

THE REVIEW OF WATER MANAGEMENT IN AFRICA

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Attitudes to water resource management in both developed and developing world have undergone major reversals in the twentieth century. In the first half of the century, the construction of water wells and boreholes, although apparently justifiable economically, was also seen as something of a challenge in engineering terms, nature was subdued and human prosperity resulted. It is crucial to understand both actual water control projects and the basis for decisions in water resource management in Africa that will affect people's lives in the future.

In view of this, globally, almost 1.9 million children die each year from diarrheal diseases caused by unsafe drinking water, inadequate sanitation facilities and poor hygiene each year. It is the second largest cause of child mortality, after respiratory infections, accounting for 15 percent of child deaths globally, and 18 percent of child deaths in the poorest countries. Chronic diarrhea in early childhood contributes to decreased food intake and nutrient absorption, malnutrition, reduced resistance to infection, and impaired physical growth and cognitive development, with long-term consequences for educational attainment and income.

This research is being focused on the management of water in Africa. Taking Africa as our case study helps us and the world to know how we have been losing life and how also we can save life.

Water reforms in Southern Africa in general and in Zimbabwe in particular constitute a relevant site to examine the strengths and weaknesses of political ecology. Water management, policies and reform reflect a combination of historical ideas and practices grafted onto the new global strategy for converting water from a free public good to an economic one.

In the emergent global discourses, and particularly in the public sphere, in contrast to professional and scientific ones, equal attention is paid to the essential nature of water for all life and to water as an economic good. The complex interplay surrounding this essential "natural" resource lends itself to political ecological analyses. Environmental anthropologists must necessarily start from observations of ecological change. One of the strengths of political ecology is its focus on the mutual constitution of social and environmental change. In our research, we have begun by focusing on the social, political and policy dimensions of the water reform process, with the goal of examining the social and environmental consequences of such changes, if indeed any result from the reforms.

Only 4 per cent of the continent's available fresh water is currently being used. With the new Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), and through their support for the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which were adopted by world leaders in 2000. The seventh MDG is to cut in half, by 2015, the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation. In sub-Saharan Africa, that proportion was reduced from 52 per cent to 44 per cent between 1990 and 2004. But the target, 26 per cent, still remains very distant.

Few countries in Africa now can pose of new water like Senegal, Gabon, Uganda and South Africa, are significantly increasing the number of new water connections in the continent. Access to water looks different in every country. It could mean pipes into homes, or a well, 30 minutes away. It is no longer news about what is happening in Niger Delta area of Nigeria scoop oil to have water for survival this was cause by the technical and equipment failure that led to crude oil spillages with environmental degradation and pollution.

But no matter the standards set by a country, access to clean drinking water and proper sanitation are crucial human rights, because without these, people are forced to rely on unsafe sources for water, which highly increases the risk for preventable, communicable diseases. As a result of inadequate resources, families are stuck in a cycle of ill health and poverty, which affect children most severely. The UN has deemed this crisis the "silent emergency" because unsafe water supply, lack of proper sanitation and improper hygiene are the cause of over 3.5 million deaths a year, and 84% of those deaths are children. We also have to take a look towards the water crisis in Kenya where only 9 out of 55 water service providers supplies water continuously under 14 hours on average in 55 water utilities. Lack of improved sanitation has caused unsafe drinking water, in the urban an additional 51% of the population used latrines while in the rural areas open defecation was estimated to be practiced by 18% of the population which pose danger to the management of the water.

Furthermore, a new technology, the dispenser, is designed to fill this gap and provide a sponsored water treatment solution for use in poor areas where take-up of water treatment products is low and where the water borne illness burden is severe. Africa is a developing continent with a low technology, so in order to save life and to manage water they resolve to the water dispenser treatment.

The dispenser system includes a simple, low-cost water treatment technology that has achieved remarkable and sustained use in Kenya. The innovative dispenser is filled with dilute chlorine and placed near a communal water source, allowing individual users to treat their water with the correct dose of chlorine in their jerricans after it has been collected from the source.

The future of water management in Africa seems to depend as much on the internal and international politics of Africa as upon objective development planning. If the ecological lobby gains the upper hand in the most senior echelons of the administration, and if their influence outlasts the transition to civilian power, then the wetlands and their associated productive systems may be saved.