

Water Crisis or Crisis of Water Management: Assessing Water Governance in Iran

Authors : Sedigheh Kalantari

Abstract : Like many countries in the arid and semi-arid belt, Iran experiences a natural limitation in the availability of water resources. However, rapid socioeconomic development has created a serious water crisis in a nation that was once one of the world's pioneers in sustainable water management, due to the Persians' contribution to hydraulic engineering inventions - the Qanat - throughout history. The exogenous issues like the changing climate, frequent droughts, and international sanctions are only crisis catalyzers, not the main cause of the water crisis; and a resilient water management system is expected to be capable of coping with these periodic external pressures. The current dramatic water security issues in Iran are rooted in managerial, political, and institutional challenges rather than engineering and technical issues, and the country is suffering from challenges in water governance. The country, instead of rigorous water conservation efforts, is still focused on supply-driven approach, technology and centralized methods, and structural solutions that aim to increase water supply; while the effectiveness of water governance and management has often left unused. To solve these issues, it is necessary to assess the present situation and its evolution over time. In this respect, establishing water governance assessment mechanisms will be a significant aspect of this paper. The research framework, however, is a conceptual framework to assess governance performance of Iran to critically diagnose problematic issues and areas, as well as proffer empirically based solutions and determine the best possible steps towards transformational processes. This concept aims to measure the adequacy of current solutions and strategies designed to ameliorate these problems and then develop and prescribe adequate futuristic solutions. Thus, the analytical framework developed in this paper seeks to provide insights on key factors influencing water governance in Iranian cities, institutional frameworks to manage water across scales and authorities, multi-level management gaps and policy responses, through an evidence-based approach and good practices to drive reform toward sustainability and water resource conservation. The findings of this paper show that the current structure of the water governance system in Iran, coupled with the lack of a comprehensive understanding of the root causes of the problem, leaves minimal hope for developing sustainable solutions to Iran's increasing water crisis. In order to follow sustainable development approaches, Iran needs to replace symptom management with problem prevention.

Keywords : governance, Iran, sustainable development, water management, water resources

Conference Title : ICSWRM 2024 : International Conference on Sustainable Water Resources Management

Conference Location : Paris, France

Conference Dates : October 28-29, 2024