

14th WaterNet/WARFSA/GWP-SA Symposium 2013

Transboundary Water Cooperation: Building Partnerships

Water and Society

Institutional Adaptation to Climate Change in the Water Sector: Understanding Power and Politics in Small-Scale Irrigation

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Overview

- Research context
- Research aims and methods
- Field sites
- Key findings

Research context

- DFID/ESRC Growth Research Programme
- March 2013-March 2015
- Bangladesh, Tanzania and Malawi

Research Team

- Overview: Elizabeth Harrison, Canford Chiroro ,University of Sussex
- Malawi: Joseph Chidanti-Malunga, Bunda College of Agriculture
- Tanzania: Anna Mdee and team, Mzumbe University;
- Bangladesh: Katy Gardner, LSE and Zahir Ahmed, Jahanginargar University

Research Aims

- Understanding how water for small scale irrigation is managed and how the institutions governing water use are evolving in response to climate change.
- Documenting the institutions governing who has access to water for irrigation and how these relate to notions of “moral economy”.
- Exploring how interventions aimed at promoting irrigation are contributing to individual, household and community resilience and livelihoods.
- Examining how knowledge about ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ technology for irrigation is produced, valued and transferred between and within diverse contexts

Research methods

- Ethnographic, qualitative
- Participant observation and focus groups
- Photo elicitation and use of video
- Interviews with diverse stakeholders, from local through to national levels
- Baseline survey in each of country study

Malawi sub-project

- Fieldwork between June-October 2013
- Variable history of irrigation promotion; current debates
- Field sites in Nsanje District, Southern Malawi
- Apparently high potential for small scale irrigation, but problems of both recurrent drought and flooding from river siltation
- Land scarcity and contestation are recurrent problems



Emerging Findings

- The form of technology has influenced the rules and practices in sharing of water
- Strong role of external actors in shaping rules, including for technology use
- Relatedness and kinship: a benefit and a hindrance?
- Resilience of one community at cost of resilience of another
- Productivity growth vs. wellbeing? (costs and their distribution)

Future Plans

- Understanding better the winners and losers in conflicts over resource access
- Comparative analysis of the socioeconomics and distributional aspects of irrigation development
- Bringing together the three field sites to explore possibilities for knowledge exchange



Thank you for your attention

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