

Universal access to water and sanitation services in vulnerable areas: the role of policies, institutions, and regulation

Summary

Access to water and sanitation services (WSS) in developing countries is limited by conditions of social inequality of the vulnerable families. Therefore, public policies related to WSS need to be expanded given the challenge of reaching all population, especially the most vulnerable, in order to achieve a balance between the social and financial objectives of the WSS.

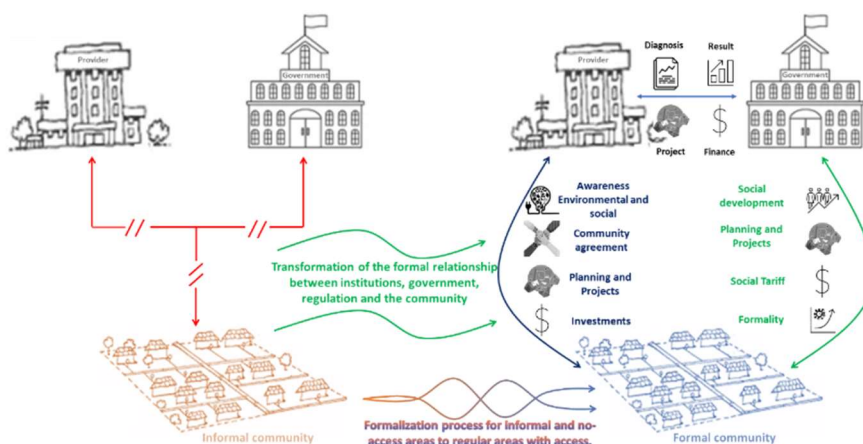
This thesis will contribute to an understanding of the main policies concerning WSS provision access with a focus on the Brazilian case study. The discussion carried out and the different experiences analyzed provided some interesting lessons about universal access in vulnerable areas. Current indirect and crosssubsidy policies are important, but the practices needed to expand pro-poor access require direct demand-side subsidies. More proactive intervention through public authorities is also needed. In this context, it is urgent to establish public policies that expand economic access to these services, so that they are more comprehensive and encompass the entire population, ensuring a balance between social and financial objectives. Contributions to a better understanding of WSS provision in vulnerable areas and the difficulty in achieving universal access are provided using Brazil as a case study. The role of regulation to universalize access in vulnerable areas is discussed, noting that in many cases the government must resume its role and be more effective, especially more proactive, so that universalization is achieved.

Despite the efforts of several governments and different reforms in the water sector, Brazil continues to face significant difficulties in achieving universal access and will have a long way to go to reach this goal, in large part due to the barriers to universal access caused by the lack of alignment between policy, institutions and regulation (PIR), where one of the main causes of failure is isomorphic mimicry. Only better alignment of the PIR can provide adequate incentives for universal access to WSS to be sustainable for poor households.

Good practices are highlighted in Brazil, in the states of São Paulo (informal area) and Ceará (rural area) where specific programs have been developed and have the effective participation of customers, operators, governments and regulatory bodies. The challenges to universalizing access to WSS in vulnerable areas must overcome the barriers imposed by adequate incentives, to integrate public policies, institutions and regulations to recognize the population in vulnerable areas, in order to promote the expansion of access, through well-designed contracts, with greater legal certainty, to integrate social participation since the planning phase.

Keywords

Universal access, public policy, regulation, vulnerable areas, incentives.



Regularization process of WSS in informal communities.



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