

Final author submission:

Science of the Total Environment 408 (2010) 2378–2386

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Chemical Drinking Water Quality in Ghana: Water Costs and Scope for Advanced Treatment

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Submitted to

The Science of the Total Environment

17 November 2009

Abstract

To reduce child mortality and improve health in Ghana boreholes and wells are being installed across the country by the private sector, NGOs and the Ghanaian government. Water quality is not generally monitored once a water source has been improved. Water supplies were sampled across Ghana from mostly boreholes, wells and rivers as well as some piped water from the different regions and analysed for the chemical quality. Chemical water quality was found to exceed the WHO guidelines in 38% of samples, while pH varied from 3.7 to 8.9. Excess levels of nitrate (NO_3^-) were found in 21% of the samples, manganese (Mn) and fluoride (F^-) in 11% and 6.7%, respectively. Heavy metals such as lead (Pb), arsenic (As) and uranium (U) were localised to mining areas. Elements without health based guideline values such as aluminium (Al, 95%) and chloride (Cl, 5.7%) were found above the provisional guideline value.

Economic information was gathered to identify water costs and ability to pay. Capital costs of wells and boreholes are about £1200 and £3800 respectively. The majority of installation costs are generally paid by government or NGO, while the maintenance is expected to be covered by the community. At least 58% of the communities had a water payment system in place, either an annual fee/one-off fee or “pay-as-you-fetch”. The annual fee was between £0.3-21, while the boreholes had a water collection fee of £0.07-0.7/ m^3 , many wells were free. Interestingly, the most expensive water (£2.9-3.5/ m^3) was brought by truck. Many groundwater sources were not used due to poor chemical water quality. Considering the cost of unsuccessful borehole development, the potential for integrating suitable water treatment into the capital and maintenance costs of water sources is discussed. Additionally, many sources were not in use due to lack of water capacity, equipment malfunction or lack of economic resources to repair and maintain equipment. Those issues need to be addressed in combination with water quality, coordinated water supply provision and possible treatment to ensure sustainability of improved water resources.

Keywords: Ghana, drinking water, improved supply, chemical water quality, boreholes, wells, groundwater, cost

54

55 **1. Introduction**

56 Approximately 880 million people still lack access to safe drinking water, the lowest coverage found in
57 sub-Saharan Africa. Waterborne diseases, such as diarrhoea, cause 1.5 million deaths a year,
58 prominently to children in developing countries (JMP, 2008). It is estimated that child mortality and
59 could be significantly reduced and general health improved by providing access to safe potable water
60 and improving sanitation and hygiene (WHO, 2004). This is the compelling motivation for
61 governments and aid organisations to avoid acute problems of waterborne diseases by constructing
62 boreholes and wells to improve coverage of safe water sources. However, these new sources, if not
63 adequately monitored, may instead be a source of chronic health problems due to high concentrations
64 of inorganic contaminants such as arsenic (As), fluoride (F⁻) and nitrate (NO₃⁻) (Bissen and Frimmel,
65 2003a; Reimann and Banks, 2004)

66

67 Ghana, in West Africa, celebrated 50 years of independence from colonial rule in 2008, and is often
68 hailed as an African economic and political success (Naylor, 2003). Yet, Ghana is still struggling to
69 provide safe drinking water and sanitation to all its inhabitancy, especially in rural areas (UNICEF,
70 2007). Although Ghana is doing better than its immediate neighbours (*e.g.* Côte d'Ivoire and Togo),
71 nearly 12% of Ghanaian children die before they reach the age of five compared to *e.g.* 6% of children
72 in South Africa and 0.6% of children in the UK (UNICEF, 2007). Access to safe water is an important
73 factor to reduce the number of deaths. According to JMP (2008), 29% of the rural population rely on
74 unimproved water sources. The majority of the improved sources in rural Ghana are boreholes and
75 protected wells.

76

77 Ghana has 10 administrative regions: Western Region, Eastern Region, Central Region, Greater Accra,
78 Volta Region, Ashanti Region, Brong-Ahafo, Northern Region, Upper West and Upper East. The

79 population according to the last census (2000) was 18.9 million and with a growth rate of about 2.6% is
80 estimated at 23 million people (UNICEF, 2007). Although most of the population growth is taking part
81 in cities, the majority of Ghana's population still live in rural areas. Ghana's Water Policy expresses the
82 need to both ensure access to enough safe water to meet basic human needs and at the same time ensure
83 the environmental and financial sustainability of the water source (Government of Ghana, 2007). In an
84 attempt to make the water delivery in the country more effective, Ghana's water supply has, amidst
85 much controversy, been made parastatal (Agyeman, 2007). The Ministry of Water Resources, Works
86 and Housing remains the government institution responsible for water resource management and
87 drinking water supply, while the Ghana Water Company Ltd (GWCL) is in charge of urban water
88 provision. The Community Waste and Sanitation Agency (CWSA) is in charge of facilitating safe
89 water provision and providing technical assistance to the District Assemblies, who are responsible for
90 planning and operation of the water supply to rural communities on a local level (Agyeman, 2007). The
91 CWSA standard is one well or borehole per 300 people. The community are responsible for operation
92 and maintenance. Regional progress reports (Government of Ghana, 2007), report 40-80% coverage
93 depending on the region; however some organisations and individuals do not operate through the
94 CWSA and thus the total number of improved sources is not accurately known (Nyarko *et al.*, 2009).
95 As the boreholes are constructed, the chemical water quality should be analysed for fluoride (F^-),
96 manganese (Mn), iron (Fe), magnesium (Mg), calcium (Ca), sulphate (SO_4^{2-}), arsenic (As), lead (Pb),
97 copper (Cu), nitrate (NO_3^-), nitrite (NO_2^-), chloride (Cl), phosphate (PO_4^{3-}), aluminium (Al), sodium
98 (Na), zinc (Zn) and alkalinity ($CaCO_3$). Water quality is seldom monitored once a borehole has been
99 established due to financial and logistical constraints.

100

101 Studies on the water quality in particular problem areas in Ghana have been conducted, such as the
102 northern parts (Pelig-Ba *et al.*, 1991; Pelig-Ba, 1998; Pelig-Ba *et al.*, 2001, 2004), along the coast (Gill,
103 1996) and in mining areas (Smedley, 1996; Pelig-Ba *et al.*, 2001; Ahmad *et al.*, 2004; Asante *et al.*,

104 2007; Buamah *et al.*, 2008; Kortatsi *et al.*, 2008b). In these mining areas, elevated concentrations of Fe,
105 Mn, As, F⁻, Pb, Hg and Cr have been found in water sources, soil and air (Kortatsi, 1994;
106 AmonooNeizer *et al.*, 1996; Golow *et al.*, 1996; Obiri *et al.*, 2006; Kortatsi *et al.*, 2008b). Elevated
107 concentrations of NO₃⁻ have also been found (Kortatsi *et al.*, 2009), but further study is needed to
108 establish the NO₃⁻ distribution in Ghana (British Geological Survey, 2000). Gill (1996) reported
109 brackish water and high concentrations of Fe, Mn, Cl and NO₃⁻ in boreholes and wells in the Volta and
110 Upper and Northern regions.

111

112 The aim of this study was to gain an overview of the chemical water quality of drinking water sources
113 in the country, particularly of “other improved” sources such as wells and boreholes through a survey
114 of rural water supplies. The potential need for further treatment of the water is discussed in the context
115 of current water prices and how treatment and maintenance costs could be incorporated.

116 2. Materials and methods

117 2.1. Sample collection in Ghana

118

119 A total of 230 samples were collected out of which 199 were from improved drinking water sources,
120 mainly boreholes and wells but also some standpipes and trucked water during the 2007 rainy season
121 (July/August) from different regions throughout Ghana. In this paper we analyze the samples from the
122 improved drinking water sources. Where possible the name of the location, age of the water source and
123 pump, funding agency, water charge, money collection system, maintenance arrangements and
124 proximity of other water sources in the area were registered. Difficulties arose when trying to
125 distinguish between boreholes and wells with hand pumps as information on the depth of the source
126 was usually not available. However, the type of pump installed was used as an indication (see Asklund
127 and Eldvall (2005) for a detailed discussion on this problem). Samples were collected from the source
128 in 500 mL plastic bottles (washed three times with the sample water prior to collection), 20 mL of it

129 filtered through a 0.45 µm syringe filter (Sartorius Minisart, non-pyrogenic CE) and stored in a 20 mL
130 polypropylene vial. The pH of the remaining sample was checked upon collection and measured again
131 at the end of the day as was conductivity (Multiline P4 multimeter, WTW) and turbidity (Turbidimeter
132 TN-100, Eutech Instruments). Drinking water was likely to be exposed to the atmosphere before
133 consumption as it was carried back in open basins and buckets and thus this reflects the pH which
134 would be consumed. Filtered samples were stored at ambient temperature and airlifted to the UK at the
135 completion of the data collection.

136

137 2.2. *Chemical analysis*

138

139 The samples were kept at 4°C and separated into two portions. One portion was acidified to pH < 2
140 (concentrated Aristar HNO₃) and left to equilibrate at for at least 3 days before ICP analysis. The other
141 portion was kept untreated at 4°C for ion chromatography (IC) analysis. Laboratory blanks were prepared
142 by using MilliQ water and treating it in the same way as the samples. Major cations (> 0.1 mg/L) were
143 detected by inductively coupled plasma-optical emission spectroscopy (ICP-OES) (Perkin Elmer Optima
144 5300 DV, USA). Cations of concentrations as low as 0.01 µg/L were analysed with inductively coupled
145 plasma – mass spectroscopy (ICP-MS) (Agilent 7500ce, Japan). Calibrations were verified by a standard
146 reference material (ICP Multi Element Standard Solution VI CertiPUR) and a reference water (SRM
147 1640). Anions were analysed using IC (Dionex, CA, USA).

148 3. Results and discussion

149 3.3. *Physico-chemical water quality*

150 The results from the chemical analysis (mean, minimum median, lower inter-quartile range (Q1),
151 median, higher inter-quartile range (Q3) and maximum values) are displayed in Table 1. The number of
152 samples analysed (N), the applicable WHO drinking water guidelines and the percentage of samples
153 with concentrations out with the guideline values are also presented. The following elements do

154 currently not have a WHO guideline value: bromium (Br), calcium (Ca), magnesium (Mg), potassium
155 (K), sulphur (S), vanadium (V) and cobalt (Co). The following elements did not exceed the WHO
156 guideline value in any location: cadmium (Cd), selenium (Se), Copper (Cu), zinc (Zn), cobalt (Co) and
157 chromium (Cr). The following elements exceeded the health-based WHO guideline value in at least
158 one location: boron (B), manganese (Mn), iron (Fe), arsenic (As), lead (Pb), uranium (U), fluoride (F⁻),
159 nitrate (NO₃⁻), sulphate (SO₄²⁻) and nickel (Ni). The most widespread parameters exceeding a health
160 based WHO guideline, were NO₃⁻ (21%), Mn (11%) and F⁻ (6.7%). Numerous samples exceeded the
161 recommended guidelines based on water treatment considerations or taste for Al (95%) and Cl (5.7%).
162 Turbidity and pH were also outside the recommended range for 90% and 53% of the samples,
163 respectively.

164
165
166
167

(Table 1)

168 Sampling locations which contained parameters exceeding the WHO guideline for chemical quality are
169 shown in Figure 1. Only parameters of greatest concern are shown in this map (Fe, Mn, F⁻, B, As, Pb,
170 U, Cl and NO₃⁻). It is important to note that the concentrations of the analytes are likely to be higher
171 during the dry season (von der Heyden and New, 2004), and hence from a health aspect, the values
172 displayed are conservative since measured during the wet season.

173

174

(Figure 1)

175

176 As can be seen in Figure 1, several water sources across the country contain concentrations of
177 inorganic contaminants above the WHO drinking water guideline. Many of the water sources along the
178 coast had elevated TDS, due to proximity to the sea. High concentrations of NaCl are expected to some
179 extent due to seawater influence. Other ions such as F⁻, Mn, Fe and NO₃⁻ were also above the WHO
180 guideline along the coast. Further inland, a variety of elements exceeded the guideline value, in

181 particular in the Western, Central, Ashanti and Upper East Regions, where F^- and NO_3^- concentrations
182 exceeded the guideline. Overall 38% of the samples exceeded the health-based WHO drinking water
183 guidelines for a minimum of one parameter. The graphs of pH, cumulative frequency versus
184 concentration for TDS, conductivity, turbidity and the main inorganic parameters of interest are
185 displayed in Figure 2 to 5. This shows the range of the concentrations found and the percentage of
186 samples found within a certain concentration. The dotted lines mark the WHO drinking water
187 guidelines, where applicable. A more detailed discussion of the individual contaminants found in the
188 waters sources follows.

189

190 There is no health based guideline for pH, although a range of 6.5-8.5 is often used suggested because
191 aquatic life is negatively affected below pH 6.0 (Mason, 1990). Additionally at low pH, the water is
192 corrosive and can cause wear to equipment. About 50% of the samples fell outside the recommended
193 pH range, with the majority being too acidic (Figure 2). Acidity is more prominent in environments
194 with granite based rocks with low buffering capacity (Mason, 1990). Of particularly high acidity (pH
195 3.7) was a borehole close to the mining town Obuasi in the Ashanti Region. The borehole also had high
196 concentrations of Al, Mn, Pb and NO_3^- , indicating contamination from mining. Other acidic waters (pH
197 4-5.5) were found in the Ashanti, Western and Central Region. Some had high concentrations of Al,
198 Mn or Pb, indicating contamination from mining. These regions are also subject to much mining on
199 both small and large scale. The Western, Central and Ashanti regions would be naturally more acidic
200 both due to their geology (British Geological Survey, 2000) and due to forest coverage (Gill, 1996).
201 Forests are naturally expected to be somewhat acidic, both due to the organic acids from the breakdown
202 of organic matter and the higher precipitation they receive (Spiro and Stigliani, 1996). This same area
203 also receives the highest rainfall in the country (1500-2200 mm/yr, compared to 700-1000 mm/yr in the
204 northern parts and east coast) (Gill, 1996).

205

206

(Figure 2)

207

208 Turbidity does not have a health based guideline, but it is recommended that it should ideally be below
209 0.1 NTU for effective disinfection (World Health Organisation, 2006). Ninety percent of the samples
210 were above this guideline (Figure 3) and the turbidity was generally highest in surface waters, although
211 high values (up to 266 NTU) were also found in boreholes. Ghana has set a guideline for a newly
212 drilled bore holes at 5 NTU; and about 80% of the water sources sampled complied with this value.

213

214

(Figure 3)

215

216 Conductivity is an indication of the total dissolved solids (TDS), both organic and inorganic found in
217 the water. There is no health-based guideline. The WHO guideline value of 1200 mg/L for TDS is
218 based on taste rather than health. High TDS may cause corrosion of equipment such as hand pumps.

219

220 3.4. *Parameters of health concern*

221

222 The elements analysed for in this study that exceeded a WHO health based guideline value were As,
223 Pb, U, B, F⁻ and NO₃⁻.

224

225 The WHO guideline value for arsenic (As) is 10 µg/L. Concentrations exceeding this guideline were
226 found in the Ashanti Region, around Obuasi, in the north of the Volta Region and the Upper East
227 (Figure 4). The highest As concentration was in a borehole in Bolgatanga (170 µg/L). Smedley (1996)
228 and Kinniburgh (Smedley, 1996; Smedley and Kinniburgh, 2002) give a detailed description of As
229 geochemistry and its mobility due to weathering conditions. As can for instance be mobilised by
230 flooding and the reduction and mobilisation of As-containing Fe oxides, or by oxidation of

231 arsenopyrates, which is the case in the gold mining areas of Ghana (Smedley and Kinniburgh, 2002).
232 Similarly high As concentrations were measured by Asante (2007) in the Tarkwa gold mining region
233 (Western Region). Bolgatanga is an active mining area, and may thus release naturally occurring As.
234 Asante *et al.* (2007) measured As concentrations in human urine samples of inhabitants of Tarkwa,
235 concluding that the concentrations were similar to those of concentrations found in *e.g.* Bangladesh and
236 India, although they could not ascertain a link to drinking water. As concentrations in rivers were
237 higher than boreholes, indicating air-borne contamination (Smedley, 1996). Kortatsi *et al.* (2008b)
238 found that 21% of the boreholes in the Offin basin (Ashanti Region) contain As concentrations above
239 the WHO guideline. Interestingly, Amonoo-Neizer and Amekor (1993) showed that crops grown close
240 to Obuasi often had double As contents compared to the same crop types grown around Kumasi
241 indicating the release of high concentrations of As in mining areas. Kortatsi (2008a) also identified a
242 number of samples with As concentrations above the drinking water guideline in the Central, Greater
243 Accra and Volta Region. From the results of this study, it does not appear that As is a widespread
244 problem in Ghana, however, it is still important to monitor and regulate contamination from mining
245 activities as very high localised concentrations occur.

246

247

(Figure 4)

248

249 High concentrations of lead (Pb), above the WHO guideline value 10 µg/L, were found in the Ashanti
250 region, as well as on the coast. The highest concentration determined was 35 µg/L. Concentrations of
251 Pb above the WHO guideline in wells and boreholes imply that groundwater sources are not
252 necessarily safe from pollution from industrial activities. The high Pb concentrations found at very low
253 pH, and south of Obuasi, indicating acid mine drainage or other mining contamination as a possible
254 source.

255

256 Concentrations of uranium (U) above the provisional WHO guideline (15 $\mu\text{g/L}$) were found in the
257 Central Region and the Volta Region. The Volta Region sample also had high concentrations of NO_3^-
258 (508 mg/L, ten times the WHO guideline value), F^- (4.24 mg/L, nearly three times the guideline value)
259 and Cl (500 mg/L, double the taste guideline value). The borehole containing most U (267 $\mu\text{g/L}$) was in
260 the Central Region. It did not contain other chemical pollutants. Other boreholes in that area also
261 contained U, although below the drinking water guideline value. U was previously found by Dampare
262 (2005). Concentrations below the drinking water guideline were also found in found in the Upper East,
263 indicating that while U might not be a widespread concern, it may be worth monitoring as it is a natural
264 part of the geology. As well as being naturally radioactive, U is chemically toxic and when ingested
265 may target bones or damage the kidney (The Royal Society, 2002; Kurttio *et al.*, 2005).

266

267 Boron (B) was found at levels up to 2034 $\mu\text{g/L}$ (the WHO guideline value is 500 $\mu\text{g/L}$) in the Northern
268 Region. The highest B concentrations corresponded with alkaline pH. Speciation models of the water
269 (using Minteq 2.53, results not shown), showed B to exist mainly as boric acid (H_3BO_3) over the acidic
270 to neutral pH range, and borate (H_2BO_3^-) above pH 8.5. Sources of boron include seawater (unlikely in
271 this situation), coal burning and industrial sources as well as borate-containing fertilizers, which may
272 be the most likely source in this case as there is agricultural activity in the region.

273

274 About 6.7% of the samples contained fluoride (F^-) concentrations above the WHO guideline value (1.5
275 mg/L) (Figure 4). High concentrations of F^- were found in the north, but also in many locations along
276 the coast, mainly in wells and boreholes. In the Upper East about 17% of the samples contained F^-
277 concentrations above the guideline. Boreholes near the coast in the Volta Region contained F^-
278 concentrations of above 4 mg/L, which can cause skeletal fluorosis. Kortatsi (2008b) also found F^-
279 concentrations of 11 mg/L in the Offin Basin (Ashanti Region).

280

281

(Figure 5)

282

283 Nitrate (NO_3^-) has a WHO guideline value of 50 mg/L and exceeded this concentration in 21% of the
284 samples (Figure 5). The highest concentration was 508 mg/L. The locations were widespread but
285 mostly found in the Western, Ashanti, southern Volta, Northern region and Upper East. NO_3^- is
286 regulated as it is one of the causes of methaemoglobinaemia (or “blue-baby syndrome”) in infants
287 (Manassaram *et al.*, 2006) as well as a potential risk of stomach cancer (Abrahams, 2002). Forty-seven
288 percent of the well waters had concentrations above the guideline, compared to 16% of the borehole
289 waters (Figure 6). The concentrations of NO_3^- were also higher in wells than in surface water (results
290 not shown). This indicates a widespread problem of elevated NO_3^- in shallow groundwater –probably a
291 result of poor sanitation and latrine construction (MacDonald and Calow, 2009). High levels can also
292 be caused by fertilizer use. The results of Pelig-Ba (2004) confirm those of this study and report a mean
293 of 93.3 mg/L of NO_3^- and a maximum of 511 mg/L in groundwater in the Upper West. The WHO
294 guideline value for nitrite (NO_2^{2-}) is 0.2 mg/L. Unfortunately NO_2^{2-} needs to be determined within 48
295 hours, which was not possible due to the logistics. Thus the NO_3^- values reported in this paper, include
296 any NO_2^{2-} which may have been originally present.

297

298

(Figure 6)

299

300 3.5. *Aesthetic parameters*

301

302 Parameters analysed for in this study with non-*health* based WHO guidelines were Al, Fe, Mn, Cl and
303 SO_4^{2-} . Despite not being a health concern, high concentrations affect the quality of water, leading to bad
304 taste and colouration of cooking utensils and food. This has caused hundreds of wells to be abandoned in

305 favour of surface waters likely contaminated with harmful micro-organisms (Smedley, 1996; Gyau-
306 Boakye and Dapaah-Siakwan, 1999).

307

308 The most widespread pollutant was aluminium (Al). The health effects from Al remain unclear, however,
309 Al does have a practicable non-health based WHO guideline value of 0.2 mg/L (stated as an achievable
310 level for small water treatment facilities. This takes into consideration the health concerns but also the
311 benefits from using Al in water treatment (World Health Organisation, 2006)). Ninety-five percent of the
312 samples measured were above the recommended guideline value (Figure 5), several more than ten-fold,
313 with the maximum concentration at 67 mg/L. Areas of particularly high Al concentration were in the
314 Volta Region (regional average of 27 mg/L) where Nkwanta district, Asuogyaman, Hohoe, Keta and
315 Ketu districts had especially high concentrations (average of 30, 42, 28, 55 and 44 mg/L respectively).
316 The Western Region also had locations containing high Al concentrations, with an average of 13 mg/L in
317 the Wassa West district. Al may leach from soils unable to buffer acidic precipitation and from minerals
318 such as kaolinite and gibbsite (Langmuir, 1997). Some researchers find high Al concentrations in
319 association with particles (Reimann *et al.*, 2003), in our study however, Al showed no correlation with
320 turbidity. Al concentrations were found to be highest around neutral pH, where Al normally is less
321 soluble. The high Al in the samples may possibly be associated with colloids smaller than the 0.45 µm
322 filter. Pelig-Ba (2004) also found higher Al concentrations in water at neutral pH and explained it by
323 presence of chelating agents such as soil organic matter raising the Al solubility. In Pelig-Ba's study from
324 the Upper Regions (1998) the Al range was reported as up to 47 mg/L, with a mean of 4.4 mg/L in the
325 Northern Region.

326

327 A number of samples had very high sulphate (SO_4^{2-}) concentrations (>500 mg/L) (Figure 5). One was
328 found in a relatively new borehole in the Northern Region, probably due to mudstone geology. In this
329 sample high Mn concentrations were also found. Due to the taste, consumers preferred to drink water

330 from the nearby shallow well, which contained low SO_4^{2-} and Mn concentrations but possible
331 microbiological contamination. This illustrates how poor chemical water quality of new deeper
332 groundwater sources may drive people back to shallow contaminated sources. Another borehole from
333 the same region contained similar SO_4^{2-} and TDS levels, but no Mn, and people were happy to drink
334 the water.

335

336 Around 5.7% of the waters sampled contain more chloride (Cl) than the recommended value (250
337 mg/L) (Figure 5). This value is based on taste, but waters of these Cl concentrations are also more
338 corrosive. As can be seen from the map in Figure 1, much of the high Cl concentrations are found in
339 the Volta delta and along the coast. Gill *et al.* (1996) also reported high Cl concentrations in the Keta
340 district and found similar evidence of seawater intrusion. A study conducted by Kortatsi (2006) in the
341 Accra plains similarly found high concentrations of Cl and concluded that 75% of the boreholes in the
342 area were brackish (TDS range 1000-10000 mg/L), with Na and Cl as the dominating ions.

343

344 Iron (Fe) concentrations below 2000 $\mu\text{g/L}$ are described as safe by the WHO (Figure 4), although taste
345 is affected above 300 $\mu\text{g/L}$. This taste based value is used by many studies when reporting Fe. Up to
346 4257 $\mu\text{g/L}$ was measured. As can be seen from the map (Figure 1), high Fe concentrations were found
347 in a variety of locations along the coast, inland in forested areas and the Northern Region. Most
348 samples (97.4%) fall below 300 $\mu\text{g/L}$ and 99% are below the guideline value 2000 $\mu\text{g/L}$ (Figure 4).
349 Most of the sources containing very high Fe concentrations were found in boreholes. The chemistry of
350 naturally occurring Fe is controlled by the redox conditions of the water (not measured due to lack of
351 equipment), where Fe is mobilised under reducing conditions, indicating that the environment of these
352 boreholes was reducing.

353

354 Concentrations of manganese (Mn) above the WHO drinking water guideline value (400 µg/L) were
355 found mainly the Western and Ashanti region and along the coast (Figure 1). The highest
356 concentrations were found in boreholes (Figure 6). Similarly to Fe, Mn chemistry is also redox
357 controlled. High concentrations of Fe and Mn corresponded in some samples, but for the majority of
358 them high Mn concentrations were not accompanied by high Fe concentrations.

359

360 High concentrations of calcium (Ca), magnesium (Mg) and potassium (K) (Figure 5) are generally not
361 a health concern and thus do not have guideline values set by the WHO, but are important nutrients.
362 Studies have shown an inverse relationship between cardiovascular disease and water hardness, with
363 increased risk occurring with Ca concentrations <60mg/L of Ca (Packham, 1990). In fact the water
364 sources in Ghana were relatively soft and the concentrations of the samples in the third percentile were
365 below 15 mg/L for Mg and 40 mg/L for Ca (Table 1). In large concentrations however, they may affect
366 the taste of the water by contributing to high TDS, which will also affect practical water usage
367 (washing with soap).

368

369 In summary, the water quality from the different sources in Ghana displayed a wide range of chemical
370 water quality, with many sources containing concentrations above the drinking water guidelines. In
371 boreholes high concentrations of NO_3^- , F^- , B, Pb, As, U, Cl, Fe, Mn and SO_4^{2-} , and high levels turbidity
372 were found. In wells NO_3^- , Fe and turbidity were common problems, as well as some instances of As,
373 Mn, Cl and F^- .

374

375 3.6. *Current rural water sources, costs and ability to pay*

376 The Ghana Water Policy advocates provision of demand driven basic water and sanitation services for
377 communities that contribute towards capital cost, operation, maintenance and repairs (Government of

378 Ghana, 2007). Non-government organisations often support the communities by paying up to 95% of
379 the borehole cost, while the community raises 5% of the borehole cost (Government of Ghana, 2007).

380

381 About 25% of the communities visited had an annual user fee per household ranging from 5000 to
382 40000 cedis (£0.3-£21, August 2007). About 33% of the water supplies had a water collection charge
383 based on quantity of water collected (Figure 7). Surface and many well waters were often free of
384 charge while boreholes, piped and especially truck-delivered water attracted the highest charges. The
385 cost per bucket (18L) for boreholes and piped water ranged from 25 to 250 cedis (£0.07 to £0.7/m³,
386 based on 62 communities) and the cost per basin (40L) ranged from 50 to 500 cedis (£0.07 to £0.7/m³,
387 based on 47 communities). Where water was trucked in, the cost was 1000-1200 cedis per bucket
388 (£2.9-3.5/m³, based on two communities). An appointed water vendor from the WatSan committee was
389 often situated at the water source to directly collect the payment from the users. Understandably some
390 households choose to use cheaper or free water sources for washing and bathing, increasing the risk of
391 contact with diseases transmitted by surface water. Surface water is often used during the rainy season
392 due to availability while in dry seasons they may be used if borehole re-charge is low (Iten and
393 McCarron, 2006). 13% of the communities visited did not have an operational payment system in
394 place. Many communities were therefore struggling to raise between 1.5-2.5 million cedis (about £80-
395 £130) in order to pay for repairs or spare parts of pumps, broken a couple of years earlier. When this
396 proved to be a major hurdle and pumps would remain disused or even abandoned. Another problem
397 encountered in some communities was that there was no payment system for the trained community
398 members to get paid for maintenance services, which meant that they were unwilling to assist.
399 Organising maintenance and collecting payment for repairs is further complicated by the dynamic
400 movement of people between different communities and even parts of the country (Iten and McCarron,
401 2006). In some cases pumps were ill designed, causing unaffordable chronic failure of parts.

402

403
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406

(Figure 7)

407 3.7. *Is water treatment a suitable option for sources of poor chemical quality?*

408 The problems encountered in the survey were those of high turbidity, high concentrations of F^- , NO_3^- ,
409 Al, Mn, Fe and localised contamination of Pb, As, B and U. Overall, 38% of the sources analysed
410 exceeded a *health*-based WHO guideline for chemical parameters. Installation costs of boreholes and
411 wells are about £3800 and £1800, respectively. Many boreholes fail due to the high chemical content of
412 for example F^- (Smedley *et al.*, 2002) and up to 64% of the boreholes in the north of Ghana fail based
413 on water flow, re-charge and chemical quality (Iten and McCarron, 2006). Thus for the actual costs of
414 developing ground water the number of unsuccessful boreholes drilled need to be taken into account.
415 To reduce this cost in areas of complex geology, investment in initial hydrogeological investigations is
416 important to improve success (MacDonald and Calow, 2009). An alternative option to capping existing
417 boreholes and drilling new, potentially unsuccessful boreholes would be to treat the water. Suitable
418 treatment options in developing countries can be provided as centralised, community based or point-of-
419 use/household based approaches. For economic and infrastructural reasons, community based or point-
420 of-use treatments are considered preferable to centralised treatment for rural communities (Peter-
421 Varbanets *et al.*, 2009). This also applies to rural areas of Ghana where boreholes or wells may already
422 exist while access to a centralised supply does not. Treatment technologies considered suitable for
423 developing countries, such as sand filtration, UV disinfection (SODIS), ceramic filters and chlorination
424 mainly remove or destroy microbial pathogens and turbidity (Sobsey *et al.*, 2008; Peter-Varbanets *et*
425 *al.*, 2009) and could potentially be used to disinfect surface waters of good chemical quality, but do not
426 effectively remove chemical contaminants. Importantly, over 90% of the samples had a turbidity of
427 more than 0.1 NTU, which must be reduced before disinfection can be effective.

428

429 Treatment methods which target chemical contaminants combine processes such as adsorption or
430 coagulation with ultrafiltration or sandfiltration processes (Brandhuber and Amy, 2001; Johnston and
431 Heijnen, 2001; Chakravarty *et al.*, 2002). Issues of handling, cost of chemicals, sanitation and
432 regeneration of the adsorption materials are a concern. Ultrafiltration systems are available at an
433 investment cost of about £2000 (20 m³/day capacity), and are maintained by a daily washing. Low-cost
434 As removal for communities in developing countries have been investigated (Bissen and Frimmel,
435 2003b; Malik *et al.*, 2009) and wells can even be constructed to allow re-circulation of oxidised water
436 back into the source, thus oxidising and immobilising Fe and As before it is with-drawn (van Halem et
437 al., 2009). This method still requires further development and testing, however, and the resulting
438 concentrations depend on concentrations originally present. The need to remove a variety of chemical
439 contaminants from existing water sources persists and long-term studies are lacking. The issue of F⁻
440 removal from drinking water in the northern regions of Ghana, for example, is unresolved (CWSA,
441 2007). In such situations membrane technologies have unique potential due to their physical separation.
442 Nanofiltration or reverse osmosis are well adapted in developed countries for water desalination, reuse
443 and removal of dissolved contaminants while application in developing countries has not yet widely
444 progressed. Investment cost into single tap reverse osmosis has been estimated to £190-£380 (Peter-
445 Varbanets *et al.*, 2009) which may be an option if it could be developed for boreholes. A solar powered
446 community-based membrane system was field tested by Schäfer *et al.* (2007) and found to perform
447 well in terms of potable water production. The system had a specific energy consumption of 1.2
448 kWh/m³. Investment and maintenance costs into a solar powered electro dialysis systems have been
449 calculated as £0.15-0.28/m³, with an initial investment of at least £5400 (Ortiz *et al.*, 2008). However,
450 the long-term integration of operation and maintenance of such systems into communities requires
451 solid strategies at a local level.

452

453 3.8. *Sustainability of treatment systems*

454 The effectiveness and sustainability of point-of-use and small-scale water treatment technology
455 remains to be seen as contentious (see for example Hunter (in press), Hunter *et al.* (2009) and Schmidt
456 and Cairncross (in press)). Three components of sustainability for engineered solutions in developing
457 countries were identified by Montgomery *et al.* (2009) as 1) effective community demand, 2) local
458 financing and cost recovery, and 3) dynamic operation and maintenance. The importance of local
459 ownership of both the technology development (local sourcing and production) as well as the resulting
460 systems should be emphasized. Failure to incorporate these components into a water source and
461 potential water treatment reduce the likelihood of its long-term functionality. Cost recovery of five
462 community managed water systems in the Ashanti Region was investigated by Nyarko *et al.* (2007),
463 who found that neither of the communities recovered their full capital and operational costs, while four
464 out of five recovered their operation and maintenance costs. Interview results showed that there was not
465 an understanding amongst the community members of the full costs involved, while some preferred to
466 use free untreated water sources when the prices were too high. The importance of demand-driven
467 appropriate water treatment was high-lighted in a study by Hoque *et al.* (2004). They found that
468 household treatment systems often were abandoned after a short period, while community based
469 systems proved more sustainable. For this reason it is important to understand the willingness (and
470 ability) to pay for water provision in such communities as well as elucidating the most suitable
471 treatment option.

472

473 **4. Conclusions**

474 It was found in this study that 38% of the wells and boreholes in Ghana had high concentrations of
475 inorganic contaminants. Major problems identified were that of high turbidity, low pH, high
476 concentrations of NO_3^- , F^- , Al and Cl and in localised areas As, Pb, B and U. The importance of regular

477 monitoring of groundwater sources is emphasized. While some ‘low-cost’ treatment technologies to
478 remove, for instance, As and F⁻ exist, the long-term sustainability and management of such
479 technologies is yet to be proven for a wide range of chemical contaminants and how performance (in
480 particular contaminant breakthrough) can be monitored. The maintenance costs of systems could
481 potentially be incorporated in the maintenance costs currently paid by community members (up to
482 £0.7/m³), especially if government and NGO’s were willing to invest in the capital costs. This could be
483 worthwhile, considering the cost of unsuccessful boreholes. About 58% of the communities had a
484 payment system in place to recover basic maintenance costs.

485

486 In areas of high chemical contamination more advanced inorganic removal treatment such as
487 nanofiltration and reverse osmosis may be necessary. This would require extensive training in
488 operation and maintenance, but while initial investment would increase, it may facilitate maintenance
489 and potentially reduce long-term costs in particular if renewable energy is used as a power supply.
490 Given that renewable energy powered ground water pumps are rapidly penetrating the market and
491 water charges for trucked water is comparable to membrane treatment costs this is a most viable option.
492 Any form of improved water supply requires community ownership and commitment by local and
493 national authorities to ensure that long-term needs are met. Research into ensuring long-term
494 sustainability in terms of community demand, cost recovery, failure management, maintenance of
495 water sources and treatment needed is timely and of critical importance.

496

497 **5. Acknowledgements**

498 UNESCO Scotland are thanked for project funding, the Royal Society and the Royal Academy of
499 Engineering for travel support. A studentship from EPSRC and ESRC was provided for H.M.A. Rossiter.
500 Mr. Samuel Ansere is thanked for his superb local guidance in Ghana as the driver of the team during the

501 field trip in summer 2007 and KNUST for the provision of a vehicle. Tanya Peshkur and Dr Peter
502 Anderson assisted with IC analysis, and Dr Lorna Eades for assistance with ICP-MS (all University of
503 Edinburgh).

504 Prof. Bryce Richards (Heriot Watt University) is thanked for his active participation in the sampling
505 trip, while Björn Schulte-Herbrüggen as well as Kofi Awuah who provided some remote samples.

506 Faustina Atipoka (CWSA, Bongo district), Osmund Ansa-Ansare (WRI, Accra), Hajo Schäfer (IGIP
507 Consulting Engineers, Kumasi) are thanked for helpful discussions in conjunction with field trip
508 logistics. Gloria Addicio (University of Hull) provided the map modified for the paper. Prof.

509 Menachem Elimelech (Yale University) has critically reviewed the manuscript and Annalisa DeMunari
510 and Laura Richards (University of Edinburgh) are thanked for critical proof reading.

511

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648 Geneva, 2006, 515.
- 649
650
651

652 Table 1 Distribution of measured parameters in the samples. The minimum, mean, maximum and
 653 median values are given along with the WHO guideline values and the percentage of samples which
 654 exceeded the guideline value.

Parameter	Unit	N	Mean	Min	Q1	Median	Q3	Max	WHO guideline	% outwith guideline
Al	mg/L	192	11.87	<0.020	3.927	8.500	14.60	66.69	0.2*	95
As	µg/L	195	1.930	<0.003	<0.003	0.073	0.532	169.5	10	0.5
B	µg/L	195	61.11	<2.551	5.820	10.08	27.14	2034	500	2.6
Br	mg/L	193	0.029	<0.200	<0.200	<0.200	<0.200	1.116	-	-
Ca	mg/L	192	28.59	0.091	10.411	19.70	39.61	169.4	-	-
Cd	µg/L	195	0.025	<0.001	<0.001	<0.001	0.013	1.755	3	-
Cl	mg/L	193	49.44	<0.200	3.711	13.27	41.22	597.2	250*	5.7
Co	µg/L	195	0.262	<0.051	<0.051	<0.051	0.077	11.62	-	-
Cr	µg/L	195	0.199	<0.068	<0.068	<0.068	0.151	9.290	50	-
Cu	µg/L	195	2.774	<0.173	<0.173	<0.173	0.715	83.10	2000	-
F ⁻	mg/L	193	0.470	<0.100	0.044	0.209	0.45	4.238	1.5	6.7
Fe	µg/L	195	84.73	<0.001	5.446	17.78	46.16	4257	2000 ^a (300*)	1.0 (2.6)
K	mg/L	187	4.382	0.241	1.475	2.564	5.511	29.65	-	-
Mg	mg/L	192	10.52	<0.030	2.586	6.459	14.55	66.20	-	-
Mn	µg/L	195	134.8	0.030	4.447	19.21	117.9	2051	400	11
Ni	µg/L	195	0.579	<0.054	<0.054	<0.054	0.436	29.59	20	0.5
NO ₃ ⁻	mg/L	193	34.01	<0.200	0.514	6.394	31.52	507.7	50	21
Pb	µg/L	195	1.526	<0.006	0.489	0.946	1.517	34.94	10	1.5
PO ₄ ²⁻	mg/L	193	0.058	<0.100	<0.10	<0.100	<0.100	1.214	-	-
S	mg/L	192	6.905	<0.200	0.372	1.150	4.091	235.4	-	-
Se	µg/L	195	0.434	<0.306	<0.306	<0.306	0.598	6.175	10	-
SO ₄ ²⁻	mg/L	193	34.69	<0.200	1.648	5.236	23.75	931.4	500 ^b	1.0
U	µg/L	195	1.988	<0.001	0.049	0.114	0.410	266.6	15	1.0
V	µg/L	195	2.380	<0.011	<0.011	<0.011	0.891	45.37	-	-
Zn	µg/L	195	9.305	<1.591	<1.591	<1.591	<1.591	454.8	3000	-
Conductivity	µS/cm	199	457.1	15.00	178.0	314.0	549.0	2280	-	-
TDS	mg/L	198	176.2	4.963	51.77	98.42	178.2	1454	1200*	1.0
Turbidity	NTU	199	14.30	0	0.237	0.793	3.303	629.7	0.1*	90
pH		199	6.32	3.69	5.67	6.43	6.98	8.88	6.5- 8.5*	53

*Recommendation based on aesthetic considerations such as taste and colour.

^aTaste is often affected (at 300 µg/L) before WHO health guideline is reached, which is why many prefer to use the taste guideline value.

^bNo health based guideline value is set, however values less than 500 mg/L are recommended due to damage to gastrointestinal effects.

655

656

657 **List of Figures**

658 Figure 1 Map of Ghana with regions and sample points marked. Locations tested that did not exceed
659 the WHO guideline value for As, B, Cl, F⁻, Fe, Mn, NO₃⁻, Pb or U were marked with an open circle,
660 locations exceeding the WHO guideline were marked according to the legend in the map.

661

662 Figure 2 Cumulative frequency (%) versus pH. The dotted lines mark the recommended pH range.

663

664 Figure 3 Cumulative frequency (%) versus turbidity (NTU), conductivity (μS/cm) and TDS (mg/L).

665

666 Figure 4 Cumulative frequency (%) versus concentration (μg/L) on log axis for Pb, As and U (top) and

667 Fe, Mn, B and F⁻ (below). The dotted line indicates the WHO guideline.

668

669 Figure 5 Cumulative frequency (%) versus concentration (mg/L) on log axis for Al (top); then Cl, NO₃⁻

670 and SO₄²⁻ (middle) and finally Ca, K, Mg and S (bottom). The dotted line indicates the WHO guideline

671 where available.

672

673 Figure 6 Comparison between boreholes (BH) and wells: percentage of source type with samples above

674 the WHO guideline for Mn, Fe, F⁻, Cl, NO₃⁻ and turbidity.

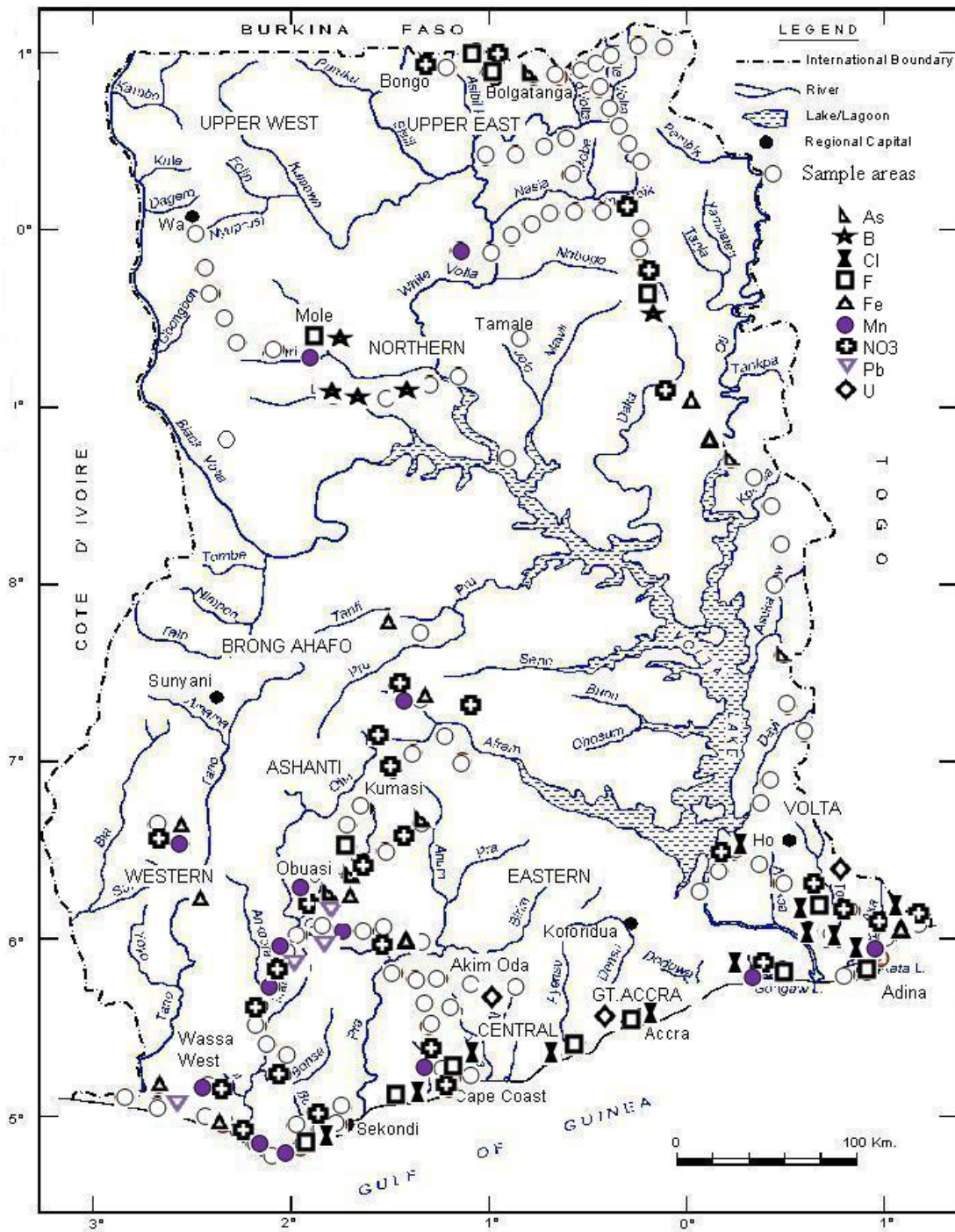
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676 Figure 7 Distribution of water charge systems (charge based on water usage, annual charge, no charge)

677 out of the 220 water sources visited.

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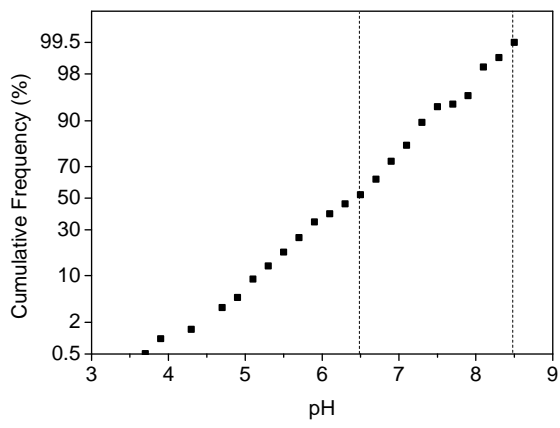
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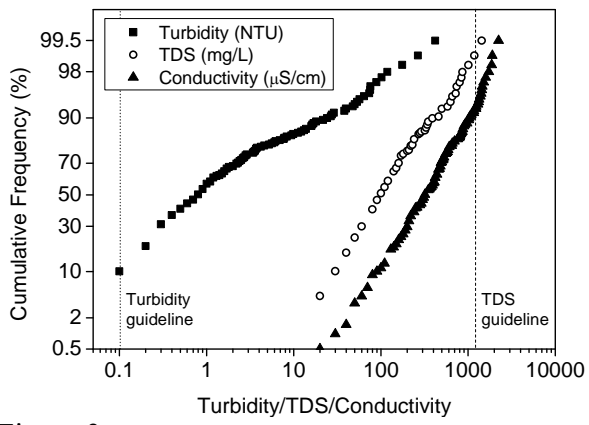
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681 Figure 1

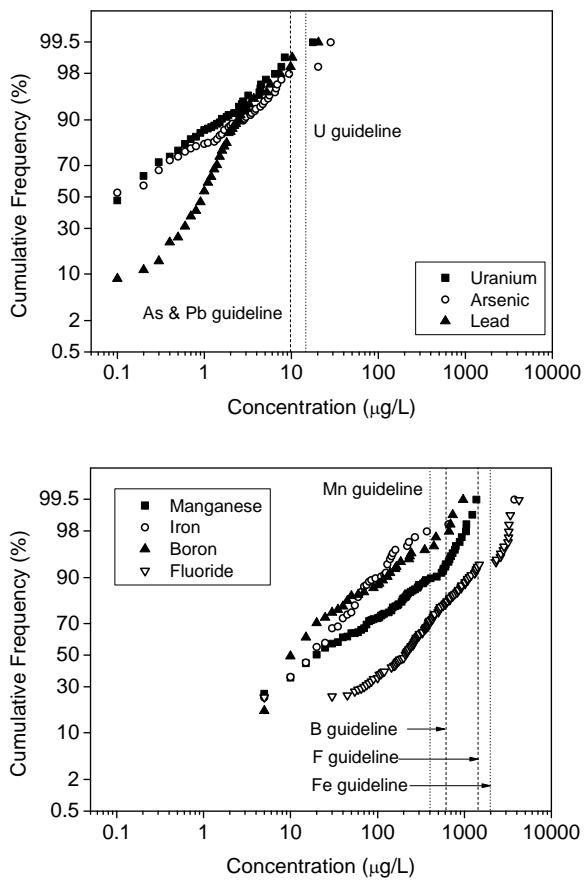
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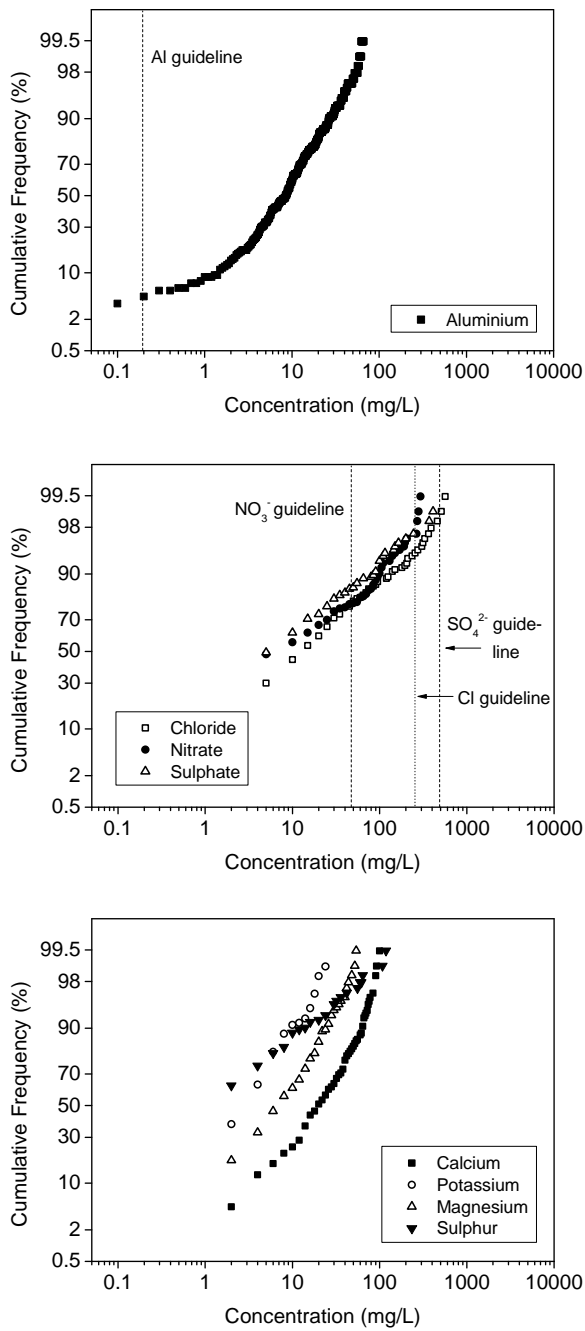
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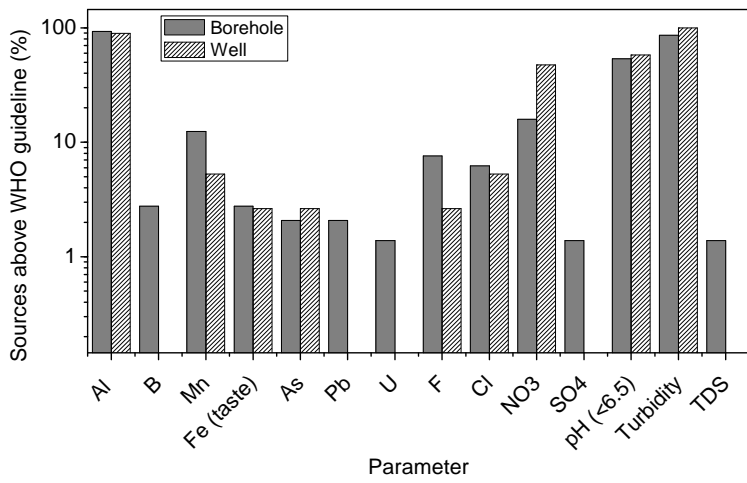
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690 Figure 4

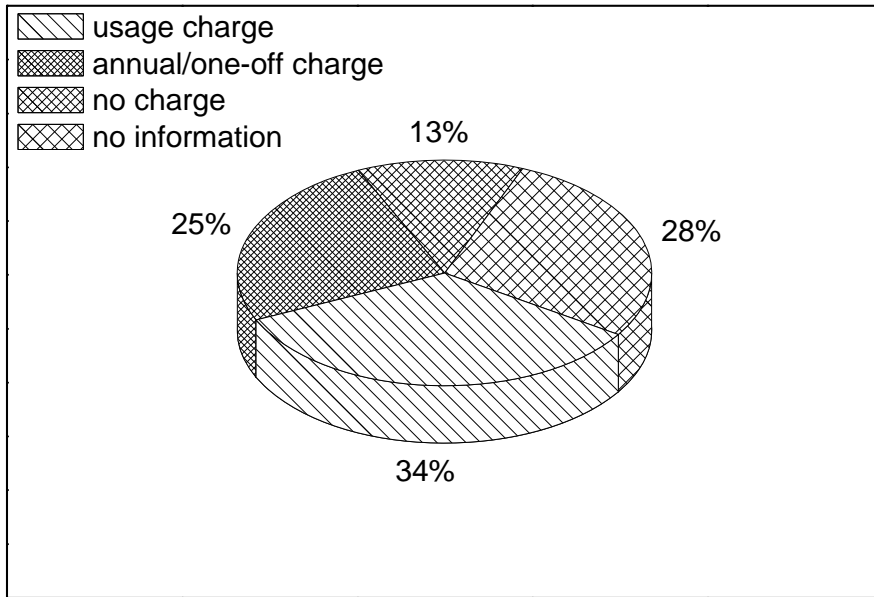


691
692 Figure 5
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695 Figure 6
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Figure 7