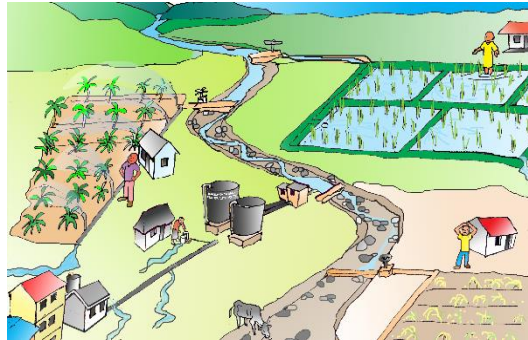


Water User Associations - building blocks for water security

Upper Ruvu catchment, Wami Ruvu Basin



Tanzania’s water policy and law, and institutional frameworks are considered to be some of the strongest in Africa. The hierarchy of roles and responsibilities for water resource management which they set out are shown in Figure 1. However, implementation is slow and this means that vulnerable communities and the economy face growing water insecurity.

This case study documents the water challenges facing farming communities along the Mgeta River in Mvomero District in the Upper Ruvu sub-basin (see Figure 2). It shows why institutional frameworks for water resource management (WRM) need urgent support. In particular, those at the ‘front-line’ of water management: Water User Associations (WUA) and Basin Water Boards (BWB) should receive priority investment to deliver their important tasks of local planning, information exchange, water allocation and conflict mitigation.

Farmers, leaders and officials in Mgeta were unaware of policy, law, roles and responsibilities for WRM and a lack of coordination was leading to conflicts, resource depletion, degradation and hardship for almost 5000 water users. With the support of the Wami-Ruvu Basin Board a WUA is now being established to help address these issues. The case illustrates how a vacuum of information and awareness among professional staff and the public creates huge implementation challenges for Tanzania’s water policy. Awareness and investment at the frontline of WRM to support vulnerable water users should become a priority.

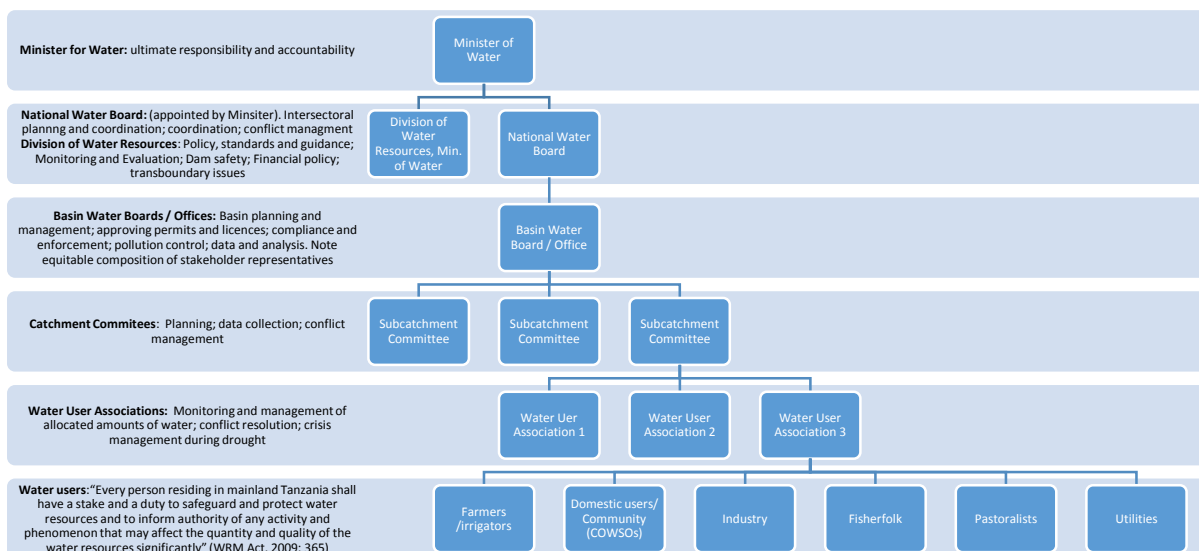


Figure 1. Hierarchy of roles and responsibilities for WRM in Tanzania as specified in policy and WRMA 2009.

This bulletin was produced by the Uhakika wa Maji Programme, a joint initiative between Shahidi wa Maji, TaWaSaNET and Water Witness International. Uhakika wa Maji undertakes high quality action research to generate evidence and advocacy materials to improve water resource management and water security for all Tanzanians.

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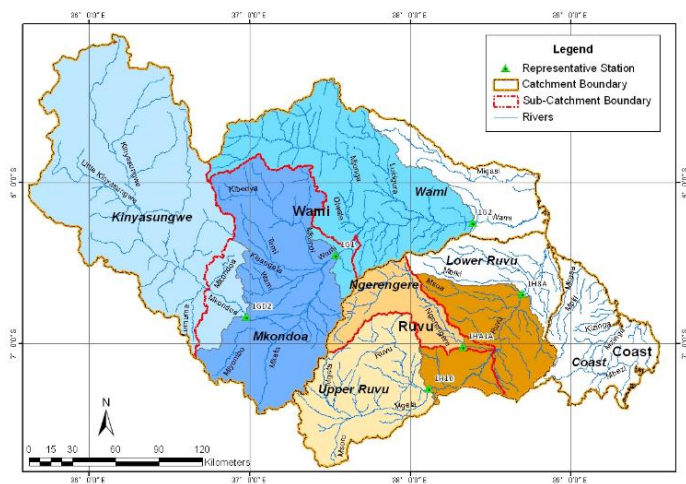


Figure 2. Location of Mgeta River case study and Upper Ruvu within Ruvu Basin (source: JICA/MoW 2014)

Background to the case

Mgeta River is a key water source for Mvomero District, ensuring water and food security for the people of Mgeta and its external markets. The River originates from the Uluguru mountains in Nyandira and flows towards Mgeta and further downstream joins the Ruvu which contributes to the water supply for Dar es Salaam. It is used for domestic uses, irrigation, and provides ecosystem needs. Along the Mgeta, 17 irrigation furrows and associated farming directly support 4300 people and food security for many more.

The Uhakika team comprising experts from the Ministry of Water, NEMC, and NGOs visited water users in of Mgeta River on three occasions in 2014 to understand and document the situation. Field work consisted of interviews with experts, meetings with community members and field surveys. The team conducted WRM awareness training to representatives from the 17 furrows and document problems such as conflicts and resource depletion and degradation. They found that communities, farmers and local leaders at Ward and Village level were not aware of Tanzania's water policy or the legal frameworks governing water use. They neither understood the government's role in water resources management nor their own roles and obligations. The absence of coordination between users was found to be a key risk for the community.

The farmers came up with a community resource map that documented water resources management issues and possible solutions to the challenges. By developing an action plan with water users, the need for a Water User Association (WUA) to provide this coordination and awareness raising role was established. With the ongoing assistance of the Wami-Ruvu BWB, water users are now establishing a WUA.

Insight 1. Irrigation furrows support productivity but abstractions are not formally recognised.

- Along the Mgeta, 17 traditional irrigation furrows abstract water from the river without water use permits.
- Water availability and sustainable yield are not known as the river flow is not monitored.
- Irrigation structures are temporary and made of local materials, and some abstraction points are washed away during heavy rains. Furrows are unlined.

Insight 2. Water use suffers from an absence of planning, coordination and agreements.

- Irrigators are not connected. There is no relationship or communication between upstream and downstream irrigators
- Users do not know what others abstracts from the river or when abstractions take place.
- Farming takes place within and close to the river channel.

Insight 3. Water use conflict is common along the Mgeta River

- Water use conflicts occur between upstream and downstream farmers during dry season.
- Downstream farmers are forced to reduce the farming land under production and outputs during this period.
- Farmers do not know where to channel complaints over such conflicts, or how they can organise to manage the resource.

Insight 4. Institutional arrangements for water governance are absent

- There are no irrigation committees for each furrow.
- No WUA has been established to coordinate water use.

Insight 5. Support and knowledge from the Basin Water Board will improve wellbeing, food security and economic output.

- Local experts at village and ward level and communities were not aware of the policies, laws and guidelines on WRM.
- By establishing a Water User Association the water users will be able to plan for equitable water resource allocation and use, resolve conflict and liaise with the Basin.
- Obtaining water use permits will provide water security for local users and generate revenue for water resource management and monitoring.

What needs to change?

Locally: In the Upper Ruvu

- a. Communities should be facilitated to establish a Water Users Association and an irrigators association of the 17 furrows so as to agree on abstraction points and management regime.
- b. Mvomero District Council should support farmers to establish an irrigators association whilst the BWB supports the WUA formation to ensure fair water use. These should be coordinated in collaboration to avoid policy conflicts.
- c. WR BWB should monitor flow and water use, to guide assessment and allocation once permits are applied for.

Nationally: learning and response

- a. Irrigation Associations are critical for water management and can assist WUA formation. Processes and policy for WUA and Irrigation Group interaction need to be coherent.
- b. Greater public awareness is needed on WRM, WUA formation processes and water permitting. It is the duty of BWBs to prepare and implement communication strategies.
- c. BWBs should target investment in monitoring in areas of high irrigation potential to guide fair use and prevent conflict.
- d. NGOs/CSOs can play a role in community awareness and demand for WUAs, and in guiding their formation. However the financial sustainability of the WUA model, best practice for WUAs and clear accountabilities need to be established. A national learning forum on WUAs should support this.

PRIORITY ACTION: Budget allocation and planning for front line activities including WRM awareness and WUA support need to be prioritised by the Ministry of Water to mitigate water conflict, depletion and degradation.