

# SUCCESS STORY

## Water Sensitive Cities in Pakistan: Engaging Community for Effective Change and Action

Pakistan faces a turbulent water future with water scarcity a reality for many of its citizens. Climate change, poor water management, and failing infrastructure are exacerbating the country's water crisis. A rise in extreme weather-related events, an expanding urban population and growing water demand have added more stress to Pakistan's water ecosystem. With the rise in global temperatures and environmental shocks, the makeup of a country's water systems is crucial for sustainability and development. Holistic system approaches in planning, design, delivery, and management are required to address water needs at all levels.

The Australia Pakistan Water Security Initiative (APWASI) - a multi-year urban water resilience initiative - is being implemented by WWF-Pakistan with partners International Water Management Institute (IWMI) and Hydrology and Risk Consulting (HARC) in the twin cities of Islamabad and Rawalpindi. The project aims to apply a Water Sensitive Cities (WSC) approach to urban water management in two disadvantaged urban communities – Farash Town and James Town. The project envisages to embed urban water management in these communities and instill water wise behaviors (conservation, capture and reuse of water) to help tread the Water Sensitive pathway.

An important aspect of developing the WSC approach is grounding technical interventions based on community feedback and needs, as no intervention is one-size-fits-all. While the principles of the WSC approach provide guidance, applying these principles in practice requires deep community engagement to tailor the sustainable solutions as per community needs. At the heart of community engagement is empowering local communities to decide the water future they want and act to realize them. Engaging grassroots community participation, especially in disadvantaged communities which are often not given a seat at the table, is key to achieving WSC interventions into successful practice. WWF-Pakistan recognizes the role of residents living in Farash Town and James Town as active partners and key agents of change in this project.

In the past year of this project, a strong foundation was built based on active community participation and water and sanitation education, rallying residents around a shared vision for sustainable urban water management and daily practices. This has allowed all stakeholders to understand current water-related shocks and stresses, clearly identify topmost priorities, and brainstorm solutions together for the next phases of the initiative.



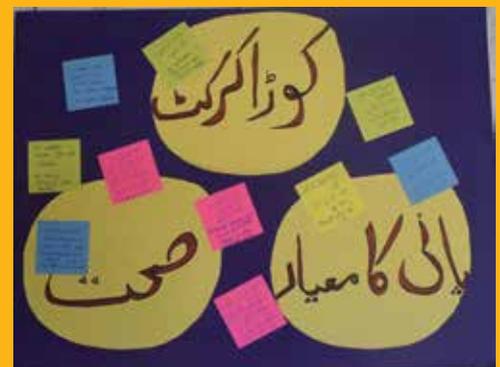
## Our community engagement strategy entails the following steps:

1. Identify priorities: During the inception phase, community interactions aimed to navigate, assess, and understand community priorities. This information was gathered via on-ground surveys, KIIs, male and female community-based organization (CBO) formation and initial Focus Group Discussions (FGDs). Men and women were interviewed separately to understand the unique gendered dimensions of water use.
2. Inform: To provide balanced and objective information to sensitize people on understanding their problems and how the WSC approach offers a solution, the communities were engaged in trainings and envisioning exercises to broaden their understanding of WSCs vision and technologies.
3. Consult: Once residents understood the WSC approach, they were consulted to gather feedback on project goals and objectives through workshops and group discussions pertaining to water security needs and the best feasible options for interventions. We paid particular attention in carrying out a gender analysis to get a better understanding of inclusivity of the proposed interventions.
4. Co-design: This stage focused on understanding community concerns and assisting them in tailoring and customizing the WSC interventions according to the community needs and existing landscape. At this stage, the communities give their input to co-design local WSC interventions.
5. Collaborate: Final decision on locations and interventions takes place at this stage. An action plan is made with the involvement of CBOs and by conducting household assessments.
6. Co-lead: At the final stage of community engagement, both communities are informed and empowered enough to drive the implementation work. Community leaders are thoroughly engaged to inaugurate the on-site work and take its ownership.

Based on results from these community interactions, we were able to learn about the critical water challenges in each area based on resident feedback. In the next stages of the project, this community engagement process will continue to respond directly to the challenges identified with detailed focus groups, CBO meetings and visioning workshops. Topics for community sessions were adapted from the Cooperative Research Centre (CRC) for Water Sensitive Cities and participants were engaged in a series of interactive participatory activities to sensitize and equip them with the right knowledge to initiate behavioral transformation towards becoming water sensitive. Activities included:

- Sharing the best and worst things about their neighborhood.
- Watching a documentary on urban water challenges across the globe and to understand steps to be taken at the local/household level for improved water management.
- Learning about proper waste disposal and good and poor water usage practice to prevent water wastage.
- Watching videos (Urdu language) about water conservation and rainwater harvesting to learn more about WSC's vision and different technical solutions available for sustainable water management.
- Learning about climate-induced urban hazards such as flooding and waterborne diseases and precautionary measures to help mitigate risks.

The community engagement process under APWASI has been a success thus far and a good blueprint for engaging local residents in urban water management. This is the first initiative of its kind in Pakistan specifically tackling urban water issues in disadvantaged communities, and in particular, highlighting the voices of both men, women and the most marginalized. In working closely with residents since the beginning of project, we are optimistic that community buy-in has been a success. James Town and Farash Town will be excellent models for Water Sensitive Cities Approach which can be replicated across Pakistan.



Good Practice	Bad Practice
1. Water less during washing hands.	1. Water less due to Brushing (Facial skin)
2. Close Tap during hand washing.	2. Open Dumping of Solid waste = water Stain
3. Proper collection of solid waste in container.	3. Flooding due to Mismanagement and Poor infrastructure.
4. Store Rainwater for reuse and water Conservation.	4. Drain not Clogging due to Solid Waste.
5. Proper Drainage System.	5. Leakage of water through Pipes.
6. Proper Piping to avoid Leaking.	6. No proper Solid waste collection/ disposal system (Sluggish Drainage).