

## **Access to Water and Sanitation in a Post-COVID Pakistan**

Even as the world struggles to come to terms with the COVID-19 pandemic, a water and sanitation crisis looms large. Research shows that 16 million people in Pakistan live without access to safe water, while 25 million do not have toilets. Pakistan ranks in the top 10 countries in terms of the number of people openly defecating. This results in the death of approximately 39,000 children under the age of 5 due to water-borne illnesses such as diarrhoea. This means that Pakistan's goal of making tangible progress in terms of the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG)-6 is significantly impacted due to the degraded water and sanitation situation in the country. Since all the SDGs are deeply interconnected, lack of progress vis-à-vis Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) means that other targets necessary for meeting the SDGs will also remain unmet. As such, there is an urgent need to holistically approach the problem of clean drinking water availability, adequate sanitation and sustainable hygiene practices as a case of human rights and social justice.

In this context, the panel will try to address the challenges faced by Pakistan in the WASH sector with a specific focus on post-COVID initiatives. The panel will comprise of representatives from the government, WaterAid, civil society and the not-for-profit sector, and tackle the following key questions:

1. Given the WASH challenges faced by Pakistan (especially in light of COVID-19), what policy options should the country adopt? Moreover, what best practices can be mainstreamed in this regard?
2. What role can sub-national level institutions play in addressing these challenges? What are the hurdles? Where are the opportunities?
3. How can academia, private sector and civil society support this agenda, particularly in terms of harmonising action at the national and sub-national level?

### **Panel Organisers:**

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