



## CASE STUDY

# Pakistan: Integrated Water Resources Management Practises in Greater and Lesser Cholistan



## Summary

The Cholistan Desert is home to a semi-nomadic population and their livestock. The climate of the desert area, with scanty and unpredictable rainfall as well as long periods of drought, makes water a limited resource. To address the issue of water shortages and to secure access of water to livestock, the people of Cholistan have created water ponds, called “tobas”.

## Background

The Cholistan Desert area is one of the largest deserts in Pakistan located in the South-West region of Punjab. Locally known as Rohi, it sprawls thirty kilometers from Bahawalpur, Punjab, Pakistan and covers an area of 26,300 km<sup>2</sup> (10,200 mi<sup>2</sup>). It adjoins the Thar Desert, extending over Sindh into India. province and is home to a semi-nomadic population and their livestock. The primary source of income for Cholistan is cattle breeding. Cholistanis rely mainly on their livestock of sheep, goats, and camel. It has the major importance for satisfying the area's major needs for cottage industry as well as milk, meat and fat. The climate of the desert area, with scanty and unpredictable rainfall as well as long periods of drought, makes water a limited resource. To address the issue of water shortages and to secure access of water to livestock, the people of Cholistan have created water ponds, called “tobas”. However, due to their vulnerability to extreme weather conditions and infiltration, the ponds storage capacities are low. There are around 1500 water points (tobas) in the entire desert out of only 500 were in running condition. Most tobas are not constructed in proper places because their present localities have not been identified on scientific basis to receive maximum rainwater.

## **Actions taken**

The Pakistan Water Partnership (PWP) as part of Global Water Partnership (GWP), undertook a project in the desert area. PWP demonstrated 22 bio sand water filters in interior Cholistan with the support of the newly created organisation Bahawalpur Area Water Partnership (AWP). They also trained community members to prepare filters at their home using locally available materials. Additionally, 12 of the 25 target villages were provided with mineral mix and medicines. The reason behind was the high rate of ill cattle, caused by unclean water as the water is often contaminated and causes diseases. To decrease the level of infection, PWP distributed medicines and mineral mix to enhance the animals' milk production. PWP also distributed ORS and Aqua Tablets to 12 target villages. Moreover, soap making was introduced and taught to two villages. The PWP also visited a number of institutions and government organisations to discuss its initiatives. For instance, the Cholistan Development Authority (CDA) was visited and they provided information about the status of the tobas. 14 installed tobas were also studied during field visits. In connection to the project, members of PWP also took part in the Cholistan Peace Mela, a multi-stakeholder event where, among other things, the involved communities were given the opportunity to interact with local government representatives. At the

event the Bahawalpur Area Water Partnership (AWP) was also launched.

## **Outcomes**

The CDC organized the launch of Bahawalpur AWP with the active participation of civil society, government, private and public sectors from Bahawalpur at the Peace Mela. Several distinguished speakers from public society were present at the event. The mela provided an opportunity for the Cholistan and Bahawalpur local communities to interact with the local administration members in an informal setting. Promotional materials like display booths educated participants about organizations' mandates and services available to the public. Each household owned more than 100 cattle, mainly cows and goats. According to the availability of water and fodder, families seasonally migrate from one area to other. However, unavailability of clean water and dry conditions result in many diseases in camels and cows. PWP distributed medicines and mineral mix in 13 villages to enhance the animal milk production.

## Lessons Learned

Majority land is state owned, and agriculture is prohibited to avoid illegal land grabbing. Absence of land distribution or not allowing them territorial rights leads to land degradation and marginalization as large amount of land is left uncultivated.

Large cattle and goat population interspersed with other species like camel and sheep. Livestock carrying capacity of Cholistan is far exceeded by the high population of Cholistan breed of cattle.

Cholistani cattle heads as a main source of livelihood. The situation with respect to milk price has marginally improved but communities complain that they are still exploited by the middleman and the government's investments in dairy development cover are lacking.

Dairying and ranching are mainstay activities but require modern up-gradation. No emergency feed

banks found to cater for emergency relief.

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**Supporting Materials**

GWP South Asia

GWP Pakistan

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**Related IWRM Tools**

Climate Change Policies, Local Authorities, Community-based water supply and management organisations, Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships

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