

A catastrophe that hit Pakistan; floods

Pakistan, a less economically developed country (LEDC), has been experiencing floods for over a decade. Due to its wavering economic conditions, efforts to build dams in order to overcome the disastrous impact are nullified causing the government to fail while tackling this situation for years. The country usually experiences floods during the season of monsoon; when the winds generated from the bay of Bengal hit the eastern side of Pakistan in summer. The situation is worsened by the excess water coming from the melting glaciers situated in northern Pakistan.

Rain is often noted as a blessing from the heavens above but for Pakistan, it is more of a disaster. 14th of June, 2022 marked the beginning of monsoon season which quite frankly is also called the beginning of the disaster. Torrential monsoon rains triggered the most severe flooding in Pakistan's recent history, washing away villages and leaving around 3.4 million children in need of assistance and at increased risk of waterborne diseases, drowning and malnutrition. As floodwaters slowly recede, the sheer scale of damage is being revealed. Hundreds of thousands of homes have been damaged, while many public health facilities, water systems and schools have been destroyed or damaged. Young children are living out in the open with their families, with no drinking water, no food, and no livelihood, exposed to a wide range of new flood-related risks and hazards, including from damaged buildings and drowning in floodwaters. (UNICEF, n.d.).

Around 33 million people, including approximately 16 million children, have been affected by this year's heavy monsoon rains in Pakistan, which have brought devastating rains, floods and landslides. As many as 7 million people have been temporarily displaced. Some major rivers breached their banks and dams have overflowed, destroying homes, farms and critical infrastructure including roads, bridges, schools, hospitals and public health facilities (UNICEF, n.d.). Floods have damaged or destroyed thousands of schools throughout the country, adding to the interruption to learning that many students faced during COVID-19 pandemic school closures. Watery diarrhoea, typhoid, and malaria outbreaks are on the rise as millions of people sleep in makeshift shelters or in the open near stagnant water. Many of the worst-affected districts are among the most vulnerable in Pakistan, where children already face high hunger rates and limited access to clean water and sanitation.

One of the known causes of the devastating flood situation in Pakistan is the effect of climate change and global warming. Climate change refers to long-term shifts in temperatures and weather patterns. These shifts may be natural, but since the 1800s, human activities have been the main driver of climate change, primarily due to the burning of fossil fuels (like coal, oil and gas), which produces heat-trapping gases (United Nations, n.d.). On the other hand, Global warming is the long-term warming of the planet's overall temperature. Though this warming trend has been going on for a long time, its pace has significantly increased in the last hundred years due to the burning of fossil fuels. As the human population has increased, so has the volume of

fossil fuels burned. Fossil fuels include coal, oil, and natural gas, and burning them causes what is known as the “greenhouse effect” in Earth’s atmosphere (Kristof, 2022).

Pakistan produces less than 1% of the world’s greenhouse gas and yet the country remains the most negatively impacted country in the world. Across the country, about 150 bridges and 3,500 kilometres (2,200 miles) of roads have been destroyed. More than 700,000 livestock and 2 million acres of crops and orchards have also been lost. The worst flooding occurred along the Indus River in the provinces of Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Balochistan, and Sindh. The provinces of Balochistan and Sindh have so far this year received five to six times their 30-year average rainfall (Pratt, 2022).

Moreover, the current political situation is adding fuel to the fire as the opposing parties compete on who is collecting the most donations funding for the floods rather than uniting upfront to deal with the already worsening situation at hand. Less fortunate people who are affected by the floods keep on losing their lives to the flood as well as waterborne diseases. Not only this, the long-run disastrous impact of floods is yet to come as the Pakistani farmers lose all their crops to the overflowing waters entering their fields. If the situation is not dealt with properly, this may result in persisting droughts in water-affected areas of Pakistan as well as a hike in the prices of daily commodities such as wheat, rice vegetables and etc; indirectly affecting the country as a whole while at the same time worsening the economy which is already in stagflation.

People from all around the world are donating to help the people of Pakistan who are affected by the waters. The Disasters Emergency Committee's (DEC) appeal to help people affected by the large-scale flooding in Pakistan has raised £13.5 million after just two days, it was announced on 1st September 2022, amid warnings that hunger and malnutrition are on the rise as a result of the floods. The total includes £5 million matched pound-for-pound by the UK Government through the Aid Match scheme (Relief Web, 2022). Other aids include aid from the US, China and Russia.

Hence as a nation, we must help by donating to several GO's and NGO's and tackle the situation of climate change and global warming by decreasing the emissions of greenhouse gases. Some ways to achieve this output are by using green renewable energy resources for energy production rather than fossil fuels, switching to electric vehicles under the national electric vehicle policy (NEVP) and by foreshadowing such trends of rain and taking measures such as building dams or evacuating people from the river banks that are bound to be flooded every monsoon season.

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