

Examining the gendered dimensions in using open access water for production among rural market gardeners.

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Introduction and Background

- 70% of Zimbabweans live in rural areas.
- Rural livelihoods linked to access, use and management of natural resources (subsistence and income generation).
- Water entry point to poverty alleviation and livelihoods protection.
- Water strategic resource for development (IUCN 2005).
- Women traditionally recognised and accepted as main users of water
- However gender relations limit their access to, control and use of water.
- Most households in Goromonzi depend on surface water to produce food and earn an income.
- Mutsvati dam located in Goromonzi district
- Irrigation infrastructure appears uniform (water pumped from dam or seasonal river to gardens)
- Buckets, simple technology treadle pumps, hand pumps and motor powered water pumps used to apply water to the fields.
- Gardens watered and cultivated by individuals or families (women mainly performing the work).

Objectives

- Examining the gendered dimensions in using open access water for production among rural market gardeners
- To document the nature of gender relations surrounding access to water among horticultural farmers in Domboshava district.

Significance of study

- Inequality in open access rights to water appear gender based.
- Women having fewer rights, authority and decision making over water than men.
- Limited literature in Zimbabwe on gender relations in open access to water after the land reform.
- Findings presented will contribute to a better understanding of gender dimensions around open access to water among small scale horticultural farmers.

Methodology

- Citizen ethnographer approach.
- Ethnography as research process based on fieldwork using variety of (mainly qualitative) techniques:
- Documented six Life histories/In-depth interviews.
- Participant observation.
- Focus Group Discussions (male and female farmers)
- Above methods adopted because of need to triangulate data gathering to come up with reliable and valid data.

Conceptual Framework

- Research guided by Anthony Giddens' (1984) structuration theory.
- Human action performed in the context of preexisting social structure governed by sets of norms distinct from other social structures.
- Domboshava district containing repertoire of different lifestyles, cultural forms and rationalities.
- Structure and rules not permanent and external.
- Individual actors having agency.

Presentation & Discussion of Findings

- Mutsvati reservoir/dam playing a key role in livelihoods
- Providing domestic and productive water.
- No water management committee at Mutsvati.
- Despite importance of the small reservoir its development is fraught with difficulties i.e.
- Lack of resources, no management structure, inequitable access by different community members for different uses.
- Women now playing crucial role because of allocation of A1 farms.
- Vegetable gardening labour intensive in dry season (2 daily waterings).

Presentation & Discussion of Findings

- Dry season conflicts with down stream farmers.
- Increased siltation, reduced rainfall and menacing alien invasive weeds causing water shortage.
- Women involved in agricultural production also responsible for providing water for household uses.
- Gender relations reflected in:
 1. The gendered division of labor,
 2. The control of productive asset ownership and
 3. The intra-household allocation.
- To locals Mutsvati dam cannot be "owned" so open access
- Time women spending collecting water class based.

Gender relations & the land reform

- Women dominated marketing of produce pre-land reform.
- Gender relations changing with allocation of A1 plots
- Some women now enjoying express authority over water.
- Women not a homogenous social group
- Class creating variations in conditions of open access.
- Rich women with diesel motor pumps having greater access than men and other women.
- Study contradicting findings reflecting women's limited open access and control of water for production.

Conclusion & Recommendations

- Study reflects changing gender relations.
- Land reform somehow altered gender relations
- Women not a homogenous class category.
- Further comparative research to identify factors affecting gender relations around open access to water post land reform.
- Recognize importance of women's specific water needs, especially for production, as opposed to domestic use.
- Need to introduce efficient irrigation techniques.
- Recognising women's multiple roles as domestic and productive water users an important aspect in (IWRM)