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## Exploring Interactions between Water Resource Depletion and Remittances from Labour Migration: The Case of Kerala

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### Abstract

For agricultural productivity water is one of the most important factors. Approximately one-third of the world's population lives in countries facing medium to high water stress. Water shortages as well as the deteriorating quality of water are among the paramount natural resource problems faced in the 21<sup>st</sup> century on a global level, with frightening prospects. The paper takes on the issue by investigating the impact of migrant worker remittances on water resources. We assume that families invest remittances received by migrants in irrigation facilities and so contribute to enhanced water consumption, which lead to increased water resource depletion.

There is indeed preliminary evidence that the investments of remittances promote increased water consumption in rural areas via changing investments in water exploiting facilities. Therefore, our research area Kerala (India) is a striking example. Kerala is considered as water-rich state. However, the people in some parts of the State are suffering from severe water shortage during the dry months of the year (*i.e.* five months per annum). The paper presents the results of a Delphi survey among water and agriculture experts from government institutions, NGOs and research institutions in Kerala. Results confirm our assumption that remittances contribute to higher water consumption for agricultural purposes and this has a potential to intensify water stress. The impact of remittances as a tool to reduce poverty and to increase economic development is widely accepted. However, the research project shows that negative impacts of remittances have to take into account. The findings can help the government as well as, national and international agencies to adequately respond to socio-economic and environmental challenges from the use of remittances, seizing the respective opportunities while preventing avoidable harm.

**Keywords:** Kerala, remittances, water resource depletion