

GEOG 371 Rural Water Supply and Sanitation

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Spring 2022

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Mid-term Q (4)

Write an essay about the rural water policies and management at the national level of the developing countries? Give 4 examples from peer reviewed articles.

- Water supply is critical for human survival, socio-economic development and environmental conservation.
- However, with the problems of water scarcity, increasing world population, climate change, water mismanagement, as well as increase of environmental degradation, the demand for safe water has been increased especially in the rural areas of the developing countries.
- Absence and inappropriate water policies at the national level are responsible to a large extent for water scarcity and poor management of water resources.
- Failure to understand and incorporate the different factors related to water use and management have resulted in the failure of the past water policies and management.
- In some parts of Asia and Africa **over exploitation** and over pumping of ground water have resulted in the **falling of water tables** and drying up of wells and boreholes.
- Policies for water and related matters had been planned in international conferences held by international organizations and applied at local levels by national governments.

Rural water policy at the national level

- National governments were responsible for providing water to the people.
- They took advantage of the technical revolution and hundreds of thousands of boreholes were easily drilled.
- Availability of water enhanced settlement, reduced the time spent in drawing water; but increased water related diseases.
- However, for a long period of time, **water considered as a low priority by governments**. This is a political and not an ethical decision.
- Governments failed to provide water for rural areas of the developing countries.
- This is because governments applied a **policy of top-down** approach and it failed.
- In addition, for a long period of time, **rural water is considered a low priority by governments**,
- As a result, **rural water has been underfunded** and receives about 10% of the needed fund to provide a satisfactory level of service.
- Because of the failure of top-down approach academicians and planners look for alternative.
- They suggest bottom-up approach.
- This is based on the **self- help approach** (Bottom-up) which has been practiced successfully by the rural communities of the developing countries
- It has been suggested another approach for the provision of rural water supply which is programs of rural water supply should be part of an **integrated rural development plan** that provides all social services such as education and health services in an equal basis.
- Another problem is that rural water, urban water and irrigation are administered by different units which causes fragmentation that hinders provision of water to users in an efficient and a timely manner.
- It became clear in the 1980s that top-down approach and centralized water policies have failed.
- Since 1980s, a shift of government policies took place from centralization to **decentralization** of providing rural water supply.
- This approach goes in line with the shift for technical/ top-down to social/ bottom-up approach which gives local people more freedom of dealing with water supply.
- This policy allowed communities to be involved in planning and administration of the rural water supply.
- This is a kind of a **participatory approach** which is considered more successful and sustainable in providing rural water supply.