

Equitable water for multiple uses: A case from SNNPR

This summary is based on Working Paper 17 on [Equitable water service for multiple uses: A case from Southern Nations Nationalities and Peoples Region \(SNNPR\), Ethiopia](#) available for download at: www.rippleethiopia.org

RiPPLE's Equity in Growth research sub-theme sought to answer the question of [how equitable access to multiple water use be stimulated and facilitated?](#) The objective is to inform service providers and implementers on how to better plan and provide equitable water services within *woredas*. This is expected to contribute to integrated water management programmes that address multiple water needs in an equitable and sustainable manner, in order to contribute to sustainable growth. Specified objectives of this sub-theme include: (a) assessing how to better match water services to multiple demands in an equitable way, by developing an info-base at *woreda* level, on water resources, infrastructure and water demands for multiple uses by different users; and (b) developing a better understanding of barriers to equity and how to overcome these.

The rationale was that to ensure equitable allocation of water infrastructure, service providers need up-to-date information on available water resources, current status of water infrastructure and people's multiple demands for water. This includes having a good understanding of livelihood assets available to people and their multiple water demands (quality, quantity, reliability, accessibility). In order to get a better understanding on multiple water demands that different people have, case studies took place in three communities representing different agro-ecological zones and access to different types of water technologies, ranging from traditional (e.g. ponds, streams) to modern (e.g. drip irrigation, dams, motorised pumps). To ensure the development of a comprehensive and useful info-base, and to facilitate the systematic analysis of the information and data, the Resources, Infrastructure, Demand and Access (RIDA) Framework was used.

Equity Highlights

Research was carried out in Mirab Abaya *woreda* in SNNPR focusing on equity issues related to spatial distribution of water services for multiple uses and issues related to social equity.

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Spatial Equity:

- Water infrastructure is not equitably distributed across the three different agro-ecological zones in Mirab Abaya *woreda*. Although the *kolla* (lowland) zone only comprises 62% of land and 64% of the population of the *woreda*, 80% of domestic water supply systems and 100% of irrigation systems are concentrated here.
- Functionality of systems is a big issue in all areas, with more than 50% of the implemented systems not functional.
- Taking into account functionality of systems, coverage in the lowlands is estimated at 60%. The coverage rate in the highlands is only about 37%.

Social Equity:

- With regards to decision making in the water sector, women and landless are generally excluded.
- Wealth was found to play an important role in ensuring access to water services, especially in lowlands. Poor households are forced to revert to unprotected sources, whereas wealthier households could mobilise additional resources to access water in neighbouring *kebeles*. On the upside, this has created temporary income sources for the landless youth.
- Personal relationships were found to be very important in accessing irrigation water. Although irrigation water is theoretically distributed equally among beneficiaries, reality shows that water arbiters were allocating water to poor households at unfavourable times.

Policy Implications

Reliable and consistent information on distribution of water schemes – for domestic and productive purposes – is essential for decision makers prior to planning in order to ensure equitable distribution of WSS investments, in both spatial and social terms. Decision makers need to have access to reliable information on available water resources, infrastructure and demand for water services for different uses by different users. It is suggested that such kind of information is also included in the proposed *Wereda* Inventories, which currently focus only on domestic water supply.

Researchers

The team of researchers for this project comprised:

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