SUCCESS STORY

Ablution water reuse
from rituals to responsibility

Australia-Pakistan Water Security Initiative

Duration	Budget	Location	Implementing Partners
April 2021 to June 2025	AUD 5.57 million (AusAID contribution AUD 5.0 million)	Farash Town, Islamabad and James Town, Rawalpindi	World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF-Pakistan) International Water Management Institute, Pakistan (IWMI) Hydrology and Risk Consulting, Australia (HARC)

Overview

Ablution, a fundamental ritual in Islam, requires the faithful to cleanse themselves with water before prayer. This is a vital part of Islamic worship, symbolising spiritual purity and devotion. However, in the face of increasing water scarcity and environmental concerns, the extravagant use of water during ablution rituals has become unsustainable. The separation of wastewater at its source enables greywater to be reused for non-potable purposes. In this way, the practice of ablution offers a unique opportunity for greywater reuse. Ablution water reuse systems have been installed at two mosques at Farash Town, Islamabad by WWF-Pakistan under the Australia-Pakistan Water Security Initiative.

Beneficiary story

In the heart of Farash Town, a dedicated soul named Shakir Ullah has been the guiding light of the Khulfa-e-Rashideen Masjid for 17 years. For Shakir, the mosque is not just a place of worship; it is a sanctuary where the community comes together to fulfil their religious obligations. However, Shakir identified a persistent challenge of water scarcity in the region, necessitating water conservation efforts, which he believes start with community involvement.

Responding to this, WWF-Pakistan under the Australia-Pakistan Water Security Initiative (APWASI), introduced the concept of the Ablution Water Reuse (AWR) System, a solution that promises not just water conservation but also the nurturing of green spaces. An AWR system is a sustainable technology that collects, filters, and purifies water used for religious or ritualistic cleansing, enabling its safe reuse (Figure 1).

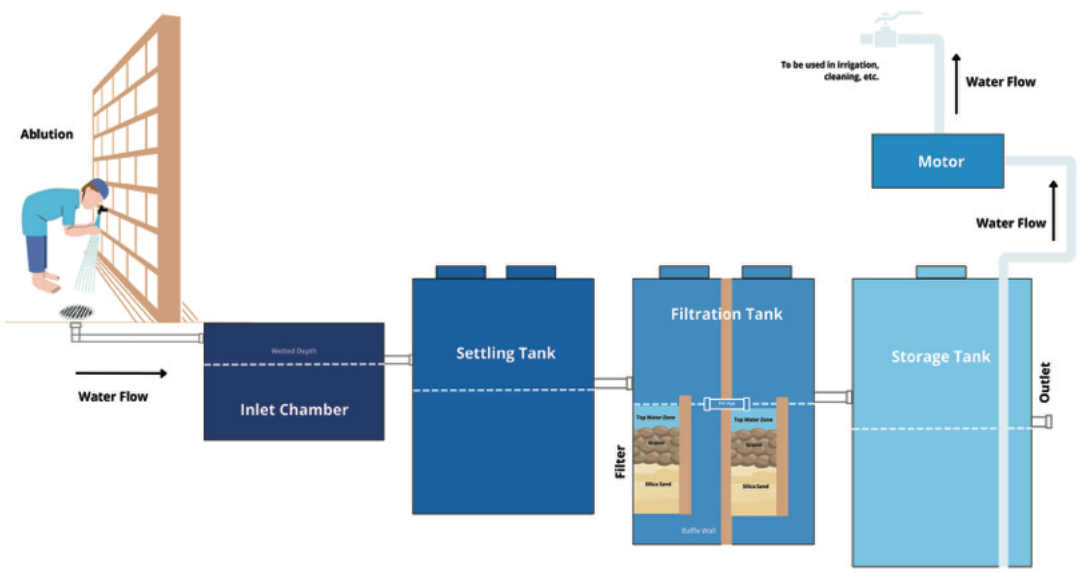

Figure 1: Ablution Water Reuse System

Shakir and his mosque committee embraced this opportunity wholeheartedly, realising the profound impact it could have on their community. Since the installation of the AWR system, the mosque has witnessed a transformation and the benefits did not stop at the mosque's doorstep. The recycled water found its way into the mosque's gardens and green spaces, breathing life into the earth. Moreover, it played a crucial role in recent construction projects, reducing the need for expensive water tankers and saving precious resources.

Another testament to the success of the AWR system was Imam Naseed Ahmad at Jamia Masjid-e-Norani, who marvelled at the positive change. The system not only conserved water but also curbed the depletion of groundwater. By repurposing ablution water for gardening and other purposes, the community began to understand the value of every drop. Imam Naseed took this message to the people, using his sermons to educate the community about the importance of water conservation and the eco-friendly practices made possible by the AWR system.

The response from the community was overwhelming. The congregation not only embraced the AWR system as a practical embodiment of their religious principles but also as a beacon of hope for a greener, more sustainable future. Inspired by the success stories of the mosques, the community rallied behind the cause, pledging to replicate such water-conserving interventions in other mosques and schools across Farash Town.

In the end, it was more than just a system; it was a lifeline that connected the people of Farash Town to a future where water flowed freely, sustaining both their faith and the earth they tread upon. Thanks to the support of leaders like Shakir Ullah and Naseed Ahmad, Farash Town had not just conserved water; they had nurtured a community, fostering a sense of responsibility that would echo through generations, reminding them of the day when water became a blessing, shared by all.

DRIVERS

- Increasing water demand and stress in the community
- Financial constraints to buy water
- Ignorance of religious ethics to conserve water
- Lack of community engagement for a shared resource
- Unavailability of public water supply
- Water demand for adjacent green spaces
- Demonstration of a decentralised treatment and reuse technology for underdeveloped communities

APWASI's journey in preserving religious rituals while promoting sustainability

The APWASI has successfully introduced three ablution water reuse systems in Farash Town, Islamabad. These innovative systems, with a daily capacity of eight cubic metres each, not only conserve water but also help replenish groundwater resources. Together, they contribute to an impressive annual water reuse capacity of 4,380 cubic metres. Beyond ensuring water access for the local community, these forward-thinking systems play a vital role in fulfilling the water requirements of nearby green spaces and construction projects. Notably, they have already (as of May 2024) reused 3,132 cubic metres of ablution water, making a significant impact on groundwater replenishment efforts.

THREE ABLUTION WATER REUSE SYSTEMS TOGETHER CONTRIBUTE TO A WATER REUSE CAPACITY OF