



Women clean small fish in the Bangladesh, Ganges Basin (Finn Thilsted)

Mapping data for equity: Four Basin Gender Profiles (4BGP)

Our world is full of maps. The purview of cartography is no longer just showing the physical and political characteristics of a landscape through the creation of traditional road or geographical maps. Showcasing a specific type of information visually – be it regional accents, weather patterns, distribution of resources, or migrations of people – makes maps both incredibly useful and powerful tools for disseminating data.

Maps are defined by the specificity of information they represent. Excluding certain information is essential to having a map be useful.

Along these lines, maps can also show a disparity of available information in a way that highlights gaps in knowledge. By visualizing these gaps, one can better understand what information is still needed to make a complete picture.

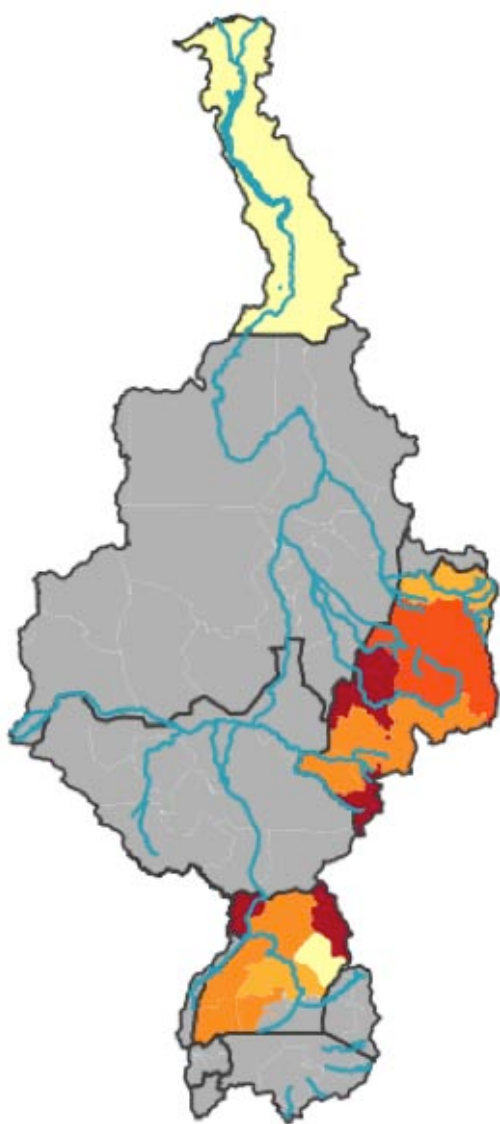
The Four Basin Gender Profiles project (4BGP) set out to try and map the kinds of information currently openly available on a range of topics related to water management and agriculture in four river basins: the Ganges, Nile, Volta and Mekong. Specifically, the project set out to collect open-source district-level gender-disaggregated data from 13 countries (Nepal, India, and Bangladesh in the Ganges; Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, Vietnam, and Myanmar in the Mekong; Ethiopia, Egypt, and Uganda in the Nile; and Ghana and Burkina Faso in the Volta) on topics such as population distribution, malnutrition and sanitation.

The 4BGP then mapped this data geo-spatially in order to show information that was currently available, and strikingly, to show what was still missing.

Surprises when mapping gender

Initially, the project aimed to provide an evidence base for further analysis of extant gender disparities in these riparian countries and to develop new development opportunities. In so doing, the team hoped to support work towards better gender equity in these countries and provide decision makers and development professionals with a more complete picture of how men and women access and use resources.

Knowing that major data unevenness exists – in ease of access as well as absolute availability – is already a significant finding. This unevenness shows that there are huge gaps in knowledge that can be filled by further research. Even asking why information is missing in some of these areas is a research question unto itself.



4BGP map of the Nile basin showing infant mortality rates

Duty of data

Alan Nicol, lead on the Governance, Gender and Poverty research theme at the International Water Management Institute (IWMI), calls this the ‘duty of data.’

“Gender equality and inclusive growth are only becoming more central as development imperatives,” Nicol says. “At the same time, the world is turning to ‘big data’ to support development and global growth. By working to profile gender under this project, we were able to really highlight how different information availability is in these basins, just by working to visualize it. We learned how difficult it is to compare and contrast, even between countries within a basin, which also adds a level of complexity to assessing what impact is possible when trying to get decision makers to plan at basin scale.”

“Ultimately, the experience of visualizing gender data has allowed us to plan for how WLE can improve equity in the future, which is our mandate,” said Nicol. “By mapping, we were able to gauge the state of knowledge in these basins and look forward to what needs to happen in order to bring about real change.”

Moving forward

IWMI researchers in India have already endorsed the use of the Ganges map for research purposes, pointing out that having a source where data is consolidated makes it easy to see what kind of information is already available. In addition, while most projects would want to go into more detail than the maps provide, having a basic idea of data distribution and gender indicators makes easier determining what topics, locations, and research questions to focus on.

In future, the project will combine the data maps with explanatory narratives on how to use them as well as key case studies that are location specific and help to provide ground-level perspectives on connections between data, gender and development. In this way, policy makers, NGOs and researchers who are interested in specific sets of information or analysis of extant data are able to delve deeper into meanings and interpretations of

existing data and be more effective decision makers as a result. With more widespread uptake and stakeholder involvement, the goal is to support better decisions and investments, namely ones that will lead to better gender equity and poverty alleviation.

4BGP now plans to narrow down work to the Volta and Nile basins. This will enable concentration of effort and greater exploration at ground-level of data and development relationships, ways of exploring 'big data' use, potential 'crowd-sourcing approaches' and links to key institutions working at

a basin level. Expert roundtables are being held on these next steps in the Nile basin.

In the upcoming Global Landscapes Forum (GLF) Alan Nicol will be leading a youth initiative on landscape restoration, which will ask young innovators to build on the 4BGP project and define tools for socio-economic and environmental data development and use in order to enhance vital land restoration processes in the Nile and Volta. The results of this session will be considered in the future development of the project.



Cucumber farmer in Ghana, Nile Basin (Nana Kofi Acquah/IWMI)

The CGIAR Research Program on Water, Land and Ecosystems (WLE) combines the resources of 11 CGIAR centers, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and numerous national, regional and international partners to provide an integrated approach to natural resource management research. WLE promotes a new approach to sustainable intensification in which a healthy functioning ecosystem is seen as a prerequisite to agricultural development, resilience of food systems and human well-being. This program is led by the International Water Management Institute (IWMI), a member of the CGIAR Consortium, and is supported by CGIAR, a global research partnership for a food-secure future. wle.cgiar.org

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