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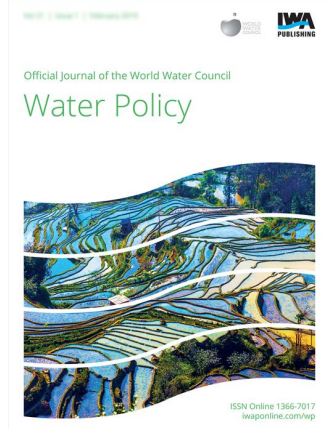
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RESEARCH ARTICLE | AUGUST 01 2009

# Urban water supply in India: status, reform options and possible lessons


David McKenzie; Isha Ray







Water Policy (2009) 11 (4): 442–460.



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Large numbers of households in cities around the developing world do not have access to one of the most basic of human needs—a safe and reliable supply of drinking water. This paper uses the experience of India as a lens through which to view the problems of access to water in urban areas and the various options available for reform. Using two sets of data from the National Family Health Survey, as well as published and unpublished secondary sources, the paper presents the status of access to drinking water in urban India, the performance of India's urban water sector compared to other Asian metropolitan regions and the reform efforts that are under way in several Indian cities. A review of these ongoing reforms illustrates some of the political economy challenges involved in reforming the water sector. Based on this analysis, we draw out directions for more effective research, data collection and policy reform. While each country faces unique challenges and opportunities, the scope and range of the Indian experience provides insights and caveats for many low-income nations.

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Urban water supply and sewage disposal is handled by the Ministry of Urban Development, while rural water supply comes under the purview of the Department of Drinking Water under the Ministry of Rural Development. The subject of hydro-electric and thermal power is the responsibility of the Ministry of Power. Flood forecasting and flood warning in India commenced in a small way in the year 1958 with the establishment of a unit in the Central Water Commission, New Delhi, for flood forecasting for the river Yamuna at Delhi. This has now grown to cover most of the flood-prone interstate river basins. The Central Water Commission is currently responsible for issuing flood forecasts at 173 stations, of which 145 are for river stage forecast and 28 for inflow forecast. Urban water supply in India: status, reform options and possible lessons, Water Policy 11:44260. Milner, M., 2009. Youth culture in a faraway place, The Hedgehog Review, Spring:6573. A hydrologic-economic modeling approach for analysis of urban water supply dynamics in Chennai, India, Water Resources Research 46:W07540. 99 Global Water: Issues and Insights. Subramanyam, M.A. and Subramaniam, S.V., 2011.