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Water Supply Situation in Benin, West-Africa

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Abstract

The presently sufficient average quantity of 4.220 m³ of sweet water per person and year in Benin indicates that the unsatisfactory access to safe drinking water must be caused by other factors than climatic and hydrologic conditions. On the other hand water demand has increased due to the growing population and higher standards of living, leading to more competition and conflicts between the consumers. The survey of water consumption, socio-economic and socio-demographic data as well as the amount of water supply facilities and management problems stand in the centre of these investigations.

The results indicate that Benin has regional and temporal differing water stress situations, which are mainly caused by missing technical and financial means as well as hydro-geological conditions. Additionally the inaccurately defined administrative structures and competencies obstruct the organisation and efficiency of the water supply in Benin.

Although the results of the local investigations show times for water fetching of six hours per day and household in the dry season, the water scarcity is for nearly 95 % of the interviewed persons not a reason for migration. Family relations and possession of farming land have a higher value in this aspect. It is shown however that the enormously time-consuming water fetching needs one complete worker alone for the water supply in the dry season, so that the economic efficiency of each household is immensely weakened. The readiness to pay for a better water supply is particularly given in the dry season. In the rainy season the people often use natural water sources such as “marigots”, which have a doubtful water quality. The mainly used water supply facility is the well. Its acceptance is far higher than this of a pump. Even households with a private tap and a safe water supply all year have a high affinity to use water out of wells. Personal preferences, social contacts and the taste of water are still a very important factors for the selection of the used water source. This should be taken into account for the national water supply strategy and for the work of NGOs.

Keywords: Benin, water availability, water consumption, water demand