

ABSTRACT

Global transformations are having a marked impact on cities in developing nations. Growing urban populations are increasingly polarised, not just in terms of income but also in terms of access to basic services such as water and sanitation. Access to such basic services is fundamental to the achievement of poverty reduction.

Although little is known about socio-spatial inequality in developing nation cities, international institutions have been advocating for privatisation of state enterprises normally charged with providing basic services. However, before such policy recommendations can be readily taken on board there is need for a clear understanding of urban socio-spatial inequality in access to water and sanitation services and the role of the state or private entities in exacerbating inequality in the local context.

Therefore, this project seeks to explore at a macro level, the degree of socio-spatial inequality in the Capital Region of Trinidad as it relates to the provision of water and sanitation services. Furthermore, it not only attempts to examine the role of the state in creating inequalities in service provision in the Capital Region but if under privatisation such inequalities may be perpetuated.

Primary data for the case studies came from a systematically stratified drawn sample of 197 households (an even mix of both upper income and lower income). A standardised questionnaire facilitated the testing of access, affordability, quantity, quality and reliability of service, as well as improvements residents consider priority to their quality of life. Combinations of both

quantitative and qualitative data are drawn from questionnaires, interviews and secondary sources of data.

Among the most important findings is that affluence enables households to mitigate against disruptions in service provision. The poorest of the poor pay a higher percentage of their income on water rates and are the least able to provide safety measures such as tanks and pumps although household sizes in this group is considerably higher than the upper income and other low income households. These absolutely poor households seemingly accept the quality of water they receive either through lack of education, or inability to afford solutions.

As a result it is recommended that municipal water management issues be addressed comprehensively according to the following guiding principles:

PRINCIPLE ONE: Further development of a sound and comprehensive database. Socio – Spatial inequalities can only be addresses if decision-making regarding investment location choices are based on sufficiently informed spatial analysis, which are sensitive to the predicament of the poor.

PRINCIPLE TWO: The recognition of the importance of political and cultural characteristics of the municipality.

The political characteristics of a municipality can sometimes be a single most important variable for determining the extensiveness of polarization regarding service delivery. In addition, the cultural characteristics can influence whether or not certain technological solutions applied are affordable or even embraced.

PRINCIPLE THREE: Utilisation of a multiple level approach to addressing socio-spatial inequalities.

Water and wastewater provision is clearly everybody's business. There are multiple agencies involved in management of the resource and if sustainability is a goal, multiple participants are required - not just private sector involvement. There needs to be public involvement in management.

PRINCIPLE FOUR: Development of an appropriate Partnership Arrangement

Privatisation is increasingly being seen as the private twin to public failures. However, none can dispute that there needs to be major transformation in service delivery. It is therefore critical that alternative ownership structures be developed.

PRINCIPLE FIVE: Planning as a tool for reducing inequalities.

Development planning is critical in avoiding the creation of inequalities in that through this means one can determine where would be the most suitable locations for creating new developments

Understandably, there are important aspects of service delivery that this particular research did not delve into and as such it is recommended that there be further research in these areas: The impact of the transformation on middle-income communities; The impact on women headed households as this segment of the population is rapidly growing in developing countries and appropriate framework for stakeholder involvement.

Keywords:

Socio – Spatial inequalities, Water and Sewerage Service provisioning,
Privatisation of Water, Urban Water Issues, and Poverty and Urban Infrastructure.