
GLOBALIZATION AND WATER MANAGEMENT: THE CHANGING VALUE OF WATER

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THE IMPACT OF GLOBALIZATION ON WATER MANAGEMENT IN SMALL ISLAND STATES: THE CASE OF JAMAICA

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ABSTRACT: Water is one of the essential survival needs of mankind. Denying its access is tantamount to denial of a basic human right. Yet, about one billion people around the world do not have access to this resource. In developing countries, especially in small island states, water assumes great importance in sustainable development. Although water is an economic resource, its availability is intrinsically related to the question of affordability by the public, at large. This paper examines the issues related to water accessibility, supply, demand, management and governance in the Caribbean Island of Jamaica.

Water resources in the Caribbean region vary from island to island. Rainfall is the sole source of water for the island of Jamaica. Reliable surface water and groundwater safe yields total 4,084 MCM (million cubic meters)/year. Island-wide water use is estimated at 916 MCM/year (22%) and the remaining 3,197 MCM/year (78%) is available for development. Present water supply amounts to 870 MCM/year or 95% of the demand. Development of major new water supply schemes are carried out by a private company, Carib Engineering Corporation Limited, while the distribution of water, maintenance works and minor water supply and sewage systems are the responsibility of National Water Commission, a public sector organization. Continued good governance is needed in making water more accessible to the general public in Jamaica and the Caribbean at large. Public and private sector efforts are required to educate the public regarding abuse of water, reuse of household wastewater and recycling of industrial wastewater.

Some strategic options are suggested which include that government in consultation with the public formulate and implement policies for proper water allocation, management and availability. The tourist industry and the industrial sector need to be implored to treat wastewater with simple available technology for general household and irrigation purposes. Strategic alliances with international organizations such as Global Water Partnership (GWP) and World Water Council (WWC) would provide appropriate research and development support as well as with policy direction.

A bipartisan committee consisting of members of the public, community leaders and private and public sector representatives would ensure proper water management resulting in free and fair distribution of water, transparency in the dealings, as well as appropriate settlement of disputes at the national level. These initiatives are expected to contribute positively towards equitable distribution and utilization of water resources in the Caribbean Island states.

KEY TERMS: Governance, Global Water Partners, Research and Development, World Water Council, Water resource, Wastewater, Water accessibility, Water management.

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