

FORECASTED AFRICA RESEARCH BRIEF

RESEARCH BRIEF

Title

Water Scarcity, Inequality, and Community Coping Strategies in Rural Arusha District, Tanzania

1. Executive Summary

Water scarcity remains a critical development challenge in rural Arusha District, Tanzania, where communities experience limited access to safe and reliable water sources. This research brief is based on field observations and community engagement activities conducted by Forecasted Africa International under its water justice and community resilience programs.

The study identifies persistent inequalities in water access, long distances to water points, seasonal shortages, and increasing competition between domestic use, livestock, and small-scale agriculture. Women and children are the most affected due to their daily responsibility of water collection.

Key findings show that communities rely heavily on unsafe water sources, spend significant time collecting water, and face increased health and economic burdens. The brief recommends strengthened local water governance, investment in rural water infrastructure, and increased community participation in water management systems.

2. Background and Context

Access to clean and safe water is a fundamental human right and a key pillar of Sustainable Development Goal 6. In rural areas of Arusha District, including villages in Monduli fringe zones and semi-arid settlements, water availability is highly seasonal and unevenly distributed.

During dry seasons, many households rely on distant wells, seasonal rivers, and shared community boreholes. In some areas, water sources dry up completely, forcing families to walk long distances or purchase water at high prices.

Despite the presence of local government water initiatives, gaps remain in infrastructure maintenance, governance, and equitable distribution of water resources.

3. Problem Statement

Rural communities in Arusha District continue to face severe water scarcity and unequal access to safe water services. However, there is limited localized evidence documenting how this scarcity affects livelihoods, gender roles, education, and health outcomes.

This lack of detailed community-level data limits effective planning and investment by government and development partners.

4. Objectives of the Study

General Objective

- To assess the impacts of water scarcity on rural communities in Arusha District and document community coping mechanisms.

Specific Objectives

- To identify major sources of water used by rural households
- To examine the social and economic impacts of water scarcity
- To analyze gender and age-related burdens in water collection
- To assess community coping strategies and local responses
- To propose recommendations for sustainable water management

5. Research Questions

- What are the main sources of water in rural Arusha communities?
- How does water scarcity affect household livelihoods and health?
- Why are women and children disproportionately affected?
- What strategies do communities use to cope with water shortages?
- What interventions are needed to improve water access?

6. Methodology

This research was conducted using a mixed-methods approach combining qualitative field engagement and secondary data review.

Data collection methods included:

- Community interviews with households in rural settlements
- Focus group discussions with women and youth groups

- Field visits to water points, wells, and seasonal rivers
- Key informant interviews with local leaders and water stakeholders

The study was conducted across selected rural villages in Arusha District during field engagement activities under Forecasted Africa water programs.

7. Key Findings

- Many households travel between 3–8 kilometers daily to access water during dry seasons.
- Women and girls are the primary water collectors, reducing time for education and income-generating activities.
- Seasonal rivers and shallow wells are the most common water sources but are often unsafe and contaminated.
- Water shortages intensify during prolonged dry seasons, especially between June and October.
- Some households spend a significant portion of income purchasing water from private vendors.
- Community water committees exist in some areas but are often under-resourced and inactive.
- Awareness of safe water practices is present but limited by lack of infrastructure.

8. Conclusions

Water scarcity in rural Arusha District is not only a physical shortage but also a governance and inequality challenge. The burden is disproportionately carried by women and children, while existing infrastructure and institutional systems remain insufficient.

Without targeted investment and strengthened community participation, water insecurity is likely to increase due to climate variability and population pressure.

9. Recommendations

- Expand and rehabilitate rural water supply infrastructure, including boreholes and piped systems
- Strengthen community-based water management committees with training and resources
- Integrate gender-responsive approaches in water planning and decision-making
- Increase investment in climate-resilient water systems
- Improve monitoring and data collection on rural water access
- Promote partnerships between government, NGOs, and local communities

10. Key Words

Water scarcity, Arusha District, rural development, gender inequality, climate resilience, SDG 6

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