

General Elections 2008

Policy Commitments of Political Parties

Safe Drinking Water

Sustainable access to safe drinking water is vital for human life, and therefore, needs serious political commitments and actions by the government. In recent years, various programs aiming at improvement in accessibility and quality of drinking water have been undertaken such as Clean Drinking Water for All Program, National Program for Prevention & Control of Hepatitis, and donor-funded Safe Drinking Water and Hygiene Promotion Project, etc. A National Drinking Water Policy has also been put in place. Despite that some progress has been achieved, the challenge of making safe drinking water available to everyone remains to be addressed. The Pakistan Council of Research on Water Resources estimates that about 50 percent of urban water supply is unfit for drinking. In rural areas, the situation is even worse. As a result, more than 35 percent people are highly vulnerable to water-related deaths and diseases due to their exposure to contaminated and unsafe drinking water. A considerable proportion of population continues to rely on unsafe drinking water with high degree of health risks.

Consumption of unsafe drinking water is adversely costing the entire nation, particularly the poor, in terms of water-borne diseases and deaths, loss of productive work hours due to water-related illnesses, and increased health costs, etc. About 60 percent diseases are attributed to unsafe drinking water in Pakistan. More than three million Pakistanis become victims of waterborne infections annually, of which 1.2 million die. Among them, 250,000 are children under five years of age who succumb to diarrhoea and vomiting. Diarrhoea alone claims some 118,000 lives every year in Pakistan. Besides, high prevalence of viral hepatitis is one of the biggest challenges facing the country. This state of affairs calls for policy commitments and actions at various levels. There is a need to put in place a legislative framework within which government and civic agencies are obliged to take concrete steps, and are held accountable, for supply of safe drinking water in both urban and rural areas.

The table provided below identifies some of the major challenges regarding safe drinking water; policy actions needed to address these challenge, and commitment of political parties whether they will implement the policy actions, if voted to power, after forthcoming general elections.

	Challenge	Policy Actions Needed	Political Party's Response
1	There is no specific legislation available for ensuring quality of drinking water for consumers. As a result, there is no coherent policy framework for coordination among various government departments and civic agencies involved in supply and regulation of drinking water.	Will your political party enact and implement a National Safe Drinking Water Act in Pakistan?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other response: _____ _____ _____
2	A National Drinking Water Policy has been made, which sets some ambitious targets. Some of the targets, which had to be achieved till the end of 2007, are not fulfilled because even basic initiative are lacking.	Will your political party take, <i>at least</i> , the following steps: Earmark sufficient funds in annual budgets for implementation of the Drinking Water Policy Raise the coverage of population with access to safe drinking water from existing 65 percent to 93 percent (or _____ percent) population Establish and operationalize a system of surveillance, monitoring and dissemination of information	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other response: _____ _____ _____
3	Pakistan Standards and Quality Control Authority (PSQCA) has enforced quality standards for tap and bottled water. The implementation of these standards, however, is very poor.	Will your political party equip the PSQCA and Environmental Protection Authorities (EPAs) with financial and human resources for effective implementation of drinking water standards?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other response: _____ _____ _____

	Challenge	Policy Actions Needed	Political Party's Response
4	Water supply schemes are missing in more than 20,000 rural settlements.	Will your political party ensure that water supply schemes are installed in 100 percent (or _____ percent) rural settlements?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other response: _____ _____ _____
5	The Government of Pakistan has set a target to build more than 6000 filtration plants, one in each Union Council.	Will your political party take further this initiative, and achieve the minimum target of one water filtration plant in every union council?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other response: _____ _____ _____
6	According to estimates, 62% of Pakistan's urban and 84% of the rural population do not use any form of treatment like boiling, filtration and chemical disinfection for purification and safety of drinking water.	Will your political party implement a Civic Education Program on print and electronic media to promote safe drinking water?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Other response: _____ _____ _____