

Abstract

Kachchh is currently facing acute water scarcity. However water scarcity is not a recent occurrence here. Civilization has survived in this area, for many millennia, despite its characteristically low rainfall, high rates of evaporation, undulating topography and inherently saline land. There are natural limitations to Kachchh's water endowment that date back to the geological formation of the land. However, over time, the inhabitants of Kachchh learnt to live with these natural limitations and developed various indigenous methods of rainwater-based systems to capture this valuable and necessary resource. The recent past has yielded a decline in the traditional systems of water supply. The characteristics that rendered the traditional systems both suitable and sustainable have been forsaken for the convenience of a new centralized pipelined water supply. This "modernization" has exacerbated the water problem in Kachchh, raising issues of long-term sustainability. The centralization of water supply has led to changes in the pattern of use (greatly increasing it), and a dependency on the government. The pipeline system though convenient is not without its own share of problems in ensuring a reliable and sufficient supply to the area. This paper argues that the disregard for time-tested and honed sources of water supply, and the inability of a community to provide from within will have long-term negative implications which need to be addressed immediately. The modern system, even with inputs from other basins, will not be able to satiate the growing demands for this scarce and essential resource. Finally, it discusses potential solutions to the identified issues with the present system of water supply in Kachchh.