

Rural women's access to productive assets and poverty implications: Evidence from Msinga LM in KZN

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Background

- Women are the dominant agricultural producers, traders and nutrition providers in most developing countries; (women produce 60–80% of the world's food);
- Women face challenges in accessing productive assets such as land and water;
- Historical formulation and implementation of patrilineal laws & cultural traditions, including laws that limit females' inheritance of property, has been identified as the main cause of women's limited access to productive resources in SSA;
- Social and administrative bias towards men as well as unequal access to education, extension, training, information and inputs exists, which exacerbates women's disadvantages;



Study Objectives

- Despite SA's progressive legislation, policies & frameworks that seek to achieve gender (& racial) equity in resource access, implementation has been slow and flawed, resulting in continued inequities;
- While literature has looked at the gendered access to land, and its welfare impacts; gender inequalities in water access have not been adequately investigated;
- Study objectives:
 - investigate the gender differences in water access among irrigators;
 - assess the extent to which observable or unobservable characteristics can explain the gender differentials;
 - evaluate the welfare impacts of the gendered access to water;

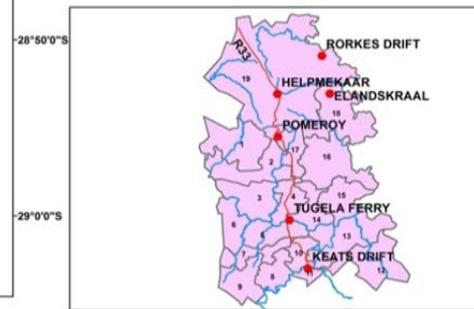
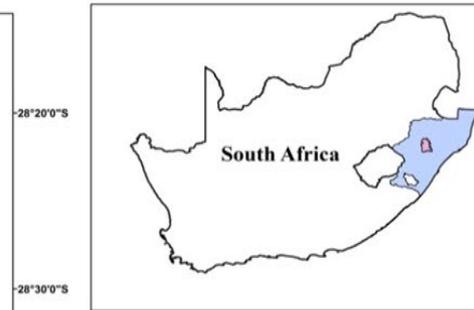
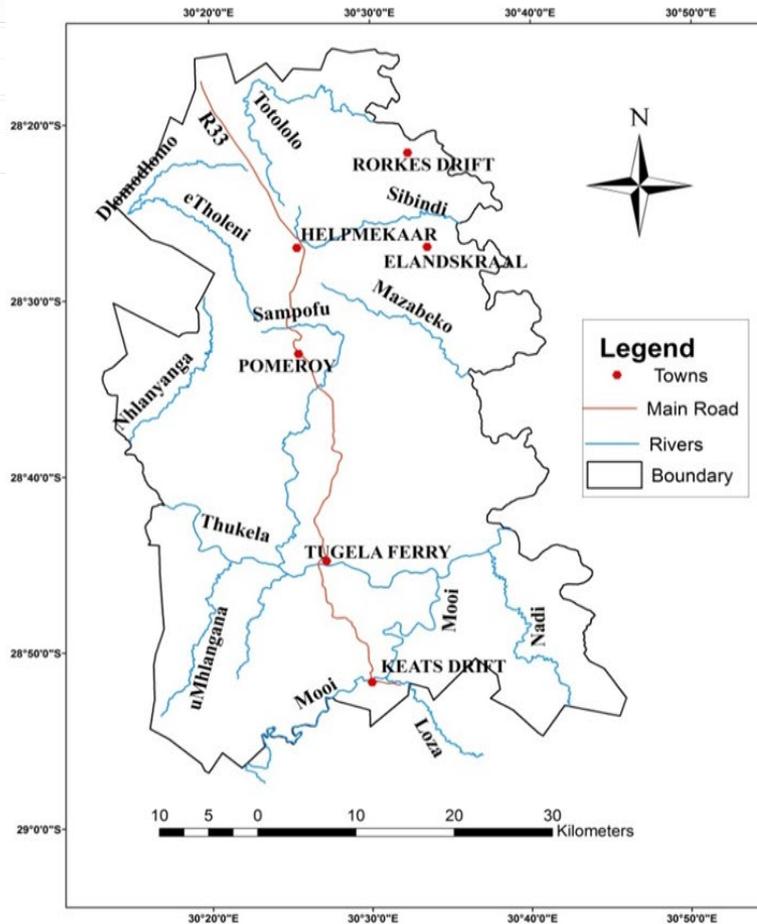


Approach

- Plot level data collected from a sample of 291 irrigators (198 Women; 93 men) in two irrigation schemes in Msinga LM; (Tugela Ferry & Mooi River Irrigation schemes); 290 analysed due to missing info on key variables
- An irrigator was defined as the individual who manages and works on the plots and actually makes decisions such as what to plant, how much inputs to use and what to do with the outputs;
- While in most cases these were household heads, there were few cases where the woman, for instance, was the farmer while the household head, the husband, was not involved in the farming decisions;
- Access to water was captured as the number of days the farmers had access to water to irrigate their plots in the 30 days prior to the survey (long enough to capture variation in water access; and short enough for accurate recall);
- Household welfare was captured by annual total income per capita



Study area: Msinga LM



Msinga LM profile

- Pop: 178,000
- 99% of pop =rural; 1% in towns
- Women = 58% of pop; 68% hhs female headed;
- 68% illiterate
- Unemployment rate: 49.5%;
- 70% land under traditional authority (Ingonyama Trust);
- Hot & dry, farming along the two main rivers: Tugela & Mooi rivers



Descriptive statistics (summary)

- 68% of the sampled irrigators were women, 32% men;
- *Less schooling among women*: 67% of women had no schooling compared to 48% of the men ;
- *Limited access to extension among women*: Women had less contact with extension officers;
- *Women were less likely to be in scheme management committees than men*;
- *Less women than men were registered water users*;
- *Limited access to water and land among women*: Women had 40% less land, and accessed water less frequently than men;
- *Women's plots were more likely to be located at the lower end of the schemes*
- *Productivity gender differential*: Men were 30% more productive in maize production than women;
- *Welfare gender differential*: incomes per capita were over 50% significantly higher for men than women;
- *Very high poverty levels among women*: Overall poverty headcount = 63%; Women = 72%; & Men = 41%

Empirical results: Welfare impact



- After controlling for variables such as education level, marital status, age, etc., the results indicate that increasing water access is associated with increasing incomes per capita;
 - Farmers with better access to water face less risk of crop failure and, therefore, have better incentives to invest in improved inputs and technologies such as fertilisers that improve crop productivity, leading to increased output and revenue;
- Men have higher welfare than women;
- However, an additional day of access to water increases men's welfare less than it does to women. This suggests that women are more efficient compared to men in using water resources to improve household welfare;
- Thus, equitable allocation of productive resources such as water between men to women would have a bigger impact on rural poverty



Summary & conclusions

- Unequal access to irrigation water between men & women
- Men accessed irrigation water more frequently than women;
- Women were less educated, accessed less land, were less likely to participate in leadership positions, had less contact with extension officers, & their plots were more likely to be located in the lower end of the scheme;
- Results indicated a positive and significant effect of water access on household welfare & that men had higher welfare than women
- Women would achieve higher welfare than men at the same level of water access.
- Interventions to ensure equity in access to water & other productive resources could be more effective in combating poverty compared to the status quo.



Summary & conclusions (cont'd)

- Policies targeting observable characteristics can improve access to water.
- Women can benefit more from being registered as water users, relying on gravity instead of pumps as well participating in canal maintenance activities
- Empower women to assume leadership positions in scheme management & in groups to improve their influence & close the gender gap in access to productive resources such as water;
- Involving women in leadership positions requires a change in the patriarchal attitudes prevailing in rural KwaZulu-Natal, which can be achieved by increased awareness and appreciation of women as equal players in society



End – thank you