

Essay

# Government Preparedness and Disaster Management in wake of Floods 2022.

## 1. Introduction

Thesis statement: Pakistan experienced severe rainfall in July, August and September of 2022, which resulted in havoc, causing many losses. The role of government in preparedness and disaster management however, has been futile in advance risk reduction.

## 2. Overview of Floods 2022.

### 3. Several reasons that show Government failed in Preparedness and Disaster Management.

a. Not paying heed to lessons from past, and early warnings.

b. Failure in mapping vulnerable localities and relocating them

c. Failure in <sup>advance</sup> measures of protecting drinking water from flood water.

d. Failed in advance arrangement of food, water and health care facilities

e. Failed in demolishing infrastructure that are constructed on river bed and evacuating people.

### 4. Impacts caused by floods due to mismanagement of government as chief reason

a. Infrastructure losses with destruction of buildings and roads.

b. Displacements and humanitarian losses

c- Agriculture and live-stock washed away causing food insecurity.

d- Health crisis caused by water-borne diseases

6- Way forward to mitigate current losses and prevent future losses.

a- Climate justice to be promoted globally and demand for GHGs (Greenhouse gas) reduction.

b- Utilize funds effectively

c- Build infrastructure on internationally opided standards

d- Shift from Response centric approach to Disaster Risk Reduction approach.

e- ~~Good~~ Construct more dams.

7- Conclusion.

## Introduction 2

There are certain guidelines provided by medical experts when it comes to take care of our body, if we do not pay heed to them and do not take care of body accordingly, eventually it starts deteriorating and may, in some cases result in death. Similar is the case with our country's preparedness and disaster management. Despite knowing all the guidelines to protect the country from disasters like floods, our government did not act accordingly, which eventually resulted in destruction of many lives, infrastructure etc. The impacts of floods kept deteriorating due to not paying heed to Disaster risk reduction guidelines. If we take the overview of floods 2022, there are several reasons that prove that government failed in preparedness and Disaster management. Chief of all is not paying heed to lessons from past and early warnings, mapping local vulnerabilities to relocate them, taking advance measures of protecting drinking water from flood water and arranging food, water and healthcare facilities in advance. Moreover it failed in timely demolishing infrastructure that are constructed on river bed along with it failed in evacuating people from there. Due to this mismanagement of government as a chief cause, we had infrastructure losses with destruction of buildings and roads, displacement and humanitarian losses and Agriculture, live-stock losses which resulted in food insecurity and also health crisis from

waterborne diseases. However, to mitigate current losses and prevent future losses, climate change justice and greenhouse gases reduction should be promoted globally and funds acquired from there should be utilized effectively with building infrastructure on internationally guided standards and response centric approach should be shifted to disaster risk reduction approach. Moreover, more dams should be constructed. Pakistan experienced severe rainfall in July, August and September of 2022, which resultantly caused many losses. The role of government in preparedness and disaster management however has been quite in advance risk reduction.

The floods Pakistan faced last year are termed as unprecedented, which are confirmed by world weather attribution that was caused due to climate change. Consequently along with many losses, around 33 million of Pakistanis are sleeping under open sky. Climate change and resultant global warming are leading to stronger monsoon with higher precipitation. Increased temperature reduces water holding capacity of clouds which results in increased precipitation. In a briefing to UN Security-General Antonio, it was mentioned that Pakistan received 518 percent more rainfall last year. Pakistan usually receives 3-4 monsoon rainfalls in July - August

but last year we had more than 8 intense rain fall.

These are although several reasons that show and prove that government failed in preparation and disaster management. First of all, our government did not pay heed to lessons from past and early warnings. Since 1947, Pakistan had 20 major floods which proved very expensive for economy, life and property. Pakistan meteorological department, before unprecedented floods of 2022, already warned the government about unprecedented rain fall. Pakistan's Federal minister for climate change "Sherry Rehman" warned on June 19, 2022 about extraordinary rain fall that might end up in monster floods but our government and responsible institutions did nothing to mitigate the losses by taking preparatory measures.

For not paying heed to warnings, it failed in mapping vulnerable localities which could have been done by data from 2010 floods. Well-tested technologies are now available that can predict future floods and their intensity along with powerful computers that can accurately forecast, map vulnerable areas and issue warnings at prior level. Government could have used SMS-communication to warn the citizens and to evacuate areas at prior level. Moreover it could relocate the people from vulnerable area people to safe government buildings of NHA roads but our government failed at many levels.

els of protecting and relocating them which consequently made  
around ~~830~~<sup>30</sup> bn losses along with 33mn people living under  
open sky as 37% of Pak displaced due to floods.

Having no shelter is not the only issue but a gov.  
nment also failed to take advance measures to protect people  
water from flood water so that people would have been saved  
from shortage of drinking water. Millions of people are now  
living there with acute clean water shortage. Not only adults  
but also children which can eventually result in diseases  
or chronic diseases. Pakistan was already having clean water  
shortages with floods and mismanagement, it has gotten even  
worse.

Having no clean water is addition in having a lack  
of government advance arrangement of good water  
and healthcare facilities. Many people specially women and  
children are suffering with having no healthcare facilities in  
those areas where they have been moved after floods. If we  
consider how worse good crisis they are facing, it was right-  
ly mentioned by UN Security General Antonio, "That survi-  
vors of flood, in number 5.7m will face a good crisis"  
but little was done to this warning and response was merely  
limited to distribution ration bags inequality. Many people com-  
plained for not getting even those ration bags and do a large

extent, ration bags were distributed among them by local people and NGOs whereas government and political leaders benefited from seeing as survivors.

Mostly these survivors however could have been in even better condition if their homes were not constructed in river bed areas were demolished and they were evacuated in timely manner. It was mentioned by Dr. Noman Ahmed, an urban planner: "Development of any infrastructure in Pakistan - from dams to roads and bridges is done in isolation from realities" (2022: The year of natural disasters - unfulfilled promises and dying hopes. "Muzhir Amin", Dawn). Data from satellites and past floods could have been used to remove obstacles and illegal constructions and roads that might fall along the route of floodwater. But nothing was done.

It had many impacts to which mismanagement of government attributes as chief reason - which consequently caused infrastructure losses with destruction of buildings and roads. With displacement of 33 km people, around 37% of Pakistan. Our buildings are not climate resilient. Development programs are not <sup>constructed</sup> keeping vulnerability of Pakistan in consideration. With reducing carbon emissions, at COP-27, climate-resilient infrastructure was agenda. At COP-27, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif mentioned that floods have

destroyed 8,000 km of highways and damaged 3,000 km of railway tracks. (Dawn, 8th November). It shows how vulnerable is our infrastructure and yet nothing was done to protect them -

This infrastructure destruction eventually resulted in displacements and also humanitarian losses. Due to these floods, around 1700 people have lost their lives. Flood survivors in this cold weather are living in tents and are forced to bear the brunt because they have no other choice. It was mentioned by UN that "Winters have intensified the need of more than 80mn flood victims" (Dawn, December 11). The reconstruction however has been started only in some areas while a large number of affected are dependant on humanitarian aid and false promises.

Agriculture losses and live-stock washed away with floods which added in sufferings of displaced people. According to one report, "Around 1.1 m farm animals lost in floods. Along with 3.5mn acres of standing crop washed away and around 40 percent land has become infertile. It has resulted in acute food shortage. Around 70 percent of staple crops have washed away. Around 90 percent of tomato, date and other vegetable crops have been washed away. This mismanagement caused the food shortage also



to unpreparedness.

Such unpreparedness also resulted in health crisis. On a recent visit of UN Security General, Antonio Guterres, he mentioned that "Pakistan is on verge of a public health disaster and malaria, cholera, dengue fever could take more lives than floods". Since there were no advance medical health care facilities, nor even now to a large extent, people are suffering with water borne diseases too. "Spread of water-borne diseases including but not limited to diarrhoea, especially among children, cholera, typhoid and hepatitis - E. Malaria and dengue through mosquito borne diseases also spread during these times due to stagnant water pools which serves as breeding sites for mosquitoes" (Health care during floods, "Zafar Meza"). This could have been prevented if government took advance preventive measures.

To all those impacts, there is a way forward to mitigate current losses and prevent future losses. Chief of them is, climate justice to be promoted globally and demand for greenhouse gases reduction. Pakistan contributes less than 1 percent to emissions of Green house gases. Just three countries, United States, China and India accounts for over half of carbon emission. It however has been mentioned and demanded by Pakistan at many international forums including COP-27.

It was also acknowledged by UN Security General Antonio Guterres "Today it's Pakistan, Tomorrow it could be any country" (Antonio Guterres). It was also acknowledged by UN humanitarian co-ordinator to Pakistan that "This super flood is caused by climate change - the causes are international (Julien Harms). Pakistan secured good amount of funds through international countries but this is not enough, reducing carbon emission should be a top priority for all countries but very little attention has been given to it which should be promoted by Pakistan to severely from future destructions.

The funds Pakistan secured for climate justice from Geneva has been amounted \$10 bn. However the question here arises is, how well these funds will be utilized. Pakistan is notorious for delayed implementation of projects (Public sector projects). Unfinished projects over time has accumulated to around 12,50 projects which cost 1.6 trillion. This is the right time for Pakistan to learn from two recent experiences. First after 2005 earthquake resulted in pledges of \$3.5 billion. Similarly in 2008, friendly countries and world Bank and Japan resulted in commitments of \$5.8 bn but Pakistan could not fully avail the pledges. We need to utilize these funds for rehabilitation and reconstruction well, to protect our people (Spending \$10 bn, "Ali Tameer Sheikh").

These funds also need to be utilized for building climate resilient infrastructure. Most of the destruction has been caused by archaic building and infrastructure models. If Pakistan had aligned her construction with internationally accepted standards, we would have saved ourselves a very high percentage of infrastructure losses. The country needs to upgrade its construction standards, materials, technologies and approval processes. We need to remember that climate vulnerability is chief issue and without working on it, no amount of funds will be of any use.

With this change, we need a change in our policy of Response centric approach to Disaster Risk Reduction approach (DRR). Pakistan's approach to deal with disasters was first formalised under 1958 National calamities act but its shortcomings were exposed after 2005 earthquake and became evident that enormous loss could have been prevented by rescue and relief alone. The National disaster management was formed in 2010 with conceptual disaster management sequential steps from Risk management, mitigation and preparedness before a disaster and to response humanitarian assistance and Reconstruction in its wake but it failed with time in Risk management. For 12 years it has been stagnant on Response centric approach. The current approach is unworkable in context of climate change. Without Disaster

risk reduction, even a rise of 1 degree Celsius may require nearly 3 folds increase in global disaster response spending and it seems unattainable for developing countries like Pakistan.

To conclude this essay, It has been proved that although floods were caused by myriad reasons but our government could have mitigated the losses if certain measures were taken in timely manner. Such steps however need cooperation at federal-local levels but in our country where governments have different party policies at both levels who jealously guard their autonomy. Consensus building in a coalition government can be risky and time consuming but it is now the need of hour to empower local governments and understand that without strengthening the coping capacity of local communities, no amount of top-down investments can succeed. Lastly steps taken for disaster risk reduction would be proved as better deal which we failed to, in floods of 2022, and in future it could prove as threat to National security.