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Designation :

Title : Significance of Informal Water Market in Balancing the Demand – Supply Scenario

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Water is vital for life. Humans depend on it for drinking and domestic purposes. Water serves an essential component of economic development and poverty alleviation programmes. In recent decades India has witnessed rapid growth in demand for water, particularly in domestic and industrial sectors due to population growth, urbanization, industrialization and rising income. In countries like India, almost the entirety of the easily possible and economically viable irrigation water potential has already been developed, but the demand for water towards different sectors has been growing continuously.

This growth in demand has not been matched by the supply. This problem is compounded by environmental pollution of water, which has reduced its suitability for various uses. Water markets have been considered as one of the coping mechanisms for managing water scarcity and reallocation of water from surplus to scarcity regions. Therefore the study of an water market, its function and its role in water resource management becomes important. The aim of this research is to understand the reason behind the emergence of informal water market by analysing the demand scenario, to study the supply scenario for sustainability of groundwater and to evolve guidelines for the sustainability of water market. For this study Thoraipakkam, a peri-urban village in south Chennai was chosen. Here water supply is given by the village Panchayat. A survey has been conducted among different sectors of water users to find out the consumption quantity and patterns. Samples for the survey need to be selected randomly. For each sector, a separate questionnaire has been used. In doing so, some background information on the complexities prevailing in the Panchayat water supply has been collected as the secondary data. Methodology for the study has been formulated. Data has been analyzed using the SPSS package / software to meet the objectives of the study.

The indepth analysis revealed that the groundwater in this area is found to be highly saline in nature. Therefore the people depend on the private tanker water supply to meet out their demand since the public water supply system is not available for them due to specific reasons and constraints. Consumers are willing to buy tanker water because of the promptness shown in service rendered. Also people opined that the quality of private water is found to be good.

The present water market in south Chennai area is functioning in an informal way. Formal regulatory mechanism may be introduced to protect the sustainability of water market till the public water system falls in place. For this some guidelines were arrived at from key Official's interview for better functioning of water markets and sustainable groundwater. In order to achieve the integrated water resource management the 5R concept i.e. Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, Rainwater harvesting and Recharge would be the best solution concept to be followed by everyone.

In Thoraipakkam water supply given by the local body is 0.3 to 0.5 mld for a day. It is very low to meet the per capita demand. The water demand for this village is 9 mld per day in summer season and 6.5 mld per day in rainy season. The demand and supply gap is 6 to 8.5 mld for a day. It is known from the questionnaire survey that this demand-supply gap is met by the informal water market. From this we understand the significance of the informal water market in balancing the demand-supply scenario. This would give a clear idea for the government and policy makers to prioritize the issue and take an initiative towards achieving self sufficiency.