

Lahore Statement

We the representatives of Non-Governmental Organizations, human rights groups, academia, media other civil society groups and concerned citizens from all parts of Pakistan and belong to all walks of life, gathered in Lahore on December 16, 2004 to deliberate on the people's right to water.

1. We are in agreement that water is a human right and it has been recognized in various international instruments.
2. We also recognize that the issue of water – its quality, its quantity, and its ensured availability to all people regardless of income or social status is one of the most pressing challenges facing the Pakistan today.
3. The provision of safe drinking water to population never gained a momentum and remained at low priority and under financed. The cost of unsafe drinking water to individual as well as society has never been calculated.
4. The overall governance crisis in Pakistan and declining quality of institutional performance are internal factors causing the poor status of water services delivery. However the role of international financiers cannot be ignored here.
5. The policy instruments used by IFIs have not helped countries to improve basic social services, rather these institutions created a vicious cycle of debt. The structural adjustment loans for policy reforms, massive devaluations and economic policies starved developing countries from financial resources to invest in human development. The global trade polices, economic reforms agenda promoted by World Bank and IMF, siphoned off the precious resources from developing countries which otherwise would have been used in human development programs.
6. Inadequate access to water forms a central core of people's poverty. It has an effect on their basic needs, health, food security and basic livelihoods of the poor. Improving access of poor people to water will potentially make a major contribution towards poverty reduction. Several of the millennium development goals are directly linked to safe drinking water. But it seems lack of political commitment at both national and global level to meet these goals.
7. The governments, multi-lateral banks, and corporations have tried to respond the water scarcity challenge in a way, which threatens historical entitlements of poor. Rather than facilitating easy accessibility of water to all, the corporate water model aims to put price tag and earn benefits. The poor conceive water as basic fundamental right; the corporations think water as blue gold to earn benefits, the multi-lateral banks visualize water sector as a high ground for secure investment, consultants and lobbying groups dream for high profile water jobs. The

international financial institutions are facilitating the penetration of corporations in water sector.

We demand that:

- State has an obligation under international law to respect, protect and fulfill the water rights of citizens.
- The state should ensure that every citizen of Pakistan without any discrimination have equal access to minimum quantity of safe drinking water to enjoy the right to life
- Government of Pakistan should protect this right by policy formulation and appropriate enforcement mechanism
- Private sector governed by corporate greed will not be the solution and global experience of water privatization has demonstrated the failure of private companies.
- Water should be managed as a public good under public domain
- All the government policies and program related to public interest should be Debated in public
- Informed citizenry can play an effective role in development, all the information related to water sector strategies, agreements with IFIs should be make available to all the citizens
- Peoples participation is a core to development, participation can be replaced with consultation or involvement but control of people over decision which are affecting them

We are agreeing to initiate “ Water for People Movement” collectively in entire Pakistan. The movement will take following steps to influence legislators, policy makers and service providers to fulfill their obligations;

- Research, Information Collection, producing Facts Sheets
- Bringing the remote issue on debating table
- Advocacy & Lobbying with policy makers and legislators
- Budget Tracking
- Engaging with and understanding the position, role, capacity and resources of TMCs
- Activating existing mechanism/systems
- Mapping Drinking water in respect of :
 - –Access, Quality, Treatment, Distance etc
- Go into litigation- where it is possible