

DISASTER MANAGEMENT IN PAKISTAN: CHALLENGES AND WAY FORWARD

OUTLINE

1. Introduction

Thesis statement: The disaster management in Pakistan is undergoing various challenges. However, out of those challenges, many can be addressed by adopting certain measures.

2. Disaster Management in Pakistan.

3. Challenges to Disaster Management in Pakistan.

- Geographical location
- Role of Government
- Role of Institution - NDMA.
- Budget Allocation
- Reliance on foreign Assistance.
- Water Terrorism - INT
- Enchroachment
- Role of citizens - Lack of Awareness.

4. Way forward to Manage Disaster Management

- Proper Budget Allocation - advance technology
- Accountability of NDMA - quarterly report.
- Pro-active measures for Predictable disasters - floods, rain, heatwaves, smog.
- Evacuation of enchroached areas.

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- e. Survey and Strict Response to Expired buildings.
- f. Early Warning System - old method of sirens etc.
- g. Tech Alerts - use of digital sign boards, alert of phones.
- h. foreign collaboration rather than foreign aid and assistance.

5. Conclusion.

"The Mistake that repeats every year cannot be mistake, but failure of working bodies."

In Pakistan, besides the un-predictable disaster, it faces same disasters every year without any productive pro-active measures. The authorities response to this is either blaming the Government or blaming the global climate change phenomenon. It is undeniable that climate change has affected Pakistan which is very vulnerable to climate change. But, pragmatic measures can mitigate this challenge as same as ~~the~~ other climate-prone countries have adopted. Besides the geographical topology of Pakistan, the climate politics further exacerbate the menace. The on-going water terrorism is one

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of the examples in this regard. However, the role of authorities also plays a crucial part. The responsive Government and institutions are imperative to prevent the destruction caused by disasters but unfortunately, this aspect of Pakistan worsen the disaster destruction. Irresponsible Government and disaster management institution like NDMA have shown their negligence throughout the years. The low allocation of budget and over-reliance on foreign assistance have always left people suffer during the time of crisis. In this regard, the role of citizens is also crucial. People lack awareness of the disaster management and response to it. The ~~private~~ encroachments have worsen the destruction in this aspect. The solution can ~~be~~ lessen the destruction caused by disasters, it can be responsible and proactive response of Government and institutions; budget allocation and accountability; and early warning systems. In this way, Pakistan can not just only mitigate the destructions ~~the~~ caused by predictable disasters, but the un-predictable disasters can also be less destructive.

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The disaster management in Pakistan have not been productive throughout the years. The disaster management in Pakistan function upon the approach of "**Pre-active**" rather than "**Pro-active**". The response towards any disaster is after the disaster occur rather than when it is predicted. In this regard, the specified body in Pakistan **NDMA** (National Disaster Management Authority) works in this regard. During the recent floods, a member of NDMA criticized the working of ~~by~~ during the meeting, said "This institution ~~can~~ is only presenting the after-affect report, rather than working on what it is assigned to". Therefore, the response of such institutions towards any disaster is questionable and due to this, Pakistan faces the destruction of disasters that occur.

There are several challenges that are faced by ~~Paking~~ Pakistan during the disaster management. These can be ~~structur~~ classified into external, structural and mass awareness.

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In terms of external challenges that hinders the disaster management in Pakistan, ~~is~~ one of which is the geographical location of Pakistan. Pakistan is located in the region of most vulnerable climate change affect. For instance, Pakistan lies on the fault lines which makes it prone to earthquakes. Besides that the floods and rainfall water crosses through the region of Pakistan through the river system. The biggest river that originates from China, falls into the Arabian Sea by driving through the rivers of Pakistan. According to the Global Indicators, Pakistan lies in the TOP-10 countries that are vulnerable to climate change. Thus, in terms of all natural disaster, Pakistan is one of the most-affected country to the disaster climate change and natural disasters.

The role of government plays the imperative role to response the disasters. However, the role of government in Pakistan is ~~not~~ unproductive to some extent. Every year, the disasters are predicted, such as heatwaves, smog, heavy rain, floods etc.

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But the response towards this prediction is quiet missing. Similarly, ~~the~~ earlier this year, the floods were expected, but the government evacuated the people a night before the floods. The irresponsible action from the government creates an environment of panic among the masses. However, if the pro-active steps were taken, both the disaster destruction and mass displacement could be minimized. People suffer financially, psychologically due to displacement and mass migration. They had to undergo various health issues and diseases due to this mismanagement.

The role of institutions like ~~NDA~~ National Disaster Management Authority, Building and Enchrachment Authorities is unproductive. The response towards any disaster is after the disaster occurs rather than before the disaster took place. The various incidents such as, recent floods 2025.

~~During~~ After the Cloud Burst, the connection towards the remote areas of Khyber cut down. Instead of restoring the means, the institutions reflected the

neglect response. The social welfare advocates reached the affected area before the institutions that are responsible for this action. Moreover, the building crash in Karachi, that was built on an encroached area and was given lease to build a high-story building on a limited and illegal ground. The institution of Sindh-Building Control Authority ~~responded~~ took action when the building collapsed resulting loss of life and infrastructure. Similarly, there are several other building that are ~~built~~ built on illegal land and restricted criteria. The role of institution can mitigate this issue ~~is~~ by timely and strict response.

The budget allocation towards the disaster management is not enough. Similarly, the budget allocation for the infrastructure development is also important. Pakistan has ~~old~~ infrastructure that is out-dated. The current population need requires the respective budget for the infrastructure development. The sewerage lines, ~~in~~ roads, bridges are built ages ago. Those cannot meet the today's need. During the recent 2025 flood, the total infrastructure

Loss is upto **1981 Km** in which **200 bridges** are included according to the report of NDMA. This certain loss requires budget to be restored that the connectivity could be ensured timely.

The another drawback that is observed through out the years is that Government on foreign assistance after the disaster occur. Instead of working earlier upon the preparedness, the Government seek loan through the International forums. During the 2022 disasters, assistance of billion dollars was recieved through the COP meeting and ~~other~~ neighbouring countries like China. Thus, till the foreign assistance arrive, people suffer. This approach of disaster management is itself a challenge that accelerate the other challenges in Pakistan.

The recent conflict with India, Pahalgam Attack, India unamously abrogated the Indus Water Treaty 1960. This has resulted in water war. Further, India release the excess water into the rivers of Pakistan that results in floods. Such aggressive response

of the neighbouring country is affecting the socio-economic fabric of Pakistan. Pakistan has called this action of India's aggression - "**Water terrorism**". India is using water as a weapon. Due to controlled water flow, Pakistan faces droughts and during monsoon excess water is released into the rivers of Pakistan. Being an agrarian countries, whose **24% of GDP** is based on agriculture, is widely affected by such acts. This disrupts the crop yield and overall exports of Pakistan.

A menace created by private-housing schemes have added fuel to the disasters in Pakistan. These schemes are built upon the canals ~~and~~ that are specified to the water flow of crops and floods. ~~But the~~ Also, these are built on the proper ~~archil~~ planned infrastructure, the water of floods do not affect them, rather ~~the~~ it moves to the rural areas. Many of these are unlicensed and illegitimate. Therefore, the encroachment further creates the disastrous situation.

Disaster management cannot be done alone in isolation, however the public role is also imperative and

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has equal responsibility. For instance, people throw their trash in the sewerage lines that blocks the flow. Thus, during rain, the sewerage lines get overflows that results in urban floodings. Another example is the **Muree incident**. NDMA blocked the roads towards the Muree due to heavy snow and over-crowd. People slept in their cars without the primary measures - resulted in loss of hundreds of lives. Thus, the role of citizens and mass awareness is crucial to address any disaster.

There are several countries in the world that are vulnerable to climate disaster. However few measures can help to address these challenges in Pakistan.

Proper Budget allocation is important to all the disaster management bodies. Inadequate resources, low salaries, out-dated technology cannot possess the ability to counter the disaster destruction properly and timely. Pakistan must allocate an adequate amount of budget to disaster management bodies. In addition to it, the revival and advancement of these institutions

is also important. Thus, Government must introduce the advancement program to introduce and integrate recent technology into these institutions to make it productive and functional.

Besides the budget allocation, the accountability of all the actions and working of NDMA must be taken place. A quarterly report must be given to the Prime Minister. In the report show all the measures and work done by NDMA to manage the disaster situation in Pakistan and its prevention. In this way, the NDMA can be productive and the disastrous destruction can be minimized to some extent.

Apart from the unpredictable disasters like earth-quake, pro-active measures and preparedness can lessen the disastrous situation. For instance, the heatwave is expected around the months of April - July, similarly monsoon is expected from June - September in almost every region of Pakistan. Thus, installing shades for heat, making barriers for floods and evacuation of people can help to address

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the problem. As Government did in the last few years for smog - timings ^{were} ~~are~~ changed for the schools and offices, smoke releasing vehicles were penalized and wearing mask was held mandatory.

People living on encroached areas must be evacuated before the climate occurs. It is seen that people deny to be moved to other places, they oppose. In such situation, it is important to not let them settle there in the first place. Private-housing enterprises must be held accountable, legal actions must be taken against them to set the precedents for the other encroachment base housing entities.

The concept of building expiry is not considered in Pakistan. Buildings also have expiry date and after that they must be demolished and reconstructed. This the main reason due to which the building collapse and people loss their lives and belongings. Strict law implementation and timely survey can help to address this issue. This led to disastrous situation in Pakistan.

A video went viral in which the police in Karachi is was using old siren to warn the people nearby. ~~by~~ The sound of that siren was rarely audible through the video that was recorded besides the officer. How can such instrument can help to warn the people ~~stand~~ at some distance. Such old-style warning system cannot help people to act timely before the disastrous situation. New technology of warning systems must be introduced and ~~given~~ ~~produced~~ to the authorities.

In the age of technology, where every news can be recieved ~~up~~ on the gadgets, warning-system can also be introduced through phones. For instance, Japan uses auto-earthquake alert on phones to help people react timely. Similarly, Pakistan can also adopt such measures. Moreover, the digital sign boards are the more piece of attraction than the regular sign boards on the roads. These sign boards must show the warnings during the time of disaster. The use of technology can be productive to prevent or lessen the disaster.

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Pakistan must seek foreign collaboration rather than foreign aid and assistance. Pakistan can gather the most vulnerable countries through multilateralism and create a platform. Through this platform, the countries help each other at the time of disaster as well as advocate collectively on the other International forums upon the natural disaster issues and climate change.

To conclude the above mentioned discussion, Pakistan is undergoing various disaster management challenges. However, out of those challenges many can be addressed by adopting certain measures. The most of the challenges can be addressed and prevented through timely actions and productive response. Pakistan must work on the proactive approach to mitigate the disasters. In this manner, Pakistan can become less vulnerable to disastrous situation. Lastly, the collective action of people, Government and International Community can play a productive and crucial part in this regard.