

The **Ouagadougou Health and Demographic Surveillance System (Ouaga-HDSS)**, established in 2008, collects data in five neighborhoods located in the northern outskirts of the capital of Burkina Faso. Data on demographic events (births, deaths, unions, migration events) are collected every 10 months. Three spontaneous neighborhoods (45 700 residents) and two zoned areas (40 700 residents) were selected to study the problems of the urban poor, and to test innovative programs that aim to promote the well-being of these populations.

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Access to water in informal settlements: the hidden reality

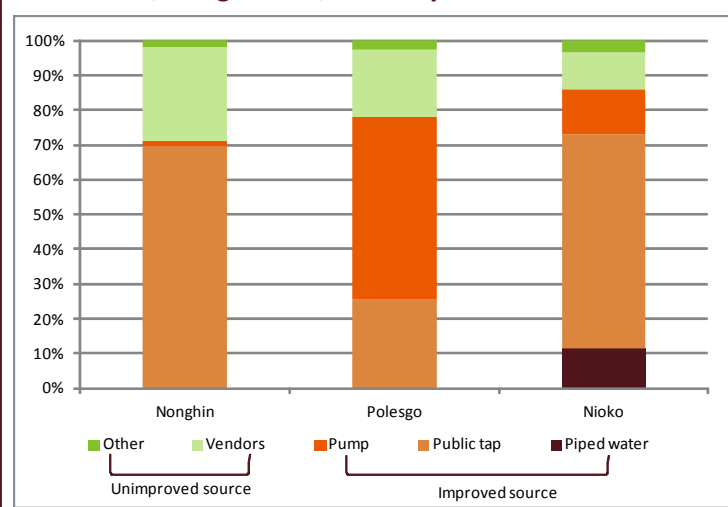
Until recently, most research on access to water in sub-Saharan Africa has focused on rural areas. The urban population, in contrast, is widely considered to have a good access to water. According to the 2010 Demographic and Health Survey, 99% of households in Ouagadougou have access to an improved water source such as private connections in their homes or compounds, public standpipes or boreholes, in contrast to 71% in rural areas.

However, due to rapid urban population growth, cities across the continent have seen a rapid spread of informal settlement areas. Inhabitants of these zones are left behind, without access to basic urban services, including access to the water utility. Many of African city dwellers thus can experience difficulties to meet water daily basic needs.

Key Findings

- One in five households in informal settlements do not have access to an improved water source.
- Average distances traveled to fetch water is more than 500 meters.
- The price of water ranged from 1 to 10, depending on the type of water source and the distance to the water point.
- Half of all households in informal areas do not have enough water to meet their basic daily needs.

Figure 1. Distribution of principal water source, informal settlements, Ouaga-HDSS, February 2012



20% of the households in informal settlements do not have access to an improved water source

In the three informal settlements monitored by the OPO, half of the households are supplied by public standpipes and a quarter with pumps. In particular, one in five households obtains water from street vendors, which is not considered as an improved water source, due both to the high price at which the vendors resell the water as well as to the water's dubious quality.

Important differences also exist between the three neighborhoods (Figure 1). In Nonghin, more than 1 in 4 households obtain water via street vendors, while only 1 in 10 households used the vendors as a principal source of water in Nioko 2.

Distant water points

On average, households travel more than 500 meters from their compounds to fetch water (Table 1). Yet, beyond a distance of 200 meters, the beneficial health impact of using an improved water source is known to decrease. The distances vary from one neighborhood to another. For example, in Polesgo, a public standpipe that supplies

households who choose this principal water source is located more than a kilometer from the neighborhood. However, statistics on distance only partially demonstrate the arduous task of fetching water outside of the compound, sometimes at night, in neighborhoods without streetlights. Furthermore, the wait time at a water point can be as much as several hours, especially when the water source is a pump (borehole).

Table 1. Mean and Median Distance to water points (in meters), informal areas, Ouaga-HDSS, February 2012

	Mean	Median
Nioko 2	347,0	285,2
Nonghin	505,7	414,8
Polesgo	778,7	295,4
Total informal areas	553,2	314,7



Water prices ranging from 1 to 10

There is a huge difference in water prices, depending on whether the water source is a borehole or a standpipe and the type of container: the price of a liter of water is more expensive for plastic jerry cans (20 liters) rather than barrels (200 liters). Households that obtain water from street vendors pay the highest price for a liter of water: it can cost as much as 10 times more than that paid by households with private water connections.

Half of households do not have enough water

It is estimated that the minimum amount of water to meet basic water needs is 20 liters of water per person per day. Among households supplied through a collective water source (a public standpipe or borehole) or through street vendors, half do not have access to the minimum daily requirements. This situation exists in all the three informal settlements monitored by the OPO.

Programmatic Implications

By studying modalities of access to water (distance, price, available quantities), the significant portion of households that have difficulties in meeting their basic daily needs is brought to light.

The quantity of water necessary to meet basic needs is affected by the type of water source, but also by the distance to the water point, the waiting time and the price of a liter of water. Organizations responsible for supplying water should measure these indicators.

The quantity of water used being significantly greater when the household has a private connection, policies to develop piped water supply in informal settlements are essential to meet the basic needs of these populations.

Further information

- Soura A., Dos Santos S., Ouédraogo F.C., Sanou B., Yaka P., Lankoande B., Millogo R., 2013, « Accès à l'eau pour usage domestique dans les quartiers informels de Ouagadougou : variations saisonnières et réponses adaptatives », *Climat & Développement*, 15, pp : 81-95.
- For questions or comments : OuagaFocus@issp.bf
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