

II.A.1. Environmental Implications of Drinking Water Supply in Rural Tamil Nadu

M. Ravichandran

Reader, Bharathidasan University, Tiruchirapalli - 620 024

This paper highlights the results of the study conducted during 1996-97 in Vadagadu revenue village of Pudukkottai District in Tamil Nadu with a focus on economic issues in the backdrop of environmental problems associated with drinking water supply.

Ground water source remained a major source of drinking water for more than 90 per cent of the respondents. Hardly 4 percent of the respondents managed to get 40 Jpcd as per the prescribed norm, while the bulk of the rest consumed less than that. Inverse relationship between size of household and per capita consumption was found. In regard to distance travelled to fetch water, the dwellers were to move a maximum of one kilometre from their residence to the water point. Increased participation of men in fetching water with help of bicycles was observed. Interestingly, the outcome of the contingent valuation method established a positive relationship between willingness to pay for getting additional water supply and the family size, monthly income and per capita consumption. But showed a negative relationship with the distance travelled by the respondents to fetch drinking water. More than 50 per cent of the respondents were ready to pay the water tax to the local bodies in order to strengthen the financial position and to have better water service. Environmental quality of water was poor due to inefficient upkeep of the overhead tanks. Continuous power supply is necessary for uninterrupted water supply. But seldom the power supply is regular in rural areas and more so in the study area.

The study concludes by reiterating the fact that all the approaches, be they schemes or missions have not fully achieved the set targets of providing adequate safe drinking water. Notwithstanding the fact domestic water supply constitutes hardly 5 per cent of the total requirements as the rest goes for industries and irrigation purposes. This study suggests that case by case study is warranted to come out with meaningful solutions towards farming better rural water policies.