



Discussion of the concept of water ‘scarcity’ – comparative study of different management strategies

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Abstract

Water quality and availability depend mainly on socio-economic management systems. Comparing different approaches in similar stress situations (facing water ‘scarcity’) may lead to different conclusions concerning political results, in terms of technical and social solutions and respective implementation.

It is difficult to determine whether water is more or less ‘scarce’ in the physical sense¹ at a global / or regional (river-basin) scale or whether it is available but should be used better. This difference turns a supply problem into a demand problem. The resulting strategy by public decisors and stakeholder committees may change dramatically in this sense. The paper reviews some experiences of international concertation towards common use of ‘scarce’ resources and compares some good practices examples of integrative approaches in management that may be more successful in dealing with water scarcity.

Water scarcity indicators are also reviewed and it is discussed in which way the use of simple indicators like the Falkenmark Indicator, may or may not help to explain the true nature of water scarcity in different situations.

Key-words: water scarcity; water scarcity indicators; integrated water management; international river-basin management.

¹As pointed out by Frank R. Rijsberman, in **Water Scarcity: Fact or Fiction?**, published 2004, International Water Management Institute