

## **Institutional Failure, State Failure or the Failure of ‘Civil’ Society? The Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Sector in Pakistan**

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[Presented at the *Citizens’ Conference on ‘The Politics of Water: Perspectives and Policies’*, SDPI, Islamabad, July 1, 1999].

### **Abstract**

*With only half of Pakistan’s rural population provided water through government sources, many observers may well be led to believe that this is a clear case of government failure. Yet, such conclusions ignore the way development thinking has changed over time. Currently, the new way of providing infrastructure and social services relies increasingly on communities, NGOs and the private sector, with the role of government considerably curtailed. In the Rural Water Supply and Sanitation (RWSS) sector, it is the Uniform Policy which now dominates planning and implementation. Unfortunately, succumbing to donor pressure, an ill-devised Policy has been approved for the sector which requires prerequisites which are just not available. A socially sensitive engineering department, and organised and active communities, which are the cornerstone of the Uniform Policy, do not exist. Hence the failure of the new thinking in the RWSS sector. While institutional failure and government sclerosis may be amongst the more critical causes of failed service delivery, it may perhaps be more instructive to analyse such institutions in a broader political economy perspective, where reasons for the failure of the state as much as of ‘civil’ society, may provide more useful answers.*

The evaluation of any institution or sector is likely to draw some, or possibly many, parallels with the overall structure within which it functions. Institutions and sectors within the confines of state and/or government are likely to reflect some of the qualities, good or bad, of the larger whole in which they exist. While specific sectors and institutions may possibly be at odds with the culture, or way of governing, which is considered to be the norm and convention, one can safely speculate that in a country where it is believed that the larger institutions of the state like the judiciary, police, and government are corrupt, inefficient, suffer from administrative failure, donor interference, political machinations and vested interests of the most

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petty kind, smaller institutions and sectors like health, education, and rural water supply, are unlikely to be very different. This paper addresses issues of institutional and policy success and failure within the context of the Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Sector (RWSS) in Pakistan, keeping in view that perhaps we are evaluating a sector within what is increasingly being called a 'Failed State'. Equally important, is the assertion that it is not just the state which is increasingly failing, but more importantly, those sections which constitute 'civil' society, as well.<sup>2</sup>

The Rural Water Supply and Sanitation (RWSS) Sector in Pakistan provides coverage to, at best, around fifty percent who have access to sanitation facilities.<sup>3</sup> With ninety million inhabitants in the rural areas, this means that around forty five million do not have access to safe drinking water, and around 76 million do not have basic sanitation facilities.<sup>4</sup> The consequences of such a severe shortage, in terms of ill-health, disease and morbidity and mortality patterns is well reflected in Pakistan's overall health status.

The reasons for such poor coverage include geophysical, demographic and economic factors. The government renews its pledge to provide safe drinking water to all, and currently, the Pakistan National Perspective Plan 1998-2003, has set a target of complete access to drinking water for all Pakistanis, whether urban or rural; sanitation facilities are to be provided to all urban inhabitants by the end of the Plan, and to an ambitious 60 per cent of the rural sector. However, institutional and financial constraints continue to play a formidable role in making water unavailable to the majority of rural Pakistanis. In order to understand the role of institutions and policy in the RWSS sector in Pakistan, this paper briefly discusses the main social and economic features that influence the sector.<sup>5</sup>

## **Key Institutions and Policies**

### ***The Public Health Engineering Departments***

The four provincial Public Health Engineering Departments (PHEDs) are the main providers of rural water supply in each of the provinces. Their

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<sup>2</sup> This paper is a highly condensed version of two of my papers which appear as chapters 4 and 5 in Zaidi, S Akbar, *The New Development Paradigm: Papers on Institutions, NGOs, Gender, and Local Government*, Oxford University Press, Karachi, 1999; the focus of this paper, however, is considerably different from my earlier work.

<sup>3</sup> Problems of definition of coverage and of 'safe', are amongst the important issues which affect the sector – see below.

<sup>4</sup> These are Government of Pakistan figures taken from their *National Perspective Plan 1998-2003*, cited in Social Policy and Development Centre, *Review of the Social Action Programme*, Karachi 1997, p. 36.

<sup>5</sup> Far greater details are available for the interested reader in Zaidi, S Akbar, op.cit.

role varies from almost complete provision of government provided water supply in the Punjab, Balochistan and the NWFP, to a very large proportion of provision in the province of Sindh – see Table-1. In comparison, the other main official source of water in the rural areas, the Local Government and Rural Development Department (LGRDD) provides very little. With the overall annual budget for water supply being almost completely taken over by the PHEDs (97 per cent), this is not surprising. Moreover, the LGRDD is expected to perform a wide variety of functions unlike the PHED, and rural water supply and sanitation are just one of the many responsibilities of the former – see below.

**Table-1: Number of Rural Water Supply Schemes, June 1996**

	Sindh	NWFP	Balochistan	Punjab
PHED Schemes (Mechanised and Gravity)	754	2,512	1,347	2,319
Population served (in million)	0.905	10.32	3.90	11.107
LGRDD Schemes (Hand pumps)	4,393	4,000	3,700	8,000
Population served (in million)	0.527	1.20	0.45	1.60
Total rural population served	1.432	11.52	4.35	12.707
Percent of rural population served	9.12%	80.14%	62.7%	25.10%
Population reached PHED/LGRDD	63/37	90/10	90/10	87/13
In-operative PHED schemes	148	29	515	223
Percent of PHED schemes inoperative	20%	1%	38%	11%

**Source:** Social Action Programme Statistics 1992/93 – 1997/98  
Multi-Donor Support Unit, July 1997.

**Note:** Given the problems concerning data and definitions discussed in the text, it is very likely that Row 1 'PHED Schemes', include the schemes listed as 'In-operative'.

The Public Health Engineering Department (PHED) of the four provinces has hitherto been responsible for constructing, operating and maintaining water supply and sanitation schemes in the country. However, under the Social Action Programme (SAP) Project I (1993-96), there has been a marked change in emphasis. The principal policy reforms for the rural water supply sector under the Social Action Programme, Phase 1, have

centred around the strengthening of institutional capacity to deliver services with a new approach for the provision of services, with a focus on involving communities in the development and subsequent management of the installed systems. Moreover, all the provincial governments are agreed that once completed, the schemes will incur a transfer of ownership from the government to the beneficiary community, who will be responsible for the financial and technical operation and maintenance of the rural water supply and drainage schemes – see below.

In the first phase of SAP, a large number of rural water supply schemes were handed over to the ‘beneficiary communities’, not all without some serious problems. Studies have found that some of these schemes have been handed over to communities despite the latter’s resistance to the idea. These communities have been ‘coerced’ into accepting these schemes rather than having been motivated by the perceived benefits of the ‘participatory’ approach. This, at a time when a large majority of households believed that a water supply system would be better managed by a government agency rather than a local political body, village water committees, or private entrepreneurs.<sup>6</sup>

The PHED in all the provinces and regions, is essentially a technical department housed by engineers and other technically skilled staff. Schemes have been constructed without any social sensitivity or social engineering, and communities have seldom, if ever, played a role in any of the stages of provision of drinking water to rural communities. Schemes have been constructed on the advice of Members of the National and Members of the Provincial Assemblies (MNAs/MPAs) or then based on some top-down assessment of need. This has led to schemes being installed in areas where it may not have been feasible to do so, or in areas where PHED schemes may already exist and/or alternative sources of water are easily and adequately available. Essentially, a non socially-sensitive technical and engineering approach has been applied to an issue which has important social and cultural ramifications and connotations. Evaluations of PHED have found that, it has neither the orientation for community mobilisation, nor any staff to undertake activity which has a social orientation. It has an engineering orientation and acts purely as a provider of services. This *modus operandi* has been to prepare technical feasibility reports, and construct schemes with little involvement of communities in either the construction phase (e.g. in site selection or choice of technology) or during O&M. As PHED is finding

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<sup>6</sup> For a detailed discussion and analysis of the Social Action Programme Project 1 in the Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Sector, see: Khan, Shahruxh Rafi, *Handing Over of Water Supply Schemes to Communities in Northern Punjab: A Case for Collective Action*, MSU/SDPI, Islamabad, 1996; and Systems (Private) Limited, *Review of RWSS Sector Under SAP 1*, Lahore, 1996.

out, by not involving communities at the earliest stage of survey and planning, the current policy of handover to beneficiary communities has been made more difficult.

The mechanism of the PHED has been to involve registered contractors to build water supply schemes and use parts and pipes purchased and supplied by the department. This procedure has given rise to allegations of extreme corruption in the sector, where quality has, for the most part, been suspect, if not extremely poor. There are accusations that engineers of the PHED and contractors are in collusion, and vast sums from such projects have been pocketed by involved individuals. Sub-standard quality work resulting in over-pricing of projects and with recurring breakdowns, and the need for recurring repair and subsequent maintenance, are seen to be the hallmark of the rural water supply sector in Pakistan. This poor quality of water supply schemes has been a further serious impediment to the willingness by the community to take them over and take the responsibility for O&M.

### ***The Social Action Programme and the Uniform Policy***

The Social Action Programme (SAP) Project launched in 1992-93 was meant to be a concerted effort on the part of the government to speed up the process of social development in the country. With growth rates at times amongst the highest in the world, Pakistan's performance in the fields of health, education, family planning and access to clean drinking water and sanitation had been very inadequate. In order to address this shortcoming, SAP was designed in such a way that not only should financial allocation and commitment to the social sectors increase, but along with an increase in facilities (quantity), quality should also improve. This also required that the way social services had so far been delivered in this country needed to change radically.

In the light of these issues, it was decided that henceforth all social development in the fields of primary health, primary education and rural water supply and sanitation would incorporate the participation of the beneficiary community and the top-down approach of the past would be replaced by a more conciliatory and involved approach. It was hoped that communities would actively participate in the design and delivery of these services, right from the planning stage, so that communities would be willing to take over the responsibility of operating and maintaining these schemes.

In order to address the government's own financial burden in operating and maintaining schemes, it was felt that some cost sharing needed to take place with the community and that the government could no longer continue to subsidise the O&M costs. By involving the community from the

initial stages of the project, it was hoped that the community would be more willing to take over the O&M responsibilities of the project and scheme.

Essentially, the key elements of SAP, with reference to all sectors under the programme but particularly for the PHED's rural water supply and sanitation sectors, have involved the following three principles: to develop and apply an integrated concept for improving various related basic infrastructure facilities; to fully involve the beneficiary community in all stages of the project so that ultimately the community can take care of O&M of the improved facilities; and, to motivate communities to assume responsibility for developing and improving the basic social services in future.

A key component of SAP in fact, one on which the future of the Social Action Programme may itself rest, is the role of organised beneficiary communities. Hence, SAP's success, and especially so in the rural water supply sector is highly dependent on the role NGOs, CBOs and Water Management Committees (WMCs) are expected to play. The relationship between formal government institutions and non-formal organisations is the key to how developments under the Social Action Programme Project 1, and particularly in the rural water supply sector take place.

In the light of these general premises of the Social Action Programme, a Uniform Policy for the rural water supply sector was developed and implemented for each province and now determines how schemes are to be planned, developed, implemented and handed over to the communities. The main focus of the Uniform Policy in each province is to transfer the ownership and the financial and technical O&M responsibilities of the rural water supply and drainage schemes to the concerned community.

Since the Uniform Policy has been the basic document determining policy in the sector over the last few years, and is going to do so till the year 2001, two important points about the Policy need to be emphasised. Firstly, according to the Uniform Policy, the *PHED completely dominates the supply and provision of water, to the exclusion of other departments, notably the Local Government and Rural Development Department*. Secondly, while the Uniform Policy is a policy for both water supply and sanitation, *there is no policy on sanitation*.

#### ***The Local Government and Rural Development Department (LGRDD)***

The LGRDD has a broad mandate. It covers promotion of rural development and improvement in the quality of life through provision of social and other facilities. To achieve this mandate it executes small rural

works programmes (that include construction of small link roads, paved streets in villages, small bridges, community centres, etc.) and monitors and supervises development schemes initiated by local councils and provides administrative and technical support to them on these schemes. It is also responsible for implementing rural development projects on behalf of provincial line departments, e.g., it constructs primary schools for the education department and basic health units for the health department. In the sector it constructs small rural water supply and sanitation schemes involving the provision of community hand pumps and implementation of sanitation programmes. The technical capacity of the department is weak in implementing large sized and complex projects. Thus, the major development work in the rural water sector is left to the PHED – see Table 2.

LGRDD is not considered a major player in the RWSS sector, even by the LGRDD itself, although it does provide a large proportion of the rural population with low technology drinking water services. Since the department has an extensive administrative set-up right down to the markaz or Union Council level, it is felt that it is much closer to the community, and should play a role in all community related activities. On the other hand, however, studies have shown that the department lacks technical and financial capability to take on any serious projects. The donor initiatives as part of the Social Action Programme Project 1 with LGRDD have been focused upon institutional strengthening, and on the provision of hardware in the form of Afridev hand pumps and household latrines. Just at there has been some institutional restructuring in the PHEDs with Community Development Wings added on, in the LGRDD as well, such wings or sections have been added on to the department.

## **Issues and Constraints in the Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Sector**

### ***The Lack of Adequate Data***

One of the more obvious issues and problems that face this sector is the dearth of reliable statistics in the RWSS sector. Different sources of information have different sets of data, and it is difficult to come up with one, or even a set of coherent statistics which give a true and reliable picture about the status of rural water supply in Pakistan. Moreover, basic definition about coverage, and provision, access, safe water, etc, are either non-existent, or then inadequate. Different agencies and institutions have different definitions. Clearly, before any strategy or targets can be established, there is urgent need to specify and agree to common definitions and criteria.

**Table-2: A Comparison of PHED's and LGRDD's Responsibilities in the RWSS Sector**

	Provision of	Responsibility	Transferred	Community	Provision of		
	Tube-wells/ Mechanised Scheme	Gravity Schemes	of O&M	to Community	Participation		
		Hand pumps					
					Drainage Schemes		
					Latrines Built		
PHED	All govt sector	A few	None	All - at least on A handful paper	Still very limited	Almost all	Some
LGRDD	None	Most	All govt	None	High	Minuscule	Majority
Private/ Community affairs	Only for irrigation	A few	Yes	All	Yes	Yes	Yes



### *Dearth of Water Sector NGOs*

Although there are reported to be more than 15,000 NGOs/CBOs registered in Pakistan, with an equal number not registered, but supposedly operative, it has been observed that very few of these organisations claim any experience or skills in water supply and sanitation. More importantly though, of those that do claim that they are competent in this sector, surveys and studies have shown that this is far from the truth. Many NGOs/CBOs are paper organisations making claims far in excess of their abilities and capabilities. The non-existence of water supply and sanitation related organisations is the single biggest reason why the RWSS sector component in SAP has been, and is likely to continue to be an outright failure.

The NGO alternative to official development is of recent origin in Pakistan, and has grown in response to funds made available by donors. While there are some internationally acclaimed NGOs – including one urban NGO which has considerable experience in sanitation and drainage – many more are fly-by-night operations which operate on the premise that quick profits can be made in a well-funded sector. This leaves the number of ‘authentic’ and ‘sincere’ NGOs to be far too few. This is probably more so in rural areas, where lower literacy levels and less access to funds and donors has limited the formation of NGOs of any kind. Research has also shown that multi-purpose NGOs far out last single-purpose (like water) NGOs, and the few NGOs that do exist in the rural sector may include water supply and sanitation objectives and targets, as one of many.

The handful of large umbrella NGOs that do exist in the rural areas, operate usually in single provinces, working in a few select districts, with their own specific agenda, of which water and sanitation may or may not be one. These umbrella NGOs are usually foreign funded with plans about their activities drawn up well in advance over the next few years. They may not be willing to change midstream, even if new funding or opportunities arise. For example, these NGOs have not rushed forward to assist their provincial governments in handing over PHED schemes to the community even in areas where these organisations have strong roots and links with the community. They have preferred to continue with their own programmes.

Hence, the quality and quantity of NGOs in Pakistan in both urban and rural areas is suspect. Moreover, while there are well-known NGOs in micro-credit, urban sanitation and drainage, and overall rural development, *there is no NGO which can claim to have considerable expertise in rural water supply and sanitation in Pakistan.* Some bigger umbrella NGOs do, however, have rural water supply and sanitation as one of many components. And that too, their involvement is restricted to either non-mechanised gravity

schemes or smaller hand pump schemes. Clearly, expertise in this sector is lacking.

### ***Community Inability/Unwillingness***

Communities have been unwilling or unable to take over schemes because they may not have the training, skills or even desire to do so. Many users feel that it is the duty of the government to operate and maintain such schemes, and they do not want to take them over. Also, many schemes have more than one source and multi-users, hence problems in management of such schemes arise. Nevertheless, if funding for SAP is to continue, as is likely, so will the implementation of the Uniform Policy. This means that whether communities like it or not and despite any reservations that they may have, the schemes are going to be dumped upon them. In the past, many communities have been coerced into taking over the schemes and it is probable that this trend will continue and become accentuated. Communities have to be willing or at least prepared for this eventuality.

### ***LGRDD's Capacity***

Although the LGRDD has a set-up which has staff at all the district, tehsil and even markaz levels, making it the government department which is technically closest to the people, the Department has been considered (not just by others, but even by itself) to be incapable and ineffective of playing a major role in the provision of non-mechanised rural water supply. Because the LGRDD is involved in numerous other activities and since it lacks technical staff, its main role has been in participating with the community in the supply and provision of hand pumps and household latrines. The Department does have a large number of male and female social organisers, who should, in theory, be able to assist communities in forming water management associations. However, both because the larger mechanised schemes are the property of PHED, and because the schemes are more complex, this community motivation role of LGRDD has been restricted to the smaller water and sanitation projects.

LGRDD is also perceived to be an institution which is more prone to corruption and manipulation by politicians. Since corruption is rampant in all government institutions, this is simply a matter of degree. However, because LGRDD has a large number of projects ongoing in different sectors, it is believed that more money is squandered away and few projects are eventually completed. In the case of other departments such as PHED, while corruption is also a major concern, the argument made is that at least projects do physically materialise. This is not necessarily so in the case of LGRDD projects.

Although the second Social Action Programme Project pays lip service to a greater role of the LGRDD in the provision of rural water supply, the original Uniform Policy undermines the position of LGRDD, making it subservient to PHED. The Uniform Policy over-emphasises the role of PHED to the exclusion of all other providers.

### ***PHED's Capacity***

PHED is a technical institution, housed mainly by engineers. Under the Uniform Policy it is being asked to play the additional role of community and social mobiliser. Various attempts at sensitising engineers by building community development wings at PHED are underway. Although a few hundred water schemes have been handed over to communities across Pakistan by PHED, in many cases communities have been forced to take over the schemes unwillingly. PHED, given its current disposition and composition, cannot behave like a community mobiliser even though such wings or units are added on.

There is a strong reluctance at PHED to change, for obvious reasons. The current involvement by engineers and contractors would be undermined if the Uniform Policy were followed through. Also, if as per SAP II, the community is asked to be involved in all stages of rural water supply, from design, construction and supervision to O&M, PHED employees lose their positions of control and involvement. This does not bode well for their social or financial prospects. Hence resentment, if not open conflict, with the Uniform Policy. Of all the actors involved in the sector, it is probably in the greatest interest of PHED to ensure that the Uniform Policy fails, and the scenario *antes* returns.

### **Weaknesses in the Uniform Policy under the Social Action Programme**

The Uniform Policy on the rural water supply sector, and the Social Action Programme, will fail because of its over reliance on the perceived benefits of community development in a country where few credible NGOs and CBOs exist. Moreover, there is no overwhelming desire by communities to take over water supply schemes, especially if alternate sources of water are available. In addition, there are thousands of schemes in the country, which are technically and financially beyond the capabilities of community organisations, and even if handed over, would fail. Community ownership and management, for most schemes, even if implemented, is not a sustainable policy. PHED does not have the sensitivity towards communities, nor the institutional support to mobilise and train communities. It is highly suspect and cynical about the role of the community and has no desire to hand over a sector through which individuals acquire huge sums of money

and have made small fortunes. With rent seeking and corruption rampant in most, if not all, public sector institutions, the department responsible for the provision of rural water supply is hardly exempt.

There is also ambiguity in the Policy regarding institutional arrangements and mechanisms in respect to the roles of the public sector executing agencies, elected representatives and beneficiary communities in the scheme selection, planning and design process, as well as in the financial and organisation arrangement for eventual O&M activities. Moreover, significantly, the Policy is silent over how the following schemes are to be taken over by the community: (i) those with one water source providing water to more than one settlement or community (ii) a distant source of water serving a large, widespread distribution network (iii) schemes that are technically complex for smaller remote communities, and (iv) schemes where communities are unwilling to take over government schemes.

No attempt has been made to deal with the problems of revenue shortfalls in the sector and greater effort would go a long way in dealing with the resource gap faced by this, and other, sectors. Since this premise is the key to the Uniform Policy, and community development in this sector is seen merely as a means to deal with the revenue problem, if user charges can be increased and collection improved, perhaps community handover may not be necessary.

The Uniform Policy also suffers from the fact that it is too uniform. It does not allow options to the community as to how it wants to deal with the drinking water supply problem. Rather than have a time-bound policy, where schemes have to be transferred, a more open-ended policy should be devised for the future. This would mean that rather than force all communities to take over the schemes, those communities that voluntarily wish to do so, should be supported and helped, through technical assistance and any other means (legal, financial, etc.) required. If communities want to involve the private sector, they should do so; PHED could help in identifying competent firms and individuals. Effective local government also has an important role to play in the water sector, and PHED and the provincial government should consider enhancing its role, not only in the water sector, but if possible constitutionally as well. So far elected and administrative local government has not been a key player in social development, through no fault of its own. Essentially, different methods of dealing with different types of schemes and communities are required, and uniformness, in terms of policy or transfer, needs to be replaced with the diversity that exists in the sector and in communities. There is also a need to share responsibilities rather than burden communities with a load which they cannot handle.

Our main conclusion is that the policy of handing over all water supply schemes to the community is a mis-conceived, ill-thought-out policy, destined for failure. It does not take cognisance of the reality of community dynamics and institutional constraints. The policy should be revised to be more accommodating and open-ended, where different options for the community and for PHED need to be devised. The option that a large number of schemes remain with PHED which improves and reforms its institutional structure, resulting in far greater revenue generation, must be at the top of the list.

In the three years of the first phase of the Social Action Programme Project, over 600 PHED schemes had been handed over to 'the community', not without serious problems, however. In the Punjab, for example, of the 363 handed over, over 50 had been returned to the PHED because the community could not maintain them. In Balochistan although 219 schemes had been transferred (on paper), in reality only twelve of these schemes were now operational. Studies have shown that most water management committees exist only on paper, and communities have been 'coerced' into taking over the schemes. The absence of any NGO willing to act as an intermediary in the handover process is well recognised by all the provincial PHEDs. Studies on the rural water supply and sanitation sector have shown that the Uniform Policy is way too ambitious with its targets and goals, and has so far achieved very little of any substance.<sup>7</sup>

### **Institutional Failure, State Failure or the Failure of 'Civil' Society?**

Amongst the main issues which have been identified in the discussion above, perhaps the following stand out: the Public Health Engineering Department dominates the provision of rural water in Pakistan, and is a department like most others, which suffers from corruption, and although it may be technically competent, is not in tune with the new means of delivering water to communities; the Local Government departments have been sidelined into providing water for a very small proportion of the rural population; the Uniform Policy of the Social Action Programme which now sets the rules for the sector, is an ill-devised policy, which seems to have been hurried through, does not take cognisance of the existing reality, and has been imposed upon an unsuspecting public and communities; and, the expectations from community organisations and NGOs are, to say the least, overly optimistic.

In this analysis of the sector of Pakistan, we have shown that the new institutional arrangements thrust upon an engineering department, have taken

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<sup>7</sup> See especially Chapter 5 in Zaidi, S Akbar, op.cit.

place not out of choice, but due to donor pressure. The World Bank and other international donors who support the Social Action Programme, have demanded that institutional arrangements that are more socially sensitive, be incorporated in this sector. These arrangements focus on the need to transform the PHED and to incorporate NGOs in the operation and maintenance of rural water schemes. We have argued that the RWSS sector has several serious problems in it, and the attempts to reform the sector or the PHED are likely to fail. In addition, the non-existence of relevant NGOs and the lack of interest by communities to take over government water schemes, will only exacerbate the extent of that failure.

Our analysis suggests that under the guidelines of the Uniform Policy, the situation in the RWSS sector is likely to worsen. It is quite possible that despite the numerous problems which did exist in the past, the means of providing water may have been appropriate for those times and those conditions. It is the new way of looking at development and the provision of infrastructure which seems to be the key issue here. In addition, elsewhere we have argued that rather than any commitment to any alternative thinking or paradigm, it was the fiscal crisis of the state which came up with the solution where communities, rather than institutions of government, were expected to take-over the considerable operation and maintenance costs, the main ingredient of the Uniform Policy.<sup>8</sup>

Just as much as there is an acceptance of the fact that many state institutions have been unable to adapt and change in line with new requirements (pace the RWSS sector), with a changed demography, and social and economic structure, resulting in government and/or state failure, it should also be emphasised that in Pakistan we are witnessing an even greater failure of segments and institutions that constitute what is called 'civil' society. The lack of any worthwhile political, cultural or social opposition which questions the workings of the bureaucracy and of government, or the extreme intrusion of donors and the conditionalities imposed by them; an intellectual dishonesty and sycophancy of the highest order; and, an NGO culture more suited to safeguarding jobs and privileges and pleasing donors, rather than addressing the concerns of presumed and potential beneficiaries, constitute some of the key failings of 'civil' society and its actors.

Any analysis of the structure and issues in the Rural Water Supply and Sanitation sector in Pakistan cannot ignore the nature of the structures and issues of the state, or of 'civil' society. The ability of donors to enforce the Uniform Policy is a failing as much of the state and of government, as it is of 'civil' society. Institutional failure, whether it is in the RWSS sector or

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

education or health, must be seen in this broader context. Likewise, any attempt at reform or solution, must necessarily take cognisance of all these issues. The mere tinkering with tariff rates, delivery mechanisms, or technology is unlikely to bring about any long lasting improvement.

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