

Media Update

23 October 2021

UN-Habitat PRESS RELEASE

Promotion of Rainwater Harvesting in Urban Areas of Pakistan

(Islamabad, 21st October 2021)



Every October, UN-Habitat and partners organize and engage in activities, events and discussions on urban sustainability throughout the month of October. This year, the Urban October theme is “Race to Zero Campaign. The purpose of Celebration of Urban October in Pakistan is to accelerate urban actions for a carbon free world.

UN-Habitat Pakistan took part in a seminar conducted by the Ministry of Climate change on October 21, 2021, as part of its Urban October celebrations. Objectives of the seminar was to engage with stakeholders and partners at national as well as provincial levels to promote rainwater harvesting for metropolitan and secondary cities so that rainwater can be efficiently utilized in future. Panelists were included from the public and private sector namely: Muhammad Irfan Tariq (DG Environment Ministry of Climate Change), Engr. Zaheer Gardezi (Ex DG ERRa GoP), Syed Zahid Aziz (MD, WASA Lahore), Mr. Faizan Ul Hassan (Secretary PCRWR), Mr. Muhammad Azeem Khoso Director Urban Affairs MoCC and Mr. Khalil Ahmed from UN-HABITAT.

The national seminar on ‘Promotion of Rainwater Harvesting in Urban Areas of Pakistan’, corresponds with the Urban October theme and activities being undertaken by UN-Habitat Pakistan to reduce urban flooding and ensure provision of water by using environmentally friendly and sustainable solutions along with Urban Flooding. UN-Habitat presented its Adaptation Fund Project on Enhancing community, local and national-level climate change resilience to

water scarcity caused by floods and drought, which was in line with the subject of this seminar. Rainwater harvesting was presented as a key solution and an innovative technique to tackle water scarcity issues in a flood resilient manner in Rawalpindi and Nowshera as pilot cities.

The Adaptation fund project is a joint collaboration of the Ministry of Climate Change and UN-Habitat. The project mainly aims to enhance the capacities of communities at local and house hold levels, strengthening of sub-national and national level Civil Society and Public Sector institutions to enable them to cope with the emerging challenges in Climate Change sector. The project will assist Public sector institutions to construct 50 Rain water harvesting units on Public buildings in Rawalpindi and Nowshera. It will also facilitate city level public and civil society institutions to install 5000 Rain Water Harvesting Units in both the mentioned cities. In addition existing policies and plans will be reviewed and new policies and strategies will also be developed under the project.

Other panelists shared the success stories of rainwater harvesting facilities in different cities. Mr. Zaheer Gardezi, the pioneer of rainwater harvesting in Pakistan highlighted the benefits and mechanism of the innovative technique along with a brief overview of the different projects he had conveyed in various northern cities across Pakistan. Syed Zahid Aziz, discussed in great detail the extensive work that is being done in Lahore to reduce urban flooding by increasing open storage facilities and water detention ponds. He also pointed the benefits of using recreational facilities such as tennis courts as makeshift water storage facilities to tackle flooding every year in Lahore due to heavy monsoon rains. Lastly, Mr. Faizan ul Hassan shed light on rainwater harvesting for urban agriculture and urban flooding where he stressed on the needs and potential of rainwater harvesting, making it the need of the hour.

To conclude the seminar, panelists and attendees engaged in discussion to highlight the potential and gaps in rainwater harvesting. Key recommendations and takeaways from the session include:

1. Make rainwater harvesting mandatory for housing construction approval
2. Increase its application in the agricultural sector
3. Include in the design of public sector buildings
4. Increased utilization of rainwater in the commercial sector such as in car wash facilities
5. Incentivize rainwater harvesting in a manner similar to solar energy
6. Introduce effective management to overlook distribution and quality
7. Enhance coordination among stakeholders and partners for future collaboration in the Rain Water Harvesting sector in Pakistan