



Peri-urban Water Security

An Agenda for Water Governance

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Water governance needs to mainstream peri-urban water security. As cities grow, policy makers and planners focus on meeting the needs of urban populations. This happens at the expense of the peri-urban and the rural. For instance, it is very common to divert physical flows of water from villages to cities. Another common practice is the acquiring of rural land

and water sources to meet the requirements of urban expansion. These compromise water and livelihood security of peri-urban communities. The evident bias in urban planning requires urgent correction. Our research recommends an in-depth understanding of the inter-relationship between rural and urban water flows and their integration in planning and management.

the peri-urban

Peri-urban is a social space characterized by changes in land use, and social and economic heterogeneity. The term refers to rural-urban transformations, flows, and relationships. Since place-based definitions of peri-urban pose problems, peri-urban is better understood in terms of its features, and processes. These include changing land use patterns, diversity of economic interests, social heterogeneity, and increasing stress on natural resources. Engaging with the peri-urban entails understanding contestations over resources and interrogating institutional vacuum.

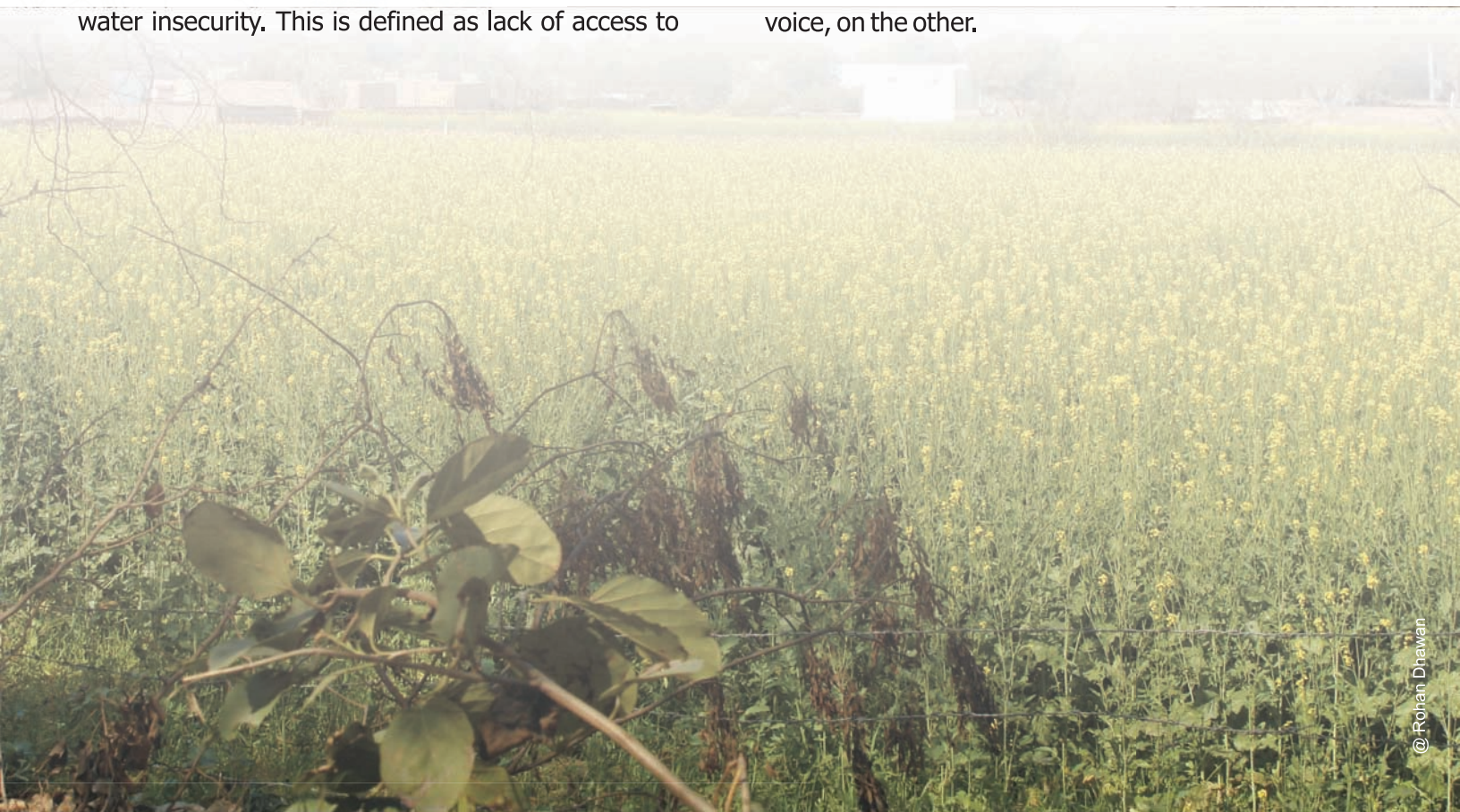
One among the main concerns of peri-urban areas is water insecurity. This is defined as lack of access to

adequate quality and quantity of water. In peri-urban contexts, land use change and economic diversification create new demands for water. Water steadily moves out from rural and agricultural uses to meet the demands of industry, recreation, and urban

habitat centres. These generate water insecurity in peri-urban sites and communities.

Thus, water governance is a critical intervention for the peri-urban. By water governance we mean the

exercise of control and authority in the allocation of water resources. Peri-urban water insecurity is intrinsically tied to the security of land tenure on the one hand and to questions of control, authority, and voice, on the other.



key research findings

Our comparative research in South Asia indicates that the expanding ecological footprint of the city compromises the water and livelihood security of peri-urban populations. The four South Asian case studies (Gurgaon, Hyderabad, Khulna and Kathmandu) show that urbanization has caused water to be re-appropriated and diverted from rural to urban uses.



Hyderabad: India



Kathmandu: Nepal

In Hyderabad and Kathmandu, water tankers carrying water from the villages to the cities have compromised the water security of peri-urban populations .

In Gurgaon and Hyderabad, common property land and water resources have been acquired, filled up, and encroached upon to meet the needs of urban populations.

In Hyderabad, the drying up of the Raviryala Lake, adjacent to the Raviryala village has adversely impacted livelihoods of peri-urban populations such as washer folk communities.



Washer-folk in Hyderabad: India

In Gurgaon, growing pressures on groundwater resources from competing urban claimants, have placed water resources out of the reach of small and marginal farmers. Unable to afford the high costs of water extraction, farmers

have been compelled to leave their land fallow. In Khulna, the dumping of urban and industrial wastes and mixing of wastewater has led to water insecurity for peri-urban residents. In all locations investigated, conflicts between different categories of users are also evident.

From the perspective of governance, degradation of water sources and competing claims arise because of the fragmentation of rural development and urban planning. The needs of peri-urban communities slip out of both urban and rural plans. Since rural and urban water supplies are seen as distinct conceptual and governance domains, peri-urban issues remain unaddressed. Policies and governance do not factor the consequences of urban expansion for peripheral areas. Furthermore, frameworks for dialogue and conflict resolution between rural and urban areas are absent.

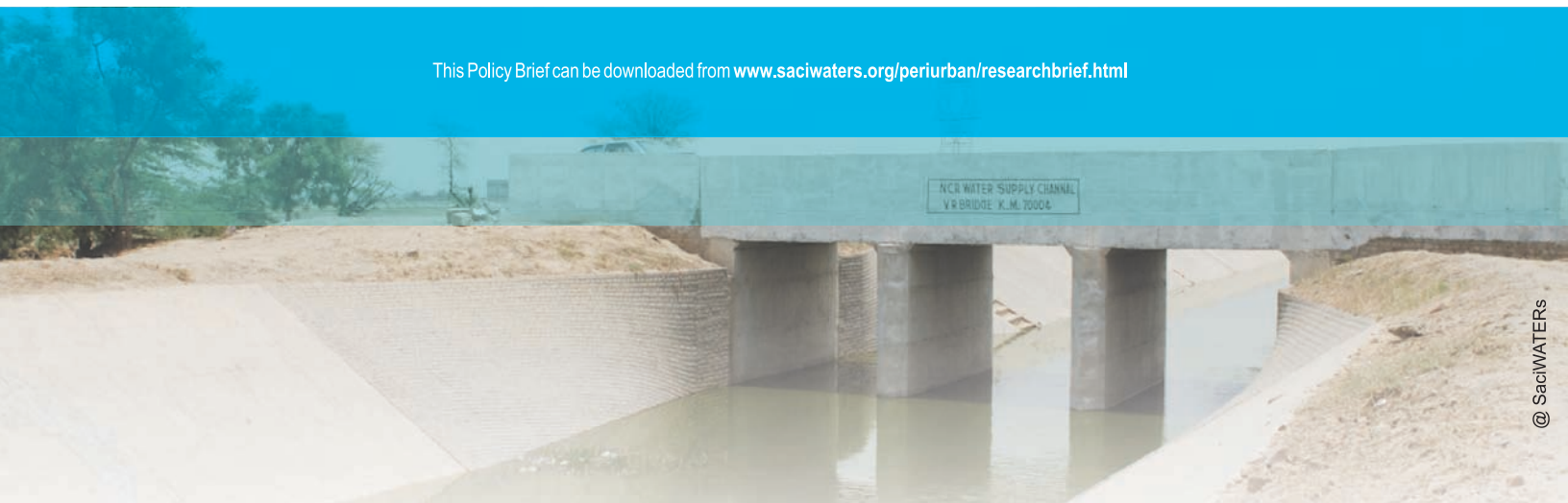
summary

- ▶ All four peri-urban research sites are experiencing various forms of water insecurity. These include growing pressure on local groundwater resources, physical flows of water from the villages to cities, acquisition of village land and water sources to support urban expansion, and the contamination of peri-urban water sources through urban and industrial wastes.
- ▶ Our research findings indicate that water insecurity emerges from the links between land tenure and water access, the fragmentation of urban planning and rural development and the absence of frameworks for dialogue and conflict resolution between rural and urban areas.

way forward

- ▶ We propose the inclusion of the peri-urban as an important step in water resource planning. There is a need to break away from the dichotomy between rural and urban water governance. Planning and governance must consider the inter-relationship between rural and urban water flows.
- ▶ The expansion of cities and urban spaces should factor careful water resource plans to prevent peri-urban populations from being marginalised and adversely affected.
- ▶ Stakeholders and civic agencies require sensitization to issues of peri-urban water insecurity. Policy makers must engage in a constructive dialogue with them. In action research projects targeting peri-urban communities, such dialogues should happen in the initial phase of investigations.

This Policy Brief can be downloaded from www.saciwaters.org/periurban/researchbrief.html



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