

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

Happy Year 2000 Ethiopia!!

On behalf of the RiPPLE Office, we wish all Ethiopians and friends of Ethiopia a blessed and prosperous Millennium. We hope the new Millennium will be a chance for us all to work together to achieve the Universal Access Plan (UAP) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in the country.



Millennium fireworks
© Isaac Abrahams

We hope you enjoyed the first issue of this newsletter. In this edition we look beyond the RiPPLE programme itself, to the people, organisations and projects which RiPPLE is connecting with in the regions.

In this issue we also introduce the first of RiPPLE's three working regions: Benishangul-Gumuz Regional State (BGRS) and its two RiPPLE woredas, Kurmuk and Menge. SNNPR and Oromia, our two other focus regions, will be covered in future issues.

As always, feel free to forward your ideas on the newsletter and also subscribe to the e-newsletter by contacting **Simret Yasabu**, RiPPLE Media and Communication Officer on +251-11-416-0075 or info@rippleethiopia.org.

RiPPLE Woredas Selected

RiPPLE has selected the six woredas in which it will now carry out action-research; two in each of our working regions. The woredas were chosen according to their accessibility, the presence of implementing partners such as NGOs working in WaSH, the security situation and the need to cover diverse areas in terms of population density, climate, agro-ecology and type of WaSH services available.

The woredas selected are **Kurmuk** and **Menge** in Benishangul-Gumuz; **Babile** and **Goro-guto** in East Harerge zone, Oromia; and **Alaba** and **Mirab Abaya** in SNNPR.

In This Issue...

- **A Special on Benishangul-Gumuz Regional State**
- **Of Learning Practice Alliances: Interview with Zemedede Abebe**
- **Meet the RiPPLE staff: Tamene Chaka, National Facilitator**
- **Find out about Action Research**
- **Millennium Celebrations address water and sanitation challenges in Harar**
- **“Let us learn from cats to use latrines” - Shebedino woreda, SNNPR**



Map of Ethiopia showing selected woredas
(All borders unofficial)

Of Learning Practice Alliances: *Interview with Zemed Abebe*

Ato **Zemed Abebe** works with one of RiPPLE's partners, **Harerge Catholic Secretariat** (HCS). Zemed was involved in the RiPPLE scoping visit to East Harerge in 2006, and represents HCS at regional LPA workshops.

RiPPLE's links with implementing organisations in water and sanitation, such as HCS, are absolutely critical to the programme. RiPPLE's action research approach (see "[Action Research](#)" feature on p.3) means carrying out research side-by-side with implementation efforts in the field, so that everyone involved can "[learn by doing](#)". In particular, RiPPLE is working with HCS on a case study assessing the costs and benefits of multiple use water systems.

We invited Zemed to share his views on the role of implementing partners in RiPPLE.



RiPPLE: *What areas does HCS work on?*

Zemed: HCS is involved in both emergency rehabilitation and development programmes. The key areas are food security, multiple use water systems, and agro-enterprise development. We work in pastoralist, agro-pastoralist and farming communities.

RiPPLE: *Why were you interested in being part of RiPPLE?*

Zemed: We felt that RiPPLE's approach would offer good linkages with other organisations and new approaches. Research, communication and documentation can be missing links in implementation work, and RiPPLE could help to fill this gap.

RiPPLE: *What role will you play in RiPPLE's action research?*

Zemed: We will be involved in identifying research ideas, also in the research activities themselves. We aim to take part in planning and implementing of the research, documentation and prioritising of issues with the team, as well as making use of the research outputs.

RiPPLE: *How do you see the RiPPLE LPA meetings you have taken part in?*

Zemed: I already had experience of learning alliances, and I could see how this experience related closely to RiPPLE's approach. The meetings were a good opportunity to discuss lots of ideas, both formally and informally. I took part actively in the learning processes, and shared my experiences. I am happy that RiPPLE is open to our ideas, and interested in working with HCS. We are very glad to work with such an international programme. It can help us to improve the quality of our implementation, as we will be able to base implementation on empirical evidence, data and documented case studies.

RiPPLE: *Have you shared opinions on the workshops with other participants?*

Zemed: Yes, I have met participants from both NGOs and government. They were so happy with the programme. They participated actively in the whole process and nobody was even looking for breaks in the meetings!

RiPPLE: *What do you think is the reason for that active participation?*

Zemed: RiPPLE's research areas are very interesting for the participants. They could see that RiPPLE would address some areas which have been missing in the water sector - because of technical reasons or lack of resources - such as the links with food security. RiPPLE's focus and strategy are very relevant to what these institutions are doing.

RiPPLE: *Can you see any challenges to the RiPPLE LPA process?*

Zemed: It is important to think about a sustainability strategy for the LPA system. This system has to continue [after the lifetime of the project]. I am suggesting that people from the regions participate from the very beginning, so that they can make these activities part of their institutional mandate.

RiPPLE: *Based on your previous experience of learning alliances, what advice would you give about RiPPLE's LPA process?*

Zemed: Ideas from other LPAs should be brought to the meetings, so that experiences can be widely adopted from the woredas and from other zones and regions. Informal discussions between members should be encouraged outside the meetings organised by RiPPLE.

RiPPLE: *What have you learned from the RiPPLE LPA process so far?*

Zemed: The main point you learn is to consider points that were unconsiderable before. Sometimes in focusing on physical implementation we have missed important social aspects. Now we are thinking about the diverse connections between multiple water uses, sanitation, gender, and social and environmental aspects. I hope that this will improve our implementation and increase the benefits to the community. This would be a big contribution for the country.

Action Research

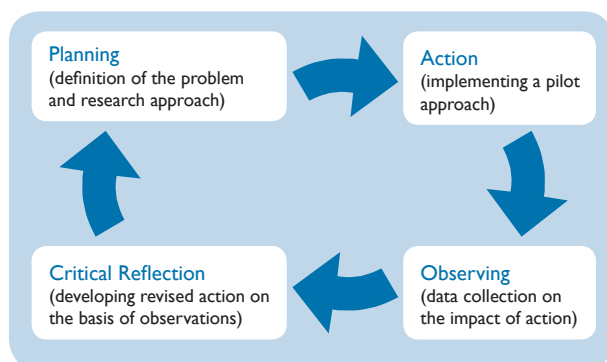
RiPPLE's research approach is "Action Research": involving stakeholders, implementers and LPA members in testing new ideas in the field of water and sanitation and researching the outcomes. This article explains the concept of Action Research.

What is Action Research?

"Action Research" is about learning by doing. It focuses on the practical concerns of a community, organisation or group of people, and involves them in testing solutions to the problems they face and evaluating the results. In contrast with traditional research approaches, Action Research has strong links with implementation and an explicit agenda for change. Traditional research might involve observing action taking place and evaluating its impact from a distance; in Action Research, taking action is an integral part of the research and learning process.

Action Research is often visualised as a cycle in which a team of researchers and stakeholders identify desired outcomes, pilot approaches, evaluate their impact, suggest improvements, pilot the improved approach, and so on. The cycle aims to achieve a spiralling up of both theory and practice, as theory informs practice and practice continually refines theory.

Key dimensions of Action Research are Involvement (of community or organisation members) and Improvement (development of practical solutions to improve their situation). As suggested by the name, Action Research has twin aims: to study a system (research), while collaborating with members of the system to improve it (action).



Action Research is a participatory process which aims to democratise research and achieve useful, practical and just outcomes which improve real-life situations. Taking part in the research and change process is a learning experience for all participants. Action Research takes a context-specific approach, recognising that effective solutions to problems need to be locally appropriate and tested in action. It should include reflective critique of its own processes to acknowledge and understand any biases, assumptions and concerns held by the participants.

Meet RiPPLE Staff...

Tamene Chaka

National Facilitator

In this issue, we introduce Tamene Chaka. Tamene was selected as the subject for this issue because of his vital role as RiPPLE's National Facilitator, but also for the special reason that he has recently got married! Congratulations Tamene!



Tamene and his bride on their wedding day.

It was during the scoping visit that I was inspired by the RiPPLE Programme, by the fact that it involves different professionals from many different organisations. Aha, I said to myself, if I try to join this programme I can learn a lot: it is composed of different professionals and carries out unique action research on the water supply, sanitation and hygiene sector. In addition I knew that I would enjoy working with the team. When Seid finally told me that I had won the job that I applied for, I was excited and my heart beat was booming. I thanked God for his blessing.

My home town is Leku, a town 25 km from the SNNPR capital, Awassa. I finished my first and junior secondary school in my home town, and then moved to Awassa where I completed high school.

I have a BSc in Agricultural Economics and an MSc in Project Management from Qinghua University, Beijing. I have a wide range of work experience in different organisations. When I started working, I joined the Ministry of Planning and Economics as a Project Planning and Monitoring Expert at the SNNPR bureau. I then joined the zonal office of the Ministry of Agriculture, which worked at middle and top management level. Following that, I became a socio-economist in the then CO-SARSAR which was recently restructured as the Bureau of Water Resources Development. Finally, I became NGO coordinator for the water sector. Overall, I have spent 50% of my career in the water sector.

My key role in RiPPLE is in coordinating and creating links between ongoing initiatives in the sector and the activities of the RiPPLE Programme. On a day-to-day basis, I work on creating and supporting effective and active platforms, building synergies with existing initiatives in the WSS sector and beyond, and tracking policy and programme initiatives at national level. Together with the director, I also coordinate and support the regional and woreda facilitators on day-to-day activities and strategic directions.

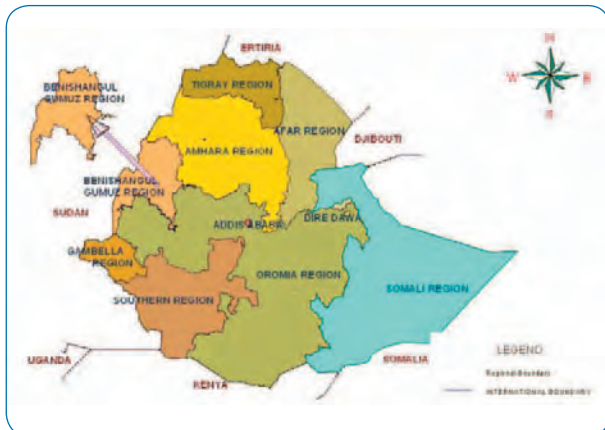
From the RiPPLE regions:

Background to Benishangul-Gumuz Regional State

by Aychew Adane

Benishangul Gumuz Regional State (BGRS) was established in 1994 by the new Constitution of Ethiopia, which created a federal system of governance. Previously the southern part of BGRS belonged to Wolega (Oromia region) while the area above the Blue Nile was part of Gojam (Amhara region).

BGRS is located in the western part of the country, stretching along the Sudanese frontier. The Amhara, Oromia and Gambella National Regional States border the region to the North, East and South, respectively. The total area of the region is an estimated 50,380 km². The Region is divided into two roughly equal parts by the Blue Nile: Metekel zone and Pawe Special woreda in the North; and Assosa zone, Kemashi zone and Mao-Komo Special woreda in the South. BGRS has 20 woredas in total, including the two special woredas. Its capital city is Assosa.



The geographic location of Benishangul-Gumuz within Ethiopia. (Unofficial borders)

Topography and Climate

Elevation ranges from 580 to 2,731m, from the Blue Nile valley at the Sudanese border to the high Belaya plateau. BGRS is principally a lowland region. 75% of its area is lowland Kolla (below 1500m) 24% is midland (Woyna Dega) (1500-2500m) and only 1% is classified as highland (Dega) (above 2500m).

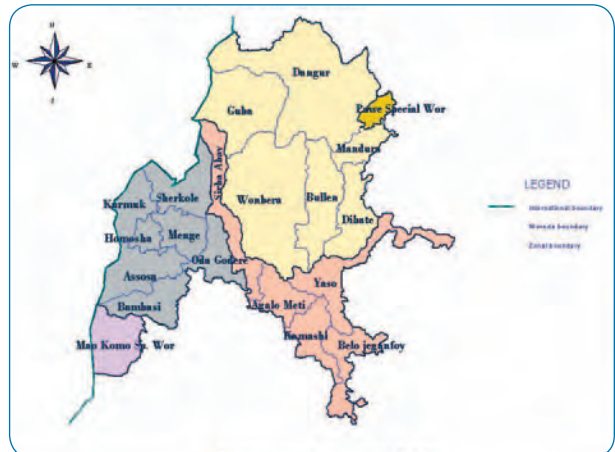
Like the rest of western Ethiopian, BGRS has a single rainy season. Top temperatures average 20-25°C (occurring in the dry season from February to April), and lowest temperatures are 12-20°C, occurring in the rainy season.

Population Characteristics

Current population figures are not exactly known, but the most recent census (Population and Housing Census, 1994) projected a population of 625,000 at June 2006. At the time of the census in 1994, over 92% of the population lived in rural areas. Population growth since then has been faster in urban than rural areas, but the region remains overwhelmingly rural.

The indigenous population of BGRS come from five ethnic groups: Gumuz, Berta, Shinasha, Mao and Komo. Many other groups also live in the region, and Oromo people form 11- 18% of the population of each zone in the region.

The main religions found in BGRS, in decreasing order of size, are: Muslim, Orthodox Christian, Traditional religions, Protestant Christian and Catholic Christian.



Benishangul-Gumuz zones and woredas (Unofficial borders)

Economic activities

The total economically active population (men and women aged 16-64) was estimated to be 57% in 1994. Over 93% of them are engaged in agriculture, which is the major economic activity in the region. BGRS is also reportedly rich in mineral resources, although its potential has not been fully explored. There are significant reserves of gold and marble, and also occurrences of zinc, lead, copper, silica and clay soils which could be exploited. Traditional gold mining is the major activity of the indigenous population, involving about 20,000 people. This gold is traded but mining is not commercialised.

Education, Health and WSS

Education rates were very low before the Regional Government was established, especially for indigenous populations. According to the 1994 Population and

Benishangul-Gumuz Regional State

RiPPLE Financing teams working in Benishangul-Gumuz

Financing

The financing theme is interested in questions about the best ways to use aid to deliver water and sanitation, how to improve coordination and monitoring of finances in the water sector, and how different financing mechanisms can help to achieve poverty alleviation, pro-poor growth and equity.

Two studies are currently being carried out in BGRS, in collaboration with the regional LPA:

1. **Action research case study to resolve the sourcing of counterpart funding for the World Bank funded Ethiopia Water Supply and Sanitation Project (EWSSP):** The EWSSP requires that 10% of project costs be met by the region. Currently this cannot be achieved, meaning that the region cannot benefit from the EWSSP funds. Resolving this bottleneck is a clear priority for improving service delivery in the region.
2. **Long-term action research study addressing the low utilisation rates of federally sourced (channel 1) funding:** Each year the BGRS water sector receives a grant from the federal government. However the regional government repeatedly has to return some of this money unspent at the end of the year. It is important to understand why the regional government has been unable to spend this grant fully, in spite of the need for investment in the water sector.

Housing Census the illiteracy rate was 82.1%. Since then enrollment rates in education have been rising.

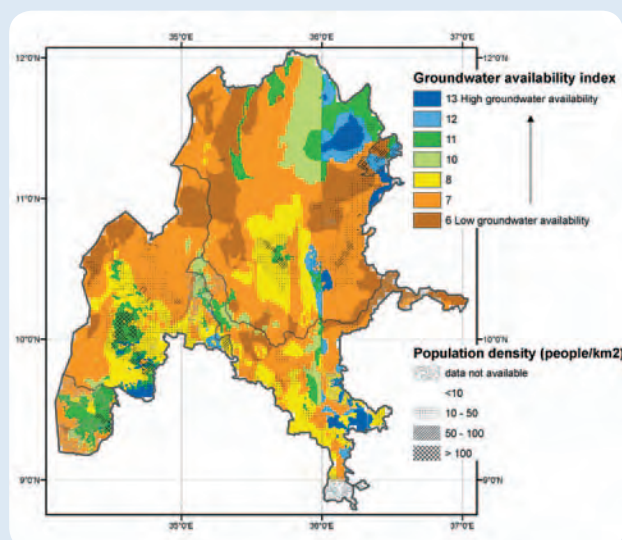
The region is in a poor condition in terms of basic health services. In 2002, regional coverage of health services was only 50%. Most diseases occurring in the region are well-known, largely preventable and directly or indirectly associated with water, sanitation and hygiene problems. Major diseases include malaria, diarrhoea and intestinal parasites.

The region has rich surface and subsurface water

resources. However little has been done to develop and utilise these resources for the benefit of the population. In 2005 (the most recent figures available), 38% of the population had access to potable water. While this is quite low, there has been a significant improvement in the last ten years: in 1997 the figure was just 19%, half what it is today. Coverage of safe hygienic sanitation lags behind: only 27% of the population has access, in 8 of the region's towns and some rural areas.

Benishangul-Gumuz water mapping – from the Mapping team

The water security map developed by the British Geological Survey, in collaboration with RiPPLE, shows the relative groundwater availability during dry periods for BGRS.



The map draws attention to some important issues related to the provision of sustainable water supplies in Benishangul-Gumuz. By combining likely groundwater availability in dry periods with spatial information on population distribution – as a surrogate for detailed information on how demand for water varies across the region – the map highlights areas where communities are at greater risk from the impacts of seasonal dry or longer drought periods.

The ultimate objective is to use the water security map to explore the capacity of WSS actors for using mapping approaches for planning. We expect that the map can be a useful input for the Bureau of Agriculture and for the Office of Food Security and Disaster Prevention in planning for small scale irrigation to increase agricultural productivity and food security. It could also be used to control likely future demands on water – e.g. as an input for the establishment of future settlement areas.

Benishangul-Gumuz region cont'd

Menge woreda

Menge woreda lies in the western part of the Region, 56km from Assosa woreda. It is a fairly small lowland woreda, with an area of just over 1500km², consisting of 22 administrative kebeles. Menge's population is around 44,000 (see WaterAid's BGRS office annual report), the majority are muslim Berta people, an indigenous ethnic group.

96% of the population are dependent on agriculture, and traditional gold mining is also an important activity (See feature in RiPPLE's May 2007 newsletter). Menge is intersected by the main Assosa-Menge-Gizehn road, and is also on the path of a planned Assosa-Sherkole-Blue Nile-Guba road. Access to Assosa is therefore reasonable at least from parts of the woreda.

The woreda faces serious challenges in access to education, health and other basic services. 2006 figures show that Menge had 17 schools, including just one secondary school, and only eight health service institutions: one health centre, one clinic and six health posts. 50% of the urban population has access to potable water supplies, but the figure is only 38% in rural areas where the great majority of the population live (see WaterAid BGRS office annual report, March 2007). According to the woreda water desk, there are about twenty waterpoints in the region: ten hand-dug wells, six handpumps, three shallow wells and one deep well.

Kurmuk woreda

Kurmuk woreda is situated in the far western side of the region. The Centre of the woreda at Kutaworke/Horazab is 89 km from Assosa. Like Menge the woreda is mainly lowland, and it covers a similar area of just over 1400km², divided into 16 kebeles. However its population is less than half that of Menge, at around 21,000 people (2006 estimate), of which most are Berta.

Kurmuk is linked with Assosa by a main road. This road is an important route between Ethiopia and Sudan, and there are plans to surface it with asphalt. As in Menge, agriculture is the major economic activity followed by traditional gold mining.

The number of schools per head of population is similar to that in Menge, with 9 schools serving the woreda including one secondary school. Kurmuk has six health facilities: two health centres, one clinic and three health posts. According to the woreda water desk, there are about 16 water points in the region: nine shallow wells and seven handpumps. (All data are from 2006.)

The Director's Cut

Dr Alan Nicol



RiPPLE has moved into a new phase since the last newsletter, characterised by real team building around core thematic areas and cross-cutting issues. This process of constituting effective teams—working across institutions and local partners—is the lifeblood of action research and needs constant oxygenation.

The oxygen is likely to be our effective communication with each other, regular meetings at the RiPPLE Office, and the production of outputs such as briefings, reports and videos, to stimulate debate and demonstrate to a wider audience what RiPPLE is all about.

In the coming few months our focus is shifting to the links we can build beyond Ethiopia and to the Nile region. This means exploiting opportunities to present and discuss our concept of Learning and Practice Alliances, and to share early results with colleagues in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania and elsewhere.

A first step is planning a regional meeting early next year in Uganda. This can serve as a platform for regional-level networking on different learning processes within the sector.

In tandem and, it is hoped, feeding into this workshop, we will be developing joint action research activities with colleagues from neighbouring countries in order to refine and share our research approach and to stimulate uptake beyond Ethiopia.

Eventually we hope to develop a regional-level action-research architecture for the water supply and sanitation sector, that will support long-term learning and help to achieve wider goals of sustainable service delivery with more equitable access.

RiPPLE latest resources



The RiPPLE website

Visit the RiPPLE website for up-to-date news and events related to RiPPLE as well as to access information about RiPPLE activities and publications.

www.rippleethiopia.org

Millennium Celebrations Address Water and Sanitation Challenges in Harar

Article based on an interview with Ato Arif Mohammed, Harar City Manager and member of the Harar Millennium Main Committee.



“Welcome to Harar”

Harar is a walled city, a town of diversity, a World Heritage Site: a town which UNESCO calls “a city of peace, tolerance and solidarity in everyday life”. If you go to Harar you will see the beauty of antiquity and modernity together. Recently the city was colourfully celebrating its 1000th anniversary along with the 3rd Ethiopian millennium celebration. Beneath its charming and attractive features, however, the town is struggling with lots of challenges. Deep-rooted poverty, water supply problems and sanitation are some of the major challenges that the town and its residents live with. With the coming of the new millennium, the city administration is taking major steps in collaboration with the people of Harar to tackle these issues. The millennium main committee, responsible for organising the recent millennium celebrations, sees the occasion of the millennium as an opportunity to take action.

Ato Arif Mohammed is the City Manager and a member of the Harar Millennium Main Committee. He told RiPPLE that lots of activities have been undertaken as part of the millennium celebrations including:

- three weeks of celebrations that mobilized the diaspora to engage in investment opportunities in the town
- various discussion forums focusing on the town’s development
- an environmental sanitation campaign in which Harari people living abroad also took part.

Environmental sanitation was one of the main themes of the three weeks of celebration, with a campaign that brought together the city administration, residents and diaspora. The focus was on awareness creation about how better sanitation and hygiene can prevent serious diseases.

But for Ato Arif, these three weeks are only the beginning, and many activities are planned going into the new millennium. He recognises that a three-week campaign is not enough to address the deep-rooted sanitation problems facing Harar, and the committee has a plan to follow it up. Campaigns will take place every month in the future promoted as a “[Monthly Environmental Sanitation Campaign for the New Millennium](#)”. The city administration aims to work hand in hand with everyone who wants to see a cleaner, healthier and more attractive Harar.

Another priority is to solve Harar’s water supply problems. Harar is known in the country for its shortage of water supply but Ato Arif is confident about the steps that are underway to address this, including the construction of a reservoir and transmission pipelines from Dire Dawa. These should be completed by June 2008, and will ensure the town’s water supply for the coming 20 years.



Ato Arif Mohammed, Harar city Manager

Finally Ato Arif stressed that, in order for Harar to stay on the list of world heritage sites, all concerned parties should work together to address the challenges of poverty, water supply and sanitation. The millennium celebration can raise awareness of these issues, and everyone must build on these three weeks with commitments for the future.

Harar is the site of RiPPLE’s Oromia office. The RiPPLE Growth theme is investigating water and sanitation issues in East Harerge zone, and their links with food security and poverty reduction.

“Let us learn from cats to use latrines” - Shebedino woreda, SNNPR

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Different mechanisms are being used in SNNPR to stimulate people to use latrines. This photo story looks at one of the more original approaches: encouraging people to learn from cats! Have you observed that a cat will cover its waste after it defecates? The title of this story is taken from a board displayed in the street in Shebedino woreda, which promotes latrines by reminding people that even cats do not defecate in the open air, let alone human beings. RiPPLE's sanitation team is currently working in SNNPR, looking at innovative approaches used to promote sanitation and hygiene.



1. This is the main road from Awassa to Shebedino.
2. In the past, trees beside the main street used to be a place to defecate. But these days, things are changing.
3. You can see announcement boards beside the road. They read: “Let us learn from cats to use latrines”
4. Now open defecation is prohibited and condemned. Geda is happily using the communal traditional latrines constructed by the community for passers-by like him.

