**Tackling water mismanagement**

**[Faisal Siddiqi](https://www.nation.com.pk/columnist/faisal-siddiqi)**

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Every year, since 1993, the United Nations has celebrated World Water Day on March 22nd to advocate for the sustainable management of freshwater resources. This year, the theme is accelerating change to raise awareness and solve water-related issues.

Acceleration of change in a country such as Pakistan is direly needed where the mismanagement of water resources is wreaking havoc on the environment and the economy. The matter is of particular concern within the agriculture sector. According to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), more than 90 percent of the freshwater is used in the agriculture sector. Alarmingly, approximately 50 percent of this water is wasted due to inefficient practices such as flood irrigation. For a country that is at the forefront of climate change, battling droughts and floods, despite contributing a negligible amount of global carbon emissions, such kind of mismanagement is simply not viable. A burgeoning population and rapid urbanisation further exacerbate the problem.

[PM calls coalition partners' parliamentary party meeting on Wednesday](https://www.nation.com.pk/04-Apr-2023/pm-calls-coalition-partners-parliamentary-party-meeting-on-wednesday)

These water-related challenges are a shared problem—these affect the people, the businesses, the economy and the government. These also require all stakeholders to come together to solve issues. Presently, corporations are at the forefront of fighting against the mismanagement of water resources. There is an increasing realisation that they have a corporate social responsibility, not only when it comes to the social side, but also towards the environment. For example, the country’s top-notch multinationals are helping conserve water by improving water use efficiency in their direct agricultural supply chain and manufacturing operations, replenishing water for communities, and adopting water stewardship to ensure on-site water efficiency.

An example is Nestlé Pakistan, which realises the importance of working beyond its factory gates and taking collective action, with other partners such as the government, communities, farmers, civil society and academia. Water has been a key focus of Nestlé’s decades-long legacy and building on its existing strong water stewardship foundation, it introduced a new commitment called the Water Pledge, in August 2021. With this Nestlé aims to conserve more water than what its Waters Business uses in its operations throughout the local watersheds. It aims to do this by taking collective action with local communities, farmers in the value chain and experts in water resource management. Using this approach, Nestlé Pakistan has forged partnerships, over the years on the issue of water using its Caring for Water-Pakistan (C4W-Pakistan) initiative.

[Imran seeks explanation from PDM for delay in Punjab Assembly polls](https://www.nation.com.pk/04-Apr-2023/imran-seeks-explanation-from-pdm-for-delay-in-punjab-assembly-polls)

Launched in 2017, C4W-Pakistan has three pillars: agriculture, factories and communities. To help farmers improve their water management and reduce their water use through high-efficiency irrigation techniques as well as new technologies, Nestlé has partnered with the Punjab Agriculture Department to encourage local farmers to take up drip irrigation on 139 acres, with plans of scaling it up in Sindh. Similarly, under the Water Sense Project, Nestlé developed Smart Soil Moisture Sensors in collaboration with the Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS). These sensors read the moisture level of the soil and send regular data updates to a cloud from where the farmer receives information about which areas he should irrigate and how much. This helps save water and increase productivity by reducing the chance of under or over-irrigation on over 500 acres.

It is the technology that can accelerate change to the extent that is needed given the scale of the environmental impact of humanity’s activities. Further interventions that are being explored in Pakistan include remote sensing where satellite imagery, integrated with a network of soil moisture sensors, provides cost-effective irrigation advisory services to farmers. Nestlé Pakistan also is the first company in the world to have all its sites certified by the globally-recognised Alliance for Water Stewardship (AWS) certification. The AWS certification confirms that sites have met the global benchmark for responsible water stewardship. This is further supplemented by their community-facing initiatives, where they focus on providing clean drinking water sites to vulnerable communities. There are other private sector entities too that are heavily reliant on agriculture such as the textile industry that is certified by the AWS Standard including US Apparel & Textile, as well as US Denim Mills.

[Nawaz Sharif wants SC justices be charged for their 'unfathomable' verdict](https://www.nation.com.pk/04-Apr-2023/nawaz-sharif-wants-sc-justices-be-charged-for-their-unfathomable-verdict)

Unilever has also launched its Water Stewardship project, under which they have successfully reduced water usage by 49 percent whilst also committing to launching sustainability programs in the 100 most vulnerable locations around the world, including Pakistan. Nonetheless, while bigger corporations have taken on their role as responsible water stewards, it is time other stakeholders such as smaller businesses as well as the public sector also played an enabling role in the solving of the water-related issues being faced by the country.