



Competing for Water

Conflict and Cooperation in Local Water Governance

1.

Competition for water is intensifying due to:

- new users (tourism, bio-fuels, vegetable exports, etc.)
- changing use patterns (changing diets, improved housing standards etc.)
- more users
- climate change, affecting the availability of water

2.

Although often global in nature, much of this competition de facto plays out at the local level, i.e. in the numerous districts and villages around the world. Yet, little is known about the nature and extent of the conflicts and cooperation resulting from this competition for water, and their impacts for the poor.

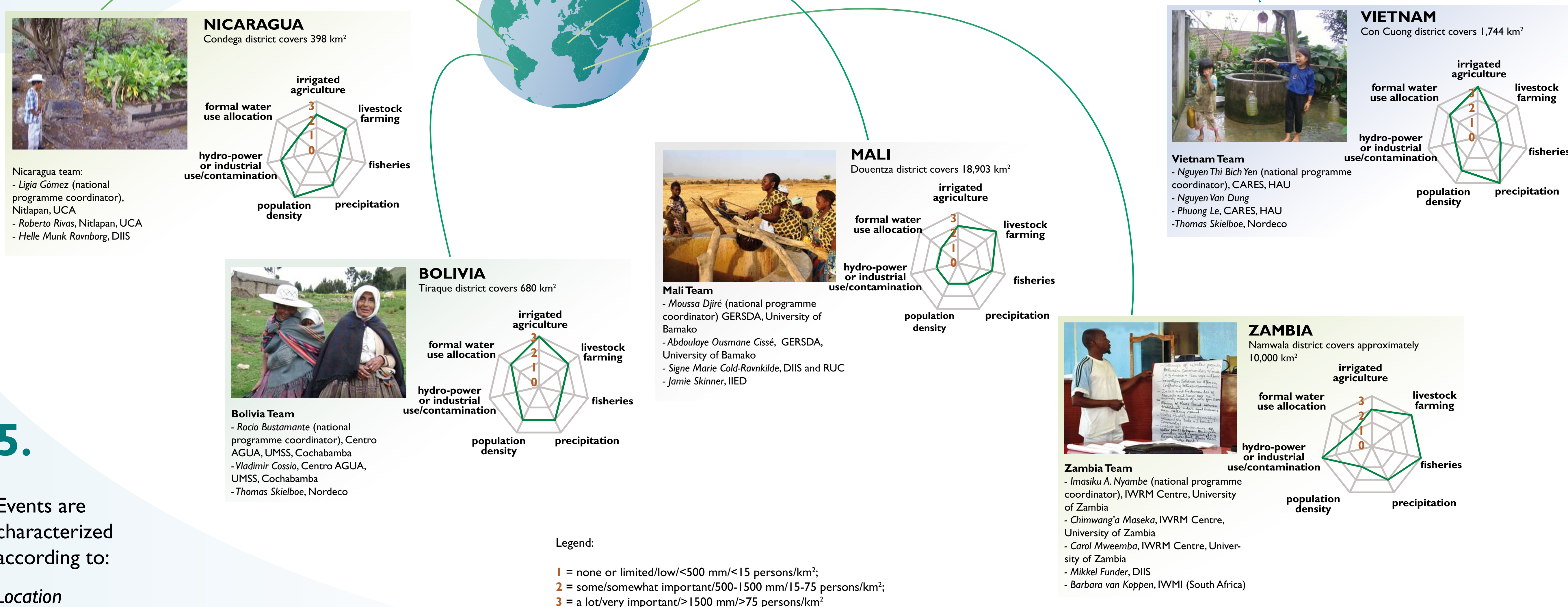
3.

By 'putting our ears to the ground', the Competing for Water programme has as one of its principal objectives to develop inventories of water-related conflictive and cooperative water events having occurred since 1998 in five highly different districts. See figure below.

4.

Inventories of water-related conflict and cooperation having occurred between 1998 and 2007 are being developed so that they for each district will contain:

- all events reported to institutions outside the location of the event
- all events having occurred in 10 selected villages irrespective of whether they have been reported outside the location of the event.



5.

Events are characterized according to:

- Location**
- Geographical location
 - Hydrological location

Users, uses, issue timing and action

- User and uses involved in the event
- Issue (e.g. quantity, quality, privatization, infrastructure, etc.)
- Direct parties to the event
- Timing
- Actions taken
- Character

Water source

- Type of water source involved in event
- Water availability

Third party involvement

- Type of third party involved
- Process of third party involvement

Magnitude

- Number of people involved in event
- Relative involvement of women and men
- Number of people affected by event
- Relative importance of women viz-à-viz men as affected party

Intensity and outcome

- Intensity of event
- Winners and losers

Information sources

- Sources of information for the event

6.

Initial results – see figure below – Condega, Nicaragua and Con Cuong, Vietnam – suggest among other things that

- the events identified to date are almost equally distributed among cooperative and conflictive events;
- a significant part of water-related conflict and cooperation in the two districts take place within a single community;
- the extent to which third parties (local or external) are involved does not appear to be correlated with the geographic scale of the event.

7.

Such insights provide useful inputs to thinking about the architecture of water governance. They suggest that although water undoubtedly flows within hydrological units, much competition takes place locally within a single or a couple of communities. Policy-driven efforts to strengthen water governance must include options that strengthen the ability to respond to these local competitive situations in practical and accessible ways, and not just to larger-scale competitive situations related e.g. to urban water supply, hydro-power generation or environmental protection.

