SARNET (Pakistan) – 3rd INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE CONSERVING BLUE DIAMONDS

THEME: "CREATING CLIMATE RESILIENCE THROUGH RAINWATER CONSERVATION & MANAGEMENT"

LAHORE, PAKISTAN – 23-24 Sep-2025

Introduction:

According to the United Nations, by 2025, some 1.8 billion people will be living in countries or regions with absolute water shortages, and two-thirds of the world's population could be under "water stress" conditions. National Geographic July 2020 warned about a looming water crisis in South Asia, based on the projected decline in ice melting from the Himalayan region. At the 15th SAARC summit held in Sri Lanka in 2008, a reference was made to imminent water scarcity in the South Asia region. The "Colombo Declaration" an outcome of this summit emphasized the need to initiate capacity building and research on rainwater harvesting to combat water scarcity predicted for the region in the future.

The population of Pakistan is growing rapidly, estimated to be 250 million at present, such a rapid increase has put enormous strain on the demand and supply gap of water. Out of 122 countries, Pakistan ranks 80th for drinking water availability, which is quite alarming (Azizullah et al., 2011).

Pakistan receives an average of minimum 200 mm rainfall in southern part to maximum 1700mm in the Northern parts, but the bulk of the rainwater is wasted due to scarcity of water storage facilities, lack of knowledge and practices about Rainwater Harvesting and improper drainage channels for the diversion of rainwater. This also leads to flooding in many parts of the country.

Having proper systems and technologies to store, recharge groundwater and treat rainwater can not only address the growing demand for safe water but can also reduce the frequency and intensity of flooding in Pakistan. Already, the model of roof top rainwater harvesting has been successfully demonstrated in earthquake 2005 Affected Areas of Pakistan and Azad Kashmir during reconstruction program in years 2010-14. Considering this project as one of the best practices of Climate Change Adaption in Pakistan, services of International Institute for Environment & Development (IIED) UK were hired by UNFCC & Ministry of Climate Change Pakistan, mainly to assess the socio-economic benefits of Rainwater harvesting in the context of Tracking Adaptation & Measuring Development (*https://www.iied.org/search?k=TAMD+Pakistan*). The outcome of the study was enormously encouraging for the promotion of Rainwater Harvesting across the country.

However, lack of awareness, not only in the masses but at policy level too; about technology, practices worldwide and its benefits, is the key challenge to promote rainwater harvesting nationally, regionally or even globally. Hence, it's highly needed to showcase the best practices of rainwater harvesting, not only in Pakistan but in the rest of the Globe, mainly to gain the confidence of a skeptical majority with low awareness of the technology & concept.

The interest and importance of harvesting of rainwater has grown in the South Asia region during the past two decades. In September 2006, the Government of Sri Lanka hosted a Regional Forum on Rainwater Harvesting in the city of Kandy. The regional forum was attended by the Ministers of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) responsible for water matters, in addition to professionals and local practitioners. The Ministerial Declaration following the technical deliberations included a decision to establish a Secretariat for the South Asian Region on rainwater harvesting to sustain interest and facilitate collaboration and coordination in the region. Sri Lanka was selected to host the Secretariat in the initial period following the Forum.

The Declaration made at the 15th SAARC summit held later in Colombo in 2008 laid further emphasis on the need to initiate capacity building and research on rainwater harvesting in order to combat water scarcity predicted for the region in the future.

A Regional Conference on rainwater harvesting held in Kathmandu, Nepal from 28th to 30th of June 2009, hosted by the government of Nepal, reiterated the need for regional collaboration and coordination and promoted the need for a regional center and secretariat.

The International Conference on Water Security through Rainwater Harvesting held in Colombo from 27th – 29th November 2018 (*Organized by Lanka Rainwater Harvesting Forum – LRWHF in collaboration with International Water Management Institute (IWMI) and the Ministry of City Planning and Water Supply*), reiterated the need for regional networking and promotion of policy and practice on rainwater harvesting. Thus, in mid-2019, LRWHF with the support of USAID and International Rainwater Catchment Systems Association (IRCSA) took steps to initiate the **South Asian Rainwater Network (SARNET)**. This Regional Network center resides within the LRWHF premise in Colombo. The objectives of the SARNET are,

- To function as a repository of information and experience on RWH, networking with RWH promoting organizations, private sector, and individual experts in the South Asia Region,
- To strength a regional rainwater network to coordinate the identification and evaluation for RWH technologies with the purpose of promoting best practices in rainwater management
- To support effective advocacy towards governments and donor agencies.
- To promote a People's Water Management Program based on rainwater harvesting

The SARNET started operations in 2020 with support from USAID and guidance from the Lanka Rainwater Harvesting Forum (LRWHF). Several development practitioners, academics, environmental activists, and academics have joined the network as members and at present SARNET has over 200 members from 20 different countries. During the span of 5 years, SARNET has launched its website and social media platforms, organized and hosted 16 webinars and 02 International Conferences, and initiated space for the young water professionals as Young Rainwater Champions. The success of the network can be gauged from the increased acceptance of technology: the number of members registering with SARNET, participants who join the knowledge-sharing training programs, webinars indicate the growing interest and demand for the technology.

There are several reports about a looming water crisis, drought as well as flash floods in South Asia including Pakistan, who experienced the series of flooding in last 15 years, 2010, 2014, 2017 and the worst in 2022. Given this situation in view, rainwater harvesting and its management could bridge the prevailing indifferences among countries in South Asia and facilitate regional dialogue to share knowledge and best practices on rainwater harvesting as a way of meeting the challenge of being a water-scarce / flood-hit region. More visibility of successful applications and benefits from RWH technology is key towards efficient management of rainwater. This may include demonstrations of the technology, having audio visual and printed material that gives information about the methods, technology, models of the technology, testimonials from rainwater users, social media influencers who promote the technology and its benefits.

Foregoing in view, and in line with National Water Conservation Strategy of Pakistan (2023-27), SARNET chapter Pakistan in collaboration with Prime Event Management Pakistan aims to hold 2-days International Conference with a title of CONSERVING BLUE DIAMONDS having overall theme of "CREATING CLIMATE CHANGE RESILIENCE THROUGH RAINWATER HARVESTING & MANAGEMENT" on 23-24th Sep-2025 at Expo Center Lahore Pakistan. The conference would be a hybrid participatory format, allowing maximum quality speakers and participants who may not be able to join in person for genuine reasons. Plenary & Technical sessions will be held as per the attached schedule. The key aim of this conference is to propose recommendations for scaling-up of rainwater harvesting & its management at National, Regional and Global level. An estimated cost of USD-25,000/= (Twenty-five thousand only) is expected to be incurred, detailed below. Sponsorship is to be solicited from various donors / partners in the water / climate sector. **Logos** of the **conference partner(s)** would be reflected in Brochures, Files, Standees, Backdrop Banners & other conference stuff. Prime sponsorship would be as follows.
Diamond partner USD 10000/=, **Golden** Partner USD-8000/=, **Silver** Partner USD-5000/=, **Bronze** Partner USD-3000/=

Expected Outcomes:

- A repository of updated `country / region specific information of best practices related to rainwater harvesting collated and shared among stakeholders at National and International level.
- Develop new links amongst organizations actively engaged in rainwater harvesting at National & International level
- Initiate a discussion with Global/Regional/ National partners in drafting a "Pakistan National Rainwater Harvesting Report".
- Recommendations for evolving the National Rainwater Harvesting Policy

Targeted Participants:

This conference will engage practitioners, researchers & policy makers from multidisciplinary backgrounds across the country, region and globe to exchange knowledge and experiences on innovations and trends in raising climate resilience. The following table shows an indicative participation (Physical + Virtual);

Sr No	Name of Organization / Institution	Expected No of Participants			Boarding / Lodging (No.)
		Physically	Virtually	Total	
1	Ministry of Climate Change, Islamabad	1	1	2	1
2	Planning Commission of Pakistan	1	0	1	1
3	PCRWR Pakistan, Isld	2	2	4	2
4	UN-HBITAT, Isld	2	1	3	0
5	Universities in Lahore & Surrounding	30	50	80	0
6	NDMA Islamabad	2	4	6	2
7	Federal Flood Commission Pakistan, Isld	2	2	4	2
8	Water Resource Management PARC	2	3	5	2
9	PHEDs & LGRDDs, ICT + Provinces + AJK + GB	25	10	35	12
10	Print / Electronic Media	10	0	10	0
11	Facilitator + 2-Assistants	8	0	8	4
12	International Speakers	8	6	14	8
13	International Participants (none-speakers)	4	25	29	4
TOTAL		**97**	**104**	**201**	**38**