

# CSC and AMRDO acclaim new water policy, but with concerns

**HYDERABAD:** Water experts, academia and water right activists lauded the newly announced national water policy 2018 and asked Sindh government to establish a high-level think tank to support the government to protect Sindh's interests of water on the long term basis.

Centre for Social Change (CSC) and AL-Mehran Rural Development Organization (AMRDO) organised a civil society dialogue entitled 'Review of national water policy 2018- consensus and concerns'.

The speakers resolved that federal government has recognised critical concerns of Sindh including implementation of the Water Accord-1991 in letter and spirit, water flow to the downstream of Kotri, assessment and regulation of ground water. The house appreciated the federal and provincial government to achieve a consensus on policy through the Council of Common Interest (CCI), a constitutional body to resolve the disputes of power sharing between the federation and provinces.

Abrar Kazi, a veteran water expert, suggested the conservation of water through emphasis crop pattern changes, Biosaline Agriculture and water recycling process.

Water flows in the streams for only three months, so new dams are not required but a review towards water governance paradigm. Despite irregularities, this policy has given opportunity to Sindh to capitalise its water share.

Centre for Social change executive director, Zulfiqar Halepoto, explained the objective of dialogue and appreciated the policy and said that transboundary issues were supposed to be dealt by either foreign office or security agencies but for the first time water issues with India and Afghanistan are being

recognised as an agenda of federal and the provincial government.

“Now, the civilian government could negotiate with India and Afghanistan regarding transboundary conflicts,” he added.

Water Sector Improvement Project Representative, Umer Karim briefed the house and explained how water related institutions developed a professional portfolio that supported chief minister of Sindh to successfully negotiate for the maximum in the new water policy.

Professor Mushtaque Mirani called the policy paper as ‘representative document’ but emphasised on the need to involve farmers, growers, water-related experts, academia and other stakeholders to maximise the legitimacy of democratic decisions.

Sindh Abadgar Board Representative Syed Nadeem Shah also appreciated the policy but said that the document lacks substantiated data on water flows, ground water extraction and water consumption of municipal, agriculture and industrial usage.

Sindh Irrigation and Drainage Authority Representative Nazeer Essani said that the federal government accommodated concerns of Sindh in a final document such as implementation of water accord, water security of Riverine area and delta with the efforts of Sindh chief minister and the secretary of irrigation. However, he expressed concerns on low-representation of Sindh in national water council.

Tandojam Sindh Agriculture University Dr Ismail Kumbhar said that the policy focuses on food security and sustainable agriculture but both are not addressed properly in the document. He suggested improvements for the new policy including research by Universities on 29 priority sections of document.

Environmentalist, Mr Nasir Ali Panhwar said that concerns of lower riparian were included in the water policy. However, he said that rural water supply

and sanitation was not covered adequately. He said that water for sea intrusion must be allocated. He urged that Sindh should devise its own water policy, while taking guideline from national water policy.

Abdul Jabbar Chachar, Waheed Jamali, Mustafa Mirani, Shabnum Baloch, Razaq Umrani, Kashif Siddique and others also addressed on the occasion.

A large number of civil society activists, youth, academia and notables attended the event.

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