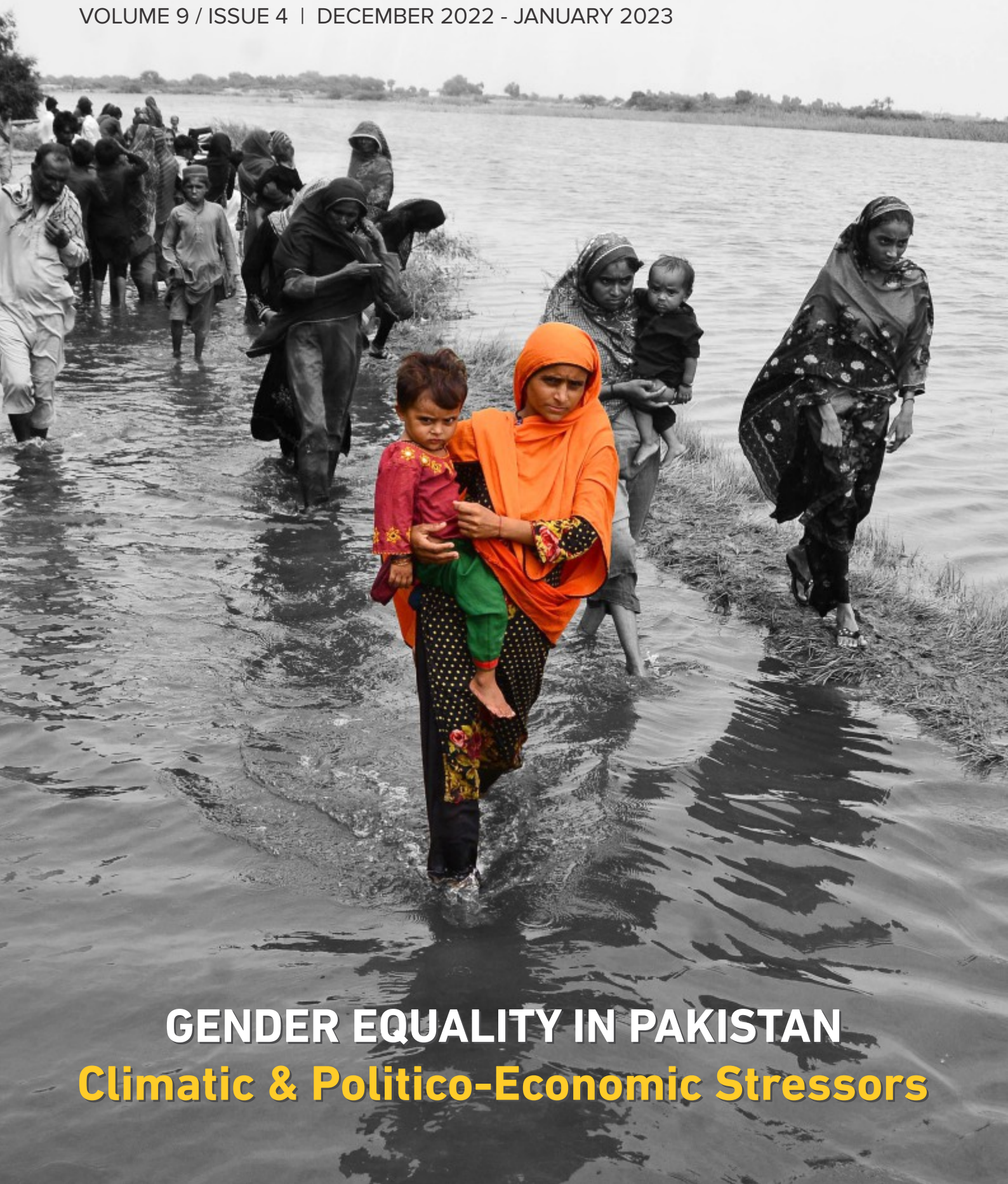


DEVELOPMENT ADVOCATE **PAKISTAN**



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GENDER EQUALITY IN PAKISTAN
Climatic & Politico-Economic Stressors



DEVELOPMENT ADVOCATE PAKISTAN

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Development Advocate Pakistan provides a platform for the exchange of ideas on key development issues and challenges in Pakistan. Focusing on a specific development theme in each edition, this quarterly publication fosters public discourse and presents varying perspectives from civil society, academia, government and development partners. The publication makes an explicit effort to include the voices of women and youth in the ongoing discourse. A combination of analysis and public opinion articles promote and inform debate on development ideas while presenting up-to-date information.



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CONTENTS

EDITORIAL		CLIMATE CHANGE VULNERABILITIES	
Turning the Tide for Equality <i>By Knut Ostby</i>	1	2022 Floods: Gender-Responsive and Risk-informed Recovery <i>By Shiraz Ali Shah & Khusrav Sharifov</i>	31
MAIN ANALYSIS		Case Study: Raising the Alarm: Women's Role in Early Warning Systems <i>By: Shameen Raza</i>	37
Leaning In: Agency, Access, and Support <i>By Afia Salam</i>	3	Media Allies: Telling Women's Stories for Climate Action <i>By Tasneem Ahmar</i>	39
LEADERSHIP PERSPECTIVE		Greening Livelihoods, Empowering Lives <i>By Iram Chaudhry</i>	43
Pushing the Gender Envelope <i>By Nilofar Bakhtiar</i>	7		
INFOGRAPHIC		REGIONAL LENS	
A Genderd Anatomy of Pakistan's 2022 Floods	11	Shaping Asia Pacific's Gendered Future in a Transforming World <i>By Koh Miyaoi</i>	47
SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL STRESSES		FORESIGHT	
Inflation and its Differential Impacts <i>By Kaiser Bengali</i>	17	A Primer on Anticipating Multidimensional Risks <i>By Aarathi Krishnan</i>	51
Navigating Political Anxiety through Gendered Interventions <i>By Ahmed Bilal Mehboob</i>	21		
The Prejudice of Climate Change <i>By Hadia Majid</i>	25		



Turning the Tide for Equality

“Transformational change can be brought about for Pakistan’s women by directly and inclusively targeting gender parity stressors with policy solutions and structural interventions.”



By
Knut Ostby
Resident Representative
UNDP Pakistan

UNDP’s Human Development Report 2021-2022, entitled ‘Uncertain Times, Unsettled Lives: Shaping our Future in a Transforming World’, reveals that in a ‘stunning first’, the world’s Human Development Index (HDI) value has declined for two years in a row because of a combined impact of disease, disaster, and economic downturn. New outbreaks of the Zika virus, monkey pox, and the West Nile Fever have joined COVID-19 and its many variants in becoming a cause for global concern. Climate change is pushing weather disasters to new extremes since mid-2020, such as the recent floods in Pakistan, wildfires in the US, torrential rains in Australia and Indonesia, and a megadrought in Brazil. Inflation and currency depreciation is rampant all over the world, with global growth projected to sharply decelerate in 2023, at rates preceded only by the global recessions of 2009 and 2020.

Pakistan’s development challenges have been exacerbated by these trends, causing increased poverty, inequality, and recurrent natural disasters. While the country’s HDI rank has remained stagnant over the last three years, it is being impacted by a complicated nexus of climate crises, economic distress, and sociopolitical vulnerabilities. And all of

this is disproportionately impacting women. Pakistan ranks 145th out of 146 countries on the World Economic Forum’s 2022 Global Gender Gap Index, and 161st out of 191 countries on the Human Development Report’s 2022 Gender Inequality Index. There is an urgent need to closely examine the factors contributing to this state of gender in Pakistan.

The first major factor is climate crisis. Despite contributing only one per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions, Pakistan was overwhelmed by climate change induced floods in 2022, which affected 33 million people and submerged a third of the country. According to the Pakistan Post-Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA) prepared by the Government of Pakistan in partnership with UNDP, World Bank, Asian Development Bank and the European Union, preliminary estimates suggest that the floods will push between 8.4 and 9.1 million people into poverty.

As the 2022 floods have shown us, climate change impacts are not gender-neutral because they cause disproportionate violence, displacement, loss of livelihoods, and lack of access to health and education facilities for women during natural disasters. Pakistan’s rural

women have been especially affected by the recent floods because of their high level of engagement in the agrarian sector, and their limited ability to cope with associated risks. According to the PDNA, 640,000 adolescent girls during the current crisis have become vulnerable and at increased risk of coercions, Gender-Based Violence (GBV), and child marriage. Women are also more likely to face harsher consequences owing to several other climate catastrophes in Pakistan, such as droughts, Glacial Lake Outburst Flood (GLOF) events, and earthquakes. These realities need to be factored by policymakers and development partners when formulating disaster recovery frameworks and policies to build community resilience against shocks.

Pakistan is also facing a second complicator of a stressed macro-economic and fiscal situation, which has eroded the space for critically-required resources to tackle the floods’ impact as well as the need for larger development spending to achieve SDGs. The country is experiencing both a heavy debt burden (with total debt servicing standing at USD 26 billion or eight per cent of the projected GDP in 2022-2023) and very high levels of inflation at 24.5 percent.

These challenges are far more insurmountable for women. As an example, the pandemic had significant economic consequences for domestic, textile, and home-based workers in Pakistan, the majority of whom are women. Women in the country also have the smallest share of senior, managerial and legislative roles in the world, standing at only 4.5%. There is also a substantial difference in their earnings from those of their male co-workers. The cumulative wage loss in Pakistan due to the wage gap between men and women is around PKR 500.5 billion. Lack of digital and financial literacy further compounds these vulnerabilities, making women less able to withstand economic shocks.

Socio-politically also, women are not afforded the same opportunities and representation as men. Sixty percent of Pakistan’s registered women voters did not cast a vote in the 2018 elections. Poor civic education and awareness of their political rights, coupled with low voter registration keeps women politically disenfranchised. Furthermore, poor linkages to programmes and interventions to improve their human development outcomes, social barriers owing to a patriarchal cultural mindset, and poor access to opportunities



increase their social vulnerabilities and risks.

Addressing this tri-fold challenge against gender equality in Pakistan requires a holistic portfolio approach that can bring about a transformational change for its women by directly and inclusively targeting gender parity stressors with policy solutions and structural interventions.

Positive action is evident in some domains. While efforts are needed to improve women’s voter turnout in Pakistan, their parliamentary representation at 20.5 per cent is higher than the South Asian regional average of 16.5 per cent. Since 2008, the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) has championed social protection and welfare for women in the country; it will help 7.7 million women-led families through various payment distribution mechanisms in the first quarter of 2023 alone. Similarly, the Ministry of Climate Change’s 2022 Climate Change Gender Action Plan (ccGAP) is a welcome roadmap for implementing gender inclusive climate action in Pakistan. Adopted at this month’s International Conference on Climate Resilient Pakistan convened in Geneva by the Government of Pakistan and the United Nations, the ‘Resilient Recovery, Rehabilitation and Recovery Framework’ (4RF) is also focused on gendered climate resilience response

and recovery mechanisms.

These gains need to be fortified and scaled by exploring new solutions that create a gender-transformative development compact in Pakistan. Special policy attention and response is required in the sectors of social protection, economic justice and growth, inclusive governance, and resilience-building, particularly in the most vulnerable communities and least developed regions. This can be done by particularly leveraging the country’s impressive digital footprint, financial infrastructures and youth demographic.

In a landmark ruling this month, the Supreme Court of Pakistan directed the Government of Sindh to ensure that flood relief efforts are overseen by women and vulnerable groups. Co-authored by Pakistan’s first woman judge of the Supreme Court, Justice Ayesha Malik, the ruling is based on the National Policy Guideline on Vulnerable Groups in Disasters (2014) according to which the participation of women is required in disaster management plans at all levels to ensure inclusion, representation and decision-making. This is an example of how innovative approaches can help break new ground for equality. Indeed, it is the women and vulnerable groups of Pakistan who are showing all of us how to Leave No One Behind for achieving Agenda 2030.



“ Psychological counselling, safe spaces, and access to assistance needs to be provided to get a handle on the burgeoning vulnerabilities that women suffer from. ”

MAIN ANALYSIS

Leaning In: Agency, Access, and Support

“ Past experiences of conflicts are proof of their disproportionately negative impact on women's safety, freedom of movement, access to education, health and economic empowerment. ”



By
Afia Salam
Journalist

In Pakistan, cricket is almost like an alternate religion, or a unique binding force. It is said to be a game of glorious uncertainties and uncertain glories. Pakistan's history has somehow mirrored those uncertainties, but they have not always been glorious - especially if one is to look at the imprint on the women of Pakistan.

Having said that, we need to contextualise the current uncertainties within global and regional happenings. A new active conflict is raging in the world, and it is threatening to escalate from a bilateral to a regional one. Its repercussions have assumed global proportions, disrupting food and fuel supply chains, and sending many of the already weaker economies, including that of Pakistan, into a tailspin.

The price hike of essential commodities has pushed a large number below the poverty line which has had a greater effect on the women as far as their access to nutrition, health - including sexual and reproductive health facilities - and education.

The ultra-poor who were already registered with the government's social safety net schemes found it to be inadequate as a buffer, while the millions more who were hovering near the poverty line did not even have recourse to this assistance as they were not registered.

However, the Ukrainian conflict is not the only one impacting Pakistan. The increase in tensions with Afghanistan on its Western border and fears of its likely spill-over are a source of concern not only in the context of national security in military



“ The recent floods serve as a case in point, pushing back many of the gains made by the women in Pakistan in over a decade. ”

terms, but also in socio-economic terms. This is again of special concern to the women as past experiences are proof of the negative impact on their safety, freedom of movement, access to education, health and economic empowerment.

Thrown into this mix are the devastating impacts of climate change. The recent floods serve as a case in point, pushing back many of the gains made by the women in Pakistan in over a decade. They have laid bare the fragility of those gains in the face of the uncertain natural climate events that turn into calamities because of poor governance and weak response mechanisms, and plans made without the gender lens.

There is a reason why we find women being disproportionately impacted by climate induced disasters. The existing social status according to the majority of them wrests their agency. The decisions are made for them, not by them. Moreover, because of the extra burden of domestic chores, their access to news and views that could help them to make informed decisions is curtailed.

Access to terrestrial or satellite channels is also limited. The expansion of the teledensity footprint has also left women far behind, as there is clear discrimination in ownership of mobile phones by women, especially young girls.

This means that they remain more or less uninformed, or receive second hand information about weather warnings, remedial measures, safe spaces, access to assistance like health and education for their children, and relocation options.

This may seem trivial and unimportant, but severance of her ties from a familiar geography, from the clan, from helping relatives, her watering hole or community tap, or her favourite goat or cow, marginalises them, and pushes them into the realm of uncertainty. The realities of climate-induced displacement, economic hardships and the unravelling of their social fabric fuse together and shake the foundation of life as they knew it.

The impacts of such circumstances on the mental and emotional health of women are severe and varied. Such impacts are not relegated to rural areas only. We have seen similar uncertainty staring urban women in the face as well, when they have had to bear the brunt of displacement from their abodes, however humble, during the ‘anti-encroachment’ demolitions in places like Karachi.

The worst part is not knowing when, or if, normalcy will return. They have not been explained that what they consider as a return to normalcy may never happen in view of the new threat

“ The realities of climate-induced displacement, economic hardships and unravelling of women's social fabric fuse together and shake the foundation of life as they knew it. ”

perceptions of climate change realities. The ‘normal’ geographical spaces may no longer ensure their safety, or access to a better quality of life.

While the 2022 floods may have exposed this phenomenon brutally, it is an extrapolation of what many families, especially the women, have been facing in places like the Indus delta, where the sea is intruding inwards, or along the meandering rivers that erode the banks, taking away their homes and sources of food and income.

Added to the mix of the uncertainty triggered by the conditions mentioned above is the burden of shouldering the responsibilities in the absence of their men, who also have to move further away in the new location to look for new sources of livelihood. The women are left to deal with the demands and pressures,

and sometimes harassment, of loan sharks in the absence of the men of the family.

These are not new problems. Their scale has increased manifold in disaster-prone areas of the country. These disasters also defy the predictability of geography and intensity. The overall pressure of so many factors can only be dealt with through programmatic interventions by advocacy and implementing organisations.

Psychological counselling, safe spaces, and access to assistance need to be provided to handle the burgeoning vulnerabilities that the already marginalised communities, especially women, suffer from. This uncertainty can only be reduced if they can clearly see a mechanism of someone leaning in.



Pushing the Gender Envelope

“ The systematic subordination of women is the basis of gender discrimination in our society, and it creates a gender gap in each sphere of life for women. ”



By
Nilofar Bakhtiar
Chairperson
National Commission on the Status of Women

What measures are needed to embed equality into the political sphere?

Women's political participation is one of the most crucial indicators of women's empowerment. Over the years, numerous measures have been introduced in the country to enhance women's political role, but a wide gender gap still exists. The systematic subordination of women is the basis of gender discrimination in our society, creating a gender gap in each sphere of life for women.

Some of the main reasons for women's low political participation and voter turnout include community decisions to bar women from voting, issues in getting CNICs and registering votes, low literacy rates, lack of civic education, and the distance of polling stations.

In a collaboration between NCSW and UNDP Pakistan, I initiated a series of consultations at national and provincial levels to collect recommendations from key stakeholders to address the gender gap in the political sphere. These included:

- Political parties and civil society organisations must connect with

NADRA and ECP to register voters with a particular focus on women, women with disabilities, the transgender community, and minorities. Voter registration vans could also be used to address the issue of women's mobility.

- Voter registration and voter education campaigns conducted by ECP must begin months before the elections, using print, electronic and social media at all levels (district, provincial and national), to ensure women have CNICs in time for the elections.
- A training programme should be introduced for women councillors and aspiring candidates to educate them about their roles.
- ECP should make a minimum of 10 percent women voter turnout compulsory at the polling station level rather than at the constituency level.
- Polling stations should be established closer to the communities they serve.
- Separate polling booths should be established for women, with a women-friendly environment.



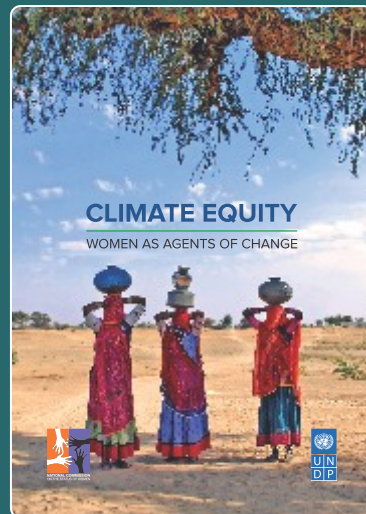
“ Women's social vulnerabilities can only be tackled by designing and implementing a social protection programme that considers women's reality in this part of the world. ”

- Ensure the safety of voters.
- A mini census should be conducted to ascertain the precise data of minorities within the country and overseas, and also the population of transgender people and persons with disabilities.
- The Social Welfare Department should facilitate issuing disability certificates to persons with disabilities.
- The ECP should take immediate measures to verify and correct voter lists (preferably through online facilities).
- Census data at the block code level should be shared with NADRA regularly to take a targeted approach to registering voters where the gender gap is higher.
- A one-window operation for women with disabilities should be established, including certificate, CNIC, and voter registration services.
- Increase the 5 percent quota for women on general seats, with tickets being given on the party's winnable seats.
- Political parties should run election campaigns for women candidates contesting elections on general seats.
- The list of women on quota seats should be made public before the election.
- The term of women on reserved seats should be limited to two terms.
- The election contesting fee for women candidates should be waived.
- The quota for minority seats should be increased from 10 percent - proportionate to the increase in their population.

How can women's social vulnerabilities be tackled to ensure equal access to social opportunities?

Women's social vulnerabilities can only be tackled by designing and implementing a social protection programme that considers women's reality in this part of the world. It recognises and addresses the issues women face from birth to death. In a society where a son's birth is preferred, baby girls early on pick up on this discrimination and internalise it. They

REPORT SPOTLIGHT



Climate Equity: Women as Agents of Change

Jointly produced by the National Commission on the Status of Women and UNDP Pakistan, this report emerged from interviews and countrywide consultative sessions conducted with policy practitioners, representatives from the Government, private sector, community-based organizations, academia, and media. The report offers policy prescriptions for enhancing resilience and reducing vulnerability of women who depend on natural environments for livelihoods and sustenance. It gives sector-specific recommendations to make the policies more gender responsive and inclusive to benefit all communities, particularly marginalized cohorts.

face many barriers to education, proper employment, and a lack of freedom to make important decisions about their own lives, like marriage, the age at which they marry, the number of children they bear, and so on.

A country like Pakistan needs a strong social protection programme to address women's vulnerabilities and ensure equal access to social opportunities. This needs to be a social protection programme that provides regular cash transfers to women with young children. BISP reaches out to a number of women, but we need more such initiatives.

It is important to have a robust reproductive health programme that provides services to all women of reproductive age, including pregnant women, girls, and new mothers.

We must provide job protection to women by enacting and implementing laws that account for women's reproductive role. In addition, providing paid parental leave and promoting shared responsibility for care is equally critical.

At the same time, it is important to extend the coverage of social protection benefits and quality public services over women's working lives and into old age, including those in informal, low-paid and precarious work.

Social protection can increase access to services and facilitate linkages to other relevant programmes and interventions to

“ Gender-responsive social protection can also improve women's public, economic, social and political status. ”

improve women's and girls' outcomes in health and education, the labour market, and protection from violence and abuse.

For example, social protection can improve demand for and access to education, health and nutrition (including sexual and reproductive health), gender-based violence services, and health insurance. In addition, it can strengthen women's livelihoods and economic advancement by providing quality care services, sustainable infrastructure, livelihood programmes and financial inclusion.

Gender-responsive social protection can also improve women's access to and control over income and assets, strengthen social networks and improve women's public, economic, social and political status. This is done by addressing unequal economic and social roles assigned to women compared to men, ensuring decent working conditions, equal pay provisions, affordable and quality care services, and access to flexible work arrangements.

Ensuring women's independent access to assets, including land, capital, and credit; adequate transfers and services; and expanding opportunities for productive employment and sustainable livelihoods is therefore critical for women to overcome social vulnerability. It can also help facilitate linkages to other complementary services for men and women or boys and girls, to leverage dialogues to address discriminatory gender norms.



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“ Government and development partners must develop a keen understanding and awareness of the interlinkages between climate degradation and women's plight. ”

How can gender-sensitive resilience measures and policies respond to women's climate change vulnerabilities?

This is very important. It was discussed at length in this year's UN Commission on the Status of Women in New York. In addition, NCSW commissioned a detailed report on it, (please refer to 'Climate Equity: Women as Agents of Change' - available on the NCSW website and National Gender Data Portal).

Pakistan is among the top ten countries heavily impacted by climate change over the last twenty years. The situation is exacerbated because the country is mainly dependent on agriculture for economic turnover. In contrast, the agriculture sector itself is bearing adverse climatic conditions such as droughts and natural disasters, severely impacting crop production.

Women and children are often the worst affected by such natural calamities and resource scarcity. Women are often unaware of the warning signs of climate change, particularly those residing in rural settings that are most impacted by the phenomena. The lack of training, awareness and agency keeps them from participating in decision-making processes,

which invariably impacts the entire household during or after the disaster.

The active role of women can go a long way in reducing the country's harmful effects of climate change. The aforementioned report contains agriculture, water, forestry, energy, urban planning, and disaster management recommendations.

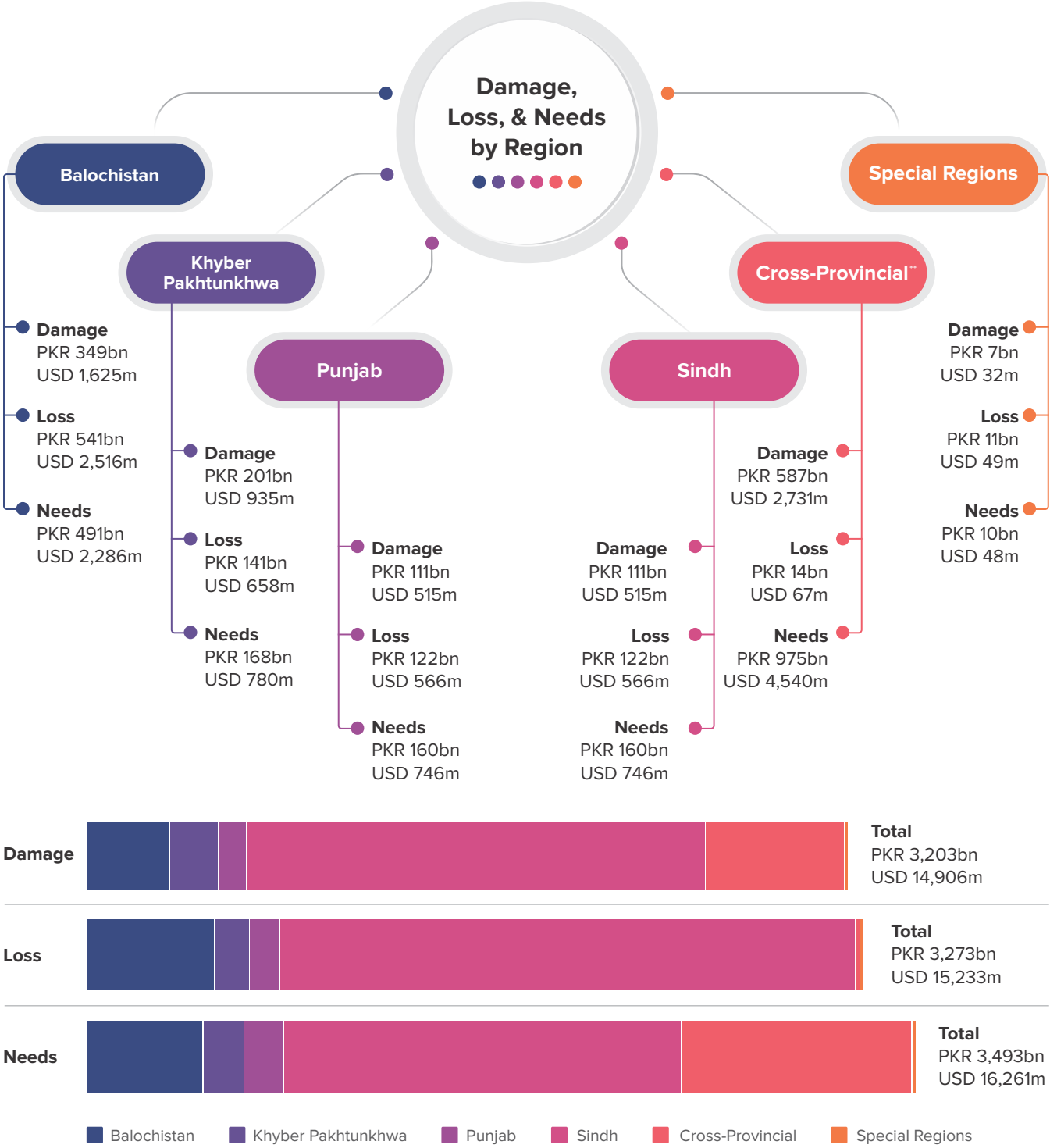
Government and development partners must develop a keen understanding and awareness of the interlinkages between climate degradation and women's plight. In this context, the importance of data cannot be undermined. There is a need to collect data on the micro-level transactions occurring every day, which will provide valuable insights.

We also need to incorporate a gender lens in our policy documents and frameworks on climate change to bring a meaningful difference to women's lives across the country.

Ultimately, it is important to recognise women's capacities and capabilities, not just their vulnerabilities. In essence, we need to cultivate women's leadership in climate action.

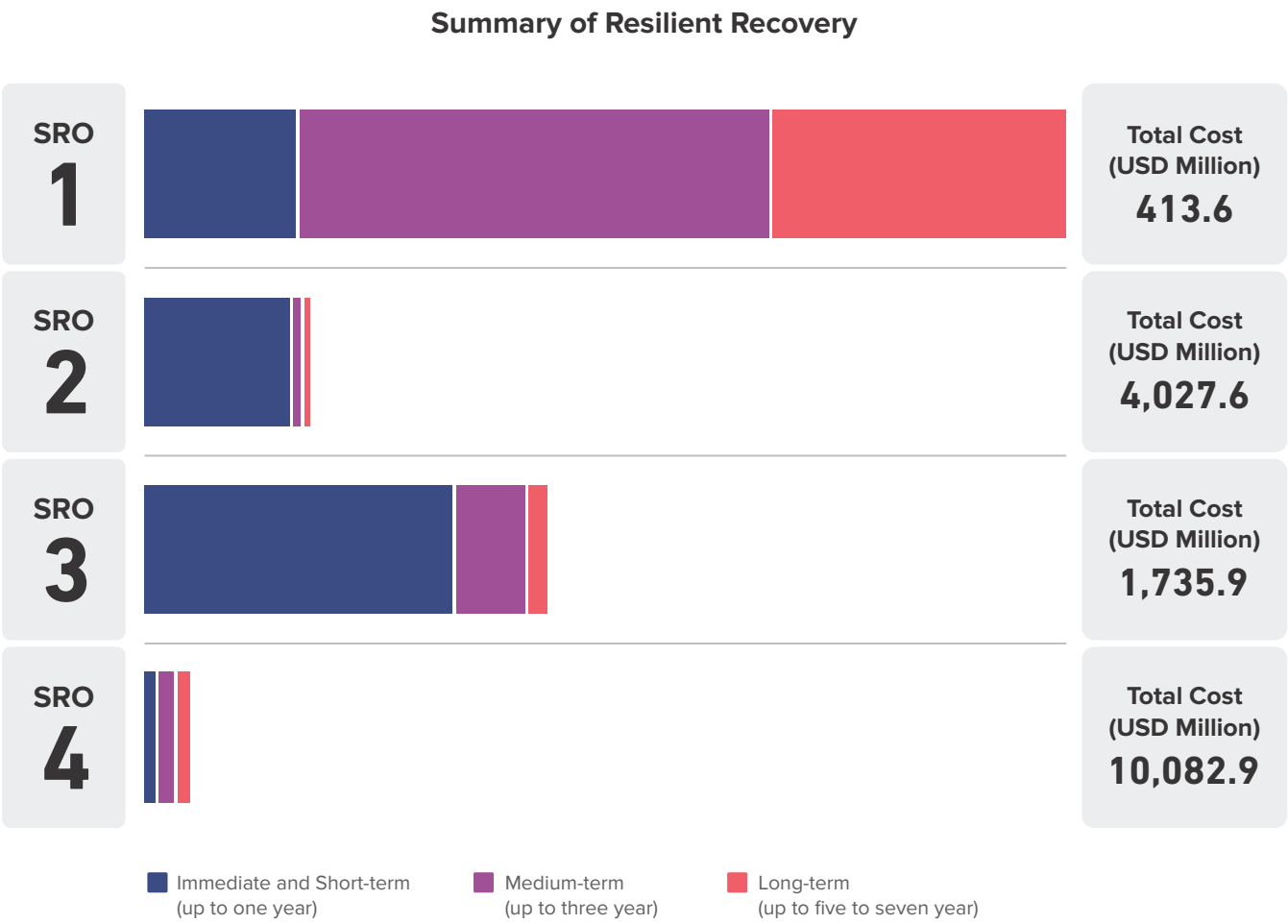
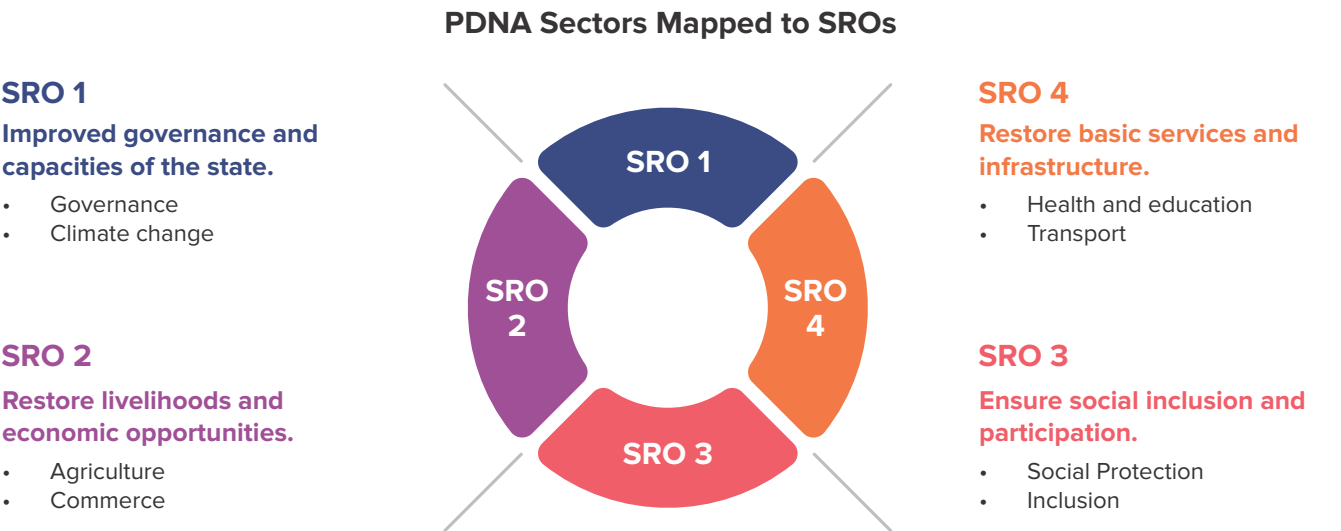
A Gendered Anatomy of Pakistan's 2022 Floods

Pakistan's Post Disaster Needs Assessment



Resilient Recovery, Rehabilitation, and Reconstruction Framework (4RF)

The 4RF presents sequenced sectoral priorities for integrated and multi-sectoral flood recovery in Pakistan. The framework has a strong focus on gender-informed recovery, and organizes needs around four **Strategic Recovery Objectives (SROs)**.



** This infographic is sourced from:
- Pakistan Floods 2022: Post-Disaster Needs Assessment, Ministry of Planning, Development & Special Initiatives, October 28, 2022. Available at: <https://www.undp.org/pakistan/publications/pakistan-floods-2022-post-disaster-needs-assessment-pdna>
- Resilient Recovery, Rehabilitation, and Reconstruction Framework (4RF), Ministry of Planning, Development & Special Initiatives, December 29, 2022. Available at: <https://www.undp.org/pakistan/publications/pakistan-floods-2022-resilient-recovery-rehabilitation-and-reconstruction-framework-4rf>
** Cross-provincial includes assets that affect more than one province or are calculated at the national level (e.g. railways, roads, telecommunications, etc.). The classification is in line with the public budget.

Impact on Women and Girls



Around **650,000** pregnant women have **poor access to maternal services**, with around **137,000** births expected in the next three months.



Nearly **4 million** children lack access to health services.



65% of pregnant women in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's flood-affected districts, **63%** in Sindh, and **50%** in Punjab face a lack of emergency obstetric and neonatal care facilities.



aged **6-11** years

1.2 million households with children will be prevented from attending school, with girls' education disproportionately affected.

The enrollment rates of girls in flood affected districts is less than **50%** in Balochistan.



The protection issues for **women, girls, and PWDs** are deemed very high by **73%** of respondents in flood-affected districts, due to the **lack or improper functioning of sanitation facilities**.



70% Girls in flood-affected districts reported not having access to a separate latrine facility in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, **80%** in Sindh, and **48%** in Balochistan.



In Sindh, about **53%** of women and girls in flood-affected districts are having difficulty accessing sufficient water, privacy, and menstrual hygiene management (MHM).

Health

Education

Sanitation

GBV



640,000 flood-affected adolescent girls are at increased risk of **coercions, GBV, and child marriage**.



In Sindh, **31%** of the displaced women and girls in flood affected areas are concerned about their privacy.



In Balochistan, **20%** are concerned about a lack of safe spaces.



10% of women and girls in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have concerns about harassment.

On the Road to Recovery

➤ Build Back Better

➤ People-centered socioeconomic recovery

➤ Building systemic resilience against natural hazards and climate change impacts



1 Restoration of jobs and livelihoods

2 Recovery and reconstruction of critical assets, services, and infrastructure

3 Strengthening governance and stakeholder capacity for reconstruction, especially communities

An inclusive and resilient recovery through a “Whole of Pakistan” approach, leading to sustainable development for the people and country

1. Pakistan: 2022 Monsoon Floods - Situation Report No. 11 (As of 11 November 2022) - Pakistan | ReliefWeb [Internet]. [cited 2022 Nov 29].
2. MSRNA-V3_all-chapters.pdf [Internet]. [cited 2022 Nov 29].
3. Rapid Needs Assessment Report: 2022 Monsoon Floods Balochistan, Pakistan (August 2022) - Pakistan | ReliefWeb [Internet]. [cited 2022 Nov 29].
4. Pakistan Floods 2022: Post-Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA) - Main Report | United Nations Development Programme [Internet]. UNDP. [cited 2022 Nov 29].
5. Detail Needs Assessment Flood Emergency – Sindh (22nd Oct 2022) - Pakistan | ReliefWeb [Internet]. [cited 2022 Nov 29].





Socio- Economic and Political Stresses



“Women forego their own medicines to prioritize food for the family, and consume less food to ensure ‘enough’ for the menfolk.”

THOUGHT PIECE

Inflation and its Differential Impacts

“Upper income consumers can dip into their savings to keep their consumption basket at pre-inflation levels. Lower income consumers do not have this privilege. They are forced to make changes to their consumption basket.”



By
Kaiser Bengali
Economist

Inflation has benefits and costs, distributed differentially. Producers and sellers, who have raw materials and stocks purchased at the old (lower) prices and sell output at the new (higher) prices benefit from higher profits. Consumers buy at the new (higher) prices at incomes fixed earlier and can now purchase less with the same money. In other words, their ‘real’ income or purchasing power has declined.

There are nuances to the benefits accruing to producers and sellers. While immediate profits can increase, they are short-term. For the next round of output, they have to purchase their inputs at higher (inflated) prices and post higher sale prices. Herewith, consumer demand behaviour is such that a product’s quantity purchased falls as its price rises. Thus, producers and sellers are hit with reduced sales if prices are raised and reduced profits if they are not.

Large and small producers and sellers face differential impacts. The former – more so, wholesalers – manage to protect themselves more from the vagaries of inflation compared to small producers and sellers, particularly small retailers. This is because of their financial capacity to hold larger inventories. This advantage is not available to small producers and sellers on account of their limited financial base.

Consumers belong to different income brackets. Upper-income consumers can dip into their savings to keep their consumption basket at pre-inflation levels. Lower-income consumers do not have this privilege. They are forced to change their consumption basket: dropping or reducing the purchase of some items to protect the consumption of what are deemed more essential items.

Consumers have a hierarchy of needs, ranging from necessities to luxuries. As ‘real’ income drops, families begin to shed from their consumption basket what are considered luxuries: ice-cream, fruit, eating out, fashion wear, etc. The macroeconomic impact of this phenomenon is a decelerating chain reaction: producers of what are deemed luxuries – sensing the drop in demand – begin to cut back output, resulting in the retrenchment of workers. The resulting unemployment causes a loss of income for working-class families, which forces them to cut back on some necessities as well, further dampening aggregate demand.

One case from Badin – a coastal district in southern Sindh – is insightful. As indicated earlier, consumption theory postulates that families will reduce non-essential items to protect essential items of consumption. A standard Pakistani meal comprises of roti (flat bread) and some form of daal (lentils) or meat or



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“ Household surveys have consistently shown a decline in ‘real’ incomes causes women to subordinate their own needs to cater to the essential requirements of the family. ”

vegetable curry, sometimes with rice; with tea as an added item, particularly for breakfast. This is presumed to be the minimum essential food consumption basket of a low-income family. However, it has also been observed that when ‘real’ income is further constricted, families are reduced to consuming roti with tea or even water. Notably, roti emerges as the last resort for staving off hunger; intuitively in line with what economic theory would hypothesise.

The Badin data on household expenditure patterns included – counter-intuitively – families spending more on tea and sugar than on roti. A re-check of the data brought forth the following response, justifying the higher consumption of tea instead of roti: a cup of tea that costs Rs. 20, kills hunger and saves Rs. 200 on a ‘daal-roti’ meal! This is a stark impact of inflation-induced poverty.

The inflationary impact is not gender-neutral. Household surveys have consistently shown a decline in ‘real’ incomes (i.e., inflation) to cause women to subordinate their own needs to cater to the essential requirements of the family, particularly children. Women forego their own medicines to prioritise food for the family and consume less food to ensure ‘enough’ for the menfolk. Even among children, sons are prioritised over daughters. There are cases of girls being pulled out of school or college because transport is no longer affordable.

Household data throws up a wide range of disconcerting cases. Women are reported to experience social isolation, with numerous cases of avoidance of participation in family events in order to save on the purchase of gifts. The impact, thereby is not limited to the women themselves. Mothers of

“ Governments adopt various measures to cushion the poor and vulnerable sections of the population from inflation impact. ”

marriageable-age daughters have stated that their withdrawal from family and community events have reduced the chances of receiving marriage proposals for their daughters.

Children – born and yet to be born – are impacted too. One single mother of four lamented that her children had forgotten what eggs taste like. The impact on children’s nutrition can be imagined. Expectant mothers, reducing their own food intake and, resultantly, giving birth to malnourished babies is a pervasive occurrence.

Managing inflation is key to macroeconomic stabilisation policy. Herewith, it is important to identify the source(s) of inflation and distinguish between demand-pull and cost-push inflation, the latter caused by supply-side factors. Demand-pull inflation is triggered by excess money supply in the economy, which places more money in the hands of consumers and the robust demand, thereby causes prices to move up.

Supply-side inflation occurs because of an increase in the cost of production on account of higher cost of inputs: taxes, wages, energy, imports, etc., while some of it is driven by higher world prices. Herewith, monetary measures, i.e. increasing interest rates – a demand-driven inflation antidote – to deal with supply-side inflation is counter-productive as it renders capital costlier and dampens the output and investment climate.

Governments adopt various measures to cushion the poor and vulnerable sections of the population from inflation impact. Pakistan has adopted a direct unconditional cash transfer mode – Benazir Income Support Programme – with the express objective of ‘compensating’ low-income families for the loss of purchasing power due to food inflation; thus, the term ‘income support’. The program targets women exclusively as recipients because women are among the more vulnerable.



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“Policies to incentivize political parties to award more tickets to women in local, provincial and national elections must be adopted.”



THOUGHT PIECE

Navigating Political Anxiety through Gendered Interventions

“Women in this part of the world, in general, lack the opportunities to face uncertain conditions.”



By

Ahmed Bilal Mehboob

President, Pakistan Institute of Legislative Development and Transparency (PILDAT)

Political uncertainty, in many ways, is a self-prescribed way of life for almost all democratic societies. Every few years, democratic countries undergo the exercise of electing new political leadership which brings with it, or at least should bring with it, new ideas, programmes, experts, advisors, leaders and leadership styles and governance.

Although modern politics does not leave everything up to surprise, and political parties and leadership are expected to share their election manifestoes and introduce their teams to voters ahead of the election, a lot is experienced only when the new teams are voted to power. We have seen parties who had extremely impressive manifestoes and claimed to have solutions to all problems. Still, they failed to deliver when voted into power because, even by their own admission, they had a poor understanding of the state of the country's affairs.

By consciously deciding to periodically seek new leadership or renew their mandate in some cases, democracies have built a certain degree of uncer-

tainty into their political systems and for good reason. In healthy democracies, despite the advances made in opinion surveys, the greatest uncertainty is around who will get elected and with what strength of public mandate.

This uncertainty is experienced at each strata of the state: national, sub-national and local. Since the change in leadership at each level generally does not take place at one time, there is a cycle of uncertainty going on almost all the time.

As the time of change or election draws near, the intensity of the uncertainty and many cases, anxiety, correspondingly increases. This is a natural phenomenon, and people generally adjust well to these recurring periods of uncertainty. Therefore, political uncertainty should not be a very big deal in normal circumstances. But these are not normal times in Pakistan. With the National Assembly entering its 5th and last parliamentary year in August 2022, we are well into the election year.

Confrontational politics is not new in Pakistan and we have seen extreme



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“ Education and skill training are some of the best tools to build the capacity and self-confidence of women. ”

polarisation between the top contenders for power in past three decades. Since 2013, these contenders may have changed but the polarisation has returned with a vengeance.

With the huge advances made in communication and information technology, making and unmaking narratives has become more dependent on communication technologists. Some political parties that have mastered these techniques much better and therefore have significant advantages over others, have popularised the narrative of uncertainty. The normal and expected political uncertainty is being portrayed as something akin to a huge crisis which needs to be urgently resolved only through immediate election. Greater public worry means stronger support to this narrative.

Vulnerable segments of society usually have a weaker shock-absorbing capacity and therefore are more apprehensive of uncertainties. Women are one such group in our society who have much less control over their lives. They have poor access to life-changing experiences such as education, travel, or exposure to international developments and therefore feel much more threatened by perceived or real uncertainty. In general, women in this part of the world lack the opportunities to face uncertain conditions. It is, therefore, correct that political uncertainty, real or perceived, causes greater anxiety and sense of distress among women.

Education and skill training are some of the best tools to build the capacity and self-confidence of women. In recent years, women have made great strides

“ More orientation and briefing courses should be arranged for prospective women politicians. ”

in access to higher education based on pure merit. Women's access to education at primary, intermediate and secondary level is still a problem. A policy intervention is needed to incentivise parents to send their daughters to schools. Girls' primary and secondary schools need to be in each village and neighbourhood so that girls do not have to travel outside for schooling. This is because travelling over a distance always discriminates against young girls. In the same vein, policies need to be devised to make it easy for girls to acquire IT skills. This will help women become financially independent too.

At the same time, the challenge of extremism will have to be strictly

checked. The recent denial of education opportunities to women in Afghanistan should serve as a wake-up call for Pakistani policymakers and rulers.

Policies to incentivise political parties to award more tickets to women in local, provincial and national elections must be adopted. More orientation and briefing courses should be arranged for prospective women politicians. A Women's Political School existed in Pakistan some years ago. It is important to revive such schools in the federal and provincial capitals. Ultimately, the country must work towards interventions that enhance women's abilities to both understand and better mediate political uncertainties.



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“ My own work shows that when households face monetary stress , it is women who tend to enter the labour market. ”

THOUGHT PIECE

The Prejudice of Climate Change

“ Are the costs of macroeconomic effects and those wrought by climate change equally borne by all social groups? ”



By

Hadia Majid

Associate Professor of
Economics at LUMS

Inflation in Pakistan in November was at 23.8 percent, standing at some of the highest levels ever recorded in the country. The steadily rising cost of living that Pakistanis have witnessed this past year is emblematic of the deep systemic issues plaguing the country. With poor export performance and a shallow industrial sector, high import burdens, a thin tax base and deep reliance on foreign borrowing, to name just a few, the country has bleak macroeconomic indicators. Add to this the devastating floods experienced in the past summer. Not only are livelihoods under a great deal of stress, but it is clear that there is little scope for sustainable growth and employment creation unless we make deep structural changes. But are the costs of macroeconomic effects and those wrought by climate change equally borne by all social groups? And while the larger long-run changes must come at the policy level, what opportunities can we leverage in the meantime?

Lower socio-economic classes remain the most vulnerable to any shocks –

natural or otherwise. In this, women are especially vulnerable. This is because of several intertwined factors. There has been a feminisation of poverty at a global and national level. The primary driver in this is the poor access to and control over economic and non-economic resources for women. Specifically in Pakistan, the country's second-worst position on the Global Gender Gap Index of 2022 represents the poor performance of women relative to men in key outcomes of economic opportunity and participation, education, health and political participation.¹ The gap in human capital as well as their poor representation and therefore say in political outcomes and public spending means that their opportunity to improve their choice sets and capabilities allowing them to escape poverty remains limited.

Similarly, there has been a systematic feminisation of certain sectors and occupations.² This is most apparent in the agriculture sector as well as the casualisation of larger proportions of

1. <https://www.weforum.org/reports/global-gender-gap-report-2022/>
2. <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s41027-021-00316-y>



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“ Pakistan's second-worst position on the Global Gender Gap Index of 2022 represents the poor performance of women in key outcomes of economic opportunity and participation, education, health and political participation. ”

women's jobs within the manufacturing and services sectors. These are inevitably the types of jobs that are most vulnerable to both natural and economic shocks. Combine this with gender norms that relegate women to secondary status within the labour market such that they are the first to lose work in the case of shocks, and their lack of assets in a context like Pakistan, and it is women who have been hit the hardest in the most recent floods. In fact, given the systemic gender-based inequality in the country, the expectation is that as the frequency and intensity of climate change-driven disasters increases, women will remain the hardest hit.

Yet, there are also some hidden opportunities.

My own work shows that when households face monetary stress, it is women who tend to enter the labour market.³ And while this creates pressure in the form of increased time poverty for women who continue to bear the brunt of reproductive work even while in the labour force, and possibly social sanctions from the community, it also creates opportunities to break and change prevailing norms. The literature on the link between women's labour force participation and norms shows that the relationship is bi-directional.⁴ Thus, while, whether, where and how

long women work is a function of norms surrounding gender roles, these same roles tend to change as women enter the labour force, albeit with some lag.⁵ Moreover, there is now a vast body of literature pointing to the empowering effect of earned income. And while it is worth paying attention to the caveat that not all work is equally empowering, it is also worth pushing back on how empowerment is typically operationalised within this literature. Thus, while we may still find that women working in the home-based informal sector are physically less mobile, we also find that women working from home are more likely to own a phone and have a larger digital footprint relative to those who go out of their home to work.

The past few years have already seen a great deal of legislative and grassroots actions that push at prevailing gender

norms. For example, we see more women using different types of transport independently, especially in larger cities. Similarly, the legislative actions related to making workplaces safer, the recognition of home-based and domestic workers, the introduction of public funding for setting up daycares, and even the Safe Cities Initiatives can all be simultaneously considered drivers behind and results of greater recognition of the need for women's higher public presence and their entry into the labour force.⁶

This is not to say that there has been no resistance to such change. Yet, as more women enter the public space, both due to rising economic pressures and otherwise, the pace of these changes will only accelerate. Ultimately, it is really up to us to make the most of the changes we see around us.



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3. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13545701.2021.1942512>
 4. https://link.springer.com/referenceworkentry/10.1007/978-3-319-95867-5_119

5. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13545700601184880>
 6. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13552074.2022.2130516>



Climate Change Vulnerabilities



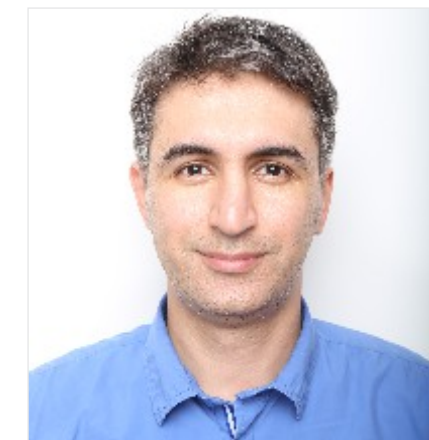
“Recognizing that humans depend on goods and services provided by climate-sensitive ecosystems, there are a range of adaptation options that can be deployed to avoid loss and damages.”

THOUGHT PIECE

2022 Floods: Gender-Responsive and Risk-informed Recovery



By
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By
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“A developing country like Pakistan can hardly afford to have its limited resources for development wiped away by disaster impacts. These also disproportionately affect the vulnerable, especially women.”

The damages and losses from the 2022 floods have been quantified at more than PKR 6.4 trillion (USD 30 billion). This can be put into perspective by the fact that the entire Public Sector Development Program (PSDP) for 2021-2022 was valued at PKR 900 billion. This means that the floods wiped out development gains worth more than six PSDPs in one go. According to the Fiscal Disaster Risk Assessment conducted by the World Bank in 2015, Pakistan faces losses of more than USD one billion yearly while serious flooding events like those experienced in 2010 and 2022 cost the economy tens of billions of dollars. A developing country like Pakistan can hardly afford to have its limited resources for development wiped away by the impacts of disasters and climate change. These also disproportionately affect the vulnerable segments of society, especially women, girls, the elderly and persons with disabilities.

In addition to physical damages, there are unquantifiable non-economic losses. These are life, mobility, health,

territory, cultural heritage, indigenous knowledge, social identity, biodiversity and ecosystem services. This list is deliberately comprehensive and inclusive of all possible consequences of climate change that are not financial and not commonly quantifiable during the Post Disaster Needs Assessment. They refer to elements that relate to individuals, communities, or the environment more widely. They arise when people are dispossessed of things that they value, and include tragic outcomes, such as the loss of life from climatic extremes, the loss of valued cultural artifacts that cannot be replaced, the loss of biodiversity, or the loss of places that give meaning to people.

The effects of such disaster episodes are two-fold, i.e., those affected initially suffer in the form of losses (such as property, livelihoods and social infrastructure), which is then further magnified by the inability of the government to provide essential services due to disaster impact on government services as well as



diversion of development budgets to relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction activities.

The debilitating impact of the floods on women can be better explained through the example of Sakina Bibi, who is a resident of Kacchi district of Balochistan. Her husband works on his small farm and supplements his income by working as a labourer in a godown in town. The floods washed away their home¹ and destroyed the standing crops on their farm.² Her husband lost his job in the godown as the business was shut down due to flood damage to the inventories.³ Already pregnant and malnourished, Sakina Bibi lost what little support she could get in the form of supplemental nutrition from her local Rural Health Center, as it was destroyed by the floods.⁴ Her daughters used to study in the government-run primary school, which was among the 17,205 flood-impacted educational institutions across Pakistan. The school is yet to be rehabilitated, leaving her children without access to education for the last five months. She used to get an

allowance under the government-managed social safety net programme, but is now unsure whether it will be continued after the floods. Some NGOs visited her village after the floods and have provided transitional shelters in the form of tents coupled with food assistance and medicines, but those have run out and she doesn't know when she will get further support to rebuild her life.

The above example is representative of what millions of women like Sakina Bibi are going through in the flood-affected areas of Sindh and Balochistan. It also highlights the vulnerability of the state as well as the poor to the impacts of disasters and climate change. It calls for a rethink of the development planning process if it is to be ensured that the existing productive, social and service delivery infrastructure is resilient to such shocks in the future.

The repeated losses from various disasters have highlighted the need for tackling development from a different perspective.

“ We need to rethink the development planning process to ensure that the existing productive, social and service delivery infrastructure is resilient to future shocks. ”

1. According to PDNA, over 2 million houses were damaged across Pakistan, with 780,000 houses destroyed.
2. According to the PDNA, 4.4 billion acres of agricultural land has been damaged by the floods.
3. The PDNA estimated Rs. 40 billion in damages to the commerce sector.
4. 13 percent of health facilities have been damaged by the floods as per the PDNA.



Firstly, there is a need to ensure that all development is resilient and is made disaster and climate proof. Achieving this objective is possible and does not cost significant time or resources. It can be achieved by getting a better idea of the hazard profile of the area for multiple hazards and planning accordingly. This is already partly applied in several sectors, such as the construction of major infrastructure like dams, motorways⁵ etc., and needs to be replicated for all development interventions carried out by all stakeholders representing public and private sectors.

Secondly, while planning development projects – be they large or small – there is a need to ensure that the infrastructure does not contribute to increasing the risk in that particular area. Depending on the nature of the development investment, this may require technical studies and analyses to assess the infrastructure's footprint and potential impact on the risk profile of the area. There is also a need to learn from the experience of some major infrastructure projects blocking the natural flow of water and drainage patterns resulting in floods in areas that had not experienced them before. This can be achieved through mainstreaming disaster and climate resilience in the development planning processes at all levels, starting from the districts all the way up to the national level. The Planning Commission of Pakistan has made some gains in this area by incorporating a disaster checklist in the PC-1 which is the basic document for preparing projects in Pakistan.

However, this needs to be further expanded to include the entire Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and climate

UNDP Pakistan's 2022 Flood Recovery Programme

UNDP Pakistan launched its 2022 Flood Recovery Programme⁶ with the objective to transition from relief, and expedite resilient and sustainable recovery in the flood affected areas in an integrated manner. This programme is based on four major pillars designed to restore housing and community infrastructure, livelihoods, and government services, while also building disaster resilience and ensuring environmental protection. Each pillar aims to kickstart the recovery process by meeting the most critical recovery needs, and lay the foundation for longer-term resilient and inclusive development, focusing on the most vulnerable segments of the population that have been impacted by the floods.

5. Even though there are examples in many developed and developing countries when large scale infrastructure, such as highways and railways have exacerbated flood impact as they prevented flood waters to recede. This risk can be reduced if designs incorporate both historical flood impacts as well as future scenarios of increased flood levels to be caused by the changing climate.
6. <https://www.undp.org/pakistan/publications/undps-flood-recovery-programme>.



resilience spectrum, which is not a simple or easy undertaking. However, it would provide significant dividends in the medium to long term by making development resilient to the impact of disasters and climate change.

There are many possibilities in Pakistan where, for climate and natural hazard-sensitive assets and ecosystems, damages and losses can be avoided or at least greatly delayed through reductions in risk drivers that increase their vulnerability to climate change. For example, the scale of nature-based solutions in wetlands, valleys, flood plains, and hilly and mountainous regions needs to be expanded. The human diversion of water is often as important a driver of risk as is climate change itself; coasts, where public and private infrastructure and assets are designed incorrectly and located in hazard-prone locations, can sometimes have a bigger impact on erosion than sea-level rise. Logging of forests and habitat fragmentation can impact biodiversity losses more than climate drivers. In these cases, there are still

actions that humans can take to avert losses that have not yet been fully explored, and the limits to adaptation are not 'hard', since there are options.

Human action in adaptation and building disaster resilience is equally critical if not more important. Recognising that humans depend on goods and services provided by climate-sensitive ecosystems, there are a range of adaptation options that can be deployed to avoid loss and damages, most often through a combination of technologies, changes in livelihoods and improvements in social and economic opportunities. These include practices that reduce dependence on climate-sensitive resources or enhance people's freedoms to adapt, such as social protection and income guarantees in times of crises, industrial restructuring programs, improvements in infrastructure, and introducing a range of disaster risk financing options. They also include technologies that reduce sensitivity to climate risk, such as coastal and river defences, irrigation, and improved designs for infrastructure.

“ In Pakistan, damages and losses can be avoided or greatly delayed through reductions in risk drivers that increase climate change vulnerability. ”



Raising the Alarm: Women's Role in Early Warning Systems

By
Shameen Raza

Reporting and Content Development Coordinator,
GLOF-II Project, UNDP Pakistan

“Gender-inclusive Climate Policy and Action Plans have always proven to be more effective in rehabilitating communities and in building up their resilience.”

The morning of the 6th of May 2022 roared with thunderous sounds of wreckage. Houses and jamat khana crumbled as if they were folds of paper, while the Hassanabad Bridge collapsed from the unfathomable forces of water. Glacial Lake Outburst Floods, or GLOFs, are unsparing in their deeds of destruction, and the damaged sights at Hassanabad stood as their grieving mementos.

“When one loses a home, one loses a great sense of identity. No familiarity remains, and one is compelled to start from nothing at all. The houses damaged can be counted in numbers, but with those houses, we simply cannot estimate the massive amount of emotional and physical displacement which takes course,” narrated Bibi Ilyas, a member of the Community Based Disaster Risk Management Committee of the GLOF-II Project in Shisper Valley, Gilgit Baltistan.

Bibi Ilyas was one of the community members to be evacuated from her valley before the GLOF event, with the help of the installed Automated Weather Station at Shisper Glacier by the GLOF-II Project. This is a resilience and adaptation project by the United Nations Development Programme and the Ministry of Climate Change, Pakistan, supported by the Green Climate Fund. The Project has footprints in 24 valleys - 8 Valleys of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and 16 Valleys of Gilgit Baltistan. It aims to empower communities to identify and manage risks associated with GLOFs and other related impacts of climate change, to strengthen public services for disaster risk reduction, and to improve community preparedness and disaster response capacities. It also supports the develop-

ment of sustainable livelihoods, with a special focus on the participation of women in ensuring food security.

This project's interventions –including installing Early Warning Systems (EWS), mitigating infrastructures, slope stabilisation through plantation and bio-engineering techniques, and the repair and rehabilitation of irrigation channels – are extremely critical. Over 7.1 million people in Gilgit Baltistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa are at a high risk of experiencing the impacts of Glacial Lake Outburst Floods, which are merciless in their claiming of human lives and habitations; propelling poverty,



hunger, gender inequality; and birthing shadow pandemics such as Gender Based Violence.

Climate change disproportionately affects women and girls, especially from the most marginalised groups, further exacerbating social, political, demographic, and economic inequalities. At the same time, women members of communities are the main force for disseminating information on flood relief and response amongst women. Gender-inclusive Climate Policy and Action Plans have proven to be more effective in rehabilitating communities and building their resilience. Despite this, the needs and potential of women and girls is largely neglected in disaster response due to an absence of their voices in Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience Strategies.

This is why the GLOF-II Project ensures the maximum inclusion of women in its programming, especially through their representation and participation in the Project's Community-based Disaster Risk Management (CBDRMC) so that their voices and narratives can be mainstreamed into climate action.

In March 2021, the GLOF-II Project supported the Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) in the installation of an Automated Weather Station (AWS) in Hassanabad in district Hunza. The AWS is one component of GLOF-II Project's Early Warning System to measure air precipitation, humidification, and rainfall, to help assess the estimated time for lake outbursts.

With the timely utilisation of AWS data at Shisper Glacier, the evacuation of communities was made possible by the provincial and district governments - both in 2021 and 2022 - thereby saving precious lives. This systematic evacuation is especially important as, due to sociocultural norms, women are often less able to make decisions about coping with climate change impacts at the household level. It is no wonder that women are disproportionately affected by climate change, and why their inclusion in mitigation and resilience building is extremely critical.

The GLOF-II Project stands strong in its aim to install fifty

Automated Weather Systems in its target valleys by July 2023 to safeguard lives from the inevitable devastation caused by GLOFs. Overall, the project aims to benefit almost 700,000 people directly and around 29 million people indirectly, more than half of whom are women. Gender-inclusivity and responsiveness is firmly embedded into GLOF-II interventions, in recognition of our understanding that climate change not only disproportionately impacts women, but that its effective mitigation and adaptation must necessarily include women as agents of climate action.

The Importance of Inclusion: Reflections from Nazuk Bibi

“We always expect floods to storm through our valleys in the summers. These floods cause an enormous amount of destruction and leave us quite scared of the impact. During this time, it always worries us especially if a woman is expecting a child and is close to her delivery. In some situations, we usually have to wait for the water level to go down so that we can safely reach the hospital. Through the GLOF-II Project, we get to meet a lot of women from other valleys who go through similar experiences. Because of the women participation in the Community-based Disaster Risk Management, we get to learn together on Disaster Risk Management through Search and Rescue Trainings and GLOF-II activities.”

Nazuk Bibi

Member CBDRMC,
Badswat Valley
Ghizer District,
Gilgit-Baltistan





Media Allies: Telling Women's Stories for Climate Action

“ As a result of low literacy levels and general poverty, there remains a poor understanding of the effects of climate change on women in Pakistan. ”



By

Tasneem Ahmar

Executive Director
Uks Research Centre,
Islamabad

My comments are from an anthropological, sociological and media research perspective. While they are meant to be intersectional and inter-disciplinary, they will navigate climate change and women's current realities around class, ethnicity, religion, income group and household structure, among other factors and how our media reports on these issues. I seek to emphasise the impact of climate change on women first as individuals, then as women. My main focus will remain on how Pakistani media, mostly with deeply embedded patriarchal mindsets, either does not understand or is uninterested in the interconnection between climate change, the SDGs, women of Pakistan and their response. Hence the media misses out reporting on women's courage, conviction and resilience that, if told, would amplify the stories of our women's courage, conviction and resilience.

Climate change has emerged as a gendered crisis. And while that in itself might be a new phenomenon in some countries, it spells trouble for a country such as Pakistan, where society and its discontents are already immensely gendered. As a result of low literacy levels and general poverty there remains a poor understanding of the

effects of climate change in Pakistan. Gender Based Violence (GBV) and women's issues continue to be dismissed as exaggerated in a deeply patriarchal society. Combine this with the traditionally negative and poor representation of women in the media, and this becomes an issue that is seriously underreported.

While the environment features in mainstream media in Pakistan, it remains oddly quiet on the impact of climate change and natural disasters on women. Uks' daily media monitoring and content analysis reveals that there is hardly any media content, mainstream and social, that talks about how and why women are more susceptible to natural disasters induced by climate change and how the incidences of GBV increase during times of natural disasters. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Pakistan registered a record surge in GBV cases. This was in keeping with the uptick in GBV around the world. Yet, the country's media remained silent about it.¹

The media generally, and the vernacular one in particular, is absolutely 'not interested' in any issue unless it has political appeal and angling. Our daily media monitoring indicates that there is hardly any content on the importance of

1. <https://uksresearch.com.pk/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Pakistani-media-in-the-time-of-Covid-19.pdf>

“ The media can truly be change-makers in creating awareness among all stakeholders that women are not the 'weaker' sex. ”



“ Our parliamentarians and policymakers need to mainstream and draw attention to women’s issues on a regular basis, without politicising them. ”

meeting the UN SDGs, and that gender issues are not limited to SDG 5, which is gender equality. Each SDG has a gender aspect. The media needs to realise the importance and relevance of the SDGs as national and local goals, as opposed to foreign-imposed ones.

The issues are countless, and the stories are unlimited. Political will is needed on the media's part to understand the importance of talking about climate change through the gender lens. The media can truly be change-makers in creating awareness among all stakeholders that women are not the 'weaker' sex. Their resilience and courage must be acknowledged at various levels. Our parliamentarians and policymakers need to mainstream and draw attention to women's issues on a regular basis, without politicising them. Thankfully, we have proactive and committed leadership that has not only been taking up the overall issues of environmental and climate change, but has also been focusing on the gendered aspects, especially GBV.

Stories of Women Under-reported in the Media

- Sexual violence, marital rape and unwanted pregnancies
- Stigma attached to menstruation
- Early marriages to shift the burden of 'honour' onto others
- Overlapping impacts of COVID-19, climate change, and GBV
- Stress caused by helplessness, depression and isolation
- The relationship between mental health, environment and family size
- Undiagnosed mental health ailments, especially PTSD and PPD
- The impact of climate change and inflation on GBV

It is earnestly hoped that the Pakistani media, some if not all, is able to bridge the knowledge and information gap that exists between policy makers and the masses, especially women. Media stakeholders must understand the urgency that is required in prioritising their daily news and views content to make it gender inclusive, sensitive and sensitised.

Women will then be able to tell their own stories, and the world shall listen.



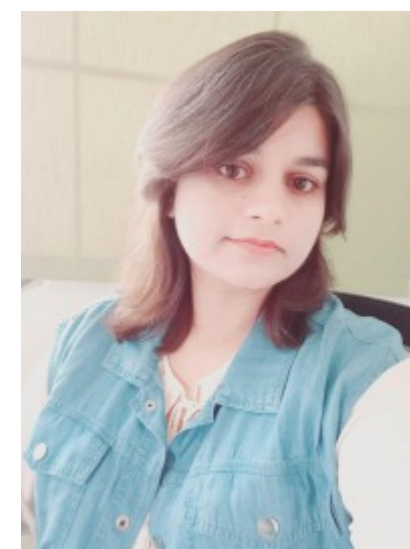
“ Women are powerful agents of change and can spearhead transformative climate action through climate advocacy, activism, and leadership. ”



THOUGHT PIECE

Greening Livelihoods, Empowering Lives

“ Amidst Pakistan's multidimensional uncertainties, women experience a more complex and compounding impact of the climate crisis due to entrenched vulnerabilities, resource scarcity and forced displacements. ”



By

Iram Chaudhry

Gender and Climate Change Analyst, UNDP Pakistan

Women and girls constitute half of Pakistan's population, and yet remain deprived of basic life and livelihood needs. According to the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Index 2022, Pakistan is the 2nd worst country in terms of gender parity and women representation in economic participation and opportunity. In addition, women face considerable challenges in terms of health, education, legal empowerment, mobility, access to finance, inclusion in decision making and climate justice, which translates into limited choices for means of livelihoods.

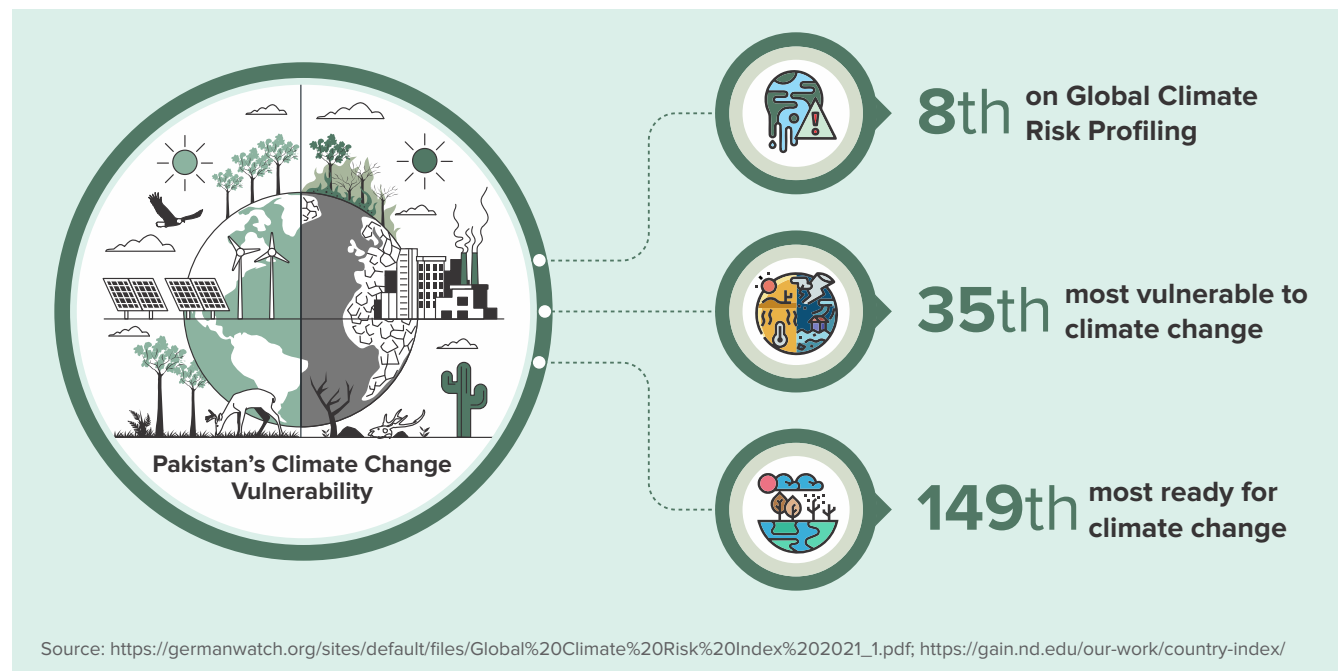
Pakistan's vulnerability to climate change and poor readiness to improve resilience is an urgent challenge. In the wake of the recent floods, over 1700 people were killed, comprising 42 percent women and 37 percent children (girls & boys).¹ Those who survived now face water, food and health crises with increased livelihood insecurity. Women are disproportionately impacted by the climate crisis, due to the deep-rooted systematic discrimination, marginalisation, ghettoising and

compartmentalisation.

Climate change is not gender-neutral. Women lie at the heart of climate change and climate action, particularly for their role as natural resource managers and in most cases, primary respondents to climate-induced disaster — including extreme weather events such as heatwaves, droughts, unprecedented torrential rainfalls, etc., and other natural disasters such as riverine floods, landslides, hurricanes and tsunamis. The climate crisis is a threat for all. However, women and children are 14 times more susceptible to death in the event of a climate-induced disaster.

The multi-tiered climate crisis, coupled with the ongoing pandemic, the risk of global economic recession and a distressed democracy in Pakistan, has led to a fragile politico-legal and economic situation in the country. This has further exacerbated ingrained gender inequalities and has increased the cost of subsistence and living in Pakistan. Amid these uncertainties, women experience a more complex and

1. NDMA SitRep Nov 2022, <https://cms.ndma.gov.pk/storage/app/public/situation-reports/November2022/N2n1eEarMt6q6Rb8ZYwn.pdf>



compounding impact of the climate crisis due to entrenched vulnerabilities, resource scarcity and forced displacements. The disparate impact of the climate crisis on women and girls leads to economic distress and limiting livelihoods.

While progress has been made on navigating the adverse impacts of the climate crisis in Pakistan, much is to be done on the forefront of gender-sensitive recovery and rehabilitation. It is imperative to understand the dynamics of women-centric sectors such as agriculture, livestock, and agri-based and agri-enabled sectors. A need for transformative and just climate action led by women is a proviso towards Pakistan's commitment to gender-responsive climate action. Pakistan must invest in a just transition towards a women-centric movement for climate action to deliver on the Paris Agreement and reflect on our commitment at COP 27.

In doing so, it is important to recognise the differential impact of climate change on women and men. Bridging gender disparity is essential to climate preparedness and building resilient communities and institutions. Women in Pakistan face the multi-dimensional burden of climate change due to structural and systematic discrimination — exacerbating their vulnerabilities and increased risk of food and livelihood insecurity, poor health, hygiene and education, and increased threats to personal security.

Recent floods have redefined the country's priorities and changed Pakistan's agricultural and market landscape. The climate crisis has just begun and Pakistan has an imminent need for gender-centric investment and innovation to improve readiness for climate change and climate-induced disasters along with even greater urgency for action. Transformative and futuristic climate action should focus on community-driven gender-centric approaches to ensure we preserve and enrich women's lives and livelihoods in the country.

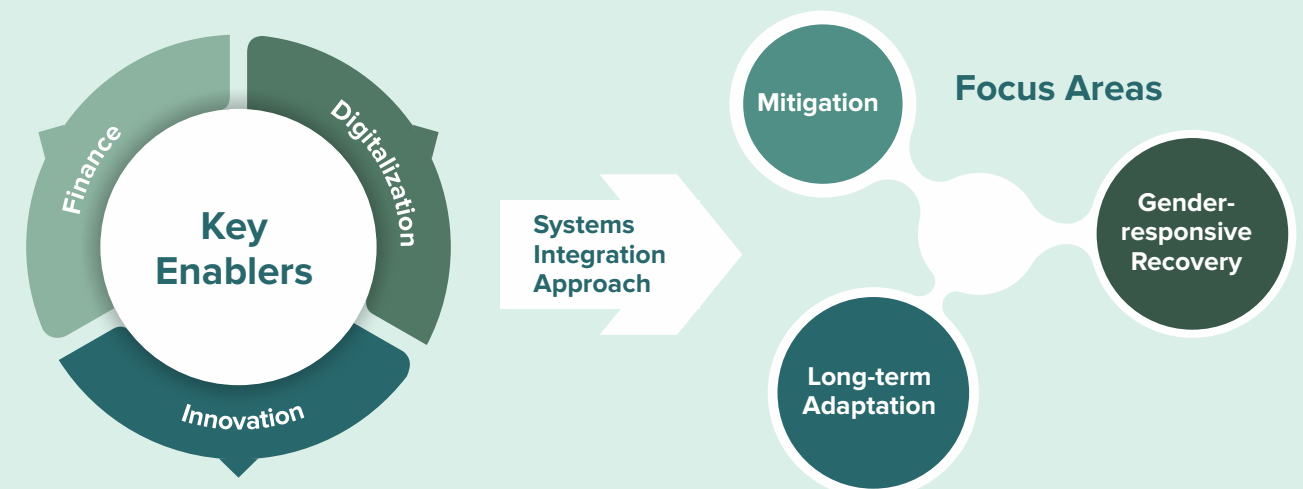
“ Transformative and futuristic climate action should be anchored in community-driven, gender-centric approaches. ”



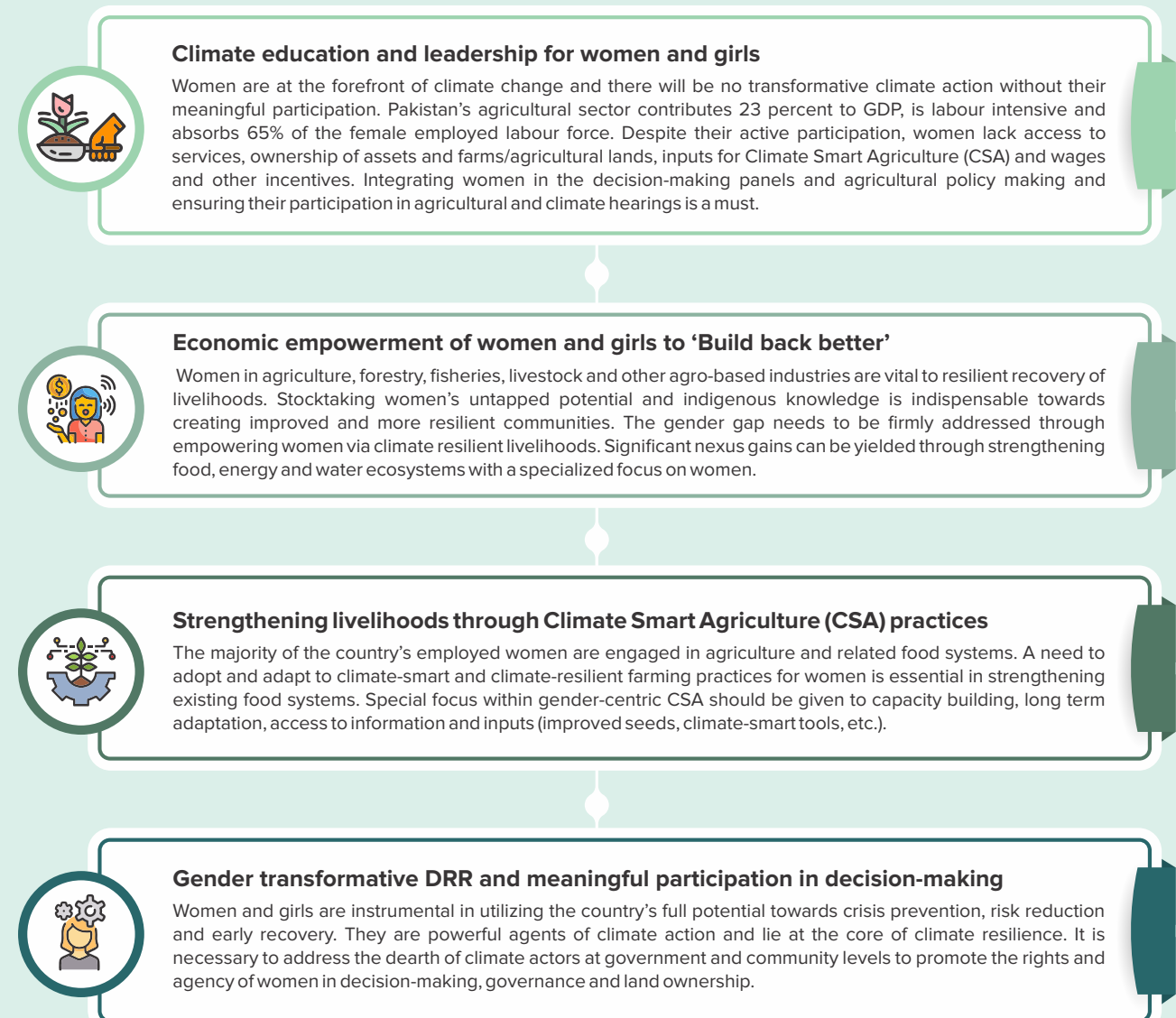
© UNDP Pakistan

Towards a Transformative Gender & Climate Change Portfolio

Women are powerful agents of change and can spearhead transformative climate action through climate advocacy, activism, and leadership at all government levels and within communities. A holistic and systematic transformation requires:



Mechanisms to Safeguard Women's Livelihoods in Uncertain Times



“Underlying structural gender inequality perpetuates an environment that disadvantages and excludes women from taking up political leadership roles.”

REGIONAL LENS

Shaping Asia Pacific's Gendered Future in a Transforming World

“Analysis of the data from the World Economic Forum's Gender Gap Reports suggests that many countries in Asia and the Pacific have made little or no progress in closing gender gaps since the first report in 2006.”



By

Koh Miyaoi

UNDP Gender Advisor for
Asia & the Pacific

In 2006, the region was already closing in on the gender gaps in 'Educational Attainment' and 'Health and Survival' domains (as defined by the Gender Gap Report). The trend is continuing, as indicated in the two graphs (on the next page) depicting 2006 and 2021 gender gaps respectively. While a number of countries enjoyed significant economic growth in those years with a well-educated and healthy population of women and men, changes in the gender gaps in 'Economic Participation and Opportunity' and 'Political Empowerment' domains have been insignificant.

In crisis after crisis, women are identified as 'vulnerable', requiring specific attention for their survival. This is despite the programmes and services delivered to support women during and in the aftermath of crises.

So, what is going wrong? Why are women's vulnerabilities never removed? What does it take to build resilient gender equality?

The persistent gender gaps in the economy and leadership existed before the pandemic, and they influenced how the gendered impacts of the pandemic were shaped and manifested. For example, globally, women were largely missing from the national and sectoral COVID-19 response taskforces. Considering the persistent gender gap in the 'Political Empowerment' domain, this may have been predictable.

Take gender equality in political representation and participation. A 2022 IPU report confirms an increase in the proportion of women in parliaments in Asia from 13.2% in 1995 to 20.7% in 2022, while the current world average is 26.1%.² At the same time, the latest IPU-published data reveals that barring New Zealand and Australia, the Pacific Island States have the lowest representation of women in parliament.³ This is not due to any shortage of qualified women in those countries. Instead, underlying structural gender inequality reaffirmed by discriminatory social and economic

Implementing disaster risk reduction in Bhutan.

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1. <https://www.weforum.org/reports/global-gender-gap-report-2022#report-nav>

2. <https://www.ipu.org/news/press-releases/2022-03/new-ipu-report-more-women-in-parliament-and-more-countries-with-gender-parity>

3. <http://archive.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm>



Soap-making in Nepal.

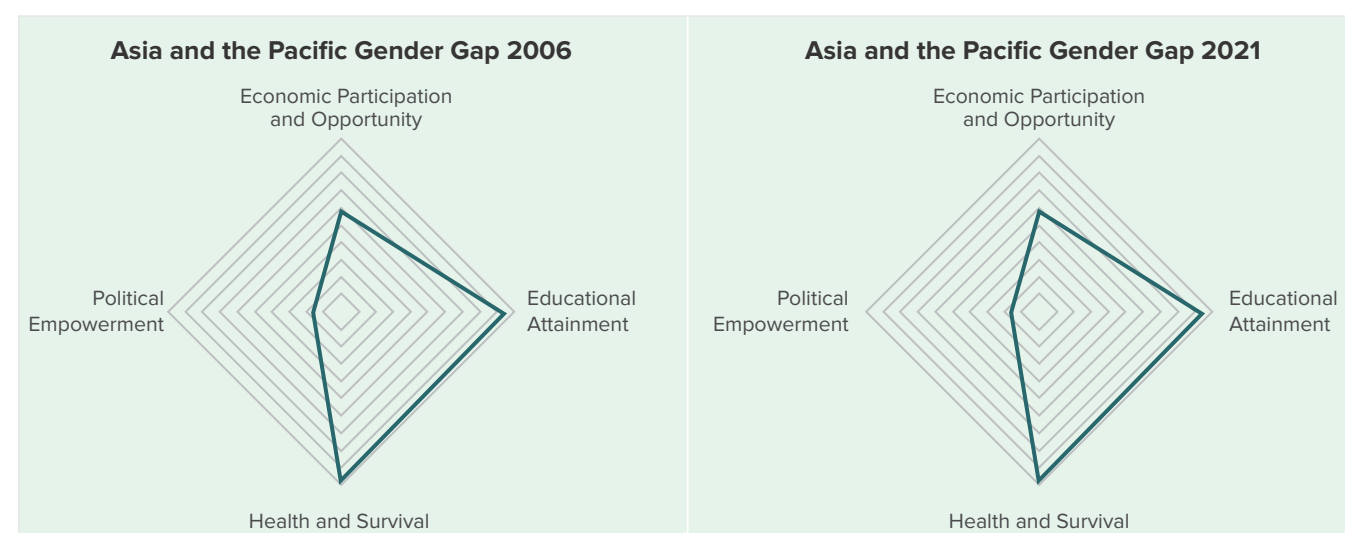
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norms perpetuates an environment that disadvantages and excludes women from taking up political leadership roles.

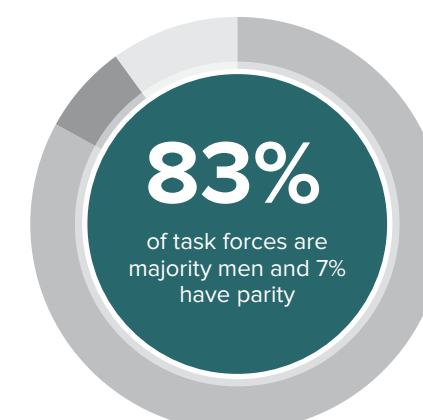
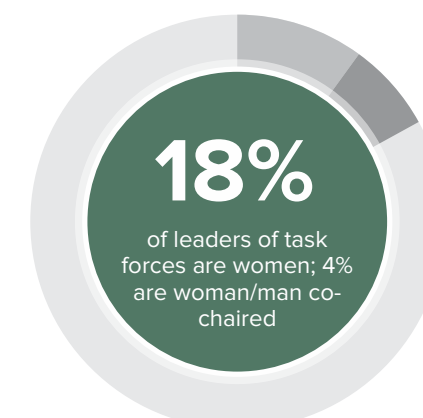
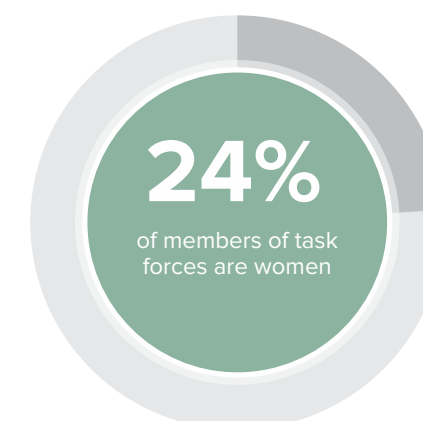
Secure and independent income is a prerequisite for individuals' dignity, survival and growth. When this is not guaranteed, the affected individuals' vulnerability increases. Their dependency on others with such income also intensifies, perpetuating inequitable power dynamics within the household, community and society. The persisting reality of women being constrained to unpaid work despite the hours they contribute to productive and reproductive outcomes undermines their full and

equal engagement in paid work, denying their access to independent income and keeping their bargaining power low. This state of affairs has been allowed to continue by the prevailing social contract, involving implicit gendered norms relating to the world of work. Accordingly, effective solutions to a secure, independent income for women will need to go beyond strengthening their job or business related skills, transforming the harmful gendered social and economic norms, and shifting the underlying systems and power structures that determine development.

As countries in the region recover from



“ To talk of the future of women in uncertain times is to talk of the future of an entire society, as women do not exist alone in this world. ”



Sources: UNDP/UNW COVID19 Global Gender Response Tracker (2021)
<https://data.undp.org/gendertanker/>

the impacts of the pandemic, they are also faced with multiple crises, ranging from political fragility, natural disasters and economic downturns. Gender equality has already suffered significant roll-back due to the COVID-19 crisis. In protecting the gains made on gender equality, and closing the persistent gender gaps in the domains of 'Economic Participation and Opportunity' and 'Political Empowerment', and needless to say, making a leap forward with the gender equality agenda, there is an urgent need to come up with different and more transformative solutions. Supporting women's agency development is merely a start. Reviewing and revising legal and policy frameworks to be aligned with human rights standards help, but alone, they cannot be a sustainable solution. Complex interventions that consciously act on understanding how power relations and negative social norms shape institutions, access to resources, and control over them can make

stronger contributions to achieving and sustaining gender equality.

Single or multiple crises undermine the progress made on gender equality and intensify the structural barriers to achieving gender quality. To talk of the future of women in uncertain times is to talk of the future of an entire society, as women do not exist alone in this world. Gender equality is relational and very much depends on the power dynamics within societies. To face any future crisis with confidence that our societies will stand strong on gender equality gains, we need to tackle the existing power imbalance among the populations. In addition to addressing vulnerabilities, privileges need to be exposed. Perpetuation of stereotypes that accord power to certain groups and remove power from others will need to be ended. To shape an equal future for all women and men, we need to aspire for ambitious and fundamental transformation.



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'Creators for Change' Social Impact Camp, Bangkok.

A Primer on Anticipating Multidimensional Risks

“ In the Asia-Pacific, ongoing global volatility, a looming recession and the impacts of climate change have brought with it a series of crises in food, energy and cost of living that threaten progress against the SDGs. ”



By
Aarathi Krishnan
Senior Advisor Strategic
Foresight, UNDP Asia Pacific

The Asia-Pacific region has been through a fast-paced period of growth since the mid-20th century. This period of development where we see five countries approaching LDC graduation by 2026 (Bhutan, Solomon Islands, Bangladesh, Lao People's Democratic Republic and Nepal)¹ though, is now also experiencing a range of interconnected and cascading risks both as a result of growth as well as a broader global nexus of geopolitical, economic, natural and biological risks. Their intersection with ongoing global volatility, a looming recession and the impacts of climate change have brought with it a series of crises in food, energy and cost of living that threaten progress against the SDGs.

Looming larger than an increase in risks is the resulting surge in uncertainty. In 2022 alone, the conflict in Ukraine, compounded by global events related to climate risks and food production constraints, led to heightened vulnerability in Pakistan across numerous dimensions — from severe wheat shortages to reduced energy supply. Examples like this also underscore the

reality that “in the Anthropocene, the local is no longer local” and “the global is not just global” with patterns and processes that may rapidly disperse as a consequence of scale, connectivity and speed”.² The 2021-2022 UNDP Human Development Report cited this year “the layering and interactions of multidimensional risks and the overlapping of threats give rise to new dimensions of uncertainty, if for no other reason than human choices have impacts well beyond our weakened socio-ecological systems’ capacities to absorb them”. Uncertainty in the context of anticipatory risk analysis refers to situations in which multidimensional risks intersect and collide, making it impossible to assign appropriate ratings on risk and impact. The inability to assign risks ratings also means that the necessary responses and mitigation measures cannot be priced appropriately and are therefore challenging to govern effectively. In such contexts of uncertainty, communities that have been historically excluded from protections and those most vulnerable to shocks tend to carry the brunt of the impact.

“ In contexts of uncertainty, communities that have been historically excluded from protections and those most vulnerable to shocks tend to carry the brunt of the impact. ”

In Asia-Pacific, key interconnected risks and uncertainties relate to energy, governance and resilience. In particular, the following emerging risk clusters have been identified in the UNDP RBAP Strategic Foresight Network’s recent Hybrid Horizon Scanning Report 2022, ‘Anticipating Risks and Uncertainties in Asia’:

- Challenges remain in achieving SDG 5 of **Gender Equality**, with backsliding or re-emergent barriers in areas including women’s electoral participation and sexual exploitation and trafficking.
- The trend of **increasing urbanization** paired with decreasing access to quality water sources poses numerous challenges across health, education, infrastructure, and security dimensions.
- **Malnutrition**, both in terms of undernutrition and obesity, is on the rise, exacerbated by the effects of the pandemic, the Russia-Ukraine conflict and climate change on agricultural production and food shortages.
- There are several cascading risks that changing **weather conditions and energy dependencies** pose to the economies, employment, livelihoods, health, food security and overall stability of the region.
- The effects of COVID-19, and consequent **hybridization of education and labor**, has accelerated the exposure of a mismatch between skills taught and skills required by Asia-Pacific economies.
- Other areas where ‘**mismatches between supply and demand**’ can be seen, with implications for development trajectories and other sectors, include the domains of electric vehicles, cold chain services and medicines.
- **Digital transformations** in the region, accelerated by COVID-19, pose multifaceted risks if issues of inclusion, availability and accessibility are not prioritized in digital infrastructure and governance.

- The intersection between technological revolution and **erosion of democracies** and civic space has become increasingly important to monitor.
- A **flux in attitudes and societal values**, including in the context of post-pandemic futures of work, burden of care, futures of transport, eco-activism and digital governance.

Governance and risk analysis measures that fail to address the causal links between multiple existential crises lead to a ‘**global polycrisis**’; “a single, macro-crisis of interconnected, runaway failures of Earth’s vital natural and social systems that irreversibly degrades humanity’s prospects”.³ It means that a risk analysis framework for a policy or program has to account for not only the known variables but also for the unknowns including the ways the outcomes of a local intervention may be influenced by and trigger effects in other areas and regions, and across different timelines. Events occurring in one part of the world will have compounding butterfly effects in other parts of the world and manifest in unequal ways particularly in nations that already experience severe structural impediments to their own development trajectories.

Bold action is needed which includes the need for more anticipatory policy measures, meaning policy dynamism that anticipates and is proactive in assessing future threats and directing resources to mitigate associated risks. The lack of such anticipatory measures points to the fault-line in risk governance systems that are not equipped to deal with downstream accountability. If the most fragile continue to bear the brunt of unanticipated risk and increased uncertainty, our mutual ability to create norms of freedom, of thriving — fall behind. In clearer terms, if we still do not have the existing structural infrastructure and investments for existing risks and vulnerabilities, futures of compounding risk and uncertainties will most certainly impact our capacity to reduce economic and human vulnerability, and in fact, arguably could increase it.

1. <https://www.undp.org/asia-pacific/publications/graduation ldc status trade preference and development financing implications asia pacific countries>
2. <https://www.undp.org/asia-pacific/publications/polycrisis-and-long-term-thinking-reimagining-development-asia-and-pacific-foresight-brief>

3. <https://cascadeinstitute.org/technical-paper/what-is-a-global-polycrisis/>



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