Water Re-use in River Basins: A Solution to Increase Water Efficiency and Productivity? The Usangu Case Study, Tanzania

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Abstract

Many river basins in Tanzania are experiencing competition over scarce water resources such that runoff and drainage, if any, from one user located in the upstream is intensively utilized by immediate downstream users. Research was conducted to explore how water use efficiency and productivity, of irrigation systems practicing water reuse, could be related to the efficiency and productivity of individuals farms within the water reuse systems. Two irrigation systems having a chain of three users (Top, Middle and End users) reusing the runoff from upstream farms were sampled for investigation in the Ruaha river sub basin. Using the limited existing methods of assessing irrigation efficiency and productivity of water reuse systems, it was observed that the system which consisted of farmers with lower individual efficiency and productivity resulted in lower water reuse efficiency (90%) and productivity (0.55kg/m^3). Alternatively, the system which consisted of individuals with relatively higher efficiency resulted in higher water reuse efficiency of about (93%) and productivity (0.72kg/m^3). However, the paper concludes that current methods of assessing irrigation efficiency and productivity of water reuse does not accurately assess key conditions inspired by the Usangu situation and which affect the irrigation efficiency and productivity of water reuse in the area. The paper further concludes that irrigation efficiency and productivity of individual farms in any water reuse system are the major contributors to high water reuse efficiency and productivity.

Key words: Upstream, Downstream, Irrigation, Water reuse, Efficiency, Productivity, Irrigation systems

Introduction

The Usangu basin

The Usangu Basin (USB), which is located in the south west of Tanzania, forms an important part of the upper catchment of the Rufiji basin, Tanzania's largest river basin. The Usangu basin covers an area of about 20,800 km^2 and is home to over 300,000 people, most of whom depend for their livelihoods on the natural resources of the basin (Lankford and Franks, 2000; SMUWC, 2001).

The basin consists of a mountainous and well-wooded area with high rainfall in the south, falling to an extensive flat plain in the north. Within the plain there are large areas of alluvial fans, supporting the majority of the settlements in the catchment, as well as irrigated and dryland farming. The alluvial fans in turn give way to an extensive wetland, comprising seasonally flooded grassland and a much smaller area of permanent swamp.

The outflow from the swamp is controlled through a weir in the form of a natural rock outcrop, from where all downstream flows from Usangu are channelled through the Great Ruaha River. The Great Ruaha flows first through the Ruaha National Park, and then to the Mtera/Kidatu hydropower reservoirs on the Rufiji River.

The mountainous area which forms the upper part of the catchment reaches a height of 3,000 m in some places, and has rainfall of between 1,000 and 1,600 mm annually. It is well drained by means of a number of perennial rivers falling sharply over an escarpment to the plain below. The plain is at a mean altitude of 1,100 m, with a much lower rainfall of around 700 mm annually. This rainfall is concentrated in the period of December to March, and is followed by a prolonged dry season. The river flows are at their lowest in November.

The basin and its downstream reaches can be considered as five linked sub-systems: the upper catchment; the alluvial fans; the wetland; the riparian reach through the Ruaha National Park; and the Mtera/Kidatu hydroelectric system (SMUWC, 2001; Machibya, 2003). All these subsystems provide a significant contribution to the Tanzanian economy. The linkage and coordination of these subsystems is vital, because they impact in one way or another on the water resources of the Usangu basin.

Irrigation and water reuse in Usangu

Irrigation, particularly rice irrigation, is a key activity for the livelihoods of over 30,000 households residing in the Usangu basin. As mentioned earlier, the Usangu basin has considerable water resources provided by six major rivers that flow from the upper catchment to the plain. These are the Ruaha, Kimani, Mkoji, Chimala, Mbarali and the Ndembera. Water in these rivers is abstracted for rice production and domestic use immediately after the high catchment before they enter into the Usangu wetland (also called the Ihefu). The Usangu wetland has a natural exit at Ngiriama which releases water to the Ruaha National park and thereby to the Mtera and Kidatu hydropower stations, further downstream.

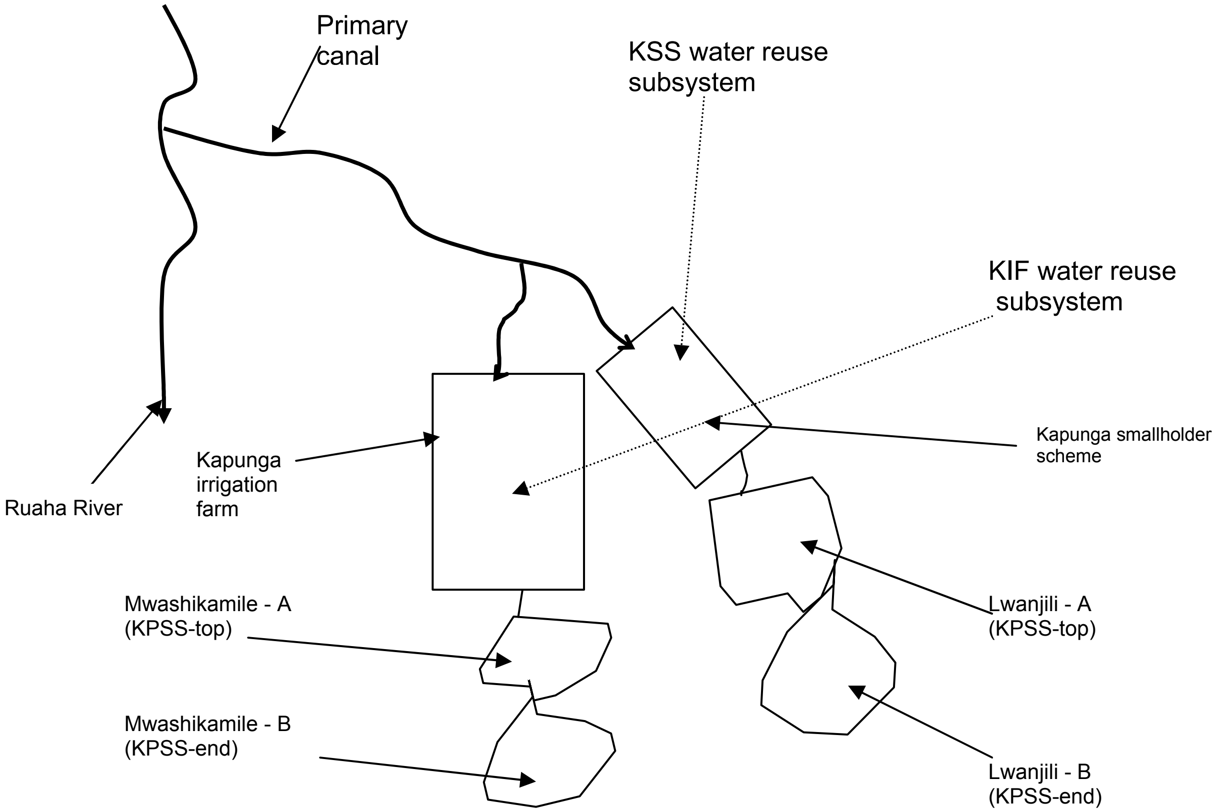
Due to this connected multiple use and increase in population, the rivers have increasingly been subject to utilisation for different sectors. The Usangu basin is now well known in Tanzania as being water scarce. Within irrigation, farmers access water either directly from rivers through intakes or via the utilization of runoff from upstream users, the process known as “water reuse”. Water reuse has received international recognition in river basins as a mechanism that increases water efficiency and productivity (Keller *et al.,* 1996; Perry, 1999). The concept is that if, say, "X" amount of water is abstracted by farmer A and then released as runoff to farmer B and later on to farmer C, both the efficiency and the productivity of the system comprising the three farms will increase. This paper discusses the extent of efficiency and productivity gain in such systems and the limitations of existing methods in evaluating water reuse in the Usangu water reuse systems.

Materials and Methods

Materials

Two water reuse subsystems (Figure 1) were selected for study during the period of 1999 - 2001 in the Usangu basin to investigate the impact of water reuse on irrigation efficiency and productivity. The first chain of water reuse consisted of three farms; Kapunga irrigation farm (KIF), Mwashikamile - A and Mwashikamile - B, and the system was named the "KIF-water reuse subsystem". The second chain consisted of Kapunga smallholder scheme (KSS), Kapunga peri-smallholder system (KPSS-top) and Kapunga peri-smallholder system (KPSS-end). This was called the "KSS-water reuse subsystem".

Figure 1: Schematic presentation of KIF and KSS water reuse systems



Detailed measurement of gross and net crop water requirement in each of the selected water reuse system was monitored throughout the research period using standard procedures (Machibya, 2003). An experimental plot was chosen for the installation of the following equipment to monitor the water balance: flumes to monitor inflow and outflows; rain gauges for rainfall monitoring; and oil drums (lysimeters) to monitor paddy transpiration, evaporation, lateral and deep percolation, and subsurface movement across field. Oil drums (plastic or steel) are acceptable lysimeters, by which water losses, seepage, evaporation and then crop water requirements could be estimated (Machibya and Mdemu, 2005) The lysimeters applied during this study were made of plastic, having a height of 900 mm and diameter of 350 mm. The installation process took place on puddling day. This was done in order to create similar soil environments in the lysimeter and in the field. The installation was done as explained below.

Each lysimeter was buried in the paddy experimental plot to a depth of 400 mm and then filled with puddled soil from the same field. The lysimeters were filled with soil to the same level as the soil in the main field. When the water was allowed into the main field up to a certain level, the same level was made in the lysimeter, and this was carried out on a daily basis, as explained later. Each installed lysimeter, in each plot, was treated differently to fulfill the objectives of the water balance experiment as described next.

For determination of deep percolation, a lysimeter had its bottom lid removed so that it was hollow in nature. Daily recording of changes in water levels (evaporation and deep percolation) in the lysimeter were done with the assistance of a level hook, which was daily reset to reflect a new level of water after taking a reading and ready for the next reading.

Evaporation from a cropped field was monitored using a lysimeter fully sealed at the bottom. The only way water exited from this lysimeter was through evaporation. The main purpose of this lysimeter was to assess the actual annual amount of water that evapotranspired from a field with paddy planted in it. The lysimeter was therefore installed in a paddy field but no paddy was planted inside it.

Paddy transpiration was estimated using a lysimeter fully covered at the bottom and planted with paddy inside. The paddy planted inside the lysimeter was planted on the same day and at the same planting spacing as in the main fields.

Methods of evaluating the efficiency and productivity of individual farms

In order to obtain the gross annual crop water requirement of each rice plot, the collected data were balanced and computed using model equation (1) below at the end of each season. The purpose here was to obtain the component which could not be directly measured (lateral and subsurface movement of water).

$$\{R + I\} = \{Ev + Tr + ADp + R_o + (Lp + {}^*s)\} \qquad (1)$$

where:

R = Annual rainfall, I = Annual irrigation water, Ev = Annual evaporation, Tr = Annual transpiration, ADp = Annual deep percolation, Ro = Annual runoff from the field
(Lp + ∗s) = Annual lateral percolation and subsurface movement of water in the field.
The individual farm efficiency in the water reuse system was computed using the model equation (2) below.

$$Efficiency(\%) = \frac{Annual\ crop\ water\ requirement\ (ACWR)}{Annual\ crop\ water\ requirement\ (ACWR) + Losses} X100 \qquad (2)$$

In addition, the water productivity of each individual farm in a chain of water reuse was evaluated using one indicator (yield per cubic meter of water used - kg/m^3) as per equation 3 below.

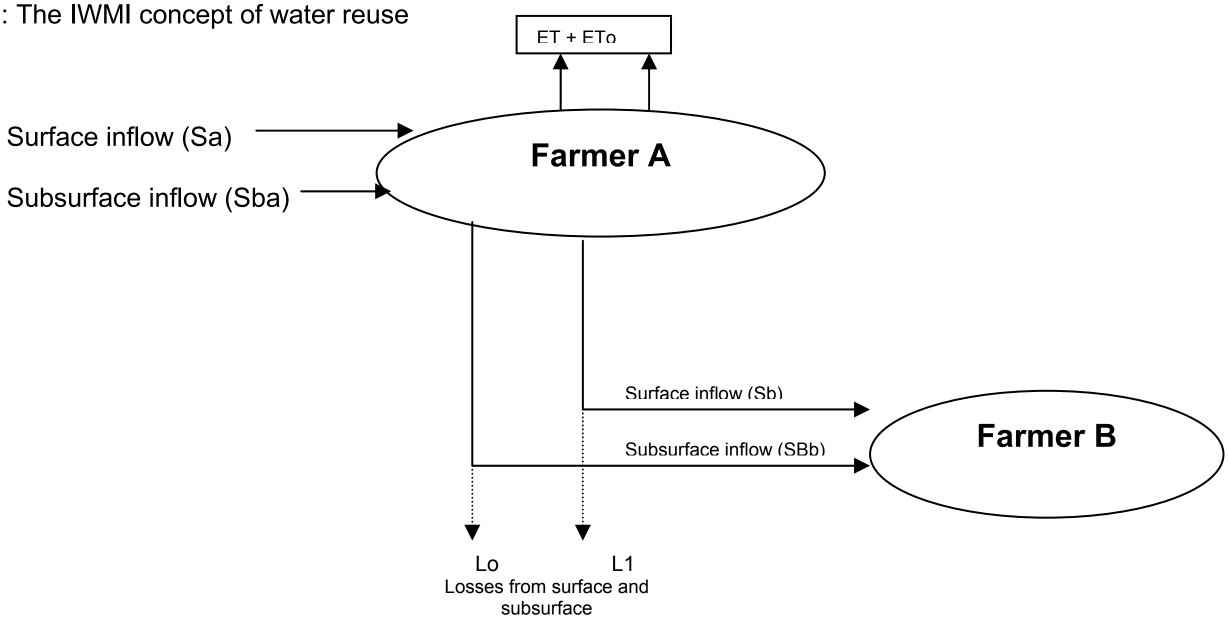
$$Productivity = \frac{Weight\ of\ crop\ grains\ (kg)}{Annual\ crop\ water\ requirement + Losses (m^3)} \qquad (3)$$

Efficiency and productivity of water reuse systems - IWMI method

Efficiency

The latest International Water Management Institute (IWMI) concept (Figure 2) assumes that there are two types of inflows that reach any farm; surface and subsurface flows. Furthermore, beneficial (ET) and non-beneficial (ETo) evaporation on the farm depletes water, either through crops or as fallow soil evaporation (Keller *et al.,* 1996). The IWMI method assumes that water released from upstream farmer 'A' going to farmer 'B' leaves farmer 'A' in two forms i.e. surface (Sb) and sub-surface (SBb). However, some water is permanently lost on the way through deep percolation and does not reach farmer B. The water which reaches farmer 'B', therefore, is less (L1+Lo) than that which leaves A.

Figure 2: The IWMI concept of water reuse



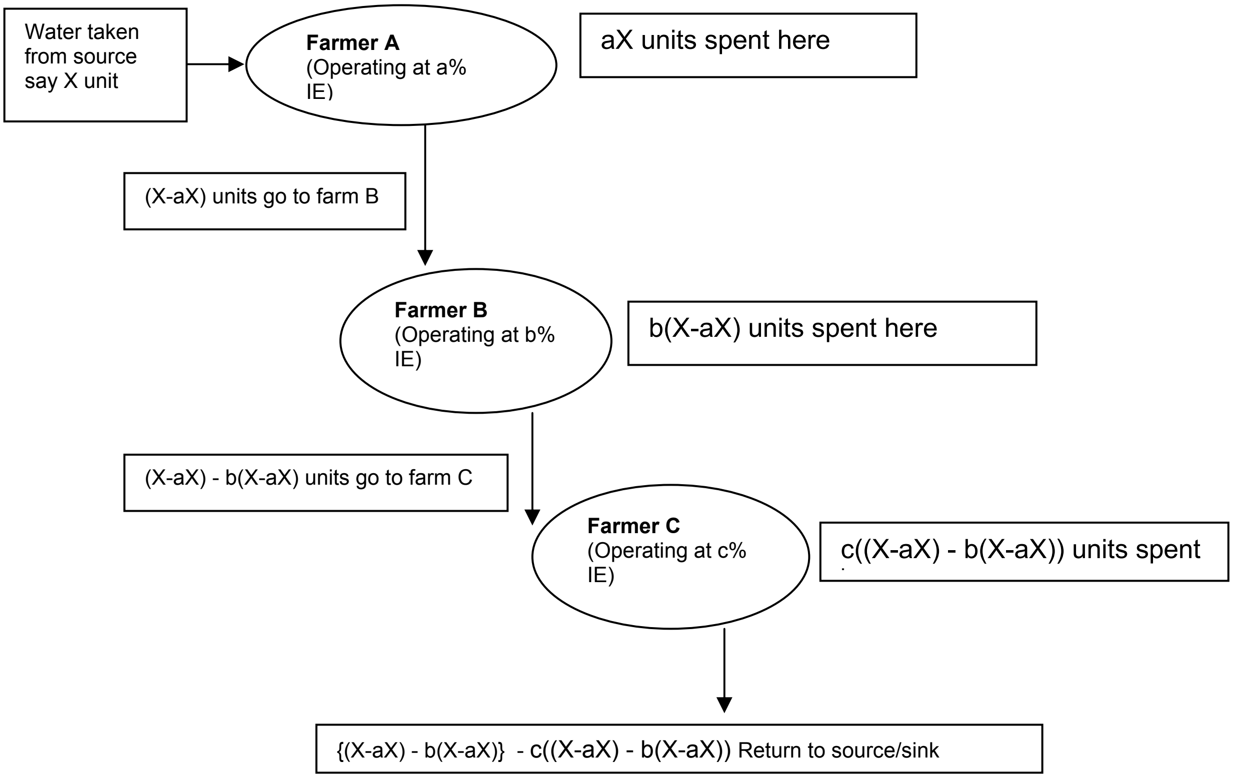
The method here is termed "Effective Irrigation Efficiency" (EIE) and is calculated as demonstrated in equation 4 below.

$$EIE(\%) = \frac{crop\ water\ requirement\ (CWR)}{crop\ water\ requirement\ (CWR) + Unrecovered\ losses (Lu)} X100$$

$$EIE(\%) = \frac{crop\ water\ requirement\ (CWR)}{Total\ depleted} X100 \qquad (4)$$

Applying the theoretical framework above, the efficiency of water reuse of up to three times in Usangu can be evaluated (Figure 3). If ***X*** units of water were diverted from the source river to farm A, which operates at ***a%*** efficiency, according to IWMI-method this means that ***(X-aX)*** of the abstracted water would move to the next farm, and only ***aX*** units will be used in farm A. If the next farmer B is operating at ***b%*** efficiency, it means that ***b(X-aX)*** units will be spent in that farm. The amount that will move ahead to farm C will be ***(X-aX) - b(X-aX)***. In farm C the amount that will be spent there is ***c((X-aX) - b(X-aX)*** and the amount leaving that farm, the return to source/sink in this case, is ***{(X-aX) - (X-aX)} - c((X-aX) - b(X-aX))***.

Figure 3: Irrigation efficiency calculated using the IWMI-P method



If the losses and subsurface movement of water from one user to another are obtained as per balance equation (1) above, and the efficiencies of the individual farms a%, b% and c% are calculated from net crop water requirement as measured by lysimeter divided by the gross water requirement as estimated from the balance equation (1):

Then, the usable units from the three reuse systems would be the sum of all the units spent by farmers A, B and C. This is given as follows:

$$Usable\ units = CWR = aX + b(X - aX) + \{c(X - aX) - b(X - aX)\}$$

Since the chain of reuse in the river basin is assumed endless such that the total depletion is equal to X, then the effective irrigation efficiency would be calculated as follows:

$$EIE = \frac{aX + b(X - aX) + c\{(X - aX) - b(X - aX)\}}{X}$$

$$= a + b - ba + c - ac - bc + abc$$

$$EIE = a + b + c - (ba + ac + bc) + abc \qquad (5)$$

Irrigation productivity

The productivity would be the sum of yields in each of the water reuse farms. The addition of all three productivities will give the effective productivity of the water reuse system as per equation 6 below. This equation was used to evaluate the productivity in all the two seasons.

$$EIP = IP_1 + IP_2 + IP_3 \qquad (6)$$

Whereby IP = irrigation productivity in each of the individual farms

Results

Efficiencies and productivities at farm level

The results on crop water requirements (net annual water requirement - NAWR) and total water depleted (gross annual water requirement - GAWR) and efficiencies of the individual farms for the period of two seasons 1999/2000 (dry year) and 2000/2001 (wet year) were calculated and are shown in Tables 1-3 and discussed in the subsections that follow:

Table 1: Summary of water use, efficiency and productivity 1999/2000 season

Site Name	GAWR (mm)	NAWR (mm)	kg/ha	kg/m^3	Efficiency (%)
KIF	2038	985	3333.33	0.17	**48**
KSS	1993	989	3666.67	0.18	**50**
KPSS-top	1668	1151	3666.67	0.22	**69**
KPSS-end	1789	999	3033.38	0.16	**56**

Table 2: Summary of water use, efficiency and productivity 2000/2001 season

Site Name	GAWR (mm)	NAWR (mm)	kg/ha	kg/m^3	Efficiency (%)
KIF	3010	1063	4770	0.16	**35**
KSS	2327	986	4217	0.18	**42**
KPSS-top	1722	1095	3680	0.31	**64**
KPSS-end	1730	976	4037	0.23	**56**

The results in the tables above show that there was no significant difference in net crop water requirement on the different individual farms. However the gross annual water requirement (total water depleted) differed significantly on modern and traditional farms. In the dry year (Table 1) the state farms (so called "modern systems") used a maximum annual sum of 2,038 mm, whereas the average net crop water requirement was 985 mm, giving an efficiency of about 48%. In the wet year (Table 2) however, the period when water was available in excess and competition for water was less, the modern system was depleted by a maximum of 3,010 mm and efficiency went down to 35%.

Table 2 shows a maximum recorded annual depletion by the "traditional systems" during the wet year of 1,730 mm. The calculated net water requirement was 976 mm, which resulted in an efficiency of 56%. During the dry year, more or less the same amount of water is applied. The same efficiency of 56% was obtained from a gross water use of 1,789 mm and a net paddy water requirement of 999 mm. It is worth noting however that efficiency in the traditional system can be up to nearly 70% in some fields, particularly during the dry year (Table 1).

Alternatively, the productivity resulting from the first year indicates that productivity was higher in KPSS-top (0.22 kg/m^3), while the productivity of the upstream user (KIF) was 0.17 kg/m^3 and the KSS produced 0.18 kg/m^3. On the other hand, the KPSS-end productivity was relatively lower (0.16 kg/m^3).

In the second year (Table 2) the KPSS-top maintained higher productivity than all (0.31 kg/m^3). It was followed by the KPSS-end (0.23 kg/m^3), then KSS at 0.18 kg/m^3 and KIF was the last, producing 0.16 kg/m^3.

Irrigation efficiencies and productivity as a result of water reuse (IWMI Method)

Recapping equations 5 and 6 above, the effective irrigation efficiency and productivity of the two water reuse systems were estimated. Tables 3 and 4 show the results of the KIF and KSS water reuse subsystems. It is clear from the results that the effective irrigation efficiency and productivity will increase if the individual farm efficiencies increase. This is demonstrated by Tables 3 and 4, whereby high individual farm efficiency in 1999/2000 resulted in high (93%) effective irrigation efficiency. Also, when the individual farm efficiencies went down in 2000/2001, the effective irrigation efficiency also went down to (90%). Alternatively, low individual farm productivity resulted in low effective irrigation productivity (Tables 5 and 6).

Table 3: Effective irrigation efficiency of KIF water reuse subsystem

Seasons	KIF (%)	KPSS-top (%)	KPSS-end (%)	**EIE (%)**
1999/2000	48	69	56	**93**
2000/2001	35	64	56	**90**

Table 4: Effective irrigation efficiency of KSS water reuse system

Seasons	KSS (%)	KPSS-top (%)	KPSS-end (%)	**EIE (%)**
1999/2000	50	69	56	**93**
2000/2001	42	64	56	**91**

Table 5: Effective irrigation productivity in KIF water reuse subsystem

Seasons	KIF (kg/m^3)	KPSS-top (kg/m^3)	KPSS-end (kg/m^3)	EIP (kg/m$_3$)
1999/2000	0.17	0.22	0.16	0.55
2000/2001	0.16	0.31	0.23	0.70

Table 6: Effective irrigation productivity in KSS water reuse subsystem

Seasons	KSS (kg/m^3)	KPSS-top (kg/m^3)	KPSS-end (kg/m^3)	EIP (kg/m^3)
1999/2000	0.18	0.22	0.16	0.56
2000/2001	0.18	0.31	0.23	0.72

Discussion of results

The results obtained here appeal for the high irrigation efficiency and productivity in the water reuse system. However, taking the Usangu context, several weaknesses of the IWMI method could be drawn out and if reassessed, taking into consideration key conditions which affect the efficiency and productivity of water reuse systems inspired by the Usangu example, the results could change dramatically.

Conditions inspired by the Usangu water reuse systems

In Usangu, the reuse process and efficiency and productivity are largely controlled by a range of factors such as the timing of the cropping window and water availability, swings in the market for irrigated products, and the technology of irrigation infrastructures. Irrigation efficiency and productivity in Usangu irrigation systems need to recognise delay of water from one user (upstream) to another (downstream); timing; changes in irrigated area; changes in irrigation seasons (wet and dry); changes in water availability for different years; amounts of drainage water re-used for downstream irrigators and lack of groundwater recovery/re-use.

To adequately capture the efficiency resulting in water reuse in Usangu, the above factors need to be considered. The IWMI method however, misses a considerable number of these factors and cannot thereforeaccurately be used to assess irrigation efficiency and productivity in systems and conditions inspired by the Usangu basin. Table 7 shows the nature of water reuse in Usangu against recognition of the IWMI method.

Table 7: Nature of water reuse in Usangu against recognition of the IWMI method

Nature	Usangu Context	IWMI-P Method
Water reuse	Exists	✓
Water losses	Exist	✓
Delay in reuse between users	Exists	x
Longevity of cropping season	Extended season exists	x
Management	Differs between users	x
Irrigation types	Two types exist	x

Product price fluctuations	Product prices differ between upstream and downstream users	x

Delay in reuse between users

In Usangu, the cropping window is defined as being between the end of November and the end of February. Any rice transplanting beyond this period will result in relatively low or no yield. This fact emphasises the significance of early release of drain water from upstream users to downstream users in the water reuse process in Usangu. In addition, any ponding of excess water with upstream users subjects the downstream to delay in starting their operations and thus miss the correct cropping window. Further, extended water ponding in upstream fields results in excess water evaporation which occurs much in tropical areas. Table 8 shows the delay in water reuse in Kapunga's large and small-holder water reuse systems.

Table 8: Water delays between individuals in water reuse systems in Usangu

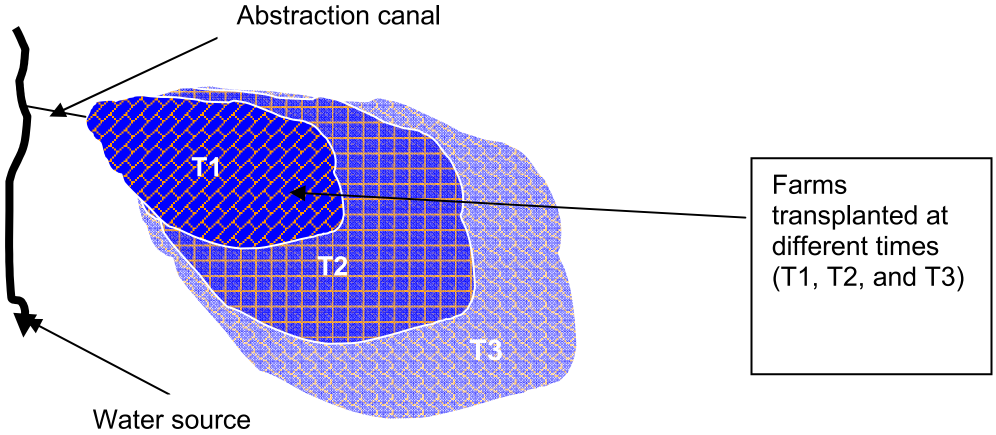
	Assessed field operations				
	Pre-saturation		Water depth	Delays to next drain user	Duration of water in field
Site	Amount (mm)	Duration in days	(mm)	(days)	(days)
KIF	665	19	121	30-60	200
KSS	205	4-6	119	5	165
KPSS	156	4	116	4	165

Longevity of cropping season

The longevity of the cropping season is a problem which is caused by a delay of water to downstream users. The delayed downstream water users will require a longer duration of water supply for their crops to mature. As recorded in the Kapunga water reuse systems, the delays were between 30-60 days, which means that the cropping season is pushed ahead for up to two months. There are two problems which emerge out of this.

The first problem is that during this time the crop will not perform well, regardless of how much water is being supplied to the crop. Crops in Usangu are temperature-sensitive and the cropping window has to be met in order to have a good yield. But again, the water losses during this time are high, since water is diverted and transported far away to irrigate late transplanted fields. There are many losses which occur on the way, especially with the field to field irrigation system of the Usangu (Figure 4). In this type of irrigation, canals are limited and water is passed on to the next field via cuts on bunds. In Figure 4, if T1 is the earliest farmer/farm to transplant/harvest and T3 is the latest farmer/farm, then, for T3 to irrigate, water will have to go via harvested farms T1 and T2. This is not covered in the IWMI method.

Figure 4: Irrigating late transplanted fields in water reuse systems



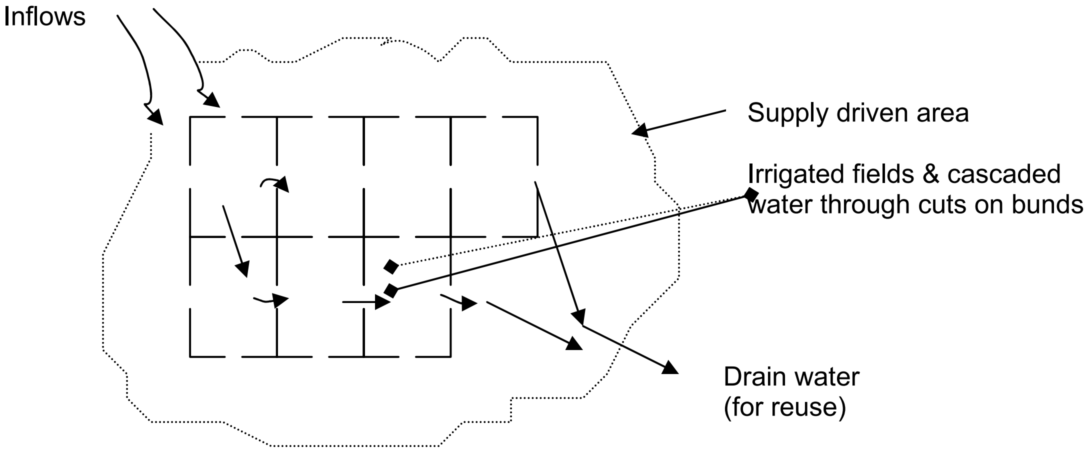
Management

The management of water differs in each of the farms/farmers in the water reuse system. This relates to water use efficiency and productivity. Farmers in the downstream are water sensitive and care about water, unlike the upstream farmers. This fact is exemplified by the results of water used, for example, for wetting up, with downstream users in the Kapunga water reuse system using 205 mm, while upstream users use 665 mm (Table 8 above). Looking at the wetting up duration of upstream users (19 days – using water as a tool to suffocate weeds) and of downstream users (4-6 days – struggling to meet the suitable cropping window), the amount spent for wetting in the two is the true reflection of the time spent.

Irrigation types

There are two types of irrigation in Usangu. The modern/improved irrigation systems are equipped with concrete intake, primary, secondary and tertiary canals to distribute water to each of the plots available in the farm. In addition, the fields are made of big bunds which are capable of withholding a sufficient amount of water over a long period. The other type is the traditional system whereby insufficient numbers of canals are made available in the field. The water is mainly distributed through cuts made on the small bunds which make up the fields in this type of irrigation. This type of irrigation is called "field-to-field" irrigation.

Figure 5: Cascading water in traditional system of irrigating "field-to-field"



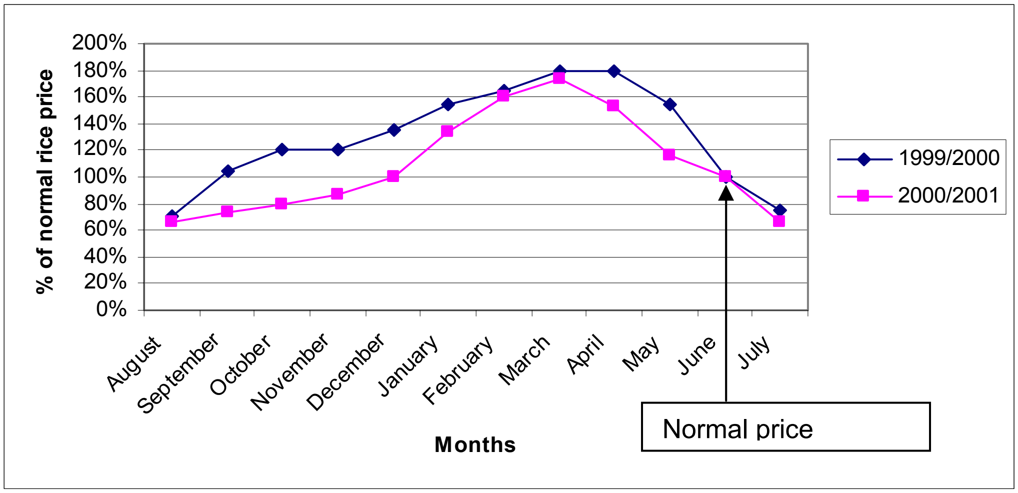
Product price fluctuation and market timing

Price fluctuations for agricultural products are a major challenge for local markets in many developing countries. Prices are always higher at the beginning of the harvesting season and lower when more farmers start to harvest in Tanzania (Kajiru *et al*., 1998). Farmers upstream who transplant early (mostly wealthier farmers) benefit from this situation as prices of rice harvested early in the season could be as much as three times higher than for that harvested later in the season (Kajiru *et al*., 1998).

Due to the difference in selling prices, the returns for upstream and drain water users in the form of $\$/m^3$ become different. There is a lower return from drain water as compared to the fresh water abstracted by upstream users. The loss is inevitably caused by an unstable market (Figure 6), but is mainly due to the delay of water from upstream users. On the other hand, production costs are the same and sometimes the inputs for downstream farmers (late transplanting) become expensive due to labour scarcity. The labour becomes expensive during this time because every farmer in the basin has water and there is a limited number of people doing paid labour. Thus, the analysis of water reuse is a complex issue, which in areas like Usangu requires consideration of product price fluctuations. Alternatively, the product price fluctuation in Usangu is very much related to/influenced by poverty as explained in the next paragraph.

Poor people who cannot secure land in the upstream in Usangu are located in the downstream and are subjected to tremendous delays to starting transplanting. They therefore always harvest late in the season as they transplant late. Their daily needs, however, directly depend on rice produce; i.e. they cannot store their yields to wait for a good price later in the season or in the next season. They start selling their produce at any available price soon after they start harvesting, which always attracts the lowest price in the season. This does not affect productivity in forms of kg/m^3 but rather affects productivity as $\$/m^3$ (cash return, which is of interest to a farmer). In other words, although productivity in terms of kg/m^3 might be higher, the same productivity analysed in terms of $\$/m^3$ becomes less. Thus, the efficiency of end users in Usangu is likely to be lower than that pictured by the IWMI method, which does not consider this factor.

Figure 6: Product price fluctuations



Conclusion

The efficiencies which arise as a result of water reuse using the IWMI method appear to be incredibly high. However, the method ignores major factors which need to be considered if anyone is to evaluate the efficiency and productivity of the Usangu irrigation systems.

This paper therefore concludes that for the IWMI methods to be applicable in Usangu, a way has to be found to assess the five factors mentioned (delay of water between users; longevity of cropping season; management; irrigation types; and product price fluctuation) which affect both efficiency and productivity.

This study further concludes that the effectiveness of water reuse in increasing both irrigation efficiency and productivity lie in the efficiency of the individual farmers executing the reuse. This is to say that the lower the efficiency of the individual farmers/farms, the lower the efficiency of the resulting water reuse and vice versa. In other words, water reuse alone, without proper management on the individual farms constituting the system cannot increase the efficiency and productivity in such systems.

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