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### MAXIMISING THE BENEFITS FROM WATER AND ENVIRONMENTAL SANITATION

#### PAKISTAN – WATER AND SANITATION SERVICES IN A DEVOLVED GOVERNMENT SYSTEM

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*The existing rural WatSan services in Pakistan are mostly the product of a top-down approach. The WatSan schemes are often complex, expensive and unsustainable, with little consideration of community participation, hygiene promotion and environmental issues. Water quality is another serious issue that has further aggravated with the recent discovery of arsenic in certain areas, high population growth and increasing number of people pushed beyond the poverty line every year. The devolved government system, introduced in 2001, is facing many challenges in social development sectors, including WatSan. Many of the over 12,000 schemes are not functional and their O&M is a serious issue as the rural communities are not willing to take them over. The TMAs, responsible for WatSan service delivery, after the launching of LGO 2001, also find it difficult to cope with the unsustainable old schemes. The best option for the country, under these circumstances, is to focus on institutional capacity building of TMAs through projects like the North West Frontier Province (NWFP) Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Project (RWSSP) in order to meet the MDG targets and undertake much-needed sectoral policy reforms.*

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#### Introduction

Pakistan has the seventh largest population in the world with nearly 150 million people (2.4% annual growth rate), of whom 70% live in rural areas. With an average annual per capita income of US\$ 470, Pakistan is listed among low-income countries (The World Bank, 2005). As a consequence of unequal distribution of resources, almost 40% of the population lives below the poverty line (UNICEF, 2005).

These poor people, mostly living in rural areas or urban slums, are not only deprived of financial resources, but they also lack access to basic needs such as education, health, and safe water supply and sanitation (WatSan) services. Limited access to education, poor health conditions and malnutrition are often the result of poor WatSan services. This situation severely undermines their capability to secure gainful employment and caused an increasing income poverty and social exclusion.

The situation in the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) is further exacerbated by the presence of an estimated three million Afghan refugees, a substantial addition to the local 20 million that has caused adverse effects to the basic services and overall social economy. According to the Government of NWFP (GoNWFP), around 59% of the province's rural population has access to relatively clean water, whereas access to hygienically safe sanitation is claimed to be around 30%. However, many experts believe that the actual figures are more modest.

#### Background

There was little concept of piped water supply and safe liquid waste disposal in Pakistan until late 1950s, when the provincial Public Health Engineering Departments (PHEDs) were created to deliver safe WatSan services. There was a general belief that water is a gift of Allah (God) so these services should be free of charge. The PHED's not only designed and implemented schemes under a top-down approach, but also operated and maintained them for which government funds were always available, as such there was no pressure for an efficient revenue collection system.

With a fast growing population, increasing public demand, and continued political influence, by 1980s the cost of operation and maintenance (O&M) of schemes increased so much that hardly any funds were left to install new schemes (World Bank, 1990). In the 1990s the number of unsustainable scheme had reached over 12,000, with a staggering Rs1.5 billion charged as the O&M cost to the national exchequer.

The Social Action Programme (SAP) launched by the Government of Pakistan (GoP) in 1992 suggested various policy reforms to improve WatSan service delivery and enhance coverage. This included the use of low-cost appropriate technologies with community involvement, hygiene promotion, and community-managed O&M (The World Bank, 2002).

## Devolution

In August 2001, GoP introduced the devolved government system, under a local government ordinance (LGO). The LGO 2001 provided for a variety of administrative reforms that included devolving WatSan service delivery to the newly created Tehsil/Town Municipal Administrations (TMAs). As expected in such cases of large-scale administrative reforms, constant challenges have emerged in the transition period, a major one of these being institutional capacity building of the TMAs.

## Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Project

In September 1998, the UK Department for International Development (DFID) agreed to the assist the NWFP Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Project (RWSSP). However, for different reasons, the project could not immediately be launched.

In the aftermath of the 9/11 scenario and the resultant Afghan war, DFID assisted Pakistan with the Community Infrastructure Initiative Project (CIIP) to provide relief to NWFP communities in anticipation of a fresh refugee influx. Due to the emergency nature of this project, an NGO Sarhad Rural Support Programme (SRSP) was engaged to implement the project by involving Tehsil/Town Nazims and Union Councillors. The project design required the beneficiary communities to contribute a minimum 20% of the capital cost in cash or kind, construct the infrastructure schemes and take full responsibility for their O&M. CIIP proved to be a very successful and cost-saving intervention. It is estimated that these cost 30 to 50% less than any similar departmentally-built schemes with contractor involvement. Self-sustenance of the CIIP schemes is proved by the fact that all 254 of them fully functional.

Some of the salient projects implemented under the Rural Support Programme (RSP) approach include:

- **Lachi Poverty Reduction Project (LPRP)** in Lachi Tehsil of NWFP's Kohat District. Lachi is deficient of groundwater and the community-built small surface reservoirs have proved to be a great success in not only meeting their drinking and small-scale irrigation water needs, but also in helping poverty reduction because of improvement in agriculture and other related activities. Sanitation and hygiene promotion are integral parts of LPRP. TMA Lachi, SRSP, DFID and the local communities are jointly implementing this project.
- **Lodhran Pilot Project (LPP)** in Lodhran Tehsil of Punjab's Bahawalpur District is a replication of the Orangi Pilot Project (OPP) model, in which the major partners are the TMA Lodhran, local mohalla committees (community organisations) and National Rural Support Programme (NRSP). This World

Bank, Water and Sanitation Programme-assisted (WB-WSP) project has significantly improved the sanitation and health conditions in this small town of over 20,000 inhabitants.

- **School Sanitation Programme (SSP)** is a UNICEF-funded rural support programme for building demonstration latrines and promoting hygiene through school children in four districts of NWFP. Other major partners are the Education Department, Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs) and NGOs, such as SRSP, SABAWON, IRSP and BEST.
- **Water Quality Assessment** as a part of improving TMAs' and local communities' awareness about the significance of hygiene practices for safer water supply is another UNICEF-supported intervention in Takht Bhai, Tull and Doaba Tehsils of NWFP. The concerned TMAs, local NGOs and community organisations are major partners in this important initiative.

In December 2002, the GoNWFP approached for DFID assistance in reinitiating RWSSP. Although DFID was encouraged by the CIIP experience, yet many changes had occurred since 1998, such as devolution, the need for an integrated WatSan approach, and change of construction costs that necessitated redesign of the project. The GoNWFP, SRSP and DFID were fully involved in the redesign of RWSSP. The updated project design focuses on the wider devolution programme to reduce poverty by providing increased access to the poorer communities to low-cost, appropriate and sustainable WatSan services.

RWSSP was launched in July 2005, but experienced some delay in the approval of revised PC-1. It is expected to complete 2,109 schemes by June 2006, out of a total of 5,527 up to the end of project in June 2008.

The project has a number of innovative features, such as:

- Support to and development of appropriate institutional relations between different tiers of the government (provincial, district and tehsil/town)
- Integrated WatSan, with hygiene promotion as an essential component
- Institutional capacity building of the TMAs and GoNWFP, Local Government, Elections and Rural Development Department
- Facilitating the TMAs in providing integrated WatSan services to one million poorer people of NWFP by installing some 5,500 schemes
- Increasing community contribution in the capital cost of schemes (from 20% in the beginning to 30% towards the end of the project) and full O&M responsibility
- Women's mandatory role in decision-making;
- Poverty-focused resource allocation

- An effective data collection and management information system (MIS)
- A comprehensive monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system at all levels, including the community level
- Co-ordination with all capacity building projects in NWFP.

### **Institutional Capacity Building**

RWSSP's capacity building strategy for different levels of the government is as follows:

- At the provincial level the project supports clear definition of roles and responsibilities and establishment of financial transfer systems in line with LGO 2001. At this level, it also encourages the setting of appropriate technical standards for WatSan design and quality
- At the district level, it supports strategic planning of water resources and planning of WatSan services in a way responsive to the user communities
- At the tehsil/town level it encourages improved management of the existing resources, setting-up of service delivery levels, development of procedures for need prioritisation and full community involvement in scheme identification, construction and O&M. The project's regional teams and the concerned tehsil/town staff along with the concerned Tehsil Officials help to form Community Organisations or work through existing Cos.
- The TMA-based Scheme Selection Committee (SSC) is headed by the Nazim (or Naib Nazim in his/her absence), with Naib Nazim, tehsil officials, a woman councillor and two of the project's regional staff members as members.
- The SSC shortlists and approves schemes against the scheme selection criteria. The list of schemes is then sent to the tehsil council for endorsement as prescribed in the LGO 2001
- The interest of the Members of the Provincial Assembly (MPAs) and other legislative bodies in the development of their constituencies is duly recognised. They are encouraged to support communities in bringing appropriate schemes to SSC. They can also participate in RWSSP by transferring to the project the special development funds at their disposal. These funds would be used in the same way as main project resources from GoNWFP, DFID and the communities.

### **SRSP's Role**

SRSP's role in RWSSP is to provide Technical Assistance (TA). This mainly involves capacity building of the TMAs in:

- Community mobilisation
- Scheme prioritisation and selection
- Low-cost, appropriate technology options
- Technical designing
- Health and Hygiene promotion
- Water quality monitoring
- Environmental protection

- Monitoring and evaluation strategies
- Management information system (MIS)
- Procurement and inventory management
- Budget management
- Human resource development
- Enhanced women's role in decision-making
- Improved income generation and literacy as a consequence of improved health and environment
- Knowledge management
- Helping trust and co-operation between government, civil society and communities to work as partners in development
- Improved donor co-ordination

### **Lessons Learnt**

The devolved government system is still new and learning from experience. There are a number of critical issues, such as: (i) inadequate experience of National Reconstruction Bureau (NRB) that designed the devolution system and insufficient consultation prior to launching it, (ii) financial and human resource constraint, (iii) lack of understanding of respective roles by different tiers of government, (iv) lack of experience of the local politicians and officials, (v) inequity in the devolution of powers from federal the government to the provincial governments and downwards.

All this still needs to be sorted out, but yet most people agree that new system is a step forward. It is expected that most of these issues will be resolved with the passage of time, in particular after the next local government elections in July 2005.

DFID's intervention in NWFP and in-depth working with the GoNWFP and other local partners has provided the department with some hands-on-knowledge of the institutional issues that needs to be addressed. These include:

- Institutional strengthening of the local government institutions in light of LGO 2001, particularly with regards to understanding of roles and responsibilities of difference tiers and functionaries – from provincial up to the UC levels
- Strengthening technical capacities of local government engineers in engineering designs, particularly in using simple computer software, conducting research and providing innovative, low-cost, appropriate, affordable and sustainable technology options
- Improving local government data collection and management systems
- Improving local government planning and monitoring capabilities
- Promoting a holistic approach in the delivery of WatSan services that not only focuses drinking water, sanitation and hygiene promotion but attaches due consideration to other related sectors, such as solid waste disposal, environment, health, education and population

- at all local government levels (provincial, districts and tehsil/town)
- Supporting availability of appropriate human resources in local government institutions
- Strengthening financial management systems to accommodate innovative approaches, such as community participation, public sector-private sector partnerships)
- Supporting WatSan sector policy reforms in line with the Millennium Development Goals
- Supporting the development and national adoption water quality standards, their dissemination, application and awareness building at all supply and delivery levels

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