

Awareness of Water Pollution as a Problem and the Decision to Treat Drinking Water Among Rural African Households with Unclean Water: South Africa 2004-06

Factors related to (1) awareness of water pollution as a problem and (2) actions to treat drinking water are examined using data from 11,270 rural African households in South Africa which did not have clean drinking water. Data are from national representative surveys conducted 2004-2006. Literature has suggested that household social status, especially education, is important to both awareness of water pollution as a problem and to the household taking actions to treat water. Logistic regression analysis finds that the worse the quality of household drinking water (among households with unclean water), the more likely the household is to perceive water pollution as a problem, but neither education nor household expenditure level matter for this perception. For the decision to treat drinking water, the quality of the household's drinking water and whether the household perceives water pollution as a problem were important, but in addition, education of household head and household expenditure level are important, with better-educated and more prosperous households more likely to treat their water. The findings suggest that households do not need to be well-educated or prosperous to perceive water pollution as a problem, but that education (perhaps related to efficacy), and household expenditures (perhaps related to the affordability of fuel) are important for a household to take actions to treat polluted drinking water. The role of the presence of young children in the household in the decision to treat water is also investigated.