

Understanding Water Governance in the Central Rift Valley of Ethiopia: Zooming into Transparency, Accountability, and Participation

Authors : Endalew Jibat, Feyera Senbeta, Tesfaye Zeleke, Fitsum Hagos

Abstract : Water governance considers multi-sector participation beyond the state; and for sustainable use of water resources, appropriate laws, policies, regulations, and institutions needs to be developed and put in place. Water policy, a critical and integral instrument of water governance, guided water use schemes and ensures equitable water distribution among users. The Ethiopian Central Rift Valley (CRV) is wealthy of water resources, but these water resources are currently under severe strain owing to an imbalance in human-water interactions. The main aim of the study was to examine the state of water resources governance in the CRV of Ethiopia, and the impact of the Ethiopian Water Resources Management Policy on water governance. Key informant interviews (KII), focused group discussions, and document reviews were used to gather data for the study. The NVivo 11 program was used to organize, code, and analyze the data. The results revealed that water resources governance practices such as water allocation and apportionment, comprehensive and integrated water management plans, water resources protection, and conservation activities were rarely implemented. Water resources management policy mechanisms were not fully put in place. Lack of coherence in water policy implementation, absence of clear roles and responsibilities of stakeholders, absence of transparency and accountability in irrigation water service delivery, and lack of meaningful participation of key actors in water governance decision-making were the primary shortcomings observed. Factors such as over-abstraction, deterioration of buffer zone, and chemical erosion from surrounding farming have contributed to the reduction in water volume and quality in the CRV. These challenges have influenced aquatic ecosystem services and threaten the livelihoods of the surrounding communities. Hence, reforms relating to policy coherence and enforcement, stakeholder involvement, water distribution strategies, and the application of water governance principles must be given more emphasis.

Keywords : water resources, irrigation, governance, water allocation, governance principles, stakeholders engagement, central rift valley

Conference Title : ICW 2023 : International Conference on Water

Conference Location : London, United Kingdom

Conference Dates : January 23-24, 2023