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## **Intra-Urban Inequalities in Water Access among Households in Malawi's Informal Settlements: Toward Pro-Poor Urban Water Policies**

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### **Abstract**

Poor access to potable water remains one of the most troubling challenges in Sub-Saharan Africa's informal settlements (*or slums*) where majority of the poor and vulnerable urban population lives. While prior research shows significant disparities in water access between urban and rural areas, little is known about intra-urban inequalities and whether they are influenced by household socio-economic status. This paper draws from household surveys in three urban informal settlements in Lilongwe, Malawi, to explore intra-urban differences in water access based on water source, volume of water per capita, total time/day spent fetching water, and affordability of primary water source. It first compares the proportion of respondents that have access to water based on Malawi's (national) and the United Nations and World Health Organization's (international) minimum standards. It then uses linear and logistic regressions to examine socio-economic inequalities in water access. The results show inconsistencies in the proportion of households that satisfy Malawi versus the United Nations and World Health Organization minimum water-access standards. Household socio-economic status (SES) significantly influenced water access, underscoring the need for pro-poor water policies that recognize that even among households in predominantly poor and under-resourced urban settings, significant socio-economic differences underlie inequalities in water access.

**Keywords:** Intra-urban inequalities; water access; Lilongwe; Malawi; urban informal settlements; pro-poor urban water policies

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