

Policies and Programs for Safe Drinking Water in Punjab, Pakistan: A Descriptive Analysis

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Article Information	Abstract
Received: December 11, 2024	Creating effective public policy to provide essential civic services, including Safe Drinking Water has gained increased importance worldwide. Such policy structures are becoming increasingly popular in many countries. Pakistan lacks a robust policy framework for administering safe drinking water services. This study aims to analyze the existing drinking water-related policies and programs in the Punjab Province. The researcher conducted a descriptive analysis of policies and programs and formulated relevant recommendations based on the findings.
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1. Introduction

Doing something purposefully is Public Policy. Harold Lasswell is the founding father of Public Policy (Khalid et al., 2016). Public Policy is a set of well-defined actions involving one or more than one actor. State institutions design public policy by exercising moral, constitutional, administrative, and financial powers. A healthy Public Policy is a strategy, not a single action revolving around meaningful objectives. Individuals, community sections, policymakers and advisors, and governmental and non-governmental organizations have direct or indirect interests in products of Public Policy. Sometimes, policy analysts and think tanks as government clients also contribute to making Public Policy with their recommendations (Young & Quinn, 2002). Formulating effective and efficient public policy requires maximum public participation (Harding et al., 2015). Thomas Dye defines Public policy as “what governmental regimes need to do and do not need to do” (Zafar et al., 2016).

In the broadest sense, the definition of “policy” is a consistent and purposeful way of doing something. Individuals, families, and businesses can have private and self-governed policies. The term “public policy” refers to a course of action taken by a government to address a public issue. Institutions design public policy in the interest of a larger group of people. It is the outcome of government processes including lawmaking, enacting regulations, and allocating resources. The public policy addresses healthcare, education, public welfare, crime control, transportation, and municipal services. With the rapid industrial growth and increasing human services in the cities, rural-urban movements are increasing, amassing the urban population, sometimes beyond the governing limits. The human drive toward urban centers is complicated, multifaceted, and challenging. Across the globe, policymakers are emphasizing the management of overcrowding cities, including the smooth provision of municipal services (Shirazi & Kazmi, 2014).

A line from Samuel Taylor Coleridge, which fits nicely in Pakistan's water crisis today, goes, "Water, water everywhere, nor any drop to drink." Billions could be saved on filtration plants and health care for waterborne diseases, by simply protecting freshwater sources from untreated sewage and industrial waste. There is no tap that is drinkable anywhere in Pakistan-from rural areas to five-star hotel suites. It is one of the top seven countries where 90% of its population is sick. Some 40% of its under-fives are stunted, well above South Asia's 31%. This is primarily because of a dismal lack of accessibility to safe

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water, with no national policy framework guiding the provinces in formulating integrated water safety strategies. Provincial policies are sectoral, focusing on one line department, like the Public Health Engineering Department, but exclude interdepartmental collaboration and climate considerations important for sustainable water resource management (Omair, 2024).

In its very nature, Pakistan tends to be one of those 37 states that are facing a high degree of water stress, which simultaneously puts the very quality and quantity of freshwater increasingly gradually in poorer conditions. As the population is increasing faster, water demand continues to increase tremendously over the years. Water scarcity is defined as less than 1,000 m³ per capita every year by international standards, and at present, per capita availability of water stands at about 1,038 m³ for Pakistan. Experts say it is likely to reach a point where only 751 m³ will be available per person by the year 2030. According to WHO, only 36% of the population is at least able to access safe drinking water. Access to clean water is also highly unequal– the wealthiest enjoy a far greater degree of access than do the poorest. It is this serious situation that needs to be addressed in time through technical and political remedies to ensure that all Pakistanis have safe drinking water. This policy note shall be a call to action for the policymakers, create awareness among them regarding challenges, and put forward a few possible solutions (Hartmeyer, 2018).

Water is generally believed to be a public good. Public and bureaucratic officials are involved in water governance (Ahmed & Araral, 2019). The construction of sound public policy for rendering basic civic services, including Safe Drinking Water (SDW), has taken wider relevance across the globe, and such policy frameworks are trending in most countries (International Water Association, 2015). In its report “Southern Punjab Basic Urban Services Project”, the Asian Development Bank suggests policy reforms, including the influential role of local governments in policymaking and a decentralized system of basic urban services, exceptionally safe water, and sanitation (Asian Development Bank, 2012). The study follows the descriptive analysis of drinking water related policies in Punjab, Pakistan identifying the issues and challenges faced by policy circles. The researcher recommends the appropriate recommendations to make the drinking water system reformed and service oriented.

2. Analysis of Policies and Programs of Safe Drinking Water in Punjab

It is evident from the available literature that recently Pakistan facing an acute shortage of clean drinking water and will be highly water stressed country in future if proactive legislation and policies will not take place. As discussed above Pakistan ranks among the countries facing high increase in population placing immense surcharge to water demand. In an urban environment, overcrowding management for the sustainable provision of clean drinking water (CDW) is essential. However, in Pakistan, no attention is paid to the balance of the growing urban population and the sustainability of drinking water services. Per capita availability of water is decreasing rapidly. Institutions work in drinking water sector with unclear roles and responsibilities. Water-related policies need to fix the responsibilities of stakeholders, and there is no central or provincial authority to execute the policy guidelines in respective areas of responsibility.

Drinking water related policies do not reflect the spirit of MDG, Agenda 2030, and SDG objectives. Drinking water-related policies revolve around meaningful objectives with well-defined actions, clear roles & responsibilities, and transparent strategies & procedures. The country needs a purposeful policy framework to be implemented effectively to provide the safe drinking water to every citizen and achieve SDG 6. This study aimed to identify the discrepant policies and draw needful recommendations in the area of safe drinking water. Policymaking circles failed to introduce a formula, indicators, or progress measurement system to gauge the progress in the developments of the drinking water sector and move ahead after minimizing the impeding factors.

2.2 The National Environmental Action Plan (NEAP) 2001

Pakistan Environment Protection Council introduced the National Environmental Action Plan (NEAP) in 2001, which deals with the issues and challenges associated with the environment, including climate change, land, forestry, air, water, and sanitation. Following the guidelines of NEAP, the Ministry of Environment designed the National Environment Policy in 2005, which

formulates a framework to address the environmental problems and pollution in fresh waters. The Policy endeavors to provide sustainable services of SDW and ensure the conservation of the country's water resources. According to the provisions of the policy, the framework for the promotion of SDW and coverage of water supply rests with the government (Environmental Protection Department Government of Hong Kong, 2007)

2.3 Clean Drinking Water for All (CDWA)

In 2004, the Government of Punjab (GOP) launched a water project, "Clean Drinking Water for All (CDWA)", under which a survey was carried out in Punjab Province. The local Government and Community Development Department (LG&CD) examined 364 Water Samples from the Pakistan Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (PCSIR) Laboratory collected from Kasur, Lahore, Bahawalpur, and Okara. Of these 364 Water Samples, 328 were found polluted with Arsenic and Bacteria elements, which are menacing to human health. To ensure safe drinking water for all citizens, the GOP installed 307 Water Filtration Plants, i.e. 215, 50, 10, and 32 in Lahore, Kasur, Okara, and Bahawalpur, respectively (<https://lgcd.punjab.gov.pk>). National and Sub-National governments have taken various steps, such as Clean Drinking Water for All (CDWA) in 2004 but failed to deliver sustainable services of clean drinking water (Rasheed et al., 2021)

The global community has acknowledged the right to SDW to make a standardized quality of life for the people. In light of recommended standards, the GOP started a "Clean Drinking Water for All" project in 2004. Provincial governments endeavor to install one water purification plant at the country's UC level with the central government's financial assistance. In the first phase, more than 300 water purification plants are being installed in the Lahore, Kasur, Okara, and Bahawalpur districts of Punjab (Punjab Municipal Development Fund Company, 2018). Federal government phased out CDWA in three steps, firstly, one WFP at the district level; secondly, one WFP at the tehsil level; and thirdly, one WFP in every union council of the country. It was a project launched and administered by the federal government. In this regard, provincial and district governments have no role. After decentralization arrangements enacted under the 18th amendment, the project did not continue further (Malik Muhammad Ramzan, Director Local Government Dera Ghazi Khan).

2.4 The National Environment Policy 2005

Environmental advocacy of international donors paved the way for the formulation of The National Environment Policy 2005 and 2007 (Hussain, 2012). The policy provides a guiding framework to address the environmental degradation observing Pakistan, specifically pollution in freshwater resources, air pollution, lack of sustainable waste disposal, increasing deforestation, and climate change (Khan & Javed, 2007).

2.5 Punjab Urban Water and Sanitation Policy (PUW&SP) 2007

In 2007, in line with National Sanitation Policy 2006 and National Environment Policy 2005, the GoP formulated the Punjab Urban Water and Sanitation Policy, which is aimed to improve water and sanitation services in urban areas of the province by guiding and supporting the provincial and local government institutions, TMAs, and communities. This policy was framed after provincial and district-level consultations with all stakeholders to provide a comprehensive framework for dealing with the urban water and sanitation services in the province. The policy also deals with governing, legal, institutional, and environmental concerns. PUW&SP aims to enforce appropriate statutory instruments. Punjab Urban Water Act would be legislated to regulate surface water rights in urban areas. Promulgation of the WASCO Act and Punjab Municipal Services Regulatory Authority Act concerns independent WATSAN entities and independent service providers in cities (Urban Unit P&D Department, 2007).

2.6 National Drinking Water Policy 2009

The Ministry of Environment Government of Pakistan, in line with the National Environment Policy, Vision 2030, and the countrywide consultation process, acknowledges that sustainable access to SDW

is a fundamental human right, that the state is responsible for rendering affordable, and equitable water services to all citizens, articulated the National Drinking Water Policy. The policy issues directive principles to provide SDW to the entire population in a resourceful and sustainable manner (Government of Pakistan Ministry of Environment, 2009).

The National Drinking Water Policy 2009 drives the legislature to lay down the country's first safe drinking water act, using cost-effective technology from the local government resources (Khwaja & Aslam, 2018). The policy defines the term "safe water" as water, which is not a risk to human health according to national water quality standards and is available at least 45 and 120 liters individually per day. The policy is the set of guiding principles to tackle the issues and challenges, which are hurdles in providing affordable access to SDW. It is the draft formulating strategies for central, provincial, and local Governments, Federally Administered Northern Areas, Federally Administered Tribal Areas, and Azad Jammu & Kashmir (Government of Pakistan Ministry of Environment, 2009).

National Drinking Water Policy 2009 sets the following objectives:

- Provision of drinking water supply to the entire population by 2025,
- Conservancy policy for water resources, making sure of the quality and treatment of drinking water,
- Emphasize water conservation through public awareness,
- Public participation and community engagement in policymaking, policy implementation, monitoring, and operations and maintenance in the water sector,
- Capacity building of water administration at all levels,
- The policy aims to focus on the capacity building of local government institutions to bring improvement in the drinking water sector,
- Promotion of public-private partnerships for augmenting public access to SDW,
- Promote research for enhancing the sustainability and effectiveness of safe water systems,
- Inter-organizational cooperation to minimize the breaks in the water supply, and
- Ensure the enforcement of the Punjab Municipal Water Act with the consensus of all stakeholders.

2.7 Punjab Drinking Water Policy 2012 (PDWP)

To meet the requirements of MDGs, international donors have played an instrumental role in drafting policies relating to the environment, including drinking water in different countries. Either the donors prepared the drinking water policies themselves and handed over to governments or assisted them in drafting their own. They played the same role in Pakistan and helped the government institutions to draft Punjab Drinking Water Policy 2012. The objective behind the formulation of the policy is to achieve the standards of MDGs, cope with water shortage, and deter environmental degradation (Hussain, 2012).

2.8 Punjab Saaf Pani Program (PSPP) 2014

The GOP introduced the "Punjab Saaf Pani Program" (PSPP) with total funds of Rs 30000 million. The scheme envisioned providing clean drinking water and sanitation services to rural and urban Punjab to improve the health and living standards of the people. GoP established the Punjab Saaf Pani Company (PSPC), which aimed to comply with government targets. In financial years 2015-16, Rs. 4,575.388 million were allocated to complete 75 Urban and 340 rural WSSs. GoP allocated Rs 1041.916 million for urban and Rs 3533.471 million for rural projects. 73% of the total funds for the safe water sector were kept for Southern Punjab, while 27% for Northern Punjab (Planning & Development Department, 2016). GOP has established the Punjab Saaf Pani Company to stipulate multiple modern water supply solutions for the districts, which observe more brackish and unclean drinking water. The program has been phased out to extend the role of the company to all districts (Planning & Development Board, 2014).

After the establishment of PSPC, no role of local governments was designated in PSPP to provide clean water. The Punjab Growth Strategy, 2023, is vital to laying a framework to provide healthier, well-

organized, and sustainable SDW and sanitation services to Punjab's urbanized communities. The GoP has approached the ADB for investing and designing the service delivery models in selected Punjab cities: Rawalpindi, Sargodha, Multan, Dera Ghazi Khan, Muzaffargarh, Bahawalpur, and Rahim Yar Khan. In improving the quality of urban services, the ADB will assist in urban developments, including technical assistance, feasibility study, surveys, geological and hydrological investigations, the performance of municipal institutions, and the exploration of innovations. The Punjab Spatial Strategy, 2047, upholds improved spatial planning in connectivity, urban planning, environmental challenges, and tourism. The strategy pursues to convert urban areas into an environment of smartness, competitiveness, and standardized living (Asian Development Bank, 2020).

Under the PSPP, urban South Punjab was given a few projects. One was a Comprehensive Water Supply and Sewerage Scheme for Vehari City with an estimated cost of Rs 308.201 million. Rs 20 million and 447.366 million were proposed for the feasibility study of the Urban WSS Dera Ghazi Khan and Urban WSS, Muzaffargarh City, respectively (Planning & Development Department, 2016).

2.9 Punjab Sector Development Plan 2014–2024: Drinking Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene

Given the post-2015 MDGs era, the GoP presented its Sector Development Plan for Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene in 2014. Punjab bore half of the country's population and weighed the challenge of the country's human development indicators and WATSAN services for the entire province population heavily. This plan has been directed toward WATSAN facilities for the urban population of the province (Planning & Development Board, 2014).

2.10 WASH Sector Development Plan 2014-24

In 2017, the Improving Urban WASH Governance and Accountability (IUWGA) project was introduced in Pakistan to evaluate the efficiency and sustainment of its participatory governing approach relating to affordable and sustainable access to water. The project was designed to analyze the model of local urban governance, which constructs on collaborative approach and accountability relations for a new social contract between local administrative offices and populations in new urban arrangements (OXFAM, 2018).

2.11 Mid-Term Development Framework 2014-17

Agendas of the Mid-Term Development Framework 2014-17 include the Urban Development to build up advanced and resourcefully managed urban areas to perform as growth drivers for the provincial economy. The framework prioritized the supply of filtered water to drink and its economical use; the establishment of an effective and well-organized system of sewerage and drainage; environment-friendly waste management services; safe and timesaving road infrastructure; and strategic planning for urban and regulatory building control (Planning & Development Department, 2015).

2.12 Urban Development Sector Plan 2018

The GoP has developed the sector plan for Urban Development with the coordination of the Housing, Urban Development & Public Health Department, Local Government and Community Development Department, Transport Department, Lahore Development Authority, the Urban Unit, Punjab Municipal Development Fund Company, and Punjab Housing and Town Planning Agency. Mandates of the Urban Development Sector Plan 2018 are Solid Waste Management, Water and Sanitation Services, and efficient transport systems in urban areas. Identifying programs, projects, and resource requirements for implementing the plan and significant policy reforms are also part of the agendas. The plan strategizes the capacity building of the government departments for the maximum potential of urban growth (Planning & Development Department, 2015).

2.13 National Water Policy 2018

National Water Policy stipulates the planning and execution principles in managing national and provincial water resources. The state acknowledges through the policy that water is a strategic resource, and sustainable water service is a fundamental right of the people. The policy endorses a participatory and consensus-based approach, efficiency at all levels, innovation in policymaking, and arrangements for water security. Provincial governments are encouraged to draft more detailed and comprehensive policies for water treatment, environmental concerns, and drinking water quality and availability. A national body entitled “National Water Council” will be constituted to regulate and review water-related policies and issues with the collaboration of all stakeholders. Provinces will establish a regulatory body, “Ground Water Authority”, under the legal umbrella of NWP 2018 to make sure the sustainability, availability, affordability, and quality of drinking water (Ministry of Water Resources Pakistan, 2018).

The government of Pakistan, the Ministry of Water Resources, devised National Water Policy (NWP) in 2018, calling it a national framework for better water governance and proper provision of SDW to all citizens regardless of religion, area, ethnic identity, or caste. It is a policy document and set of principles covering all dimensions of water governance. Following the recommendations of NWP, provincial governments are authorized to formulate their strategies for water resource management and the provision of SDW. NWP frames clear objectives and assigns roles and responsibilities with clarity to all stakeholders. This policy document drafted a national imperative for water security. The objectives of the NWP 2018 are to extend awareness regarding emerging water system issues. It is a policy framework and set of strategies for comprehensive action plans. The policy draft declares water as a strategic resource and clean drinking water as a fundamental human right (Ministry of Water Resources Pakistan, 2018).

The policy draft stipulates an integrated approach to tackling the country's water security challenges. However, the institutional governance mechanism could not be given a room in NWPP 2018 (Sumra, Mumtaz, & Khan, 2020). According to provisions of the 18th Amendment 2010 of the constitution, provinces observe considerable autonomy under the country's federal structure. The constitutional draft of 2010 authorizes the provinces to formulate their action plans and design strategies for a sustainable system of SDW. Water resource management is a federal concern, but safe water supply in rural and urban areas and other water-related sub-sections are provincial subjects (Ministry of Water Resources Pakistan, 2018).

National Water Policy sets the following objectives regarding SDW:

- Provision of SDW and sanitation services to the rural and urban population of the country
- Provincial Action Plans for Sustainable Urban Water Management
- Making sure of consistent water availability, particularly in urban areas
- Financial Viability for the Urban Water Supply and Sanitation System
- Enhancing public participation and public-private partnership
- Water conservation through awareness and behavior change
- Purification strategy for SDW
- Sustainability in production and consumption patterns
- Resilient water resource management
- To cope with the households and general requirements
- Refining urban water services, including SDW, sanitation, and wastewater management
- Maintaining water-related ecosystems
- Infrastructural reforms for better services of SDW
- Promoting technological advancements
- Capacity building of water institutions, and
- Emphasizing research and maximizing inter-municipal coordination.

2.14 Punjab Water Policy 2018

Punjab Water Policy 2018 aims to enforce drinking water and sanitation standards in rural and urban areas (Irrigation Department, 2018).

2.15 Punjab Growth Strategy 2018

Planning and Development Board has introduced a provincial growth strategy entitled “Punjab Growth Strategy 2018 Accelerating Economic Growth and Social Outcomes”. The draft strategizes and emphasizes the improvements in drinking water, sanitation, and hygiene services to avert communicable diseases (Planning & Development Board, 2014).

2.16 The Clean Green Pakistan Movement (CGPM)

In 2018, the national government launched the Clean Green Pakistan Movement while adopting a more holistic approach to the WASH sector, which covers sanitation, water, and waste management as significant campaign organs. The CGPM is one of the countrywide efforts to develop a mechanism of monitoring and responsibility in the WASH sector. The campaign introduces a competitive environment leading the provinces to a state of competition to show clean green city progress. National Water Policy 2018 was also adopted under the umbrella of CGPM (Musawi, Bokhari, Saadat, & Ijaz, 2021).

2.17 The Punjab Growth Strategy 2023 and the Punjab Spatial Strategy 2047

GOP has strategized development concerns, focusing on the sustainable provision of clean water, adequate sanitation services, efficient city transport, and good living standards. Since 2017, the GOP has taken significant steps to introduce new solutions to urban development challenges, including increasing private sector engagements in service delivery. For instance, Punjab’s major urban centers have introduced outsourced SWM. Recently, more roles of the private sector in rendering community services have been introduced through the Punjab Local Government Act 2019. The Punjab Spatial Strategy, 2047, for instance, is a positive step towards GoP’s policy of planning and coordination in the management of urban areas. It also encourages improvements in spatial planning in different urban subjects. Similarly, the Punjab Growth Strategy, 2023 outlines the efficient and sustainable provision of SDW and sanitation services in the Punjab province (Asian Development Bank, 2020).

2.18 Vision 2025

In Pakistan, the Ministry of Planning Development & Special Initiatives introduced a well-thought-of vision for 2025 and declared a torchbearer in the struggle for sustainable human development. The formation of Vision 2025 and bringing it into line with Agenda 2030 is adequate to achieve sustainable urban development and the targets of SDGs. The central government has started different policies to pledge its achievement. These initiatives include the Youth Loan Program, Benazir Income Support Program, Prime Minister Health Card, and National Internship Program. Besides this, the adaptation of all development programs with the 2030 agenda, the establishment of the SDGs Parliamentary Task Force, the constitution of federal and provincial SDGs units, and the PM, Global SDGs fund, are also important components of government strategies (Ahmad & Haq, 2021). The GOP focused on creating a supportive environment for better WATSAN services as defined in the Vision 2025 document (Ministry of Climate Change, 2019).

3. Conclusion

Drinking water-related policies revolve around meaningful objectives with well-defined actions, clear roles & responsibilities, and transparent strategies & procedures. In many countries, policymakers consider population issues and human rights-based approaches in the formation and execution of municipal services-related policies, including the smooth provision of clean water. Result-oriented policies in community services, including Clean Drinking Water (CDW) are taking wider relevance for human beings in most countries. International organizations emphasize formulating policies defining the precise role of multi-stakeholders to achieve the objectives of MDGs, Agenda 2030, SDGs, and other international instruments or commitments.

In line with unclear constitutional provisions, drinking water-related policies in Pakistan need to be harmonized with international standards and instruments. These policies do not reflect the spirit of MDG, Agenda 2030, and SDG objectives. Most policies advise guiding principles, more than a complete execution

plan to implement internationally recognized standards. Drinking water as a human right has been given little room in federal and provincial policies and programs. The state recognizes through the National Water Policy 2018 that water stands among strategic resources and availability of drinking water is a part of human rights. The policy endorsed the role of local governments in the drinking water sector and extended partnership, behavior change, and water conservation through awareness campaigns. On the other hand, the policy recommended the establishment of a parallel entity, “Ground Water Authority”, at the provincial level for resilient water resource management but without the considerable role of the local government.

In an urban environment, overcrowding management for the sustainable provision of Clean Drinking Water (CDW) is essential. However, in Pakistan, no attention is paid to the balance of the growing urban population and the sustainability of drinking water services. In other words, policy frameworks could not bridge demand and supply gaps. As pointed out by the Former Chief Minister of Punjab in an interview, slum areas burden urban centers’ service structure. Notably, poor and limited infrastructural arrangements are insufficient to meet the drinking water requirements of city and slum areas, which often do not include the area of responsibility of municipal institutions. Unfortunately, slum areas adjacent to cities are not considered in policies relevant to local governments and municipal services. He upheld the human rights-based approach in safe water services to treat the populations of semi-urban and urban areas equally.

Water-related policies need to fix the responsibilities of stakeholders, and there is no central or provincial authority to execute the policy guidelines in respective areas of responsibility. Similarly, national and provincial level policies require advocating the human rights-centric approach and allowing the local authorities to adopt such an approach. Local government institutions mostly follow the constitutional or legislative provisions, not the policy recommendations. A responsible municipal officeholder said there should be coherence between water-related legislation and policies to avoid administrative ambiguities and legal issues. The designated role of local governments may be a significant part of the policy framework, but no particular consideration is given to this. For example, a prevalent program PSPP has no designated role of local governments.

Policymaking circles failed to introduce a formula, indicators, or progress measurement system to gauge the progress in the developments of the drinking water sector and move ahead after minimizing the impeding factors. Mainly, water service-related policies need a mechanism or strategy for accountability. In this regard, the Improving Urban WASH Governance and Accountability Project 2017 (IUWGA) can be exemplified here, maintaining the measurement of efficiency of the participatory governing approach applied to the affordability and sustainability of the drinking water system. It was the model of measuring the local urban governance for a new social contract between people and local administration offices in urban arrangements. Furthermore, water-related policies and programs should consider private sector engagement, inter-municipal cooperation, technological advancement, and other modern governing approaches in drinking water management.

Infrastructural improvements are essential, along with legislative and administrative reforms. More on the policy side, directive principles and execution plans for advanced and service-oriented infrastructural reforms are not part of any policy framework. The most current policy, NDWP 2018, instructs infrastructural reforms for better drinking water services but confers no clear responsibility to relevant stakeholders. As policy reforms bring positive changes, a complete policy shift causes adverse effects on already achieved targets. Shifting policy with the change of government, as most recently, the Clean Green Pakistan Movement (CGPM) 2018, requires continuity of the policies. The country has been observing harmful practices of complete policy shifts and ever-changing policies for a long, which resulted in negative impacts and poor results in the drinking water sector. In response to the question of the poor performance of municipal institutions in drinking water services, complete policy shifts and ever-changing policies are to be held responsible by some local government and municipal office bearers.

As discussed above, many countries emphasize vulnerable human groups and areas to free them from water shortage and impurities through proper legislation and policy reforms. Against the growing practices across the globe, in terms of water scarcity and water impurity, vulnerable human groups like women & children and vulnerable areas like South Punjab could not be emphasized in federal and provincial policies in Pakistan. Vulnerable sections of society and geographical entities deserve sustainable provision of drinking

water. It is a broader concern and must be addressed in upcoming policies. The country requires area-specific and human group-specific policies to cope with its water needs efficiently.

4. Recommendations

It is necessary to utilize parliamentary means and deliberative environments to drive the drinking water agenda, including legislation, policymaking & implementation, and allocation of adequate financial resources. A coherent policy framework is the need of the hour for the water sector mentioning clear roles & responsibilities, demand & supply gaps, and execution & monitoring plans. Policies must emphasize disintegration & dual responsibilities and coordination among all tiers of government. National and provincial governments should minimize the intervention and enhance the capacity-building efforts of the local governments. The researcher recommends clarity of the relationships between the administrative and legislative sections of the federal, provincial, and local governments. Schemes of Small-Scale Water Supply should be introduced for specific localities synchronized to population size, available resources, and requirements. The system of safe water governance must be harmonized with the social, economic, and cultural specifications of the specific area.

International instruments like MDGs & SDGs and the country's commitments must be considered in legislation and policymaking at all levels. Local government representatives must be imparted basic and necessary knowledge of MDGs and SDGs. International collaborating organizations must be engaged to realize the prevalent social, political, and economic stress and extend their cooperation accordingly. Constitutionalize drinking water and its provision as fundamental human rights and the responsibility of local governments in its fulfilment. Service-oriented policies in the drinking water sector may be devised rather than politically motivated, which causes meagre institutional performance. Most importantly, people must be aware of constitutional provisions, rules & regulations, policies & programs, practices & procedures, their rights & duties, and administrative & infrastructural arrangements of water-related institutional entities. Local government institutions may initiate such programs to educate the people so that they can perform their responsibilities efficiently. There should be appropriate access to information regarding institutional mandates, legislation, rules, and regulations about rural and urban areas across the country.

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