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Water marginality in rural and peri-urban communities

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Abstract

Water supply in an increasing number of rural and peri-urban communities can be described as marginal i.e. subject to failure, becoming unaffordable or increasingly difficult to access. A range of common factors contribute to water marginalisation or access bias. Firstly, communities may be poorly served by formal water infrastructure by being on the margins of urban settlements. Secondly, where water infrastructure exists, this may be prone to failure as local municipalities and water utilities with limited capacity and resources struggle to maintain a widely dispersed system. Thirdly, when local water systems fail, they are often not repaired quickly, if repaired at all. This results in people, often with very limited resources having to obtain water from far distances or having to pay someone to transport water to them in order to meet their basic water needs. Thus, where water supplies are unreliable, unaffordable and difficult to access, geography, urban settlement patterns, the choice of water distribution systems, and the management capacity result in water marginality.