

Water, sanitation and hygiene in selected counties in western Kenya: status and challenges

Access to clean water and sanitation services is a fundamental human right in Kenya, according to its 2010 constitution. However, water and sanitation services coverage in Kenya is low, even with the implementation of reforms in the sector initiated in the last decade. This study aimed at assessing the status and challenges of water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) in western Kenya, with three counties, namely Busia, Kakamega and Vihiga, taken as a case study. This was achieved through focused group discussion, key informant interviews and document reviews. Kakamega County had the highest score with respect to access to water services at 85%, while Vihiga had the lowest at 26%. Open defecation is still prevalent in these three counties, with Vihiga highest at 26% and Busia lowest at 0.1%. Sanitation coverage was relatively high at above 70% while sewerage coverage was still low, with Kakamega recording the highest coverage of 19%, whereas Vihiga had the lowest at 1%. Some of the challenges hindering access to water and sanitation services include inadequate financing, socio-cultural issues, environmental factors and weak governance. The study established the need for an enhanced effort toward the creation of an enabling environment for the implementation of WASH in western Kenya.

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