



**The Report on the activities undertaken during
the field visit to Cholistan**



11-14 November 2014



Unlined Toba (pond) and drought impacted areas of Cholistan, Source: PWP Mission 2014

Development Issues

The core development issues relating to water and agriculture perceived by the team include:

- 1) Extreme desert temperatures ranging from 47^c to 51^c.
- 2) Extreme scarcity of rainfall – average annual rainfall is 166 mm(Ref. PMD website 2013).
- 3) Climate change is impacting both flora and fauna and often forcing migration of both human and animals to far flung canal embankments.
- 4) Land tenure – majority land is state owned and no agriculture is allowed and actually discouraged to avoid illegal land grabbing.
- 5) Absence of land distribution among landless people or not allowing them territorial rights lead to land degradation and marginalization because large amount of land is left uncultivated.
- 6) Large cattle and goat population interspersed with other species like camel and sheep
- 7) Livestock carrying capacity of Cholistan is far exceeded by the high population of Cholistan breed of cattle.
- 8) Dairy industry is the only industry that seems visible and majority of the population maintains small to medium size Cholistani cattle heads as a main source of livelihood.
- 9) Given large distances between the 14 key population centers e.g. *Tobas* where both human and livestock congregate to use drinking water.
- 10) 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 e.g. chillers, refrigerators, storage vans and veterinary cover are lacking.
- 11) There are both *Pakka* and *Kacha* water ponds and scattered investments in deep water turbines but this infrastructure is grossly inadequate to meet the water requirements.

- 12) The present state of the ponds is extremely poor and requires community based interventions.
- 13) There are no public-run facilities for drinking water supply during drought periods along with lack of relief initiatives.
- 14) The quality of water in many cases is unfit for human consumption. Consequently resulting in high prevalence of water borne diseases and infant mortality.
- 15) Tree and grass cover is thin and of extremely low quality. The situation has potential for improvement through technical innovations with consequent improvement in livestock health and family incomes.
- 16) The lack of in-road infrastructure signifies the poor attention given by the government to uplift the welfare of local population.

In the evening, an International Sufi Conference was organized by CDC. In the introductory opening session, the water issues in relation to Cholistan and human plight of the Rohi was highlighted. Special mention was made about the Pakistan Water Partnership (PWP) team and its initiatives and support to improving water quality addressing livelihood issues to promote peace and harmony in line with the teachings of the great Sufis.



In line with these development observation and goals of the WACREP project, PWP in association with the newly formed Bahawalpur AWP, can rapidly undertake development

interventions in water and livestock that can serve as a model for improving the livelihood of Cholistani people. The following activities are proposed:

- 1) Demonstration and provision of 20-bio-sand filters in five locations.
- 2) Three villages will be selected in area 25 Km from Lal Sohanra Park (see map).
- 3) Two villages will be selected on two Tobas 15 Km from Channen Pir (see map).
- 4) Demonstration of soap making in 5 villages to be undertaken jointly by PWP and local partners.
- 5) Provision of cuttings of Napier sorghum grass and seeds of multipurpose around five village water ponds.
- 6) Demonstration of in-house kitchen gardening and distribution of 250 gardening-kits amongst female farmers who participate in the desert vegetable growing sessions.

Conclusion

It is proposed that PWP immediately chalk out a plan based on the above activities to implement these interventions on high priority basis in joint consultation with the Bahawalpur AWP.