

Topic:

COP 29: How Pakistan can improve its Climate Resilience

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The Essay

Pakistan's Prime Minister shehbez sharif while recalling a meeting with Flood affectee, a boy named 'ikramullah' at COP 29 summit said, " His village was completely erased from the surface of earth. His house was demolished and his school was completely submerged. we had arranged his education in another part of Pakistan." Indeed, Prime minister shehbez sharif's confession about the scale of climate crisis faced by Pakistan reflects ground realities. Climate crisis is no longer a distant warning but a present

day reality. Developing countries like Pakistan are on frontlines of climate crisis. The enormity of the challenge faced by these countries is evident in incidents of flooding, heatwave, air pollution and climate-induced migration. Developing countries are facing twin challenges both in development domain and investing in climate adaptive infrastructure. Securing climate finance is a substantial challenge that hinders the countries' ability to invest in green infrastructure. Pakistan is on the frontlines of climate crisis. Despite significant challenges in securing climate finance, Pakistan can improve its climate resilience by implementing international climate resilience models.

Global response to crisis is usually manifested in widespread policy frameworks to achieve objectives of United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Moreover, to achieve these objectives, Paris Climate Agreement and Kyoto Protocol and some other important international climate

Agreements. Importantly, COP (Conference of Parties) conferences are instrumental in achieving annual Global climate goals. However, the financial dilemma between Global North and Global South accentuated the scale of crisis.

For instance, countries of Global South rejected the climate finance deal in COP29 summit and labelled this deal as 'optical illusion'.

Countries of Global South are facing serious challenges in securing climate finance which bars these countries to invest in adaptation and mitigation projects. This divide resulted in failure of the COP process.

Former UN secretary general Ban Ki Moon said the COP process 'is no longer fit for the purpose'.

Moreover, UN Global Emission report revealed that we are on a path towards achieving 3.1°C rise in global temperature.

Furthermore, global climate experts are unhappy with the pace with which Global North is providing finance to developing countries.

Several current climate incidents that lead to widespread belief of COP's failure

are Flooding in Africa, Landslides in Asia, and Drought in Spain. Due to deep gulf between Global north and global south on the issue of climate finance, BBC reported that climate experts are considering the COP 29 summit as 'worst COP in decade'. Furthermore, international banks are not ready to provide long term low-interest loans to developing countries.

COP 29 summit held in Baku, Azerbaijan in November 2024. Several developments took place in COP conference. Firstly, one of the significant developments is financial divide. African based think tank attributed this divide as 'Rich world staged a great escape in Baku'. Global south demanded 1.3 trillion dollars annually but what came on a surface was a 'paltry sum'. Global north pledged to give 300 billion dollars annually by 2035. This finance deal was outrightly rejected by Global south. It was short-sighted even in rich's world perspective. Secondly, Fossil fuel interests

dominated the environment of summit. COP 28 which was held in Dubai clearly mentioned that countries would phase out fossil fuels. However, COP 29 only referred to Dubai deal without explicitly mentioning fossil fuels' phase out. Adding insult to injury, Azerbaijan's President Ilham termed the fossil fuels as "gift of the God".

Moreover, at COP 29 summit, developing countries also highlighted climate related trade barriers which hinder their ability to invest in green infrastructure. Importantly, conference allowed the countries to establish carbon credits to bring in funding and 'offset' their emissions. This is known as Article 6 of Paris Climate Agreement.

The most interesting aspect of summit was fears of arrival of Trump in White House. Although he was not there, his presence was felt across the summit. He is a known climate sceptic and the fears among countries are genuine. He can withdraw the United States from all major climate

Agreements. ODI Global think tank reported that "No one thinks that Trump in the White House would be anything but damaging to multi-lateral climate regime".

So countries in summit had one common question in their concerns that 'who would be the next climate leader in world?' Indeed, China is emerging as world climate leader.

Importantly, China is categorized by UN as 'developing country' which means that it has no moral compulsion that it would provide funds for climate finance. Despite this reality, China pledged to play its role voluntarily in boosting climate finance for developing countries. Asia Policy Institute demonstrated this quiet ascent of China as, "China is becoming more transparent in its role as climate leader".

Developing countries are facing significant challenges in securing climate finance. Climate finance is essential for country's ability to invest in adaptation and mitigation projects. These projects include sustainable Agriculture,

Climate-smart Cities, renewable energy Projects and other adaptation efforts. Prime minister Shehbaz Sharif said in COP 29 meeting, "without climate finance, there can be no real resilience". Pakistan is also experiencing various predicaments in securing climate finance. The challenges faced by Pakistan include political instability, economic fragility and lack of bankable projects. Moreover, lack of community engagement is a major issue in familiarizing common public of Pakistan with the scale of crisis. For instance, farmers in Pakistan are unaware of the sustainable agricultural practices. The president of world wildlife fund Pakistan (WWF-P) Dr. Adil Najem noted that Global north should keep its promises in providing climate finance to vulnerable countries.

Despite being responsible for less than one percent Global emissions, Pakistan is facing the brunt of the climate crisis. Global Climate Risk Index reported that Pakistan is among 'fifth-most' vulnerable countries in world affected by climate

Change. Pakistan faced monsoon floods in 2022 which wrecked havoc in Pakistan.

According to the statistics shared by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif at COP 29 Summit,

Pakistan faced 30 billion dollars to the economy due to floods, 30 million people displaced, and there was loss of 1700 lives.

Furthermore, UNICEF reported that in flood-affected areas alone, approximately

3.5 million children are out of school. Importantly,

Glacial lake outburst floods (GLOFs) are major threat in northern regions that are causing

water scarcity in these regions. Pakistan is relied on Indus river system for its

water needs. Climate change is altering river flows which induced water scarcity in

Pakistan. World Resource Institute (WRI) said

in its report that Pakistan is among the

countries that are under "extreme water stress".

Practices of over-irrigation also accentuating this crisis.

Heatwaves are also common climate

phenomenons observed in Pakistan. Last

year Mohenjodaro experienced 52°C rise in temperature and importantly Lahore experienced 48°C in May 2024. So Heatwaves are routine aspects in national life of Pakistan especially in summer. The government of Pakistan introduced short-term initiatives to combat heatwaves such as installing water stations and relief camps.

Importantly, air pollution is a considerable climate threat to Pakistan. In winters, Pakistan Punjab witnessed bad air quality due to smog. Number of factors can be attributed to worst air quality indicators in Pakistan Punjab. The factors include stubble burning, brick kilns not using zig-zag technology, vehicle emissions and industrial emissions. Geographical and climate conditions of Punjab is also a dominant factor in worsening the air quality of region. The Punjab Provincial disaster management Authority declared smog as "calamity". Moreover, IPSOS survey also noted that 68 percent respondents cited serious health

Security concerns such as cough, respiratory problems and flu-like symptoms amid smog. The problem of smog is also accentuating the educational crisis. Unicef also reported that one in five students globally noted that their studies are being affected by climate hazards. Pakistan is already in a state of 'Education Emergency' whose state of education was badly affected in COVID-19. So the confluence of educational and climate crises is lethal.

Furthermore, the climate crisis is a setback to agriculture. According to Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS), Pakistan's agriculture contributes 24 percent to GDP and more than 37 percent to labour force. Pakistan's agriculture sector is facing the brunt of situation. Due to heat waves, our farmers prefer to rely on practices like over-irrigation to cope heatwaves. Additionally, unsustainable agriculture practices are major constraints in successfulness of sector. Finally, these climate hazards are promoting the

Climate-induced migration. People living in coastal areas especially started to migrate in cities which put strain on resources of cities and would ultimately lead to conflicts over limited resources.

Pakistan's strategy to combat the crisis is multi-dimensional encompassing various aspects of climate resilience. Above all, Pakistan unveiled National Climate Finance Strategy (NCFs) on the sidelines of COP 29 summit. The strategy has three goals as noted by press release of ministry of climate and environmental coordination Pakistan.

Press release mentioned that "strategy aims to enhancing sectoral resilience, clarifying institutional roles and securing climate finance from diverse channels"

Federal Finance minister Muhammad Aurangzeb praised the Pakistan's initiative and regarded this as 'matter of great pride'. Pakistan is facing substantial challenges in securing global climate finance. Amid these challenges, the initiative of Pakistan is timely and

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bold decision in the interests of country
Importantly, Prime Minister climate aide
on climate change Romina Khushid Alam
was unhappy at COP29 summit on meagre
amount pledged by Global north. She said,
"we are leaving Baku with heavy hearts"
In contrast, former US President Joe
Biden termed the deal as 'historic outcome'.
EU states termed the amount 300 billion
dollars annually as 'new era of climate finance'.
However, Pakistan is facing serious climate
financing gap. A Gap she (Romina Alam)
estimated approximately 348 billion dollars
by 2030.

Moreover, Romina Alam also said in her
speech that this new climate finance
strategy would accompany the National
Climate Finance Portal to ensure transparency
of cash inflow and outflows. The World
Bank's envoy on climate change in South
Asia also praised the Pakistan government's
strategy to secure finance from diverse
channels.

Importantly, Sindh government has set a precedent for the rest of Pakistan by entering into global carbon credit markets.

Through Delta Blue Carbon-1 Project, Sindh government sold nearly three million tonnes of CO₂ equivalent credits approaching 40 million dollars. This is a project of public-private partnership between Sindh Forest Department and Sindh's Merlin Woods Private Limited. The project has already stored more than 100,000 hectares of mangroves and aimed to restore more than 250,000 hectares of mangroves by 2030. Mangroves are important carbon sinks and crucial for sequestering carbon. So, by establishing these credits, Pakistan can serve both ecological and economic purposes.

Pakistan also enhanced the role of renewable energy to meet its broader goal of climate neutral energy system. Pakistani government recently approved 'New Energy Vehicle Policy' in its endeavours to enhance the

Role of renewable energy in Pakistan. According to this Policy, 30 percent new energy vehicles would be electrified until 2030. Moreover, 3000 charging stations would be installed as mentioned in Policy. The Policy has widespread advantages for Pakistan. First, it would reduce the country's reliance on imported fuels for vehicles. Second, it would help Pakistan to improve its air quality indicators especially in Punjab. Third, it would reduce the burden of idle capacity payments on Pakistan. Extensive network of charging would increase the country's reliance on renewable energy.

Finally, Pakistan's emphasis on climate diplomacy to meet its goals is commendable. Chief Minister Punjab, Pakistan also signified the role of Pakistan in climate diplomacy. While addressing climate leadership event in Lahore CM Punjab Maryam Nawaz said, "Both India and Pakistan Punjab should undertake

joint efforts to combat smog." The Pakistan's decision to engage India is wise and sagacious move. Both countries should present the case of South Asia at global level to secure significant climate finance for the region. As climate finance is a common problem of both countries, climate diplomacy can play important role in securing a better deal for South Asia generally. Notwithstanding bilateral irritants, both countries should advance in pursuit of common goals. India's delegate famously mentioned in COP 24 summit about the inadequate finance deal and said "This amount would not address the enormity of the challenge we all faced". Pakistan also have some kind of concerns. Therefore, both nations should come together on this common issue. As we noted that issue of smog is still persistent in both Pakistan and Indian Punjab which slowed down the civic life and accentuated the educational crisis in both countries, climate diplomacy between both countries is the need of the

Hour. It could be blessing in disguise in bringing both nations on same page. For context, Indian people enjoyed Pakistani mangoes even in times of Kargil war. Therefore, the prospect of normalization of diplomatic tie cannot be underestimated.

Climate resilience refers to the people's ability to recover from specific climate hazard occurrences. Despite Pakistan's multidimensional climate strategy, Pakistan can still learn from international models of climate resilience.

Firstly, Netherland's Delta Plan involves building of flood gates and storm surge barriers. This plan would reduce the coastline and create freshwater lakes. This plan is regarded as 'one of seven wonders of world' by American Society of Engineers. Secondly, Japan has early warning system that would reduce the 30 percent damage with only one day notice. This effort of Japan is termed by UN as "long-hanging fruit of adaptation efforts". Thirdly, Germany set a target to achieve climate

neutral energy system by 2045. Importantly, 'Energie wende' (Germany's climate resilience strategy) aimed to phase out fossil fuels from energy sector and achieve broader goals of climate neutral system.

Furthermore, Costa Rica introduced Ecosystem based services including sequestering carbon, monitoring soil quality, preserving water resources and Afforestation. Likewise, Australia also worked on National Adaptation efforts to enhance its climate resilience. Its strategy involves investing in climate-resilient infrastructure and inclusion of climate resilience in decision making.

In a nutshell, developing countries like Pakistan are facing multiple climate challenges. These countries are witnessing twin challenges both in domain of development and in the domain of adaptation and mitigation projects. Financial dilemma between Global north and Global south reopened the long standing debate of gap between poor and rich countries. However, Pakistan's initiatives to improve climate resilience are commendable. Pakistan's Policy

makes can improve the country's resilience
by implementing international models of
climate resilience.
