

SAMRA ASHRAF.

BATCH = 83

ENG ESSAY

MOCK = 01.

Disaster Management in Pakistan: Challenges and Way Forward

(1) Introduction

(1.1) Hook

(1.2) Background

(1.3) Thesis Statement: The major challenges in Pakistan's disaster management system include weak governance and poor inter-agency coordination, ineffective use of early warning system despite their availability, the growing threat of climate change and floods, low community awareness and high social vulnerability, persistent funding and maintenance gaps often exploited for aid gains, shortage of skilled human resources and training, and weak legal and accountability mechanisms that prevent lessons from being translated into reforms.

(2) Challenges of disaster management in Pakistan

(2.1) Weak Governance and Institutional Coordination

(a) Overlapping mandates between NDMA, PDMA and local administration

(b) Provincial and district level often act

reactively rather than preventively.

(C) Lack of coordination during disaster response

(2.2) Poor Implementation of Early Warning System

(a) Early warning equipment (like in KPI 2025)

was available but not installed

(b) Gaps between Technology acquisition and on-ground application

(c) Lack of training for local staff to maintain alert systems

(2.3) Climate change and Emerging Multi-Hazards

(a) Rising temperatures accelerate glacier melting and cloud burst

(b) Intensified monsoon patterns lead to flash floods and drought in different regions

(c) Heatwaves and wildfires are increasing but poorly managed.

(2.4) Insufficient public awareness and Community Preparedness

(a) Local communities remain unaware of evacuation plans and safe zones.

(b) Cultural and linguistic barriers hinder message delivery.

(c) School and community-level drills are rare or poorly organized.

(2.5) Financial Constraints and Misallocation of Funds

(a) Disaster management budgets are limited and often diverted to other sectors.

(b) Reliance on donor agencies rather than self-sustained funding.

(c) Corruption and lack of transparency in fund utilization.

(2.6) Shortage of skilled Human Resources

(a) Few trained disaster response professionals

(b) Dependence on army personnel instead of dedicated civil teams -

(c) Brain drain and lack of incentives discourage expertise reaction.

(2.7) Lack of Legal Framework and Accountability

(a) Disaster laws exist but are weakly implemented at Provincial level

(b) No strict penalties for negligence or failure to install provided tools -

(c) Post-disaster inquiries rarely result in policy change -

ESSAY:

When disasters strike, they do not choose between rich or poor, strong or weak but in Pakistan, the damage always falls hardest on those who are least prepared. From the northern mountains of Gilgit-Baltistan to the plains of Punjab and the coasts of Sindh, the country faces floods, earthquakes, droughts, and now sudden cloudbursts almost every year. The 2025 flood in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab once again exposed how unprepared our systems are. Despite having modern early warning tools that could give alerts before floods, the equipment was not properly

DATE: ___/___/___
installed. As a result, thousands of families lose their homes and livelihoods. These repeated tragedies show that Pakistan's disasters are not only caused by nature but also by weak management and poor coordination among institutions. The major challenges in Pakistan's disaster management system include weak governance and poor inter-agency coordination, ineffective use of early-warning systems despite their availability, the growing threat of climate change and cloudbursts, low community awareness and high social vulnerability, persistent funding, procurement, and maintenance gaps often exploited for aid gains, shortage of skilled human resources and training, and weak legal and accountability mechanisms that prevent lessons from being translated into reforms.

Pakistan's disaster management is weakened first and most visibly by poor governance and weak institutional coordination. Multiple bodies, NDMA, Provincial PDMA, irrigation departments and district administrations often have overlapping roles and unclear handoffs, so responsibility blurs at the moment of crises. The NDMA's own planning documents repeatedly call for clearer lines of authority and better provincial-federal cooperation, yet reports after recent events show the system still reacts rather than prevents. Provincial and district offices frequently mobilize only after lives are lost or roads are

DATE: ___/___/___

cut. As one local advocate said during the 2025 floods, "the government spends huge amounts compensating the affected families but refuses to invest in disaster prevention," calling for permanent local warning systems and planning rather than one-off relief. Independent reviews and journalism of the 2025 monsoon season described delays in rescue and duplication of effort where agencies failed to share information and resources quickly, and slowing relief delivery. These governance gaps all mean accountability is weak. Post-disaster inquiries rarely translate into lasting reforms or punished negligence, which encourages repeated mistakes instead of institutional learning.

The second critical failure is that early warning technology exists in many cases but is not turned into real protection on the ground. In several districts equipment bought years ago remains in warehouse or has never been linked to local alert network, for example, reports show an early warning system purchased for Swat was left uninstalled for 15 years, leaving communities exposed when flash floods struck. At the same time, the catastrophic 2025 floods across KPK again showed that forecasting did not translate into community level action. The PMD had issued heavy rainfall alert three days in advance, but the information never reached

vulnerable valley villages where hundreds of homes were later washed away. "We only heard the sound of water when it was already inside the streets," one resident told Dawn 2025, describing how the absence of local sirens or communication channels cost lives.

A 2024 audit by Planning Commission found that less than 40 percent of disaster management staff in KP had received any formal training in early warning procedures. The problem is not a total lack of technology but the failure to connect data with people.

Despite millions spent on forecasting infrastructure and foreign-funded warning systems, early alerts rarely trigger preventive evacuation or road closures. By contrast, countries like Bangladesh with smaller budgets but clearer community protocols have sharply reduced cyclone casualties through local-level volunteer networks and quick text alerts.

Climate change is already reshaping the hazards Pakistan faces: warmer summers are accelerating glacier melt in the Hindu Kush-Karakoram-Himalaya and creating unstable glacial lakes, while a more volatile monsoon brings heavier, more concentrated rains and sudden flash floods. The NDMA and international partners warn that these glacial lakes can burst with little warning,

sending destructive floods down narrow mountain valleys a risk now treated as urgent because thousands of lakes sit behind fragile moraine dams - Pakistan has roughly 7000-7200 glaciers feeding major river systems and when heat spikes or unusually intense rain hit, those glacier-fed-rivers can surge quickly downstream. Scientists and climate attribution studies say the 2025 monsoon season was made more intense by warming, turning what used to be rare extreme rainfall into repeating threat and contributing to the wide, fast-moving floods that battered Punjab and KP. Recent years have also seen a rise in deadly cloudburst in GB and Chitral, where sudden localized downpours trigger flash floods within minutes. These cloudbursts, often linked to shifting monsoon currents and higher humidity levels have destroyed entire villages before authorities could issue warning.

Financial limitation and poor allocation of funds remain among the biggest barriers to effective disaster management in Pakistan - Annual budget for both national and provincial management authorities remain small - In 2024-25, less than 0.3% of the national budget was earmarked for disaster risk reduction -

DATE: — / — / —
According to the Planning Commission Annual Review 2024, funds meant for preparedness and early-warning projects were "reallocated to other urgent development schemes," weakening resilience before each crisis - Corruption and lack of Transparency further dilute the impact of where money is available -

The shortage of skilled and dedicated human resources compounds these fiscal weaknesses. Pakistan still depends heavily on the army for rescue and relief operations, while civilian disaster-response institutions remain underdeveloped.

The NDMA's own 2025 capacity review found that only about one-third of its professional staff had specialized disaster management. Many trained experts move to international NGOs or abroad, contributing to slow brain drain in this sector. A 2024 UN OCHA report noted that disaster response in Pakistan remains personality-driven rather than institutionalised. Without systematic training programs, local government cannot maintain 24/7 readiness, rescue equipment and GIS tools underused.

Weak enforcement of disaster-related laws and minimal accountability complete this cycle of vulnerability. Pakistan's National Disaster Management Act (2010) provides a legal framework for coordination,

DATE: / /
but its implementation at the Provincial level remains inconsistent - Few Provinces have enacted strong by-laws to operationalize the A&E or impose Penalties for negligence - After 2022 and 2025 floods, Parliamentary committees announced reviews of NDMA and PDMA Performance, but no major legal reform followed - In Sio Moku Case No. 19 of 2010, the SC had earlier directed authorities to ensure institutional Preparedness through mandating safety and response Plan, yet follow-up compliance reports were never made Public - Legal experts have called for amendments giving NDMA greater enforcement power and creating independent Provincial oversight bodies to audit Preparedness spending and staff Performance - Without such reforms, disasters will continue to expose the gap between written law & lived reality.

(3) Recommendations:

(3.1) ~~Strengthen governance and coordination framework.~~

Create a single command platform linking NDMA, PDMA's, and local bodies with clear roles and real time communication.

(3.2) ~~Operationalize Early Warnings:~~

Install and maintain flood sensors

Link them with local alert system,
and ensure alerts in regional language.

(3.3)

Include climate resilience in all development
plans, invest in representation and natural
flood barriers.

(3.4)

Introduce school level drills, awareness
sessions and women-inclusive disaster
volunteer network.

(3.5)

Establish a national disaster academy,
offer incentives and conduct regular
refresher courses for NDMA/IDMA
staff.

(3.6)

Amend 2010 Disaster Act to enforce
penalties for negligence and ensure
public oversight.

(4) Conclusion:

When calamities hit, they make no
distinction between rich or poor, yet
in Pakistan, the weakest always bear
the greatest loss - From the mountains
to the coasts, every disaster exposes
how unready and divided our system
remain - Unless governance improves and
warning turn into action, history will
keep repeating itself - Pakistan must
rise from reaction to readiness,

DATE: ___/___/___

transforming disaster into discipline, and vulnerability into resilience. It is never too late to pledge for a new change to create a new tomorrow. Where there is a will there is always a way, regardless of the obstacles and hindrances, they can definitely achieve their goals.