

Goal 13

CLIMATE ACTION

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Country Context

Islamic Republic of Pakistan, the fifth largest population on the planet with 213.6 million people,¹ is a sovereign state situated in a geo-strategic location at the junction of middle East and central Asia. Bereft of Quaid's dream for a welfare state, social development has been off the mark with 22.4 million Out of School Children,² 56.3% Out of Pocket Expenditure in health,³ and 29.5% population living below poverty line.⁴ Exclusionist policy patterns marginalizing governance has led to country ranking at 147th out of 188 in Human Development Index⁵ and 143rd out of 144th in Global Gender Gap Index.⁶ Moreover, marginalization of key strategic sectors has led to funding diversions away from social development, barely allocating 3% of the GDP each for Education, Health and Social protection.⁷

With a GDP of \$279 billion (2017 est.),⁸ Pakistan is categorized as a lower middle-income country. Economic stability has been a constant uphill battle with public debts and liabilities escalating up to 74% of GDP.⁹ The country is ranked at 171 out of 188 countries in terms of GDP per capita (PPP) of \$5,400 (2017 est.)¹⁰ while unemployment stands at 6% without factoring in statistics from informal economy which employs almost 70% of the country's workforce.¹¹ Gini index estimates 30.7% inequality with disparities as wide as the income share held by the lowest 10% at 4% against that of the top 10% at 26% (2013 est.)¹² in Pakistan.

In hindsight, political institutions in their formative years - mainly adapted from the colonial rump - were barely able to withstand extraconstitutional maneuvers¹³ in the absence of a strong nation-building consciousness. This resulted in successive instability of civilian governments followed by political proxies and status-quo representatives, beguiling under democratic pretexts. Weak democratic structures led to the absentia of populace from democratic processes and crippled country prospects in socio-economic and political spheres with implications long into its future. This is evident of the country rankings at 110th in Democracy Index¹⁴ and 20th among Failed States rankings in 2018.¹⁵ Fret over it not though, for Quaid's optimism guides our course:

The story of Pakistan, its struggle and its achievement, is the very story of great human ideals, struggling to survive in the face of great odds and difficulties.ⁱ

Amid international isolationism, national calamities and social fragmentation, democratization of state and social institutions is the moral and political imperative. It is essential that we promote critical education and discourse to bring forth analysis that helps adequately influence policy mandates for a just, peaceful and prosperous Pakistan.

ⁱ M.A. Jinnah, Address to the people in Chittagong, March 23, 1948

Climate Change

Marginalized adrift our policy focus, climate change epitomizes one the most dangerous threats to our strategic survival.¹⁶ Ranked as the 7th most vulnerable country to climate change hazards, Pakistan has lost 10,462 lives and economic losses worth \$3.8 billionⁱⁱ struck by 141 extreme weather events including cyclones, storms, floods, Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GLOFs) and heatwaves etc. between the period of 1997-2016.¹⁷ Further, increased water-stress could lead to severe losses in agricultural productivity and intrusion of saline water would mean scarce breeding prospects for fish – both leading to massive food insecurity for a country that is way off the mark in meeting food security demands of the population.

Another aspect is manmade disasters due environmental degradation seen as a usual tradeoff for industrial and development projects in Pakistan. The inefficient governance and failure to enact robust regulation is privy to the lack of political will on climate change mandate, resulting in several ill-planned trade and investment agreements and projects which circumvent environmental considerations. Orange Line Train Project, Port Qasim Coal Power Project, and Thar Coal project are a few examples where environmental considerations and human rights have been undermined despite several protests from the communities and civil society. The government must prioritize climate change mandate to redress environmental threats, prevalent air and water pollution, depleting natural reservoirs and decaying terrestrial ecosystems.

- 1. The country requires serious political will, efficient governance and equitable financing to avoid calamities through futuristic planning.**
- 2. Pakistan must ensure that climate change is mainstreamed across planning and budgetary processes, as required by CPIER of Paris Agreement.**
- 3. Budgetary allocations for climate change must be substantially enhanced; meager allocations of Rs. 815 million in budget 2017/18 are insufficient for the mandate which has a huge bearing on our strategic survival.**
- 4. Climate justice must be adopted as a policy lens to ensure that protection of people and environment is an ethical and political imperative.**
- 5. Efficient controls must be enacted to ensure compliance with Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) to negotiate fair compensations for local communities.**
- 6. Environmental and Social Impact Assessment (ESIA) review must not be reduced to a toothless constitutional instrument and must be utilized effectively for protection of social and environmental standards.**
- 7. The redressal of water scarcity needs to be resolved mobilizing consensus from all**

ⁱⁱ In direct costs only

corners as a national priority issue.

8. The technical issues of water storage, water wastage, irrigation efficiency and electricity production need to be strategized before opting for aquifers or dams.
9. Sensitization campaigns must be directed to raise awareness on environmental protection and conservation of finite resources.
10. The international community must play its due role in climate change adaptation in compliance with the principles of equity and Common but Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities (CBDRRC) of the Paris Agreement.

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