

ABSTRACT

Rural settlements have for long faced water accessibility challenges. These challenges have negatively impacted the livelihoods of the rural population in various ways. For example, a lot of time, energy and resources are spent by people in searching for water instead of them indulging in development activities. For instance, children especially girls below the age of eighteen, are forced to skip school in order to fetch water for their respective households. Agriculture and livestock keeping, which is the main source of livelihood for most rural households, is limited due to water inaccessibility especially in ASAL regions.

This study therefore, sought to evaluate the level of water accessibility in rural areas a case of Kikumini location, Makueni County. Water accessibility in this study is evaluated in terms of distance, availability and affordability. The study seeks to reveal if the major water resources and supply modes in the study area, conform to the required global and national standards of distance, availability and affordability. The study also sorts to analyse how typical rural settlement patterns affect water accessibility.

This kind of information was collected through primary and secondary data sources. Secondary data sources included all the relevant literature regarding water accessibility from a global, regional, national and finally, rural context. Primary data sources included all the information collected from the field survey ranging from household questionnaires, key informant guides, observation lists, mapping to photography.

From the data analysis, it was discovered that most households in the study area travel long distances of usually more than a kilometre to access water. According to WHO regulations on water access, this is unacceptable. Furthermore, it was also discovered that the main challenges faced in accessing water in the study area is the long distance from a reliable water source and water unavailability. The study also found out that the typical unplanned and uncontrolled settlement patterns of most rural settlements negatively impact water accessibility.

The study also offers planning recommendations to the problems and challenges discussed. The discipline of urban and regional planning sets out to increase service delivery to the population therefore a planning research study which yearns to evaluate the level of water access in rural areas would help increase service delivery in rural areas who have for long been neglected.

For the population of Kikumini location to enjoy economic growth and prosperity, there is no doubt that the water inaccessibility problem has to be tackled efficiently and effectively.

