

## **NATIONAL RIVERS PROTECTION AND CONSERVATION**

### **PROGRAMME**

Pollution in our rivers has been steadily increasing over the years, and has become more severe in the lower reaches of the rivers. The sources of this pollution include uncontrolled discharges of municipal as well as industrial wastes in water bodies, runoff from agriculture fields where agrochemical usage has been increasing, and other natural as well as anthropogenic activities which take place in the river basins. . High incidence of water borne diseases can directly be attributed to polluted waters in our rivers. Furthermore, the livestock also consume the same water, and high contamination can adversely affect these animals.

Other impacts of high contamination in the waters include loss of biodiversity and ecosystems, reduction in fish population and damage to soils and crops in the irrigated areas.

The Project is included in the Mid-term Development Framework: 2005-2010. The Mid-term Development Framework: 2005-2010 (MTDF 2005-10) has been developed in line with the NEAP objectives, and focuses its four core areas: Clean air; Clean water; Solid Waste management; and Eco-system management.

### **BACKGROUND**

#### **Major Issues:**

- The existing water resources in the country are under threat due to untreated discharge of municipal and industrial wastes to rivers and other surface water bodies.
- Untreated sewage from our cities and towns is usually released in the nearby land, streams or *nullahs*, which ultimately drain the highly polluted water in the rivers. Key examples in this regard include sewage from Lahore polluting Ravi River, sewage from Karachi polluting Lyari and Malir Rivers, and sewage from Islamabad polluting Nullah Lai (which drains in the Sowan River)
- During the last several years, Hepatitis-B is on the rise in major cities, which is mainly due to the mixing of sewage with the drinking water.

- Our industries import about 525 types of chemicals and dyes/colours for use in different processing industries. Their processing generates wastes, most of which are released untreated in the rivers and drains, posing potential risk to public health.
- Excessive use of agrochemicals (chemical fertilizers and pesticides) has resulted into the contamination of surface run off, which in turn pollute the rivers. Recent studies have revealed the presence of residues of pesticides, nitrates and nitrites in drinking water above the acceptable limits.
- During the year 2000, a bone deformity disease appeared in the form of an outbreak in the peripheries of Lahore, which is attributed to the contamination of groundwater by fluorine.
- The marine environment has been severely polluted by discharge of industrial and domestic sewage through the Malir and Lyari rivers and other sources, carrying in excess of 350 mgd of effluents. Oily discharge is also contaminating sea water at the Karachi port and harbour.
- In the absence of proper monitoring of the river water quality or the adverse effects the high level of contaminants these rivers receive, the severity and graveness of the problem is not fully understood or appreciated.
- The objective of the proposed Project is to reduce the pollutant levels in the rivers and rehabilitate these water bodies, thus reducing the high cost of the polluted water on the human health, environment and ecosystems. The Project thus falls under one of the core areas of the MTFD-2005-10. The proposed Project falls under the '**Water, Sanitation and Slums (Pakistan Clean Water Programme)**' component, which is a part of the '*Brown Environment*' category of the Mid-term Development Framework: 2005-2010. The Pakistan Environmental Protection Act 1997 addresses the pollution discharges under its Section 11. Under this Section, the National Environmental Quality Standards (NEQS) address the waste effluent discharges into the water bodies. Time required for the completion of project is five years and cost of project is 495 Million.

## **SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES**

- This objective will enhance the capacity of government and partner agencies to develop and then implement a comprehensive river management strategy, strengthen institutional and individual capacity at the national, provincial and local levels for rivers management, increase public awareness and understanding of rivers and their values, and catalyse public and private measures and commitments to secure sustainability of these water bodies.
- To develop plan for sustainable conservation of one river that will serve as replicable models for subsequent nationwide rivers conservation initiatives.