

The challenges of providing fresh water supply in rural Swaziland: A case study of Nhlambeni

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Abstract

Adequate water supply is an entry point to sustainable development and demand for fresh water supply has tremendously increased globally and this has led to the current water crisis faced by many countries. The crisis can be defined as (a) lack of access to fresh, safe and affordable water supply, (b) the scarcity of water supply, and (c) the increasing world population which increases the water demand. Many households especially in rural communities are facing these challenges and it seems to be more pronounced in the developing countries such as Swaziland.

The main objective of the study was to provide an analysis of the challenges faced by communities in providing fresh water at household level. The study was conducted at Nhlambeni area, a rural community in central Swaziland. A household survey questionnaire was administered to a sample of 49.2% randomly selected from the area to solicit the information on; the household water situation, sources and use, distances to water sources, challenges faced in water provision and challenges faced in fresh water supply on the people's livelihoods. The results of this study showed that the majority of the people lack a supply of fresh water. As a result most of them entirely depend on unsafe water sources which are far from their households such as rivers, streams and open public wells. The demands of water supply are high too.

The study concludes that the current water supply situation is risky since water with a higher possibility of contamination is used untreated even for drinking. It is recommended that as long as there are no agencies to provide a supply of fresh water to communities, affordable methods for water treatment such as boiling can be practiced.

Key words: Challenges, Fresh water, Water supply, Water provision, Water sources, Water situation