

The Role of Formal and Informal Institutions in Water Governance in the Central Rift Valley of Ethiopia

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Abstract : Institutions can play a key role in coordinating how natural resources are effectively used without over-exploitation. Institutions are the laws, policies, and organizational arrangements that permit, forbid or regulate human action. The aim of this study was to look into the roles of formal and informal institutions, as well as their interactions, in water resource governance in Ethiopia's Central Rift Valley (CRV), where water scarcity is a concern. Key informant interviews, group discussions, in depth-interview, and secondary data sources were used to generate relevant data. The study revealed that formal and informal institutions were involved in water resource governance in the study area. However, the influence of informal institutions on formal institutions or vice versa is trivial to change the action of water users. Lack of clear roles and responsibilities of actors, weak capacity and lack of meaningful decentralization and participation of key actors in policy development, lack of synergy and incongruence between formal and informal institutions, and absence of enforcement mechanisms including incentives are attributed to inefficient use of water resources in the CRV. Enhancing the interplay of formal and informal institutions in the water resource policy development and meaningful decentralization and key stakeholders' engagement is recommended for sustainable water use.

Keywords : institutions, governance, institutional interplay, water users

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