

## Research-inspired Policy and Practice Learning in Ethiopia and the Nile Region

Welcome to the third RiPPLE newsletter, for January to April 2008; we hope you find it enjoyable and informative and we would also like to wish you [Happy New Year for 2008](#). The newsletter will now be published three rather than four times a year and will cover a greater variety of topics.

The highlights of this issue include an interview with Ato Getachew Abdi, Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Services Department Head at the Ministry of Water Resources, on the Universal Access program and its challenges; the future of *hidar sitaten*, or the traditional day for burning waste; and a helpful overview of Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Region (SNNPR) and the two woredas where RiPPLE is working. Our regular photo gallery feature can be found on the back page of the newsletter covering the initiative to cope with water scarcity through integration, and we also feature an introduction to our Policy Officer and a commentary on planning observational studies .

Please feel free to distribute our newsletter widely to anyone interested in the issues we cover. As always, we welcome feedback on this issue as well as any ideas for future editions. To get in touch or subscribe to the e-newsletter, please contact:

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**RiPPLE News in Brief : this section presents highlights of what has been done in the last couple of months. More information will be available on our website and in hard copies**

- RiPPLE in collaboration with the Ethiopia Country Water Partnership organized a two day and half (31 January- 1st February 2008) media training for journalists. The training focused on: providing basic introduction to water sector issues for media professionals; developing their skills to report on water resources issues; familiarizing them with the concept, approaches and importance of Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) to pass the message to the general public and create a more water-conscious society in Ethiopia.

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- **UAP & Sustainability case studies: SNNPR:** Two different but linked case studies were carried out in SNNPR between November 2007 and January 2008. These case studies had been identified and agreed to during the LPA meeting of September 2007.
    1. One looked into the opportunities and challenges related to UAP and the SNNPR strategic plan. For this study different WASH sector stakeholders were interviewed at the regional level as well as in Gomofa zone, and in parallel policy documents were analysed.
    2. The second case study assessed the sustainability of the waterpoints and schemes in Mirab Abaya and Alaba special woreda. In both the woredas the same methodology was used, consisting among others of: waterpoint mapping (every water point in each woreda was visited and mapped); interviews and focus group discussions with users, WATSANCo's, and woreda officials and stakeholders; and document review.
  - **Sanitation Case study: SNNPR:** The sanitation team together with other stakeholders carried out a case study on technical, social-cultural and policy aspects - of the post-2003 drive towards improved ' Sanitation and hygiene ' mounted by the regional Bureau of Health.

*cont'd on page 3*

## “UAP is challenging but not far from Achievement”, Getachew Abdi, MOWR

The Universal Access Program (UAP) for Water Supply and Sanitation Services was initiated in October 2004 responding to the need to design and implement a program that enables rapid expansion of services to all members of the community. The program has a life span of seven years (2005-2011). According to the UAP document the goal of the program is to raise the water coverage of towns that stands at 80.6% at the beginning of the plan in 2005 to 100% at the end of the plan period in 2012. The program also targets to raise the sanitation service coverage from 57% in 2005 to 100% in 2011. In this interview, Ato Getachew Abdi, Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Services Department Head at the Ministry of Water Resources, talks to RiPPLE about the water sector performance in general and the UAP in particular. RiPPLE Governance and Planning team is now finalizing a case study on UAP in SNNPR.

**RiPPLE:** What are the current best-guess coverage figures for WSS in rural and urban sectors at a national level?

**Getachew:** The current national level water supply access is 52.5%. When we see the rural /urban coverage, it is 82% for urban and 46.39% for rural, and the sanitation coverage is 38% at the national level

**RiPPLE:** Can you please explain some major measures taken by the government to increase the coverage?

**Getachew:** Some of the major measures undertaken by the government included implementation of the Universal Access Program (UAP), establishing the WASH structure at all levels, and high budget allocation to the sector.

**RiPPLE:** What are the major challenges to overcome in addressing the water and sanitation MDGs in Ethiopia?

**Getachew:** Some of the major challenges that we are facing to address the water supply and sanitation coverage under the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are high turn over, weak management and limited skilled implementation capacity.

**RiPPLE:** How is the government responding to these challenges through the Universal Access Program?

**Getachew:** The government has allocated high budget for training water technicians and health extension workers. So far more than 3000 water technicians and 17,000 health extension workers have graduated and are assigned to the woredas and kebeles. Woreda WASH councils with the support of woreda support groups, community facilitator teams, water technicians, health extension workers and local service providers are trying their best in improving implementation capacity. The donor community is also trying to increase fund flow thresholds in order to scale up implementation. The Multi Stakeholder forum is also accelerating integration and harmonization of national efforts by all stakeholders. The capacity building pooled fund under establishment is also expected to leverage capacity building required to achieve not only the MDGs but the UAP.

**RiPPLE:** Some people working in the sector say that the UAP is an ambitious plan which can not be achieved within the specified time that we are left with. What is your comment on this?

**Getachew:** It is challenging but not far from achievement. In Afar, for instance, they have reached 50% access from 17.5% in 2 years. The county has reached 52.5% access from 24% since 2004. The ambition only shows the high commitment of the people and the country. It is in this way that countries like Vietnam, Malawi and Bangladesh have inspired the world by doing their utmost.



Many people still travel long distances to fetch water

**RiPPLE:** How much financial assistance does the government require to achieve the UAP?

**Getachew:** The financial assistance that is required to achieve the Universal Access Program is estimated as 2.5 million dollars.

**RiPPLE:** How are the regions involved in helping to achieve the UAP and sector development more generally in Ethiopia?

**Getachew:** Regions are the ones who actively took part in the preparation of their regional UAP. The national UAP has summarized the regional UAPs. Therefore, it can be concluded that they plan, implement and monitor their regional UAPs.

## Meet RiPPLE Staff...

I have been RiPPLE's Policy Officer since March 2007. Working for RiPPLE has been a good experience, providing me with exposure to new areas, such as the WASH sector, and an opportunity to work with institutions in the RiPPLE consortium that have significant experience and expertise. I hope to learn a lot during my time at RiPPLE and that the experience will help me to develop professionally.



Bethel, RiPPLE Policy Officer

I was born in Addis Ababa in 1977 and grew up in the city, attending both public and private elementary and high schools. In 1994, I joined Addis Ababa University and earned my undergraduate degree in Political Science and International Relations. After working for three years, I went back to Addis Ababa University again to join the department of Regional and Local Development Studies and graduated with a master degree in 2003.

My professional experience has mainly been with NGOs; I have worked in one local and two international NGOs, mostly in the area of women's rights. My most recent job was with ActionAid Ethiopia, an international NGO working to end poverty, as Regional Programme Officer for Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Region, and focal person for women's rights. At ActionAid I learned a lot about development and gained a new insight into looking at poverty in terms of rights and power relationships. I was inspired by the role of civil society organisations in strengthening people's capability to act collectively and in influencing global and local governance to make it responsive to their needs and priorities; a strategy also followed by ActionAid. As a member of the RiPPLE team, I hope to further develop myself in policy research, which is an area I've always been interested in. Within RiPPLE, my responsibilities are research and communication related, including:

## Bethel Terefe, Policy Officer

### Research

- Preparation of research outputs, including literature reviews, background papers and other studies
- Contributing to the overall conceptual development of RiPPLE through regular attendance of meetings and workshops in Ethiopia and maintaining a watching brief on key theoretical and practical developments
- Conducting field research, including interviews, baseline data collection at different levels, and supervising and monitoring small research teams
- Analyzing, interpreting and synthesizing the outputs of RiPPLE's research and learning activities

### Communications

- Authoring and co-authoring RiPPLE publications, including research reports, policy briefs and other documents
- Presentation of research results to different audiences, including attending meetings on behalf of RiPPLE

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- **Growth theme: East Hararge Zone**
  1. The Multiple Use of Water (MUS) case study attempted to analyze the costs and benefits of multiple use of water and the additional costs and benefits of multiple use of water as compared to single use. It looked at different costs of infrastructural development, operation and maintenance and the management costs and indirect support costs involved in supplying water with certain characteristics (quantity, quality, accessibility, and reliability).
  2. A Household survey was conducted to cover issues related to households' access to different water source, both improved and unimproved; time required to collect water (including who does water fetching); access to different sanitation and waste disposal ways; linkages between access to improved WSS and health; reduction in health expenditure; impact on poverty (measures in terms of income and consumption expenditure) and improved labor productivity
- **Finance theme:** Two case studies were carried out in Benishangul Gumuz that were identified by the LPA members.: Matching Fund and Channel I budget Utilization Case studies
  1. Matching Fund is an action research case study on resolving the sourcing of counterpart funding for the World Bank funded Ethiopia Water Supply and Sanitation Project (EWSSP).
  2. Channel I budget Utilization case study which is a potential study for long-term action research study (LARS) is addressing the low utilization rates of federally sourced (channel I) funding.

## From the RiPPLE regions:

By Desta Dmitse

SNNPR is one of the biggest regions in Ethiopia, accounting for more than 10 percent of the country's surface area. The population is estimated at nearly 18 million; around a fifth of the country's population (Central Statistical Agency, 2006). It is overwhelmingly rural, with only 8 percent living in urban areas.



Map of SNNPR

It contains a huge variety of ethnic groups – as many as 56 different groups, with their own distinct languages, cultures, beliefs, traditions, rituals and social identities living together. These varied ethnic groups are categorized under the Cushitic, Omotic, Nilo-Saharan and Semitic language families and a variety of religious backgrounds. Based on such ethnic and linguistic diversity, the region is at present divided into 13 zones, which are further sub-divided into 126 woredas and 8 special woredas. Within the zones and special woredas there are 22 towns identified as autonomous provisional city administrations. The region as a whole has about 3652 rural kebeles and 99 towns having municipality. (SNNPR Bureau of Finance and Economic Development [BoFED] June, 2007).

### Agriculture and rural development

A traditional, subsistence farming system is the main livelihood in the region, especially in the highland areas, with farmers managing both crops and livestock. Due to the diverse agro-ecology, climate, soil type and cultural practices, the region is the home to many varieties of food crops, in particular enset, maize, root crops, wheat and teff. Other important crops are fruits, vegetables and coffee (SNNPR Bureau of Agriculture and Rural Development [BoARD], 2007).

Up to 45 percent of all Ethiopia's coffee for export comes from SNNPR, which is second only to Oromia.

More than three quarters of all the woredas produce coffee, with the largest share sent to the central market coming from Sidama, Gedeo, Shaka, Kaffa and Bench Maji zones. (BoARD, 2007)

### Education

Education indicators are tools that provide information on performance of education system. These are the indicators of Access, Quality, Equity and Efficiency. The indicators access measures the proportion on the children who have access to education and the total population of the standard school admission age which is 7 years in Ethiopian context.

The school age population for the age group 7-14 in the primary school (Grade 1-8) in the year 2005 when disaggregated by gender 98.3% female and 71.8 male was enrolled in the region.

The regional data indicates that the Gross Enrollment Rate (GER) and Net Enrollment Rate (NER) is 89.6 and 78.6 respectively. GER of male (101.1) is higher than female (78.1). (BOFED 2007)



Time saved fetching water means children can go to school

### Health

The health coverage of the region is just over 50 percent, but this varies widely between zones. The highest coverage is in Sheka Zone and the lowest is in Wolayta Zone. There are a total of 16 hospitals, 161 health centres, 179 health stations and 1,316 health posts in SNNPR (BoFED, 2007).

The variations in health coverage are due to the general scarcity of health infrastructure and its unequal distribution; for example, the only special woreda with a district hospital is Dereshe. The leading causes of morbidity and mortality in the region are mostly attributed to lack of clean drinking water, poor sanitation and low public awareness of environmental health and personal hygiene practices. Malaria is the primary cause of mortality in the region.

## Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Region (SNNPR)

### Water supply

The source potential for water supply in both urban and rural areas of SNNPR relies heavily on groundwater abstracted from springs and shallow or deep ground aquifers. Although the degree of availability in terms of close range, cost, and quality varies in different locations, the potential for water supply sources is mostly available. The challenge is how to locate a reliable water source that is convenient for communities at minimal cost.

The water supply coverage of the region was as low as 20 percent in 2002/03, rising to 45 percent in rural areas and 60 percent in urban by 2005. Recent documents suggest that average regional water supply coverage has reached 54 percent; 64% urban and 49% rural (BoFED, 2007).

There are 1,304 hand dug wells, 1,678 shallow wells, 421 deep wells, 2,688 spring developments with distribution points and 255 springs with network distribution in the region. In addition, three roof water collection works have been finalised. Currently about a third of the population (6.94 million people) have access to potable water (BoFED, June 2007).

### Alaba Special Woreda

Alaba is one of the eight special woredas, which means they have special administrative status and are directly accountable to the regional state structures. There are 81 kebeles in Alaba, of which only two are urban. Of the quarter of a million population, 87% is rural and 54% is said to be economically active. Average household size is 4.8.

The altitude of the woreda ranges from 1,554 to 2,149 metres above sea level, with an average of around 1,800. The total land area is about 973km sq, with 86 percent weina dega (mid-elevation) and 14 percent kola (lowland).

The dominant ethnic group is Alaba, followed by Silte, and the large majority of the population are Muslim, followed by Orthodox Christian, Protestant Christian and traditional beliefs.

Agriculture is the backbone of the woreda & the farming system is characterised by mixed farming.

Currently Alaba woreda has 58 functioning schools; 5 kindergartens, 51 primary schools and 2 secondary schools, and a net primary school enrolment rate of 60.5%. The woreda has a scarcity of water resources; and according to the water supply scheme inventory, coverage of potable water supply is 45.5%, with 37% in the rural areas and 100% in the urban area of Kulito town.

There are only two government health centres, with two more under development, and 38 health posts for the whole population of the woreda. In addition, there are four medium and one small private

clinic, one non-governmental clinic, four diagnostic laboratories, seven drug shops and seven rural drug vendors.

### Mirab Abaya

Mirab Abaya woreda is in Gamogofa Zone, and has a land area of about 1,600km sq and a total population of 69,036, with 43 people per square kilometre. More than 90 percent of the population live in a rural area. The average family size in the woreda is 4.8

Administratively, the woreda is divided into 24 kebeles, of which only one is urban. There are three climatic zones; kola (lowland), weina dega (mid-elevation) and dega (highland) covering 62%, 27% and 11% of the area respectively. The dominant ethnic



Banana is largely produced and sold to other parts of the country

group is Gamo (85%) followed by Wolayita (9%) and others (2.5%). Protestant (52%), Orthodox Christian (41%), Muslim (5%), and Catholic are among the main religions followed.

A mixed farming system is dominant, with maize, sorghum, wheat, barley, cotton, enset and banana. Cattle, goats and poultry are the main forms of livestock. Beekeeping is also an economic activity, with both traditional and modern beehives in use.

According to the district Water Development Office, in 2006 potable water supply coverage reached 27.38% in the woreda, mainly from groundwater sources. There are a total of 57 water schemes, of which about 40 are functional: 24 machine shallow wells, 7 protected small and medium springs, 5 hand-dug wells and 4 deep boreholes. The water table is 20-30m deep in hand dug wells, 45-50m in shallow wells and 55-90m in deep boreholes. Two irrigation schemes are found in the woreda, Wojjifo and Raya, with a potential of 300ha and 425ha irrigable land area respectively.

## Planning observational studies: who makes the best observer?

### Lessons from the RiPPLE sanitation and hygiene case study in SNNPR

By Alemayehu Haddis

Many researchers recommend that methodological approaches to behavioural studies in sanitation and hygiene should include qualitative studies – focus group discussions, key informant interviews and observational studies – followed by quantitative studies, by administering questionnaires. The qualitative surveys have significant importance in studying behaviours and practices more deeply, while quantitative studies are important in studying variables in a more organised way that can result in statistical analysis.

The most important feature of observational studies is to give the researcher a true picture about people's claims during the questionnaire survey. People may respond that they have a latrine and that they use it regularly. However, closer observation of the latrine itself can show that it is not used, that it is full, or even that it doesn't exist at all. It is very common for people to answer what they think is 'acceptable', what the data collector wants to hear, rather than their actual practices. There is no doubt about the advantages of observational studies in learning more about the true picture of sanitation and hygiene practices in a certain community. The key question is: who should do the observation?

The design of observational studies requires some kind of 'trick'. The first principle is that data collectors should be unnoticed; people should not be aware that they are being watched for certain behaviour. The second principle is that the observer should not be a stranger. Rural communities in Ethiopia are shy about using latrines in the presence of strangers, so research teams from outside the area are not good candidates for observational studies.

Considering these principles, RiPPLE's sanitation and hygiene research team decided to use community health agents as observers. They were provided with carefully designed checklists and clear instructions on how to go about the observation process when visiting households during their regular programme. However, when data collection began the research team realised that some of the community health agents were not suitable candidates. Some of them used the opportunity to show their importance in the community, which alerted people they were being watched. Some started to fill the checklist without basing their information on observation, assuming that they already know the community. It was a very important lesson for the RiPPLE team, who quickly adjusted their approach

and started to use dedicated data collectors (high school graduates) who were selected, instructed and controlled by kebele administrators. This was a much more successful strategy.

## Expanding and deepening

Dr Alan Nicol  
RiPPLE Director



The Chinese Year of the Rat is upon us and RiPPLE has kicked off with action on all fronts—Media training in Addis Ababa with Ethiopian Country Water Partnership, preparation for a regional colloquium in Kampala, sanitation meetings

in Awassa, and umpteen financing, mapping, growth, and governance and planning activities.

Coming months are likely to be even more hectic and include developing the Forum for Learning on Water and Sanitation—FLoWS—with the Ministry of Water Resources, and increasing our support to the Research and Development Department.

At the same time the disastrous events in Kenya have highlighted how activities can be subject to real force majeure; now plans for joint work with our Network Partner, Practical Action Consulting, are having to be rapidly redesigned. Let's hope the situation improves for the sake of all Kenyans.

Away from these pressing concerns, our core task in coming weeks is a successful transition from case study work to long-term action research. This means greater integration between RiPPLE components and clear plans for future activities. Thankfully, we're able to build on solid foundations in the form of established regional Learning and Practice Alliances. The next step is deepening our engagement and partnership through the establishment of woreda LPAs.

So, lots to do, but also lots to achieve. Wishing you a fruitful—and peaceful—2008.

## *Hidar sitaten*: a historical reaction to a pandemic that is still practised

In 1918, thousands of people across Ethiopia lost their lives to a pandemic. As a quick solution to the problem, it was declared that everyone should clean up and burn their waste on a particular day. Since that time, many people continue to burn waste every year on the 22nd of November on the day called *Hidar sitaten*. *Hidar* is the month of November in Amharic and *sitaten* refers to the smoky environment. This article aims to highlight the side effects of this practice, which have not been widely considered. We will mainly focus on household waste burning practice during *Hidar sitaten*.

According to environmental experts, the solution of burning waste was previously less harmful than it is today. These days the practice is no longer encouraged, unless it is done in a proper way that does not affect the environment through air pollution. Ato Seid Abdella is a team leader for impact assessment in the Addis Ababa City Administration Environmental Protection Authority.



Many households collect and burn their wastes on this particular day

According to him, *Hidar sitaten* is not worth practising any more, because the waste that is burnt today is different from waste in the past and can contribute to air pollution. Today's waste includes plastic, metal, fluorescent lights and batteries, which contain damaging chemicals such as mercury and zinc. Such chemicals can contribute to many serious health problems, including cancer, nerve system disorders and affected respiratory organs. In extreme cases, it could possibly damage the kidneys or even brain.

One major concern about ceasing to observe *Hidar sitaten* is how to find an alternative way to dispose of household waste. Ato Seid would like to see a process that minimises the impact of waste. First and foremost, people should try to reduce the amount of waste produced; for example, by using products that can be reused or recycled. Instead of using plastic bags which are immediately thrown away, other materials can be used, such as cloth or straw bags, which are more durable and last longer. Much household waste is food leftovers, which can be composted and used as a fertiliser. Other



Air clogged due to collective smoke from different households burning their waste

waste that cannot be reused or composted can be burnt, but before burning the waste should be sorted and dangerous materials have to be disposed properly in those containers the city administration has put in different locations. The wastes in the containers are collected as frequently as possible and taken to a place designed by the city Administration has prepared for waste dumping and where it will be handled properly.

Many people have been practicing *Hidar sitaten* for years, so it is difficult to stop the practice overnight – but it does need to be stopped. Awareness creation activities will be vital in this process. In conclusion, Ato Seid recommends that the media, civil society organisations like idirs and other institutions, have to work together to bring about the desired changes.

## Coping with Scarcity through Integration; Tigray Region

Water is life: humans, animals and plants all need water to survive. Water is also a scarce resource. So the issue of balance between its scarcity and its importance is very critical.

One of RiPPLE's network partners, Ethiopia Country Water Partnership (ECWP), promotes and implements an integrated water resource management (IWRM) approach. These pictures show the Berki catchment in Tigray Region, one of the pilot IWRM learning sites. Water in the Berki catchment is scarce and there are many competing uses. The mountainous upper catchment is the source of most of the river water; if it is not well-protected, the river flow will decrease and put downstream users at risk. Unless socio-economic activities that are based on water use are linked to protecting the water resource base, it is difficult to make them sustainable. Upstream water usage also has an impact on downstream water users. Competition for the scarce water resources has led to conflict among users in the Berki catchment area. This demonstrates the need for integrated management of water resources of the catchment through a participatory process.

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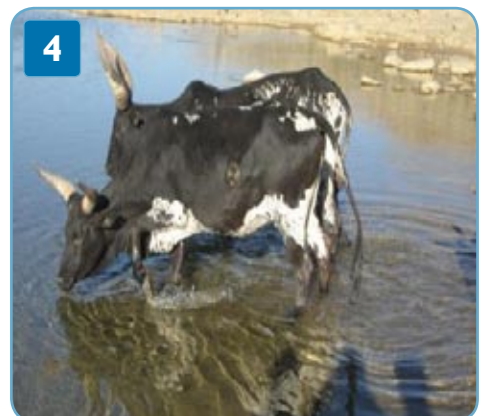
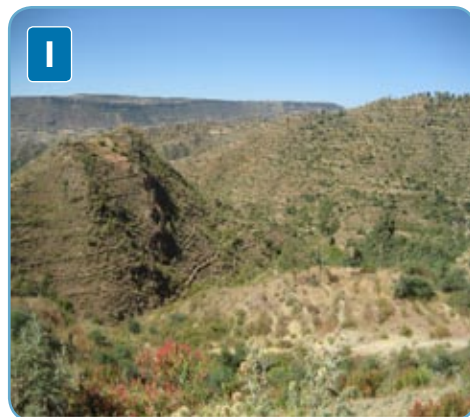
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1. This is where the source is located in Atsbi district
2. River diversion for irrigation
3. Netsanet Gebremariam, 13, fetches water for drinking and washing
4. Cattle also drink water from here, adding their excretions to the river
5. The river is used to grow vegetables, which beautify the area as well as providing products both for local use and local markets