the end of Phase I, CoWaSS partners should hold a learning event that takes stock of CoWaSS progress in Phase 1. *SDC MR:* Partially agree; CoWaSS will distribute its learnings. However, the exact level and scope of such an event needs to be defined first. Timeframe: late summer/early autumn 2025	
Recommendation by evaluators: 6. Strengthen the capability and social accountability of CoWaSS (R6). Ahead of Phase II, all partners should review composition of the consortium and revisit the 'Consortium Governance Document' to ensure a more equal representation of CoWaSS partners in decision making and activity. *SDC MR:* Partially agree; The Consortium governance document will be updated among existing members based on the Phase II programme, clearly defining each partner's responsibilities. However, SDC does not see value in including additional national partners into the set-up. Timeframe: autumn 2025	
Recommendation by evaluators: 7. Advocacy, influencing & visibility at the national level needs to be strengthened to both raise the profile of the CoWaSS project model and share sector wide learning (R7). In Phase 2 CoWaSS needs to better demonstrate its impact and the process that is being applied. *SDC MR:* Fully agree; In Phase 2 the Focus of the project will be more on advocacy for scaling and sustainability, building on the evidence base laid out in phase 1. Documentation of processes in the policy areas are critical and will be continued at the start of Phase 2. Timeframe: as of start of Phase 2 of the project	
Recommendation by evaluators: 8. Develop and articulate a roadmap for future progress (R8). CoWaSS (led by ISW) should develop roadmaps for the target districts of Kanibadam and Jabbor Rasulov, with the aim of achieving full WASH coverage. *SDC MR:*	

Partially agree; Agree on the development of a roadmap (already ongoing) but facilitated by CoWASS and not developed by them. Timeframe: immediately / ongoing			
Recommendation by evaluators: 9. Institution building (R9). In terms of systems strengthening work CoWaSS partners need to build institutional capability in such a way that it will outlive the CoWaSS project. *SDC MR:* Partially agree; Ensuring institutional capacity building and strengthening existing mechanisms is crucial and will be done, however the creation of new institutions will not be supported through the project. Timeframe: ongoing			
Recommendation by evaluators: 10. Generate a significant body of evidenced learning (R10). Documenting learning & evidence of what works is vital if the 'comprehensive' approach is to be upscaled successfully. *SDC MR:* Fully agree; CoWaSS has already produced a certain number of learning documents and will continue to draw lessons from its past and present experience. Timeframe: ongoing			
Fully agree	Partially agree	Disagree	

Reaction from the CoWaSS project team

The CoWaSS project team voiced their criticism about the evaluation as well, which is duly noted by SDC. Notwithstanding their criticism the CoWaSS team prepared a detailed management response to the recommendations of the evaluation. The CoWaSS management response provides further insights and background information related to the recommendations as well as includes concrete measures on how the identified challenges in the project shall be addressed. The CoWaSS management response is therefore part of this SDC management response and can be found as annex 2 to this document.

Annex 1

Further details on perceived shortcomings of the External Evaluation of CoWaSS Phase 1

The CoWaSS project underwent an external end of phase evaluation by a team of three consultants from Oxfam Consults. The evaluation took place between January and May 2025.

This note complements the official SDC management response to the evaluation report of Phase 1 of the CoWaSS project. It aims to highlight shortcomings in the evaluation that limit the usefulness of its findings and recommendations for guiding the completion of Phase 1 and preparing for Phase 2. Despite the observed limitations a number of findings and recommendations of the external review remain valid as they also underline known shortcomings already identified by the SDC and the Water Backstoppers during past monitoring visits and the semi-internal mid-term review of the project.

Overall assessment of the external evaluation

The evaluation process took significantly longer than anticipated, extending from late January to end of May. This delay was largely due to challenges in producing a satisfactory draft report. Early drafts fell short of expectations in terms of scope (not covering all elements outlined in the ToR and inception report), analytical depth (excluding some key outcomes), and use of available evidence (important documents were omitted). Despite repeated feedback from SDC and the Water Backstoppers, several critical aspects were still not addressed in the final version.

Key limitations of the evaluation include:

- **Inadequate Desk Review and Overall Analysis**: It was signalled since the early drafts that key documents have obviously been overlooked (such as the Mid-Term review or the District WSAH Plan Guidelines) leading to misinterpretations in the key findings.
- **Weak Analytical Rigor**: The report lacks a reflective analysis that would justify its recommendations and fails to clearly connect findings, conclusions, and actions.
- **Incomplete Outcome Assessment**: The evaluation focuses narrowly on water infrastructure, neglecting the broader, integrated and more holistic approach which is central to the CoWaSS project.
- **Generic Recommendations**: Recommendations remain broad and lack specificity for actionable implementation aligned with project realities.
- **Insufficient LogFrame Analysis**: The evaluation did not conduct a thorough LogFrame-based assessment, despite detailed instructions and examples provided (i.e., Mid Term Review report).

These shortcomings limit the usefulness of the evaluation for shaping the conclusion of Phase 1 and informing the design of Phase 2.

Detailed shortcomings of the evaluation

Comprehensiveness of the CoWaSS Project

- The evaluation places disproportionate emphasis on the infrastructure component, while largely overlooking the foundational elements of the project – namely, institutional strengthening and systemic coordination – which form the core of its comprehensive approach.
- Important contextual changes and their impact on the project could have been better analysed, such as aspects related to CoVid-19, armed conflicts between Tajikistan and Kirgizstan, elaboration of new policies such as National Water Strategy 2040, big delay in the development and approval of the new compressive Program on Drinking Water and Sanitation 2032 under the lead of World Bank, the creation of new Committee on Housing and Communal Services, etc.
- Despite their knowledge of the WASH sector in Tajikistan and the availability of relevant resources, the consultancy team demonstrated limited understanding and appreciation of key sectoral challenges and attributed their resolution to the current CoWaSS project only. These challenges include among others: lack of government ownership, lead and contribution (e.g., budgets), limited capacity among key actors, and the neglect of critical issues such as faecal sludge management – challenges that affect not only this project but many others in the country.
- There was no attempt to assess the project's approaches and tools on: community-based management (DWOs), various elements related to the district WASH plans (see below), sanitation marketing (sanitation catalogue), sanitation in schools and health care facilities, research on the sanitation chain and possible application on sludge, the policy work (policy documents including detailed methodology for knowledge products 2023) nor was the cost recovery tariffs approach critically analysed and described.

District WASH Plan

- The District WASH Plan Guide was shared by ISW as part of the documents package at the outset and was part of the desk review (indicated in the inception report). The document is, however, not acknowledged in the analysis nor in the reporting.
- Efforts to replicate the district WASH plans in additional districts such as Asht should have been well known to the consultants as it was part of the desk review (reports, management responses, steering committee presentation, etc.). This is not, however, acknowledged in the analysis nor in the reporting.
- The evaluation omits any mentioning of the web-based monitoring system tied to the WASH plans.

Community-Based Management and the performance of DWOs

- The evaluation largely overlooks the role and performance of Drinking Water Organizations (DWOs), which are central to the project's community-based management approach. Following Evaluation Questions 14 and 15, the assessment demonstrates a limited understanding of how the project engages with communities and whether foundational community mobilization activities are in place.

  Although DWOs under the current phase are not yet fully operational, the project includes clear mechanisms to monitor and draw lessons from the performance of DWOs established during the previous ISW-implemented project. These earlier DWOs, developed with SDC support in Sughd, represent some of the very few successful examples in Tajikistan of sustainable service delivery through full cost recovery at the community level. Their long-term operational success has been repeatedly acknowledged by government entities, including the Ministry of Energy and Water Resources (MEWR), and international development partners such as the World Bank.

  CoWaSS is attempting to replicate this proven model in the current phase. However, the evaluation fails to assess the extent to which this replication is succeeding or facing challenges.

A more balanced and comprehensive analysis – recognizing both achievements and areas for improvement – would have significantly strengthened the evaluation and provided valuable insights for refining the community-based management model in future phases of the project.

Contribution to IWRM, Policy Work and Academic Collaboration

- Project contributions to policy dialogue are discussed only in general terms. The evaluation report neglects the project's engagement in policy dialogue at both basin and national levels and omits its role in key working groups (e.g. water quality), policy platforms (e.g. Syr Darya River Basin Council, Women's Forum), and Water Sector Coordination Meetings with MEWR.
- The project's policy research outputs are not referenced.
- Cooperation with universities under the Blue Peace CoP4WASH initiative is disregarded, with no assessment of its relevance or potential.

Engagement with Development Partners

- The claim that the CoWaSS project is "invisible" to other development partners is questionable and lacks representativeness. The consultants interviewed four donor representatives (ADB, WB, EBRD, and IFC). While a recent leadership change at ADB may explain gaps in institutional memory, both the World Bank and IFC are known to maintain regular and constructive engagement with the CoWaSS project. Notably, IFC has incorporated sanitation models developed by CoWaSS into its Housing Microfinance Project – clear evidence of awareness and collaboration. This raises the question if the interviewed representatives were in fact the most suited ones.
- In addition, the evaluation fails to mention or refer to the SDC-funded SWSMT project, which closely mirrors CoWaSS in both design and implementation. The omission of this "twin" project overlooks an important opportunity to analyse synergies, complementarities, and lessons learned within SDC's broader WASH portfolio in Tajikistan.

Annex 2

COMPREHENSIVE WATER SUPPLY & SANITATION IN RURAL AREAS OF SUGHD

ISW • HELVETAS • CAICO

Separate CoWaSS Management Response to the External Review of the Phase I of the Comprehensive Water Supply and Sanitation in rural areas of the Sughd Region project (CoWaSS)

This Management Response (MR) has been prepared by the implementing Consortium of the CoWaSS Project, represented by ISW, Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation and CAICO.

This MR reflects the views and opinion of the CoWaSS project implementing partners and does not necessarily match the views of SDC nor of the external evaluators.

This MR is intended to provide further insights, details and reactions to the findings of the evaluation from CoWaSS side in order to put them into perspectives of the project reality.

Overview of recommendations, management response and measures

Recommendation 1 Complete and monitor infrastructure works- CoWaSS should complete remaining construction work and work with relevant actors to commission the water supply and sanitation services.		
Any construction defects or concerns raised by communities should be addressed by ISW. Measures should also be put in place to improve the supervision of construction work delivered through various contractors. This is necessary because the quality of infrastructure design, construction and supervision will largely determine what transpires next with regards to service performance and sustainability. ISW should then work with Private Operators to measure service performance levels across all systems to obtain a true understanding of performance indicators, customer satisfaction and operating costs.		
Management response		
Fully agree	Partially agree	Disagree
Evaluation report mentions that all constructions were on-going. It is the normal working procedure of the project to finalise the construction activities according to the contracts signed with the constructors, to monitor the construction whilst on-going with the support of the population and the institutions (participatory monitoring), and to address the construction defects or shortcomings. Payments are made once all parties agree on the constructions (tripartite contracts). Contracts include a retention guarantee payment which is released one or two years after all work is finished and any defects occurring in this guarantee period are corrected. KPIs are in place and water operators are trained to record them.		
Measures	Responsibility	Timing
a) Mobilize the team and assign a dedicated person to oversee planning, execution, and monitoring b) Implement a detailed work schedule with clear deadlines and responsibilities c) Conduct regular site inspections to ensure compliance with design and standards d) Organise transfer of assets to DWOs (water supply) or to institutions (toilets in schools and Health Care Facilities)	CoWaSS CoWaSS and District authorities	By the end of Phase I A separate table with concrete timeline of infrastructure implementation is prepared and will be regularly refined
e) Service performance: training of DWOs on selected KPIs for operational efficiency	CoWaSS & CAICO	Once the systems are built up, tested,

		and after the people are receiving water.

Recommendation 2 Asset Management Planning. Linked to R1, ISW should support the establishment of Asset Management Plans to determine how the desired water supply service levels can be provided in the most cost-effective manner.		
This will provide government institutions and operators with information on the asset base and the ability of different systems to meet user expectations. This should form a key component of a district-wide approach. Asset Management Plans will help determine if the higher tariff rates are adequate to cover operational and repair costs, and this information should make the WASH sector more attractive to potential investors. As a starting point, in addition to measuring service levels, the following data should be collected: • Location and complete information regarding the assets being provided • Details of asset failures and repairs • Cost of repairs • Cost of asset replacement • Time taken to respond and repair assets		
Management response		
Fully agree	Partially agree	Disagree
Each DWO has its asset management plan in the form of assets available, life expectancy DWOs record failures and repairs, their cost as well as the cost of asset replacement etc. For WASH services in institutions, the asset management planning is responsibility of district levels. So for sanitation services asset management planning is done with government services at district level.		
Measures	Responsibility	Timing
a) Conduct targeted training programs for both pre-CoWaSS and CoWaSS DWOs on accounting, asset management, and related administrative skill	CoWaSS CAICO	Currently implemented up to Sept. 2025 May – Sept. 2025
b) Ensure comprehensive WASH data collection and maintain updated information at the district level to support planning and decision-making	CoWaSS Monitoring Specialist	June – Sept. 2025
c) Establish mechanisms for information sharing to make relevant WASH-related data accessible to consumers and DWO members.	CoWaSS CAICO	

Recommendation 3 Clarify necessary actions before and in response to WASH services breaking down - A simple logic model should be developed by CoWaSS partners and agreed upon that outlines responses and actions that 'will' be taken when WASH services breakdown.
Attention is needed to ensure the POs responsible for the management, operation, and maintenance of the water supply infrastructure under construction, are established and adequately trained to take on this role. Given many of the water supply systems are still under construction, this may require support activities being carried over into Phase II. CoWaSS should also continue to strengthen district level institutions focusing on the human and technical capacity at District and Jamoat levels required to sustain WASH services. The evaluation found no evidence these assistance plans currently exist.
Management response

Fully agree	Partially agree	**Disagree**

The project disagrees with the conclusion. The below two points are part of the project operation and are gradually implemented in line with project plan:

- Assistance to DWOs (PO) for the management, operation and maintenance of the water supply infrastructure
- Continue to strengthen district level institutions focusing on the human and technical capacity at district and jamoat levels required to sustain WASH services

Measures	Responsibility	Timing
a) <u>For DWOs:</u> DWOs are trained to manage, operate and maintain the water supply infrastructure and receive support when needed from their peers through the network of DWOs	DWOs themselves, peer support of DWOs when needed	During construction process (Feb. – Sept. 2025) May September 2025
b) <u>Continue</u> to strengthen district level institutions: this is done through the district WASH plan development and is taking place in the 3 districts building up WASH plans to be included in the District Development Plan	Working group, technical services of Districts, support of qualified personnel from Economic Department Support from CoWaSS team	

Recommendation 4 Develop costed District WASH Plans - These plans should be developed by CoWaSS partners and outline a phased approach for providing WASH services at district scale.

They should be accessible and incorporate real time information from the Asset Management Plans (R2). They should also detail the evolving roles and responsibilities of different actors as institutional capabilities are strengthened. Once started the development and refinement of a district-wide plan should be a continuous process to be updated routinely by government entities. This information should be fed upwards to inform national budget allocations.

Management response

Fully agree	Partially agree	Disagree

This is exactly the idea of the district WASH Plan: have a clear idea of the situation at date, plan the development of the WASH sector (infrastructure, services, capacities) in the district and monitor its changes throughout the years.

All groundwork has been done and 2025 is preparation year for District Economic and Social Development Plan (DDP) 2026-2030 and so the plans should be developed May-October for DDP and its annexes. The intention is to have maximum development done by districts.

However, some small remarks

- Real time info not possible – rather regularly updated
- Progressive: evolving capacity

The endorsed New State Programme on Drinking Water Supply and Wastewater Management for the period of 2025 - 2029 promotes District WASH plans and this has been influenced by the advocacy work of the CoWaSS Project. It is also a learning experience, and CoWaSS suggests to learn from other Development Partners that have worked on supporting the district WASH plan modality (including district monitoring system), e.g., Agha Khan, World Bank.

WASH plan development and its effective operationalization is dependent on acknowledged parallel processes, i.e. (1) development of DDPs for 2026-2030 by district authorities, and (2) the launch of the New State Programme up to 2029 with WB's initial financing throughout urban and rural Tajikistan. The process of linking and integration of WASH Plans with these processes is what ultimately

ensures legitimization and/or operationalization of intended district WASH plans. Both processes operate with different concepts, priorities, and defined service levels, which the district WASH plans shall take into account. While development of draft WASH plans is a feasible task towards the end of Phase I, their effective operationalization is subject to finalization (and launch in implementation of investments) of those intended processes.		
Measures	Responsibility	Timing
a) Involvement of a National Consultant to facilitate the WASH plan development for the 3 districts	CoWaSS	May - October 2025
b) Make sure that the process is aligned with 2025 DDP preparation phase, guideline to be shared in June	CoWaSS & National Consultant	
c) Update the WASH information already collected in the three districts	CoWaSS Surveyors	
d) Cost each plan based on recent observed constructions prices,	CoWaSS	
e) Facilitate visioning and target setting for the development of the WASH Plan	CoWaSS District authorities	
f) Exchange of experiences with other projects on district WASH plan experience and district monitoring system	SDC & CoWaSS	

Recommendation 5 Document evidenced learning and share with others - Before the end of Phase I, CoWaSS partners should hold a learning event that takes stock of CoWaSS progress in Phase 1.		
This learning workshop should be undertaken in collaboration with other district WASH stakeholders. This not only serves as an opportunity to increase visibility of the project, but it is also an opportunity to engage with the new Government WASH Sector Lead (CoHCS), other WASH Sector organisations, donors, UN Agencies and the IFI's. Such an event could be jointly funded, and it would be helpful in determining where to focus attention at the outset of Phase II. After the learning event, CoWaSS partners should develop a prioritization matrix to identify where the project can maximise impact in Phase II. This will help to prioritise and redistribute tasks. This is also required because the project currently refers to itself as being comprehensive, but there are clearly some aspects that are not yet gaining traction (such as sanitation marketing), and progress has been limited.		
Management response		
Fully agree	**Partially agree**	Disagree
The project agrees to share (selected) learnings of Phase 1 progress in Water Sector Coordination Meeting of MEWR. However, we disagree to have national learning event on progress of CoWaSS Phase1. We rather suggest having a specific national level event on the key topic of WASH master planning, where all key stakeholders can share experience so that it can be incorporated in the State Programme up to 2029. Indeed, the project will maintain and develop contacts with CoHCS keeping in mind that this Committee is not yet fully operational.		
Measures	Responsibility	Timing

a) Discuss with SDC and SDC funded projects first to make suggestions for approach of a learning event and funding (as CoWASS has limited budget available for such activity that was not planned for 2025). b) Suggestion to involve SDC backstoppers in the facilitation of the learning event.	CoWaSS, SDC,	At the end of the Phase I, once the District actors have built up their WASH Plans and can share their experience and concerns

Recommendation 6 Strengthen the capability and social accountability of CoWaSS (R6) - Ahead of Phase II, all partners should review composition of the consortium and revisit the 'Consortium Governance Document' to ensure a more equal representation of CoWaSS partners in decision making and activity.		
CoWaSS should have detailed discussions between partners to reflect on progress and to understand organisations desirability to do more. The addition of a national partner to the consortium with capacities in Social Accountability will provide a much-needed bridge between civil society, POs, and government. A key role could be to improve the community engagement component of the project to ensure water system user are consulted about design preferences for their systems. Sanitation users should be consulted to identify user friendly designs/preferences. Women, youth, girls, boys and minority groups also need to be included in decision-making processes, alongside those ultimately responsible for managing institutional facilities.		
Management response		
Fully agree	**Partially agree**	Disagree
The Consortium governance document will be updated among existing members based on the Phase II programme, clearly defining each partner's responsibilities. However, we do not see value in additional national partner. While social accountability is vital, it is ensured through extensive community consultations. Villager's co-financing water systems are actively involved in their design, with support from mobilisers and local authorities (jamoat and district). Sanitation users help design user-friendly facilities, and all population groups participate in decision-making. Future facility managers are consulted, visit existing systems, and discuss their pros and cons. These processes are supported by local NGOs and coordinated with national-level actors and donors.		
Measures	Responsibility	Timing
a) Continue to organise consultations at village level for the design of Water systems (co-financed by people) and Sanitation facilities.	CoWaSS, village population, institution managers	For the current phase this is already initiated and takes place As for WASH May October 2025
b) Continue to support the development of costed WASH plans at district level including the prioritisation of phased construction activities decided in partnership with the populations.	District Authorities CoWaSS coached, Working Group (inclusive of village populations)	Phase II
c) Concentrate on the gaps identified into the sanitation chain and work to improve them.	CoWaSS	Phase II
d) Sign MoU with responsibilities of each actor defined including the design decided, the definition of the management responsibilities etc.		
e) Update consortium governance document based on phase II programme.		

Recommendation 7 Advocacy, influencing & visibility at the national level needs to be strengthened to both raise the profile of the CoWaSS project model and share sector wide learning- In Phase 2 CoWaSS needs to better demonstrate its impact and the process that is being applied.

Advocacy work should not only focus on acceptance of the model or process being applied but also seek to create a network around 'replicability' by engaging with financial institutions, donors, and government. There is also an opportunity to engage with the newly created CoHCS, responsible for WASH related policies and regulation (guide CoHCS on financing, monitoring, performance indicators, etc.).

Management response

Fully agree	Partially agree	Disagree

To demonstrate Impact, it is important that preliminary bases are developed, models are refined and can be proposed for replicability and systemic changes. Impact does not happen on day one of a project proposing systemic changes.

It is already foreseen in SDC TORs and CoWaSS proposal from 2020, that the focus of the project in phase 2 will be more on advocacy for scaling and sustainability, building on evidence base laid in phase 1. Documentation of processes in the policy areas are indeed critical and will be continued at start of phase 2.

ISW had been an active participant and contributor to a multiple of policy initiatives at national level, launched by UNICEF, WB, MEWR, and others. As an example, the ISW has informed and contributed pre-CoWaSS and CoWaSS experiences to the following policy initiatives (final reports and documents as evidence of ISW contribution provided separately):

- National Water Strategy of the RT for the period up to 2040 (GoRT, 2024);
- National Roadmap. Hand Hygiene for All Tajikistan (MoHSPP, UNICEF, 2023);
- State Programme for Drinking Water Supply and Wastewater Management for the period 2025-2029 (CoHCS, 2025);
- Preliminary Assessment of Private Sector Engagement in WASH service delivery in Tajikistan (feasibility study) (UNICEF, 2023);
- National Standards and Guidelines on Water, Sanitation, Hygiene and Health Care Waste Management in Health Care Facilities (MoHSPP, UNICEF, 2023);
- Guidelines for National Minimum Standard for Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WaSH) in Schools (MoES, UNICEF, 2023);
- National Sanitation Strategy (MoHSPP, MEWR, UNICEF, 2023)
- The National Tariff Setting Strategy for Water (SUE KMK, GoRT, 2022);
- Water Supply and Sanitation Program 2030 – Investment Planning Draft (Hydrophil, WB, MEWR, 2022);
- Sanitation Development Plan in Tajikistan (UNDP, 2021).

IFIs have already been extensively consulted (the list of meetings held over the years provided) and costed models of water and sanitation facilities have been transferred to IFIs for consideration. However, IFIs are often limited in their plans by the client itself who may have different priorities.

CoHCS, currently being established, will surely be key stakeholder in Phase 2 for engagement on policy and regulation.

Measures	Responsibility	Timing
a) **Engagement at national (and regional) level on advocacy to be reinforced:** The CoHCS already approached the CoWaSS Team to support the inception workshop planned after the endorsement of the State Programme for DWS&WWM. The CoWaSS is in the process of guiding the Committee on key advocacy	CoWaSS Project in partnership with SDC and other donors	Pro Doc Proposal mid-July And then 2026 - 2030

items to be included in the agenda of the workshop. As a follow-up to this workshop, the Committee will also assume the management of the existing coordination platform for the sector – *Inter-Agency Working Group on drinking water supply, wastewater and sanitation*. CoWaSS will provide technical support in organization of the meetings of this working group, advocating to include key issues in its agenda, and advocate for further reforms in collaboration with participating development partners. These existing mechanisms will ensure the needed visibility of CoWaSS profile in the network. CoWaSS will also arrange MoU with the Committee for joint implementation of an Action Plan (incl. Project Vision) that the project advocates for. For more details, please refer to Management Response for Recommendation #9. **b) Reinforce documentation of lessons learned and other evidence for policy advocacy:** CoWaSS is already in the process of developing knowledge products that document lessons learned and present evidence for policy advocacy. To this point, the following key knowledge products are defined and will be produced during designated time-frame: o Knowledge Product #1 – "DWO model as viable DWS service provider – FCR tariffs, institutional and governance features: experience in Sughd region" (*community-driven and self-sustaining DWS systems and alternative service providers*); o Knowledge Product #2 – "District-wide approach to delivering sanitation services across the value chain: CoWaSS experience in sanitation marketing (*dealing with final stages of the value chain – transportation, disposal, treatment and re-use*); o Knowledge Product #3 – "District WASH Plan development and operationalization in Sughd Region" (institutionalization of financing, financing models and frameworks, linkages with DDPs, RBMPs, NWIS, and the State Programme); c) **Revisiting budgetary means within policy component for advocacy, influencing and visibility:** Following the endorsement of the new State Programme and the support required to institutional strengthening of the CoHCS to govern and regulate the WASH sector, the CoWaSS Project will revisit the budgetary means for advocacy, influencing and visibility. Targeted campaigns will be costed to ensure CoWaSS WASH vision and sustainability models are well documented, advocated for replication as feasible via available platforms initiated and supported by CoHCS (inter-agency collaboration and development partner forums) and other partners.	or implementers (BORDA, AKF etc.)	

Recommendation 8 Develop and articulate a roadmap for future progress - CoWaSS (led by ISW) should develop roadmaps for the target districts of Kanibadam and Jabbor Rasulov, with the aim of achieving full WASH coverage.		
This will map out the systems strengthening and infrastructure (Capital Expenditure) journey ahead and help CoWaSS to articulate the process that can be replicated and adapted by other districts. The roadmap can also be used to attract sector investment. This is important given further CoWaSS requires further investment and engagement with other potential finance mechanisms (replicability), government and the private sector. Elements of the roadmap can also be based on learning from Water Trust Funds, particularly around financial transparency, and social accountability.		
Management response		
Fully agree	**Partially agree**	Disagree
Agree with Roadmap development (already ongoing), but facilitated by CoWaSS (not developed by), and not with including WTF modality for financial transparency, and social accountability. Roadmaps in the target districts of Konibodom and Jabor Rasulov (as well as Asht) will be part of the district WASH Plan under development, with the objective of achieving full WASH coverage, not only Water but also Sanitation. They should be developed by district stakeholders, with CoWaSS only in facilitating role. The infrastructure part will be covered in the current cycle of WASH plans development (for the period 2026-2030). Next to CapEX there is also need for OPEX and other cost categories, including considerations for district capacity for planning and monitoring services. Attracting IFIs is a must … This has proven to be possible in neighbouring countries in Central Asia and therefore should be pushed in Tajikistan (see recommendation 7 above).		

Measures	Responsibility	Timing
a) Collect financial, managerial and operational evidence of the sustainability and replicability of the models proposed (decentralised management of Water with full cost recovery tariff, sanitation as a business, simple but robust models of wastewater treatment facilities that can be financed etc.) b) District WASH Plan with its priorities and models as a road map to attract interest of investors c) Facilitate learning from neighbouring countries on financing mechanisms through IFIs for scaling rural WASH services d) Engage with IFIs for innovative solutions (e.g., to establish a credit line devoted to the financing of WASH in rural areas on which villages can draw in order to co-finance the construction of their water system with participation of the population)	CoWaSS project Exchange of experience between SDC financed projects Work with Blue Peace CA	Initial document Available end of June Further development to be included in ProDoc for Phase II

Recommendation 9 Institution building - In terms of systems strengthening work CoWaSS partners need to build institutional capability in such a way that it will outlive the CoWaSS project.
These reforms need to be identified, and they need to be significant so they do not stop or can be reversed when CoWaSS ends. A possible example is to ensure there is a district level mechanism for 3rd party quality assurance for water supply & sanitation system construction. This requires qualified 3rd party monitoring for major infrastructure components (water pumping sites, reservoirs, water treatments, etc.), blended with social accountability mechanisms for distribution network pipe networks.
Management response

Fully agree	**Partially agree**	Disagree

We agree on the importance of ensuring institutional capacities and strengthening existing mechanisms, but do not support the creation of new institutions.

Despite CoWaSS's previous advancements on this with the MEWR and the development partners, i.e. translating the model recognition and replicability in the draft State Programme for DWS&S, with the latest re-distribution of roles in the WASH policy and regulation, that work will be re-launched now with the CoHCS.

The CoHCS has taken over further development of the State Programme for DWS&WWM, and had presented a revised version to the Government. CoHCS is planning an Inception Workshop during which the endorsed Programme will be presented and discussed. CoHCS assured that key development challenges and priorities have remained, and that the needs of the rural WASH are explicitly acknowledged in the document. Therefore, supporting the new Committee in implementing the endorsed Programme, implies that development partners will be required to collectively plan interventions on institutional strengthening and policy development initiatives that the Programme envisages. This also implies the review of the policy and systems strengthening budget within CoWaSS during Phase 2.

Measures	Responsibility	Timing
a) Establish a Joint Vision for collaboration between the CoHCS and the ISW-CoWaSS Project and implementation: The frequent communication with the Committee, reveals that the ISW will need take series of steps first to address capacity needs within the new entity, and then present the CoWaSS development vision for rural WASH sector. Anticipating further support in implementing the endorsed State Programme, the Committee would seek Project's suggestions on how to advance replicability towards country-wide access to WASH services. The CoWaSS suggest the following steps in implementing the measure: o Development of a brief CoWaSS development vision for WASH sector, based on the experiences of previous and current phases (available and intended knowledge products to support the process); o Presentation of the Vision to CoHCS at a targeted workshop with accompanied trips to project sites for joint exchanges in the field; o Development of a joint Action Plan with the Committee on – (a) institutional capacity development amongst CoHCS's related department staffs, and (b) strengthening systems and policies towards implementation of the endorsed State Programme. Simultaneously, the Committee is expected to collaborate with other development partners in distribution of available support in systems strengthening and capacity building. The CoWaSS will contribute with inputs to collaboration platforms for WASH sector that the Committee will conduct on a regular basis. Replication possibilities will be discussed in such platforms under the Committee's leadership.	CoWaSS Project relevant institutional actors	Phase II and III

○ Signing of an MoU with the Committee in implementing agreed Joint Vision during Phase 2 and 3 (Action Plan as supplement to MoU). **b) Operationalize WASH plans in target districts:** District WASH plans are in final stages of development, final drafts due before end of Phase 1. The most important step is to ensure their operationalization. That process is dependent on three different processes, i.e. (1) District Development Plans (DDPs) and budgets for the period 2026-2030, (2) donor investments to the endorsed State Programme for DWS&WWM, and (3) River Basin Management Plan for 2026-2030. Linking to each of those three processes and their integration requires that those processes first need to conclude with related commitments that will have implications to intended WASH plans. Priorities and committed investments will need to be integrated into the given plans. This process will need to be coached in consultation with the new Committee, as there is no clear guidance at this point on how the Committee extends its enforcing via District Administrations. The CoWaSS suggests the following steps in implementing the measure: ○ Finalize draft WASH plans and define linkages with the district budget, RBMP, State Programme for DWS&WWM (CoHCS), donor community investment commitments, and the NWIS of the MEWR. ○ Advocate for improved financing strategies (linking budgets) for WASH Plans at targeted workshops with the CoHCS (State Programme), District Authorities (DDPs), Donor community (investment prospects), and the MEWR (RBMP). ○ Establish at district level the M&E process in agreement between the CoHCS, MEWR, and District Administrations. ○ Document the process, scaling up of good practices on the WASH Plans development and implementation. **c) Wider institutionalization of DWOs and network strengthening:** As DWOs continue to demonstrate institutional and financial viability, the CoWaSS project will further upscale support in organizing them into a professional network (franchise) with additional professional support (asset management, legal and accounting support, M&E and learning programs). The comprehensive audits (managerial, financial and technical) will be conducted on a yearly or biannual basis to inform how the DWO network strengthening will be implemented. The governance improvements will ensure that General Assembly meetings are regularly conducted by DWOs. General Assembly meeting will be guided by the CoWaSS to ensure accountability measures are intact, and relevant representatives from district and regional		

authorities participate. CoWaSS project will engage with District Administration in appointing 3rd party quality assurance teams that will need to be formally introduced as participants to given General Assembly meetings. **d) Revisiting budgetary means for policy component:** In anticipation of the endorsement of new State Programme and required support to institutional strengthening of the CoHCS to govern and regulate the WASH sector, the CoWaSS Project will revisit the budgetary means to ensure expected project results are sustained beyond programme time-frame. Institutional improvements (CoHCS), strengthened inter-agency collaboration frameworks (MEWR, District Administrations, etc.), and WASH platforms for networking and coordinating development partner programs will need to be supported by CoWaSS consecutive phases.		

Recommendation 10 Generate a significant body of evidenced learning - Documenting learning & evidence of what works is vital if the 'comprehensive' approach is to be upscaled successfully.		
Lessons learnt and relevant recommendations need to be systematically documented by all partners and disseminated to not only influence best practice, but to also serve as an engagement point for replicating the CoWaSS model. CoWaSS should also be undertaking its own targeted research into specific issues. For example, conducting further research into faecal sludge management practices in target districts would link directly to the other groundwater management and water resources work being undertaken by Helvetas, and funded by SDC. This could also serve to demonstrate the comprehensive nature of CoWaSS if there is direct crossover with other projects working on similar issues.		
Management response		
Fully agree	**Partially agree**	Disagree
CoWaSS has already produced a certain number of learning documents and will continue to draw lessons from its past and present experience (list of documents included in annex). With new CoHCS we see new opportunities for re-energizing regular WASH sector partners meetings (that has been operational in recent years).		
Measures	Responsibility	Timing
a) Evidenced Learning: CoWaSS is in the process of developing a number of knowledge products that provide a body of evidenced learning. To this point, the following key knowledge products were defined and will be produced during designated time-frame: o Knowledge Product #1 – "DWO model as viable DWS service provider – FCR tariffs, institutional and governance features: experience in Sughd region" (*community-driven and self-sustaining DWS systems and alternative service providers*); o Knowledge Product #2 – "District-wide approach to delivering sanitation services across the value chain: CoWaSS experience in sanitation marketing (*dealing with final stages of the value chain – transportation, disposal, treatment and re-use*): This will be supported via studies of sanitation models (pre-	CoWaSS External experts COP4WASH	Included in the ProDoc to be produced in July and then further developed during Phase II

CoWaSS and CoWaSS phases), study of the problems of raising water table that have implications for sanitation model choice, study on faecal sludge management, treatment know-how at local level, etc. The Knowledge Product will also provide a practical Sanitation Vision for rural settlements. o Knowledge Product #3 – "District WASH Plan development and operationalization in Sughd Region" (institutionalization of financing, financing models and frameworks, linkages with DDPs, RBMPs, NWIS, and the State Programme); **b) Supporting partner exchanges for learning and best practice documentation:** CoWaSS through CoHCS will promote exchange visits between development partner projects to document lessons learned, and advocate for best practices. Such exchange had previously been implemented between CoWaSS and SWSMT (AKF-MSDSP) projects, and will be carried out with other projects (WB, ADB, EBRD, JICA, MEWR PMU, etc.). The possibility for project-to-project exchanges will also be sought directly with implementers of WASH projects in Tajikistan. **c) Ensure that collaboration with Cop4WASH continues.**		

Additional Notes:

On the Lack of Evidence: The Evaluation Report has noted repeatedly the lack of evidence across the document on reported progress. The ISW Team finds this claim inaccurate, and also unacceptable for the bulk of the claims made therein. The Project Team at the onset of the project evaluation has provided the initial batch of the evidence base, in anticipation that the Evaluation Team would maintain follow-up on any missing information they might find interesting to bulge in greater detail. Placing every bit of information for reading by the Evaluation is deemed impossible during the mission in the field, and there had not been any follow-ups after the field mission. The Evaluation Team also does not define properly the depth of evidence they expected to see. All that had certainly not been reported back to the project team during the evaluation for further recollection, as the amount of evidence is actually available.

On visibility amongst development partners: For example, on collaboration and knowledge of development partners, the ISW CoWaSS team had spared a considerable amount of time on exchanges, site visits, and stakeholder meetings (SCMs, NPD, MoEWR, EBRD, WB-PMU, etc.), and the project team is in strong denial of the fact that evaluation team claims the project had not been visible to many donor development partners. On the part of policy work, ISW CoWaSS team had been amongst very active contributors to collective policy work that was led by the MoEWR, MoHSPP, MoE, and KMK. All the contributions are there within the given policy documents, reports, drafts, and decision. The expected follow-up by the Evaluation Team did not take place to accurately note what those contributions had been. Documenting separately all communications, and recurrent notes on contributed excerpts from those reports is a challenge in itself.

Implementation of Evaluation Principles: The Evaluation Team conducted field missions to project sites, met authorities and other stakeholders. Having done so, we find that the mere principle of **'triangulation'** and/or **'meta-analysis'** principles of evaluation were not duly implemented. For example, the opinions of beneficiaries on-site (anticipated water users) reporting 'poor design and/or

quality' in infrastructure were taken at face value, without any opportunity for the Project Team to provide feedback. The beneficiaries cannot claim to be engineers to report about poor design. Another example, about a particular district authority claiming the project performing poorly, had been looked at out of context. As it was well reported, numerous attempts of 'looting' or 'take-over' of DWS systems from DWOs. Vested interests amongst local authorities were not taken into account. The method of triangulation assumes that when on a particular subject there are conflicting or inconsistent information, it is further cross-checked or investigated through communicating the subject with all relevant stakeholders including the **Project Team** to conclude meaningfully and argumentatively.

Sustainability Requirements: The project design and infrastructure development under CoWaSS, as in pre-CoWaSS phases, are driven exclusively by **sustainability** requirements. The standards of sustainability are well known and should be looked at in true context with parallel initiatives implemented by other projects and development partners. Historically higher tariffs and standards of services are maintained at length, this had been in part possible due to the need to have relatively lower per capita costs of systems investments. In that context, the CoWaSS Team finds that the Evaluation Team did not take that duly into consideration, by claiming or rating project design (and quality) as poor. Few instances are work in progress and will be dealt with, without any judgement passed on until the infrastructure development is complete, however, other instances like placing additional water towers or reservoirs, places unbearable costs to infrastructure maintenance and economic sustainability. When inquiring about examples from the Evaluation Team, the examples referred to by the evaluators were in humanitarian aid projects in other countries, which is unacceptable for CoWaSS context projects aiming for sustainability at length. For the sake of argument, the Evaluation Team does not, at minimum, provide examples that would define 'poor quality' or 'poor design'.

Overall view: It seems that a certain number of documents have been either overlooked by evaluators or simply ignored and presented as non-existing by the team of evaluators although clearly referenced in the Box opened by the evaluation team as the only secure place. This was e.g. the case in particular for the Mid-Term Review and the Guidelines for WASH Plan, both highlighted by the evaluators as non-communicated by the project. Given the importance of those two documents (not to mention other ones), the project would like to express its concerns on the presentation of results achieved (or non-achieved).

However, notwithstanding its concerns, the CoWaSS consortium and the team have tried to make the best of the recommendations and of the proposals of the evaluation, together with presenting the details of realisations achieved so far.

Recognising that some objectives have not been fully achieved and that, during the implementation of the first phase, strategies have been revised, the project is indicating the steps that are already on-going to achieve all the targets achievable by the end of the first phase as well as opens up the ways for the definition of a second phase.

Management response to the External Review of the Phase I of the Comprehensive Water Supply and Sanitation in rural areas of the Sughd Region project (CoWaSS)

Management Response

The Management Response (MR) states the position of the SDC on the recommendations of the External Review of the Phase I of the Comprehensive Water Supply and Sanitation in rural areas of the Sughd Region project (CoWaSS) project. The MR provides basis for further definition of actions for improving the project performance and strategic decision-making.

Overall assessment of the evaluation

The evaluation was conducted by a team of three experts, T. Forster, S. Yarbaeva and S. Day, in accordance with international standards. The overall evaluation process was accompanied by the SDC's reference group comprising of Alisher Shabdolov, NPO Rural Water Supply and Sanitation, and SCO Water Backstoppers from SKAT Consulting.

The main objectives of the evaluation – to validate the CoWaSS project outcomes, as well as to review the original project concepts for strategic orientation and fresh ideas for increasing the effectiveness of WASH service delivery in Sughd region – have been partly met by the evaluators.

While SDC acknowledges the efforts invested by the evaluation team to meet all the SDC's requirements, it needs to be stated that the final evaluation report still lacks comprehensiveness and provides only limited analysis of key elements related to the performance of the CoWaSS project.

Main findings

The overall evaluation process experienced significant delays, primarily due to the lower-than-expected quality of the initial drafts of the report, which required numerous exchanges with the consultants and feedback loops by SDC and the Water Backstoppers, leading to repeated revisions of the document. From the SDC's point of view the consultants struggled to grasp the project's full complexity, resulting in a too narrow, infrastructure-focused analysis and subsequently in an unsatisfactory assessment of the LogFrame related achievements (outcome and outputs).

Key contextual factors – such as regional political instability (i.e. the Tajik-Kyrgiz armed conflicts near project target areas), policy shifts (e.g. adoption of the National Water Strategy 2040, delays in the adoption of new the Drinking Water and Sanitation Program 2032), and institutional developments (i.e. creation of a new committee of housing and communal services) – were insufficiently addressed. The desk review and field investigation also overlooked critical elements like the District WASH Plan Guide, policy work, academic collaboration, and the project's role in SDC's broader water resource management efforts in the Syrdarya River Basin.

Although the evaluation presents a series of actionable recommendations to improve current operations and implementation within the project, the report provides only minimal insights and guidance for the project's broader future strategic direction.

Further details on the perceived shortcomings of the external evaluation can be found in Annex 1 to this MR.

Despite these shortcomings, the evaluation's findings and recommendations are appreciated. The evaluation finds that the CoWaSS project is well-designed to meet the needs of local beneficiaries and aligns closely with national policies and strategies. The project remains relevant in light of institutional changes (e.g., establishment of the Committee on Housing and Communal Services) and the reduction of ODA assistance. The project's approach demonstrates adaptability and responsiveness to the evolving context.

CoWaSS is commended for its cost-efficiency, maintaining modest operational costs while prioritizing programmatic activities. It directly tackles the issue of financial sustainability by engaging communities to accept significantly higher tariffs in exchange for improved services. Additionally, the project plays an active role in driving policy reform, collaborating closely with the Ministry of Energy and Water Resources to influence and support systemic change.

The evaluation underscores the urgent need to ensure that infrastructure components of the project are completed both on time and to a high standard of quality. It also highlights the importance of systematically documenting lessons learned and capturing project deliverables – such as policy papers and strategic reports – in a clear and accessible manner. Additionally, the evaluation points to the necessity of enhancing the internal coordination and organizational efficiency of the consortium to optimize performance. These recommendations have been well received and will be carefully considered and integrated into the planning and implementation of future project activities to strengthen overall impact and sustainability.

The detailed recommendations of the evaluation are mainly directed towards the project implementation consortium partners and national counterparts at various levels. Of the ten recommendations, five are *fully agreed* (green), four are *partially agreed* (orange), and one is *not agreed* (red) — see the table below for details.

The SDC will ensure a close follow-up with project partners on effective and timely implementation of the agreed measures.

Overview of recommendations, management response and timeframe of measures

Recommendation by evaluators: 1. Complete and monitor infrastructure works (R1). CoWaSS should complete remaining construction work and work with relevant actors to commission the water supply and sanitation services. *SDC MR:* Fully agree; CoWaSS will develop a detailed action plan for the remaining time of the CoWaSS Phase 1, highlighting the pending works and their implementation. Timeframe: immediately	
Recommendation by evaluators: 2. Asset Management Planning. Linked to R1, ISW should support the establishment of Asset Management Plans to determine how the desired water supply service levels can be provided in the most cost-effective manner. *SDC MR:* Fully agree; CoWaSS will develop a detailed action plan for the remaining time of the CoWaSS Phase 1, highlighting the pending works and their implementation. Timeframe: immediately	
Recommendation by evaluators: 3. Clarify necessary actions before and in response to WASH services breaking down (R3). A simple logic model should be developed by CoWaSS partners and agreed upon that outlines responses and actions that 'will' be taken when WASH services breakdown.	

SDC MR: Disagree; A logic model exists already but requires operationalisation. CoWaSS will develop a detailed action plan for the remaining time of the CoWaSS Phase 1, highlighting the pending works and their implementation. Timeframe: summer 2025.	
Recommendation by evaluators: 4. Develop costed District WASH Plans (R4). These plans should be developed by CoWaSS partners and outline a phased approach for providing WASH services at district scale. *SDC MR:* Fully agree; CoWaSS will develop a detailed action plan for the remaining time of the CoWaSS Phase 1, highlighting the pending works and their implementation. Timeframe: immediately	
Recommendation by evaluators: 5. Document evidenced learning and share with others (R5). Before the end of Phase I, CoWaSS partners should hold a learning event that takes stock of CoWaSS progress in Phase 1. *SDC MR:* Partially agree; CoWaSS will distribute its learnings. However, the exact level and scope of such an event needs to be defined first. Timeframe: late summer/early autumn 2025	
Recommendation by evaluators: 6. Strengthen the capability and social accountability of CoWaSS (R6). Ahead of Phase II, all partners should review composition of the consortium and revisit the 'Consortium Governance Document' to ensure a more equal representation of CoWaSS partners in decision making and activity. *SDC MR:* Partially agree; The Consortium governance document will be updated among existing members based on the Phase II programme, clearly defining each partner's responsibilities. However, SDC does not see value in including additional national partners into the set-up. Timeframe: autumn 2025	
Recommendation by evaluators: 7. Advocacy, influencing & visibility at the national level needs to be strengthened to both raise the profile of the CoWaSS project model and share sector wide learning (R7). In Phase 2 CoWaSS needs to better demonstrate its impact and the process that is being applied. *SDC MR:* Fully agree; In Phase 2 the Focus of the project will be more on advocacy for scaling and sustainability, building on the evidence base laid out in phase 1. Documentation of processes in the policy areas are critical and will be continued at the start of Phase 2. Timeframe: as of start of Phase 2 of the project	
Recommendation by evaluators: 8. Develop and articulate a roadmap for future progress (R8). CoWaSS (led by ISW) should develop roadmaps for the target districts of Kanibadam and Jabbor Rasulov, with the aim of achieving full WASH coverage. *SDC MR:*	

Partially agree; Agree on the development of a roadmap (already ongoing) but facilitated by CoWASS and not developed by them. Timeframe: immediately / ongoing			
Recommendation by evaluators: 9. Institution building (R9). In terms of systems strengthening work CoWaSS partners need to build institutional capability in such a way that it will outlive the CoWaSS project. *SDC MR:* Partially agree; Ensuring institutional capacity building and strengthening existing mechanisms is crucial and will be done, however the creation of new institutions will not be supported through the project. Timeframe: ongoing			
Recommendation by evaluators: 10. Generate a significant body of evidenced learning (R10). Documenting learning & evidence of what works is vital if the 'comprehensive' approach is to be upscaled successfully. *SDC MR:* Fully agree; CoWaSS has already produced a certain number of learning documents and will continue to draw lessons from its past and present experience. Timeframe: ongoing			
Fully agree	Partially agree	Disagree	

Reaction from the CoWaSS project team

The CoWaSS project team voiced their criticism about the evaluation as well, which is duly noted by SDC. Notwithstanding their criticism the CoWaSS team prepared a detailed management response to the recommendations of the evaluation. The CoWaSS management response provides further insights and background information related to the recommendations as well as includes concrete measures on how the identified challenges in the project shall be addressed. The CoWaSS management response is therefore part of this SDC management response and can be found as annex 2 to this document.

Annex 1

Further details on perceived shortcomings of the External Evaluation of CoWaSS Phase 1

The CoWaSS project underwent an external end of phase evaluation by a team of three consultants from Oxfam Consults. The evaluation took place between January and May 2025.

This note complements the official SDC management response to the evaluation report of Phase 1 of the CoWaSS project. It aims to highlight shortcomings in the evaluation that limit the usefulness of its findings and recommendations for guiding the completion of Phase 1 and preparing for Phase 2. Despite the observed limitations a number of findings and recommendations of the external review remain valid as they also underline known shortcomings already identified by the SDC and the Water Backstoppers during past monitoring visits and the semi-internal mid-term review of the project.

Overall assessment of the external evaluation

The evaluation process took significantly longer than anticipated, extending from late January to end of May. This delay was largely due to challenges in producing a satisfactory draft report. Early drafts fell short of expectations in terms of scope (not covering all elements outlined in the ToR and inception report), analytical depth (excluding some key outcomes), and use of available evidence (important documents were omitted). Despite repeated feedback from SDC and the Water Backstoppers, several critical aspects were still not addressed in the final version.

Key limitations of the evaluation include:

- **Inadequate Desk Review and Overall Analysis**: It was signalled since the early drafts that key documents have obviously been overlooked (such as the Mid-Term review or the District WSAH Plan Guidelines) leading to misinterpretations in the key findings.
- **Weak Analytical Rigor**: The report lacks a reflective analysis that would justify its recommendations and fails to clearly connect findings, conclusions, and actions.
- **Incomplete Outcome Assessment**: The evaluation focuses narrowly on water infrastructure, neglecting the broader, integrated and more holistic approach which is central to the CoWaSS project.
- **Generic Recommendations**: Recommendations remain broad and lack specificity for actionable implementation aligned with project realities.
- **Insufficient LogFrame Analysis**: The evaluation did not conduct a thorough LogFrame-based assessment, despite detailed instructions and examples provided (i.e., Mid Term Review report).

These shortcomings limit the usefulness of the evaluation for shaping the conclusion of Phase 1 and informing the design of Phase 2.

Detailed shortcomings of the evaluation

Comprehensiveness of the CoWaSS Project

- The evaluation places disproportionate emphasis on the infrastructure component, while largely overlooking the foundational elements of the project – namely, institutional strengthening and systemic coordination – which form the core of its comprehensive approach.
- Important contextual changes and their impact on the project could have been better analysed, such as aspects related to CoVid-19, armed conflicts between Tajikistan and Kirgizstan, elaboration of new policies such as National Water Strategy 2040, big delay in the development and approval of the new compressive Program on Drinking Water and Sanitation 2032 under the lead of World Bank, the creation of new Committee on Housing and Communal Services, etc.
- Despite their knowledge of the WASH sector in Tajikistan and the availability of relevant resources, the consultancy team demonstrated limited understanding and appreciation of key sectoral challenges and attributed their resolution to the current CoWaSS project only. These challenges include among others: lack of government ownership, lead and contribution (e.g., budgets), limited capacity among key actors, and the neglect of critical issues such as faecal sludge management – challenges that affect not only this project but many others in the country.
- There was no attempt to assess the project's approaches and tools on: community-based management (DWOs), various elements related to the district WASH plans (see below), sanitation marketing (sanitation catalogue), sanitation in schools and health care facilities, research on the sanitation chain and possible application on sludge, the policy work (policy documents including detailed methodology for knowledge products 2023) nor was the cost recovery tariffs approach critically analysed and described.

District WASH Plan

- The District WASH Plan Guide was shared by ISW as part of the documents package at the outset and was part of the desk review (indicated in the inception report). The document is, however, not acknowledged in the analysis nor in the reporting.
- Efforts to replicate the district WASH plans in additional districts such as Asht should have been well known to the consultants as it was part of the desk review (reports, management responses, steering committee presentation, etc.). This is not, however, acknowledged in the analysis nor in the reporting.
- The evaluation omits any mentioning of the web-based monitoring system tied to the WASH plans.

Community-Based Management and the performance of DWOs

- The evaluation largely overlooks the role and performance of Drinking Water Organizations (DWOs), which are central to the project's community-based management approach. Following Evaluation Questions 14 and 15, the assessment demonstrates a limited understanding of how the project engages with communities and whether foundational community mobilization activities are in place.

  Although DWOs under the current phase are not yet fully operational, the project includes clear mechanisms to monitor and draw lessons from the performance of DWOs established during the previous ISW-implemented project. These earlier DWOs, developed with SDC support in Sughd, represent some of the very few successful examples in Tajikistan of sustainable service delivery through full cost recovery at the community level. Their long-term operational success has been repeatedly acknowledged by government entities, including the Ministry of Energy and Water Resources (MEWR), and international development partners such as the World Bank.

  CoWaSS is attempting to replicate this proven model in the current phase. However, the evaluation fails to assess the extent to which this replication is succeeding or facing challenges.

A more balanced and comprehensive analysis – recognizing both achievements and areas for improvement – would have significantly strengthened the evaluation and provided valuable insights for refining the community-based management model in future phases of the project.

Contribution to IWRM, Policy Work and Academic Collaboration

- Project contributions to policy dialogue are discussed only in general terms. The evaluation report neglects the project's engagement in policy dialogue at both basin and national levels and omits its role in key working groups (e.g. water quality), policy platforms (e.g. Syr Darya River Basin Council, Women's Forum), and Water Sector Coordination Meetings with MEWR.
- The project's policy research outputs are not referenced.
- Cooperation with universities under the Blue Peace CoP4WASH initiative is disregarded, with no assessment of its relevance or potential.

Engagement with Development Partners

- The claim that the CoWaSS project is "invisible" to other development partners is questionable and lacks representativeness. The consultants interviewed four donor representatives (ADB, WB, EBRD, and IFC). While a recent leadership change at ADB may explain gaps in institutional memory, both the World Bank and IFC are known to maintain regular and constructive engagement with the CoWaSS project. Notably, IFC has incorporated sanitation models developed by CoWaSS into its Housing Microfinance Project – clear evidence of awareness and collaboration. This raises the question if the interviewed representatives were in fact the most suited ones.
- In addition, the evaluation fails to mention or refer to the SDC-funded SWSMT project, which closely mirrors CoWaSS in both design and implementation. The omission of this "twin" project overlooks an important opportunity to analyse synergies, complementarities, and lessons learned within SDC's broader WASH portfolio in Tajikistan.

Annex 2

COMPREHENSIVE WATER SUPPLY & SANITATION IN RURAL AREAS OF SUGHD

ISW • HELVETAS • CAICO

Separate CoWaSS Management Response to the External Review of the Phase I of the Comprehensive Water Supply and Sanitation in rural areas of the Sughd Region project (CoWaSS)

This Management Response (MR) has been prepared by the implementing Consortium of the CoWaSS Project, represented by ISW, Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation and CAICO.

This MR reflects the views and opinion of the CoWaSS project implementing partners and does not necessarily match the views of SDC nor of the external evaluators.

This MR is intended to provide further insights, details and reactions to the findings of the evaluation from CoWaSS side in order to put them into perspectives of the project reality.

Overview of recommendations, management response and measures

Recommendation 1 Complete and monitor infrastructure works- CoWaSS should complete remaining construction work and work with relevant actors to commission the water supply and sanitation services.		
Any construction defects or concerns raised by communities should be addressed by ISW. Measures should also be put in place to improve the supervision of construction work delivered through various contractors. This is necessary because the quality of infrastructure design, construction and supervision will largely determine what transpires next with regards to service performance and sustainability. ISW should then work with Private Operators to measure service performance levels across all systems to obtain a true understanding of performance indicators, customer satisfaction and operating costs.		
Management response		
Fully agree	Partially agree	Disagree
Evaluation report mentions that all constructions were on-going. It is the normal working procedure of the project to finalise the construction activities according to the contracts signed with the constructors, to monitor the construction whilst on-going with the support of the population and the institutions (participatory monitoring), and to address the construction defects or shortcomings. Payments are made once all parties agree on the constructions (tripartite contracts). Contracts include a retention guarantee payment which is released one or two years after all work is finished and any defects occurring in this guarantee period are corrected. KPIs are in place and water operators are trained to record them.		
Measures	Responsibility	Timing
a) Mobilize the team and assign a dedicated person to oversee planning, execution, and monitoring b) Implement a detailed work schedule with clear deadlines and responsibilities c) Conduct regular site inspections to ensure compliance with design and standards d) Organise transfer of assets to DWOs (water supply) or to institutions (toilets in schools and Health Care Facilities)	CoWaSS CoWaSS and District authorities	By the end of Phase I A separate table with concrete timeline of infrastructure implementation is prepared and will be regularly refined
e) Service performance: training of DWOs on selected KPIs for operational efficiency	CoWaSS & CAICO	Once the systems are built up, tested,

		and after the people are receiving water.

Recommendation 2 Asset Management Planning. Linked to R1, ISW should support the establishment of Asset Management Plans to determine how the desired water supply service levels can be provided in the most cost-effective manner.		
This will provide government institutions and operators with information on the asset base and the ability of different systems to meet user expectations. This should form a key component of a district-wide approach. Asset Management Plans will help determine if the higher tariff rates are adequate to cover operational and repair costs, and this information should make the WASH sector more attractive to potential investors. As a starting point, in addition to measuring service levels, the following data should be collected: • Location and complete information regarding the assets being provided • Details of asset failures and repairs • Cost of repairs • Cost of asset replacement • Time taken to respond and repair assets		
Management response		
Fully agree	Partially agree	Disagree
Each DWO has its asset management plan in the form of assets available, life expectancy DWOs record failures and repairs, their cost as well as the cost of asset replacement etc. For WASH services in institutions, the asset management planning is responsibility of district levels. So for sanitation services asset management planning is done with government services at district level.		
Measures	Responsibility	Timing
a) Conduct targeted training programs for both pre-CoWaSS and CoWaSS DWOs on accounting, asset management, and related administrative skill	CoWaSS CAICO	Currently implemented up to Sept. 2025 May – Sept. 2025
b) Ensure comprehensive WASH data collection and maintain updated information at the district level to support planning and decision-making	CoWaSS Monitoring Specialist	June – Sept. 2025
c) Establish mechanisms for information sharing to make relevant WASH-related data accessible to consumers and DWO members.	CoWaSS CAICO	

Recommendation 3 Clarify necessary actions before and in response to WASH services breaking down - A simple logic model should be developed by CoWaSS partners and agreed upon that outlines responses and actions that 'will' be taken when WASH services breakdown.
Attention is needed to ensure the POs responsible for the management, operation, and maintenance of the water supply infrastructure under construction, are established and adequately trained to take on this role. Given many of the water supply systems are still under construction, this may require support activities being carried over into Phase II. CoWaSS should also continue to strengthen district level institutions focusing on the human and technical capacity at District and Jamoat levels required to sustain WASH services. The evaluation found no evidence these assistance plans currently exist.
Management response

Fully agree	Partially agree	**Disagree**

The project disagrees with the conclusion. The below two points are part of the project operation and are gradually implemented in line with project plan:

- Assistance to DWOs (PO) for the management, operation and maintenance of the water supply infrastructure
- Continue to strengthen district level institutions focusing on the human and technical capacity at district and jamoat levels required to sustain WASH services

Measures	Responsibility	Timing
a) <u>For DWOs:</u> DWOs are trained to manage, operate and maintain the water supply infrastructure and receive support when needed from their peers through the network of DWOs	DWOs themselves, peer support of DWOs when needed	During construction process (Feb. – Sept. 2025) May September 2025
b) <u>Continue</u> to strengthen district level institutions: this is done through the district WASH plan development and is taking place in the 3 districts building up WASH plans to be included in the District Development Plan	Working group, technical services of Districts, support of qualified personnel from Economic Department Support from CoWaSS team	

Recommendation 4 Develop costed District WASH Plans - These plans should be developed by CoWaSS partners and outline a phased approach for providing WASH services at district scale.

They should be accessible and incorporate real time information from the Asset Management Plans (R2). They should also detail the evolving roles and responsibilities of different actors as institutional capabilities are strengthened. Once started the development and refinement of a district-wide plan should be a continuous process to be updated routinely by government entities. This information should be fed upwards to inform national budget allocations.

Management response

Fully agree	Partially agree	Disagree

This is exactly the idea of the district WASH Plan: have a clear idea of the situation at date, plan the development of the WASH sector (infrastructure, services, capacities) in the district and monitor its changes throughout the years.

All groundwork has been done and 2025 is preparation year for District Economic and Social Development Plan (DDP) 2026-2030 and so the plans should be developed May-October for DDP and its annexes. The intention is to have maximum development done by districts.

However, some small remarks

- Real time info not possible – rather regularly updated
- Progressive: evolving capacity

The endorsed New State Programme on Drinking Water Supply and Wastewater Management for the period of 2025 - 2029 promotes District WASH plans and this has been influenced by the advocacy work of the CoWaSS Project. It is also a learning experience, and CoWaSS suggests to learn from other Development Partners that have worked on supporting the district WASH plan modality (including district monitoring system), e.g., Agha Khan, World Bank.

WASH plan development and its effective operationalization is dependent on acknowledged parallel processes, i.e. (1) development of DDPs for 2026-2030 by district authorities, and (2) the launch of the New State Programme up to 2029 with WB's initial financing throughout urban and rural Tajikistan. The process of linking and integration of WASH Plans with these processes is what ultimately

ensures legitimization and/or operationalization of intended district WASH plans. Both processes operate with different concepts, priorities, and defined service levels, which the district WASH plans shall take into account. While development of draft WASH plans is a feasible task towards the end of Phase I, their effective operationalization is subject to finalization (and launch in implementation of investments) of those intended processes.		
Measures	Responsibility	Timing
a) Involvement of a National Consultant to facilitate the WASH plan development for the 3 districts	CoWaSS	May - October 2025
b) Make sure that the process is aligned with 2025 DDP preparation phase, guideline to be shared in June	CoWaSS & National Consultant	
c) Update the WASH information already collected in the three districts	CoWaSS Surveyors	
d) Cost each plan based on recent observed constructions prices,	CoWaSS	
e) Facilitate visioning and target setting for the development of the WASH Plan	CoWaSS District authorities	
f) Exchange of experiences with other projects on district WASH plan experience and district monitoring system	SDC & CoWaSS	

Recommendation 5 Document evidenced learning and share with others - Before the end of Phase I, CoWaSS partners should hold a learning event that takes stock of CoWaSS progress in Phase 1.		
This learning workshop should be undertaken in collaboration with other district WASH stakeholders. This not only serves as an opportunity to increase visibility of the project, but it is also an opportunity to engage with the new Government WASH Sector Lead (CoHCS), other WASH Sector organisations, donors, UN Agencies and the IFI's. Such an event could be jointly funded, and it would be helpful in determining where to focus attention at the outset of Phase II. After the learning event, CoWaSS partners should develop a prioritization matrix to identify where the project can maximise impact in Phase II. This will help to prioritise and redistribute tasks. This is also required because the project currently refers to itself as being comprehensive, but there are clearly some aspects that are not yet gaining traction (such as sanitation marketing), and progress has been limited.		
Management response		
Fully agree	**Partially agree**	Disagree
The project agrees to share (selected) learnings of Phase 1 progress in Water Sector Coordination Meeting of MEWR. However, we disagree to have national learning event on progress of CoWaSS Phase1. We rather suggest having a specific national level event on the key topic of WASH master planning, where all key stakeholders can share experience so that it can be incorporated in the State Programme up to 2029. Indeed, the project will maintain and develop contacts with CoHCS keeping in mind that this Committee is not yet fully operational.		
Measures	Responsibility	Timing

a) Discuss with SDC and SDC funded projects first to make suggestions for approach of a learning event and funding (as CoWASS has limited budget available for such activity that was not planned for 2025). b) Suggestion to involve SDC backstoppers in the facilitation of the learning event.	CoWaSS, SDC,	At the end of the Phase I, once the District actors have built up their WASH Plans and can share their experience and concerns

Recommendation 6 Strengthen the capability and social accountability of CoWaSS (R6) - Ahead of Phase II, all partners should review composition of the consortium and revisit the 'Consortium Governance Document' to ensure a more equal representation of CoWaSS partners in decision making and activity.		
CoWaSS should have detailed discussions between partners to reflect on progress and to understand organisations desirability to do more. The addition of a national partner to the consortium with capacities in Social Accountability will provide a much-needed bridge between civil society, POs, and government. A key role could be to improve the community engagement component of the project to ensure water system user are consulted about design preferences for their systems. Sanitation users should be consulted to identify user friendly designs/preferences. Women, youth, girls, boys and minority groups also need to be included in decision-making processes, alongside those ultimately responsible for managing institutional facilities.		
Management response		
Fully agree	**Partially agree**	Disagree
The Consortium governance document will be updated among existing members based on the Phase II programme, clearly defining each partner's responsibilities. However, we do not see value in additional national partner. While social accountability is vital, it is ensured through extensive community consultations. Villager's co-financing water systems are actively involved in their design, with support from mobilisers and local authorities (jamoat and district). Sanitation users help design user-friendly facilities, and all population groups participate in decision-making. Future facility managers are consulted, visit existing systems, and discuss their pros and cons. These processes are supported by local NGOs and coordinated with national-level actors and donors.		
Measures	Responsibility	Timing
a) Continue to organise consultations at village level for the design of Water systems (co-financed by people) and Sanitation facilities.	CoWaSS, village population, institution managers	For the current phase this is already initiated and takes place As for WASH May October 2025
b) Continue to support the development of costed WASH plans at district level including the prioritisation of phased construction activities decided in partnership with the populations.	District Authorities CoWaSS coached, Working Group (inclusive of village populations)	Phase II
c) Concentrate on the gaps identified into the sanitation chain and work to improve them.	CoWaSS	Phase II
d) Sign MoU with responsibilities of each actor defined including the design decided, the definition of the management responsibilities etc.		
e) Update consortium governance document based on phase II programme.		

Recommendation 7 Advocacy, influencing & visibility at the national level needs to be strengthened to both raise the profile of the CoWaSS project model and share sector wide learning- In Phase 2 CoWaSS needs to better demonstrate its impact and the process that is being applied.

Advocacy work should not only focus on acceptance of the model or process being applied but also seek to create a network around 'replicability' by engaging with financial institutions, donors, and government. There is also an opportunity to engage with the newly created CoHCS, responsible for WASH related policies and regulation (guide CoHCS on financing, monitoring, performance indicators, etc.).

Management response

Fully agree	Partially agree	Disagree

To demonstrate Impact, it is important that preliminary bases are developed, models are refined and can be proposed for replicability and systemic changes. Impact does not happen on day one of a project proposing systemic changes.

It is already foreseen in SDC TORs and CoWaSS proposal from 2020, that the focus of the project in phase 2 will be more on advocacy for scaling and sustainability, building on evidence base laid in phase 1. Documentation of processes in the policy areas are indeed critical and will be continued at start of phase 2.

ISW had been an active participant and contributor to a multiple of policy initiatives at national level, launched by UNICEF, WB, MEWR, and others. As an example, the ISW has informed and contributed pre-CoWaSS and CoWaSS experiences to the following policy initiatives (final reports and documents as evidence of ISW contribution provided separately):

- National Water Strategy of the RT for the period up to 2040 (GoRT, 2024);
- National Roadmap. Hand Hygiene for All Tajikistan (MoHSPP, UNICEF, 2023);
- State Programme for Drinking Water Supply and Wastewater Management for the period 2025-2029 (CoHCS, 2025);
- Preliminary Assessment of Private Sector Engagement in WASH service delivery in Tajikistan (feasibility study) (UNICEF, 2023);
- National Standards and Guidelines on Water, Sanitation, Hygiene and Health Care Waste Management in Health Care Facilities (MoHSPP, UNICEF, 2023);
- Guidelines for National Minimum Standard for Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WaSH) in Schools (MoES, UNICEF, 2023);
- National Sanitation Strategy (MoHSPP, MEWR, UNICEF, 2023)
- The National Tariff Setting Strategy for Water (SUE KMK, GoRT, 2022);
- Water Supply and Sanitation Program 2030 – Investment Planning Draft (Hydrophil, WB, MEWR, 2022);
- Sanitation Development Plan in Tajikistan (UNDP, 2021).

IFIs have already been extensively consulted (the list of meetings held over the years provided) and costed models of water and sanitation facilities have been transferred to IFIs for consideration. However, IFIs are often limited in their plans by the client itself who may have different priorities.

CoHCS, currently being established, will surely be key stakeholder in Phase 2 for engagement on policy and regulation.

Measures	Responsibility	Timing
a) **Engagement at national (and regional) level on advocacy to be reinforced:** The CoHCS already approached the CoWaSS Team to support the inception workshop planned after the endorsement of the State Programme for DWS&WWM. The CoWaSS is in the process of guiding the Committee on key advocacy	CoWaSS Project in partnership with SDC and other donors	Pro Doc Proposal mid-July And then 2026 - 2030

items to be included in the agenda of the workshop. As a follow-up to this workshop, the Committee will also assume the management of the existing coordination platform for the sector – *Inter-Agency Working Group on drinking water supply, wastewater and sanitation*. CoWaSS will provide technical support in organization of the meetings of this working group, advocating to include key issues in its agenda, and advocate for further reforms in collaboration with participating development partners. These existing mechanisms will ensure the needed visibility of CoWaSS profile in the network. CoWaSS will also arrange MoU with the Committee for joint implementation of an Action Plan (incl. Project Vision) that the project advocates for. For more details, please refer to Management Response for Recommendation #9. **b) Reinforce documentation of lessons learned and other evidence for policy advocacy:** CoWaSS is already in the process of developing knowledge products that document lessons learned and present evidence for policy advocacy. To this point, the following key knowledge products are defined and will be produced during designated time-frame: o Knowledge Product #1 – "DWO model as viable DWS service provider – FCR tariffs, institutional and governance features: experience in Sughd region" (*community-driven and self-sustaining DWS systems and alternative service providers*); o Knowledge Product #2 – "District-wide approach to delivering sanitation services across the value chain: CoWaSS experience in sanitation marketing (*dealing with final stages of the value chain – transportation, disposal, treatment and re-use*); o Knowledge Product #3 – "District WASH Plan development and operationalization in Sughd Region" (institutionalization of financing, financing models and frameworks, linkages with DDPs, RBMPs, NWIS, and the State Programme); c) **Revisiting budgetary means within policy component for advocacy, influencing and visibility:** Following the endorsement of the new State Programme and the support required to institutional strengthening of the CoHCS to govern and regulate the WASH sector, the CoWaSS Project will revisit the budgetary means for advocacy, influencing and visibility. Targeted campaigns will be costed to ensure CoWaSS WASH vision and sustainability models are well documented, advocated for replication as feasible via available platforms initiated and supported by CoHCS (inter-agency collaboration and development partner forums) and other partners.	or implementers (BORDA, AKF etc.)	

Recommendation 8 Develop and articulate a roadmap for future progress - CoWaSS (led by ISW) should develop roadmaps for the target districts of Kanibadam and Jabbor Rasulov, with the aim of achieving full WASH coverage.		
This will map out the systems strengthening and infrastructure (Capital Expenditure) journey ahead and help CoWaSS to articulate the process that can be replicated and adapted by other districts. The roadmap can also be used to attract sector investment. This is important given further CoWaSS requires further investment and engagement with other potential finance mechanisms (replicability), government and the private sector. Elements of the roadmap can also be based on learning from Water Trust Funds, particularly around financial transparency, and social accountability.		
Management response		
Fully agree	**Partially agree**	Disagree
Agree with Roadmap development (already ongoing), but facilitated by CoWaSS (not developed by), and not with including WTF modality for financial transparency, and social accountability. Roadmaps in the target districts of Konibodom and Jabor Rasulov (as well as Asht) will be part of the district WASH Plan under development, with the objective of achieving full WASH coverage, not only Water but also Sanitation. They should be developed by district stakeholders, with CoWaSS only in facilitating role. The infrastructure part will be covered in the current cycle of WASH plans development (for the period 2026-2030). Next to CapEX there is also need for OPEX and other cost categories, including considerations for district capacity for planning and monitoring services. Attracting IFIs is a must … This has proven to be possible in neighbouring countries in Central Asia and therefore should be pushed in Tajikistan (see recommendation 7 above).		

Measures	Responsibility	Timing
a) Collect financial, managerial and operational evidence of the sustainability and replicability of the models proposed (decentralised management of Water with full cost recovery tariff, sanitation as a business, simple but robust models of wastewater treatment facilities that can be financed etc.) b) District WASH Plan with its priorities and models as a road map to attract interest of investors c) Facilitate learning from neighbouring countries on financing mechanisms through IFIs for scaling rural WASH services d) Engage with IFIs for innovative solutions (e.g., to establish a credit line devoted to the financing of WASH in rural areas on which villages can draw in order to co-finance the construction of their water system with participation of the population)	CoWaSS project Exchange of experience between SDC financed projects Work with Blue Peace CA	Initial document Available end of June Further development to be included in ProDoc for Phase II

Recommendation 9 Institution building - In terms of systems strengthening work CoWaSS partners need to build institutional capability in such a way that it will outlive the CoWaSS project.
These reforms need to be identified, and they need to be significant so they do not stop or can be reversed when CoWaSS ends. A possible example is to ensure there is a district level mechanism for 3rd party quality assurance for water supply & sanitation system construction. This requires qualified 3rd party monitoring for major infrastructure components (water pumping sites, reservoirs, water treatments, etc.), blended with social accountability mechanisms for distribution network pipe networks.
Management response

Fully agree	**Partially agree**	Disagree

We agree on the importance of ensuring institutional capacities and strengthening existing mechanisms, but do not support the creation of new institutions.

Despite CoWaSS's previous advancements on this with the MEWR and the development partners, i.e. translating the model recognition and replicability in the draft State Programme for DWS&S, with the latest re-distribution of roles in the WASH policy and regulation, that work will be re-launched now with the CoHCS.

The CoHCS has taken over further development of the State Programme for DWS&WWM, and had presented a revised version to the Government. CoHCS is planning an Inception Workshop during which the endorsed Programme will be presented and discussed. CoHCS assured that key development challenges and priorities have remained, and that the needs of the rural WASH are explicitly acknowledged in the document. Therefore, supporting the new Committee in implementing the endorsed Programme, implies that development partners will be required to collectively plan interventions on institutional strengthening and policy development initiatives that the Programme envisages. This also implies the review of the policy and systems strengthening budget within CoWaSS during Phase 2.

Measures	Responsibility	Timing
a) Establish a Joint Vision for collaboration between the CoHCS and the ISW-CoWaSS Project and implementation: The frequent communication with the Committee, reveals that the ISW will need take series of steps first to address capacity needs within the new entity, and then present the CoWaSS development vision for rural WASH sector. Anticipating further support in implementing the endorsed State Programme, the Committee would seek Project's suggestions on how to advance replicability towards country-wide access to WASH services. The CoWaSS suggest the following steps in implementing the measure: o Development of a brief CoWaSS development vision for WASH sector, based on the experiences of previous and current phases (available and intended knowledge products to support the process); o Presentation of the Vision to CoHCS at a targeted workshop with accompanied trips to project sites for joint exchanges in the field; o Development of a joint Action Plan with the Committee on – (a) institutional capacity development amongst CoHCS's related department staffs, and (b) strengthening systems and policies towards implementation of the endorsed State Programme. Simultaneously, the Committee is expected to collaborate with other development partners in distribution of available support in systems strengthening and capacity building. The CoWaSS will contribute with inputs to collaboration platforms for WASH sector that the Committee will conduct on a regular basis. Replication possibilities will be discussed in such platforms under the Committee's leadership.	CoWaSS Project relevant institutional actors	Phase II and III

○ Signing of an MoU with the Committee in implementing agreed Joint Vision during Phase 2 and 3 (Action Plan as supplement to MoU). **b) Operationalize WASH plans in target districts:** District WASH plans are in final stages of development, final drafts due before end of Phase 1. The most important step is to ensure their operationalization. That process is dependent on three different processes, i.e. (1) District Development Plans (DDPs) and budgets for the period 2026-2030, (2) donor investments to the endorsed State Programme for DWS&WWM, and (3) River Basin Management Plan for 2026-2030. Linking to each of those three processes and their integration requires that those processes first need to conclude with related commitments that will have implications to intended WASH plans. Priorities and committed investments will need to be integrated into the given plans. This process will need to be coached in consultation with the new Committee, as there is no clear guidance at this point on how the Committee extends its enforcing via District Administrations. The CoWaSS suggests the following steps in implementing the measure: ○ Finalize draft WASH plans and define linkages with the district budget, RBMP, State Programme for DWS&WWM (CoHCS), donor community investment commitments, and the NWIS of the MEWR. ○ Advocate for improved financing strategies (linking budgets) for WASH Plans at targeted workshops with the CoHCS (State Programme), District Authorities (DDPs), Donor community (investment prospects), and the MEWR (RBMP). ○ Establish at district level the M&E process in agreement between the CoHCS, MEWR, and District Administrations. ○ Document the process, scaling up of good practices on the WASH Plans development and implementation. **c) Wider institutionalization of DWOs and network strengthening:** As DWOs continue to demonstrate institutional and financial viability, the CoWaSS project will further upscale support in organizing them into a professional network (franchise) with additional professional support (asset management, legal and accounting support, M&E and learning programs). The comprehensive audits (managerial, financial and technical) will be conducted on a yearly or biannual basis to inform how the DWO network strengthening will be implemented. The governance improvements will ensure that General Assembly meetings are regularly conducted by DWOs. General Assembly meeting will be guided by the CoWaSS to ensure accountability measures are intact, and relevant representatives from district and regional		

authorities participate. CoWaSS project will engage with District Administration in appointing 3rd party quality assurance teams that will need to be formally introduced as participants to given General Assembly meetings. **d) Revisiting budgetary means for policy component:** In anticipation of the endorsement of new State Programme and required support to institutional strengthening of the CoHCS to govern and regulate the WASH sector, the CoWaSS Project will revisit the budgetary means to ensure expected project results are sustained beyond programme time-frame. Institutional improvements (CoHCS), strengthened inter-agency collaboration frameworks (MEWR, District Administrations, etc.), and WASH platforms for networking and coordinating development partner programs will need to be supported by CoWaSS consecutive phases.		

Recommendation 10 Generate a significant body of evidenced learning - Documenting learning & evidence of what works is vital if the 'comprehensive' approach is to be upscaled successfully.		
Lessons learnt and relevant recommendations need to be systematically documented by all partners and disseminated to not only influence best practice, but to also serve as an engagement point for replicating the CoWaSS model. CoWaSS should also be undertaking its own targeted research into specific issues. For example, conducting further research into faecal sludge management practices in target districts would link directly to the other groundwater management and water resources work being undertaken by Helvetas, and funded by SDC. This could also serve to demonstrate the comprehensive nature of CoWaSS if there is direct crossover with other projects working on similar issues.		
Management response		
Fully agree	**Partially agree**	Disagree
CoWaSS has already produced a certain number of learning documents and will continue to draw lessons from its past and present experience (list of documents included in annex). With new CoHCS we see new opportunities for re-energizing regular WASH sector partners meetings (that has been operational in recent years).		
Measures	Responsibility	Timing
a) Evidenced Learning: CoWaSS is in the process of developing a number of knowledge products that provide a body of evidenced learning. To this point, the following key knowledge products were defined and will be produced during designated time-frame: o Knowledge Product #1 – "DWO model as viable DWS service provider – FCR tariffs, institutional and governance features: experience in Sughd region" (*community-driven and self-sustaining DWS systems and alternative service providers*); o Knowledge Product #2 – "District-wide approach to delivering sanitation services across the value chain: CoWaSS experience in sanitation marketing (*dealing with final stages of the value chain – transportation, disposal, treatment and re-use*): This will be supported via studies of sanitation models (pre-	CoWaSS External experts COP4WASH	Included in the ProDoc to be produced in July and then further developed during Phase II

CoWaSS and CoWaSS phases), study of the problems of raising water table that have implications for sanitation model choice, study on faecal sludge management, treatment know-how at local level, etc. The Knowledge Product will also provide a practical Sanitation Vision for rural settlements. o Knowledge Product #3 – "District WASH Plan development and operationalization in Sughd Region" (institutionalization of financing, financing models and frameworks, linkages with DDPs, RBMPs, NWIS, and the State Programme); **b) Supporting partner exchanges for learning and best practice documentation:** CoWaSS through CoHCS will promote exchange visits between development partner projects to document lessons learned, and advocate for best practices. Such exchange had previously been implemented between CoWaSS and SWSMT (AKF-MSDSP) projects, and will be carried out with other projects (WB, ADB, EBRD, JICA, MEWR PMU, etc.). The possibility for project-to-project exchanges will also be sought directly with implementers of WASH projects in Tajikistan. **c) Ensure that collaboration with Cop4WASH continues.**		

Additional Notes:

On the Lack of Evidence: The Evaluation Report has noted repeatedly the lack of evidence across the document on reported progress. The ISW Team finds this claim inaccurate, and also unacceptable for the bulk of the claims made therein. The Project Team at the onset of the project evaluation has provided the initial batch of the evidence base, in anticipation that the Evaluation Team would maintain follow-up on any missing information they might find interesting to bulge in greater detail. Placing every bit of information for reading by the Evaluation is deemed impossible during the mission in the field, and there had not been any follow-ups after the field mission. The Evaluation Team also does not define properly the depth of evidence they expected to see. All that had certainly not been reported back to the project team during the evaluation for further recollection, as the amount of evidence is actually available.

On visibility amongst development partners: For example, on collaboration and knowledge of development partners, the ISW CoWaSS team had spared a considerable amount of time on exchanges, site visits, and stakeholder meetings (SCMs, NPD, MoEWR, EBRD, WB-PMU, etc.), and the project team is in strong denial of the fact that evaluation team claims the project had not been visible to many donor development partners. On the part of policy work, ISW CoWaSS team had been amongst very active contributors to collective policy work that was led by the MoEWR, MoHSPP, MoE, and KMK. All the contributions are there within the given policy documents, reports, drafts, and decision. The expected follow-up by the Evaluation Team did not take place to accurately note what those contributions had been. Documenting separately all communications, and recurrent notes on contributed excerpts from those reports is a challenge in itself.

Implementation of Evaluation Principles: The Evaluation Team conducted field missions to project sites, met authorities and other stakeholders. Having done so, we find that the mere principle of **'triangulation'** and/or **'meta-analysis'** principles of evaluation were not duly implemented. For example, the opinions of beneficiaries on-site (anticipated water users) reporting 'poor design and/or

quality' in infrastructure were taken at face value, without any opportunity for the Project Team to provide feedback. The beneficiaries cannot claim to be engineers to report about poor design. Another example, about a particular district authority claiming the project performing poorly, had been looked at out of context. As it was well reported, numerous attempts of 'looting' or 'take-over' of DWS systems from DWOs. Vested interests amongst local authorities were not taken into account. The method of triangulation assumes that when on a particular subject there are conflicting or inconsistent information, it is further cross-checked or investigated through communicating the subject with all relevant stakeholders including the **Project Team** to conclude meaningfully and argumentatively.

Sustainability Requirements: The project design and infrastructure development under CoWaSS, as in pre-CoWaSS phases, are driven exclusively by **sustainability** requirements. The standards of sustainability are well known and should be looked at in true context with parallel initiatives implemented by other projects and development partners. Historically higher tariffs and standards of services are maintained at length, this had been in part possible due to the need to have relatively lower per capita costs of systems investments. In that context, the CoWaSS Team finds that the Evaluation Team did not take that duly into consideration, by claiming or rating project design (and quality) as poor. Few instances are work in progress and will be dealt with, without any judgement passed on until the infrastructure development is complete, however, other instances like placing additional water towers or reservoirs, places unbearable costs to infrastructure maintenance and economic sustainability. When inquiring about examples from the Evaluation Team, the examples referred to by the evaluators were in humanitarian aid projects in other countries, which is unacceptable for CoWaSS context projects aiming for sustainability at length. For the sake of argument, the Evaluation Team does not, at minimum, provide examples that would define 'poor quality' or 'poor design'.

Overall view: It seems that a certain number of documents have been either overlooked by evaluators or simply ignored and presented as non-existing by the team of evaluators although clearly referenced in the Box opened by the evaluation team as the only secure place. This was e.g. the case in particular for the Mid-Term Review and the Guidelines for WASH Plan, both highlighted by the evaluators as non-communicated by the project. Given the importance of those two documents (not to mention other ones), the project would like to express its concerns on the presentation of results achieved (or non-achieved).

However, notwithstanding its concerns, the CoWaSS consortium and the team have tried to make the best of the recommendations and of the proposals of the evaluation, together with presenting the details of realisations achieved so far.

Recognising that some objectives have not been fully achieved and that, during the implementation of the first phase, strategies have been revised, the project is indicating the steps that are already on-going to achieve all the targets achievable by the end of the first phase as well as opens up the ways for the definition of a second phase.