
POVERTY, GENDER, AND
ACCESS TO ELECTRICITY AND
WATER AS A SOCIAL BENEFIT
IN THE AGE OF MODERNITY:
THE CASE OF JAMAICA.

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PRESENTATION OUTLINE

- **METHODOLOGY**
- **POVERTY AND UTILITY ACCESS**
 - **WATER**
 - **ELECTRICITY**
- **GENDER IMPLICATION**
- **POLICY IMPLICATION**
- **CONCLUSION**

METHODOLOGY

- QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE APPROACHES
- QUESTIONNAIRES, OBSERVATIONS, DESK RESEARCH, INTERVIEWS WITH POLICY PERSONNEL
- DATA ANALYSIS USING SPSS

TABLE 2: SOURCE OF WATER (percentage) – 1993 to 2004

SOURCE	'93	'94	'95	'96	'97	'98	'99	'00	'01	'02	'04
Piped water	62.3	63.0	63.4	66.8	66.1	65.7	67.6	66.6	70.9	64.5	68.2
P. stand pipe	20.0	20.0	16.5	14.9	15.1	14.2	15.3	13.2	13.1	12.1	9.5
Truck/bottle water	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	NS	1.9	1.8
Untreated river/spring/pnd	3.1	2.1	2.9	2.3	3.8	4.4	3.2	3.2	3.1	3.3	4.1
Rainwater (Tank)	11.4	11.4	13.2	12.9	11.4	13.1	10.5	11.7	11.6	15.3	7.9
Well/Other	3.1	3.2	4.1	3.1	3.5	2.6	3.5	5.4	1.3	3.0	2.3

Source: Jamaica Survey of Living Conditions (2004).

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Table 1: Reason for no access to safe/potable water

Reason	Numbers	%	Poverty %	Illegal connec.%
Unaffordability	69	54.8	5.2	4.2
No need for service	12	9.5	2.8	1.2
Hilly terrain reduces water pressure	15	11.9	3.2	0.0
No water in community	18	14.3	1.0	0.0
Others	12	9.5	1.3	1.1
Total	126	100	13.5	5.5

Table 3: Reason for no access to electricity

Reason	Number	%	Poverty %	Illegal connec.%
Unaffordability	77	55.8	6.1	2.3
No need for service	12	8.7	1.9	5.4
Distance from the power grid	21	15.2	2.4	0.0
Others	28	20.3	3.2	1.4
Total	138	100	13.6	9.1

Table 4: Source of lighting (percentage) – 1993 to 2004

Source	'93	'94	'95	'96	'97	'98	'99	'00	'01	'02	'04
Electricity	68.1	70.8	71.5	76.9	78.2	80.4	80.8	86.9	86.1	87.1	89.0
Kerosene	29.1	26.9	25.7	21.1	17.9	15.9	14.8	11.2	11.3	10.8	6.9
Other	0.2	0.7	0.5	0.8	0.6	0.4	0.5	0.7	0.8	0.6	1.3
None	2.6	2.4	2.3	1.3	3.3	3.3	4.0	1.2	1.7	1.4	2.8

Source: Jamaica Survey of Living Conditions (2004)

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GENDER IMPLICATION

- **EDUCATION:** Girls go to school & boys stay home carry wood and water for household purposes. In some societies this is the reverse. Also, women spent so much time gathering wood & carrying water, hence not enough time spent with children for school work.
- **HEALTH:** Women carry firewood for cooking and lighting in the absence of electricity. Smoke affects women & children's eyes. Incompletely burnt particulates from indoor fires, and pollutants (carbon monoxide, benzene, formaldehyde) cause respiratory infection, lung disease, cancer.*
- Heavy weight of carrying firewood and pan of water affects women's health.*

*Approx 2 million deaths worldwide each year because of indoor air pollution from cooking fires. (Karlsson, *et al* (2001) In a UNDP Report).

GENDER IMPLICATION contd.....

- **CONVENIENCE:** More practical for men to bath nude at river than women. In addition, the gathering of fuel wood causes deforestation, hence women will have to travel farther for more wood.

POLICY IMPLICATION

- Controversial decision – government privatize utility industry for the benefit of efficiency but ignore social objectives in the bargaining process.
- Government's commitment - (i) Maximize the use of scare resources of the state through the integration of distinctive competencies; (ii) sound regulatory governance/content resulting in the mathematical turning point of efficiency into utility poverty, inequity, environmental degradation, and a utilitarian approach.
- Distinguish between ownership and control of the utility enterprise.
- Politics: Self-interest/self-seeking behaviour.

CONCLUSION

This paper goes beyond the usual World Bank and Marxian perspectives of poverty (food consumption, education), and instead looks at utility. Poverty does not mean a lack of utility access. There were respondents who had access and were of poverty status and visa versa. There were also respondents who lacked access because of their ethos that it is the Government's sole responsibility to make utility provision, hence illegal connection.

In some cases, a lack of access was because of damage to NWC's and JPSCo's infrastructure by consumers.

Inadequate access of electricity and water affects women and children more than men.

Utility poverty cannot be eradicated as it is not economically viable to make provision for ALL – because of illegal connections; damage to infrastructure by consumers; the sector's priority of profit over social welfare development (especially if privatized).

CONCLUSION CONTD.

The essence of this paper therefore is that efficient utility access through modern forms of energy hinges on the tenets of modernity. This means therefore, that gender equity should be maximized; the burden of poverty should be eased (significantly reducing the use of fuel wood and the consumption of untreated water); the physical transporting of water on one's head from far distances should be minimized; and the environment should be sustained and not be degraded by utility projects.

Therefore, because the provision of electricity and water as public goods and social benefits are by nature natural monopolies, access and affordability are imperative.