



LOW EMISSIONS, HIGH VULNERABILITY: WHY SDG 13 MATTERS MOST FOR PAKISTAN

ABOUT THIS BRIEF

Despite contributing less than 1% of global greenhouse-gas emissions, Pakistan ranks as the fifth most climate-affected nation and 150th in climate vulnerability. Pakistan faces nine documented climate threats, yet its 22 policies remain reactive and short-term, focused on disaster relief. Pakistan must mainstream climate considerations across all sectors, climate-proof investments and public spending, and prioritize long-term resilience over reactive disaster response.



WHY CLIMATE ACTION MATTERS

Essential to SDG 13

CLIMATE ACTION

Directly linked to:



Climate change is not an isolated crisis - it undermines sustainable development, human health, and social equity across Pakistan.

SITUATION AT A GLANCE (PAKISTAN 🇵🇰)



CLIMATE IMPACT

33M

people affected by the 2022 floods

+0.5°C

temperature rise since 1970

7,000+

glaciers at risk across the Hindu Kush–Karakoram–Himalayan ranges



HUMAN COST

Direct Health

Rise in fatal heatstroke, dehydration, respiratory attacks, and disaster-induced physical injuries.

Indirect Health

Increased burden of cardiovascular diseases, vector-borne diseases, and adverse mental health outcomes.

Agriculture & Urban

Crop failures, livestock losses, and infrastructure damage.



ECONOMIC COST

\$10B+

lost to the 2010 catastrophic floods alone

\$30B+

in damages from the 2022 climate disasters

\$2B+

in annual loss from climate-related disasters

KEY CHALLENGES

Extreme Heat

Severe heatwaves have increased in many regions of Pakistan, destroying lives, livelihoods, and ecosystems.

Extreme Floods

Frequent, severe coastal and glacial flooding cause massive social and economic harm; the 2010 and 2022 floods alone affected millions.

Glacial Retreat

Retreating glaciers in the Hindu Kush–Karakoram–Himalayan ranges threaten freshwater security and increase environmental risks.

Ecosystem Degradation

Shifting plant species and mangrove loss weaken natural coastal defenses, raise sea levels, and harm fisheries.

Seawater Intrusion

Saltwater encroachment into the Indus delta damages farmland, contaminates freshwater, and threatens coastal livelihoods.

Water Conflicts

Increasing water scarcity is intensifying competition among communities and provinces.

Health Hazards

Climate change is increasing heat-related illness, infectious diseases, and other mental-health challenges.

Agricultural Decline

Declining agricultural productivity threatens food security and disproportionately affects rural women.

Reactive Policymaking

Climate governance remains fragmented and heavily focused on disaster response rather than resilience.

WAY FORWARD | POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

1

Mainstream Climate across All Sectors

Integrate climate change considerations into policies addressing health, education, labor force, and gender equality.



2

Climate-Proof Plans, Budgets, and Investments

Climate-proofing plans, budgets, and investments will bring direct benefits in both the short and long term.



3

Create Cross-Sectoral Resilience

Move beyond reactive, short-term disaster relief toward long-term resilience building by creating more comprehensive, robust, and cross-sectoral policies.



4

Adopt Participatory Policymaking

Engage multiple stakeholders, including communities and marginalized groups, in policy development and analysis. Ensure that all policies represent the challenges faced by affected communities.



5

Strengthen Monitoring and Accountability

Implement short-term and long-term monitoring and evaluation exercises moderated by third parties. Conduct more research, and propose a plausible implementation plan with allocation of resources.



CONCLUSION

Climate change presents one of the greatest challenges to Pakistan's development. Despite contributing minimally to global emissions, the country faces disproportionate risks that demand sustained, cross-sector action. Building resilience through climate-proofed investments, stronger institutions, and long-term planning is essential for achieving SDG 13 and safeguarding future development.