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**The Internal Displacement Crisis: Governance Challenges and the Role of National Responsibility in Balochistan**

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**Abstract**

Internal displacement poses significant governance and humanitarian challenges worldwide, particularly in regions affected by conflict, environmental shocks, and socio-political instability. This study examines the internal displacement crisis in Balochistan, Pakistan, focusing on the governance frameworks, the role of civil society organizations (CSOs), and national responsibility in addressing the needs of displaced populations. The research aims to assess government policies and emergency response mechanisms, evaluate CSO capacities, and explore challenges related to transparency and accountability. Employing qualitative research design, in-depth interviews were conducted with 12 members of civil society organizations working in Quetta, Balochistan. Thematic analysis revealed four key themes: governance inefficiencies and policy gaps, CSO capacity and resource limitations, challenges in transparency and accountability, and collaboration between state and non-state actors. Participants emphasized systemic weaknesses in planning and implementation of displacement response programs, highlighting constraints in financial and human resources, as well as limited coordination among agencies. Findings also underscored the critical role of CSOs in filling service gaps, advocating for displaced communities, and promoting accountability. This study contributes to the understanding of internal displacement management in Pakistan by documenting the perspectives of frontline actors and identifying structural and operational barriers to effective governance. Recommendations focus on enhancing inter-agency coordination, building CSO capacity, and developing transparent, responsive frameworks to uphold national responsibility towards internally displaced persons. By integrating governance analysis with civil society perspectives, the research provides evidence-based insights for policymakers, humanitarian actors, and scholars interested in addressing internal displacement challenges in fragile contexts.

**Keywords:** Internal Displacement Crisis; Governance Challenges; National Responsibility.

**1. Introduction**

Internal displacement is a significant global issue, affecting millions of people worldwide due to conflict, violence, and natural disasters. As of the end of 2023, there were 75.9 million internally displaced persons (IDPs), with conflict being a major driver, alongside natural disasters like earthquakes, which accounted for a significant portion of displacements in 2023 (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, 2024). Historically, internal displacement has been a persistent challenge, with numbers fluctuating but remaining high over the decades. For instance, in 2010, 27.5 million people were displaced due to conflict and violence, while 42 million were displaced by natural disasters (Van der Auweraert, 2012). The scholarship on internal displacement has evolved, focusing on legal, policy, and humanitarian responses, highlighting the need for comprehensive frameworks to

address the issue (Cantor & Woolley, 2020). Despite increased international attention, the situation for IDPs often remains dire, with many unable to return home or find durable solutions, as seen in past years (Albuja et al., 2009; Jennings & Birkeland, 2007). The United Nations has developed a regime to address internal displacement, aiming to replicate refugee protection frameworks within national borders (Laker, 2022). However, IDPs often lack the international protections afforded to refugees, as they do not cross international borders, leaving them vulnerable to neglect by their own states (Avery, 2003). Efforts to improve data collection and policy responses have been ongoing, with initiatives aimed at preventing displacement and supporting IDPs in achieving durable solutions (Cazabat et al., 2023). The complexity of internal displacement is further compounded by regional variations, such as in Asia, where ethnic and religious diversity can exacerbate displacement issues (Deng, 2000). Overall, while progress has been made in understanding and addressing internal displacement, significant challenges remain in providing effective protection and assistance to IDPs globally.

The primary drivers of internal displacement in South Asia are predominantly climate-induced, with natural disasters such as floods, droughts, and rising sea levels being significant contributors. The region's geographical vulnerabilities, including coastal flooding in countries like India, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka, and glacial melt in landlocked nations such as Nepal and Bhutan, exacerbate these challenges (Moitree et al., 2024). In 2020, the Asia-Pacific region, which includes South Asia, experienced 21.4 million displacements due to natural disasters, highlighting the severe impact of climate change on mobility (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2023). Pakistan, in particular, faces recurrent floods and extreme heat events, which are compounded by socioeconomic vulnerabilities such as income inequality and limited access to resources, further driving displacement. The lack of comprehensive legal frameworks to protect climate-displaced persons is a critical issue across the region, with existing international and national laws proving inadequate (Bibi & Abbasi, 2024). This legal gap is compounded by historical and political factors, including colonial legacies and regional rivalries, which hinder the development of effective displacement laws (Bibi & Abbasi, 2024). Additionally, the displacement crisis is linked to non-traditional security challenges, such as resource conflicts and political instability, which are exacerbated by the legal invisibility of migrants and their exclusion from humanitarian aid. The Internal Displacement Index highlights that South Asia lags in addressing these issues compared to other regions, indicating a need for improved policy responses and regional cooperation (Internal Displacement Index (IDI), 2021). Overall, while climate change is the primary driver, the interplay of socioeconomic, legal, and political factors significantly influences the patterns and impacts of internal displacement in South Asia.

The primary causes of internal displacement in Balochistan are multifaceted, involving a combination of socio-political, economic, and environmental factors. The ongoing insurgency, driven by grievances over unequal resource distribution and political marginalization, is a significant factor contributing to displacement. The Balochistan Liberation Army's activities and the state's militarized response exacerbate the situation, leading to further instability and displacement (Afridi et al., 2022; Aslam, 2011). Additionally, development-induced displacement is prevalent due to large-scale infrastructure projects, such as those associated with the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which often lead to forced evictions and resettlement without adequate compensation or support (Terminski, 2015; Wani, 2023). Climate change also plays a critical role, as natural disasters like floods and droughts, compounded by weak institutional capacities, force communities to migrate internally (Makki et al., 2024). These displacements have profound socio-economic impacts on the region, including increased poverty, disruption of social networks, and heightened vulnerability to further socio-political unrest. The lack of effective governance and inadequate disaster management frameworks further exacerbate these challenges, hindering sustainable development and economic revival in the province (Umer & Ali, 2023). The internal migration patterns, driven by both push factors such as conflict and environmental degradation, and pull factors like urban opportunities, reflect broader socio-economic disparities and the need for comprehensive rural development policies (Ahmed & Ishrat, 2020). Addressing these issues requires a multi-faceted approach, including improved governance, equitable resource distribution, and enhanced disaster management, to mitigate the causes of displacement and

promote stability in Balochistan (Aslam, 2011; Umer & Ali, 2023).

This study focuses on governance challenges related to internal displacement in Balochistan, emphasizing the role of CSOs and national responsibility. It aims to provide insights into policy efficacy, operational capacities, and structural barriers, contributing to academic and policy debates on internal displacement management. By documenting the experiences and perspectives of CSO members actively engaged in displacement response, the study informs strategies for improving transparency, accountability, and coordination between state and non-state actors. The research holds significance for policymakers, humanitarian agencies, and scholars concerned with human rights, governance, and development in fragile contexts. The introduction directly connects to the study's three guiding objectives, which together frame the analysis of governance and humanitarian response to internal displacement in Balochistan. First, the study seeks to assess the perceived efficacy of government policies and emergency response frameworks in addressing displacement-related needs. Second, it evaluates the capacity and resource constraints experienced by Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), whose roles are crucial in supplementing state efforts. Third, it analyzes the specific challenges associated with ensuring transparency and accountability within displacement governance. Through these interconnected objectives, the study situates Balochistan's internal displacement crisis within broader governance and humanitarian frameworks, highlighting the complex interplay between state responsibility, civil society action, and operational limitations.

## **2. Review of Literature**

### **2.1. Governance and Internal Displacement**

The relationship between governance and internal displacement varies significantly across regions and countries, influenced by local contexts, state capacities, and international frameworks. In eastern Ukraine, local governments have begun to forge new social contracts with internally displaced persons (IDPs), suggesting a potential for bottom-up governance solutions to displacement challenges (Weihmayer, 2024). Conversely, in Central America, particularly in El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala, state neglect and repressive governance exacerbate internal displacement driven by violence, highlighting how absent or criminalized state actions can create conditions for mass displacement (Boerman et al., 2023). Furthermore, the governance of protracted displacement is shaped by a complex interplay of global, regional, and domestic policies, with varying effectiveness in addressing the needs of IDPs across different countries, such as those in Europe and Africa (Ferreira et al., 2020). These dynamics underscore the necessity for tailored governance approaches that consider local realities and the broader geopolitical landscape influencing displacement outcomes (Müller-Funk et al., 2023).

### **2.2. The Role of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)**

Civil society organizations (CSOs) play a pivotal role in managing displacement, particularly in contexts where state institutions are overwhelmed or ineffective. In regions like the Middle East, North Africa, and Europe, CSOs, especially women's organizations, have emerged as key providers of support and advocacy for displaced individuals, ensuring their rights are protected amidst crises such as the Syrian conflict (Stoneking, 1998). Similarly, in Iraq, CSOs have become essential in addressing the needs of internally displaced persons due to ongoing armed conflicts and natural disasters (Mohammed & Mahmood, 2023). In Yemen, where state institutions are largely absent, parallel institutions, including CSOs, have been crucial in fostering community resilience by providing essential resources and services (Almeida et al., 2023). Historical examples, such as the collective actions during Northern Ireland's Troubles, further illustrate how CSOs can mobilize communities to manage displacement effectively, often filling critical gaps left by the state (Gilmartin, 2023). In Lebanon, the influx of Syrian refugees has led to a significant expansion of local CSOs, which have stepped in to provide healthcare, education, and vocational training, compensating for the Lebanese government's inadequate response (El-Chmali, 2017). Thus, CSOs are indispensable actors in displacement management, addressing urgent needs and advocating for displaced populations.

### **2.3. Transparency and Accountability**

Transparency and accountability are indeed central to the governance of internal displacement, as they are fundamental principles of good governance that enhance institutional effectiveness and public trust. The Index for Good Migration Governance emphasizes these principles, highlighting their role in fostering awareness and guiding organizations in migration policies (Karabacak et al., 2024). Furthermore, accountability ensures that leaders are answerable to the populace, while transparency allows citizens to verify government actions, thereby promoting a more engaged and informed society (Adagbabiri, 2015). Empirical evidence from decentralized governance in West Bengal illustrates that enhancing transparency and accountability at the grassroots level can significantly improve governance outcomes, facilitating greater public participation (Islam, 2004). However, the governance framework for internal displacement remains weak due to coordination challenges and insufficient accountability mechanisms, which hinder effective action in addressing displacement issues (Daniel, 2023). Thus, integrating these principles is crucial for strengthening governance in this context (Mabillard & Zumofen, 2017).

### **2.4. National Responsibility and Ethical Considerations**

National governments are primarily responsible for the protection and assistance of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), guided by key international frameworks such as the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement and the Kampala Convention. The UN Guiding Principles, established in the 1990s, emphasize the rights of IDPs and the obligation of states to protect them from forced displacement and to provide necessary assistance during crises (Casey-Maslen & Vestner, 2022; Goossens, 2023). The Kampala Convention further reinforces these principles within the African context, establishing legal obligations for states to prevent displacement and ensure durable solutions for IDPs (Verma, 2023). Despite these frameworks, implementation remains inconsistent, with many countries lacking comprehensive domestic laws to support IDP protection (Orchard, 2019). The international community also plays a crucial role, yet its efforts often reflect an ad hoc approach, necessitating stronger monitoring and accountability mechanisms to enhance the protection of IDPs globally (Mandal, 2017).

## **3. Material and Methods**

This study employed a qualitative research design to explore governance challenges related to internal displacement in Quetta, Balochistan. The population consisted of civil society organization (CSO) members posted in Quetta, actively engaged in providing services or advocacy for displaced communities. A purposive sample of 12 participants was selected to ensure diversity in organizational affiliation, years of experience, and areas of expertise. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, each lasting 60–90 minutes. Interviews focused on participants' perceptions of government policies, emergency response frameworks, CSO capacity, resource limitations, and challenges in transparency and accountability. Interviews were recorded, transcribed verbatim, and analyzed using thematic analysis. Following Braun and Clarke's (2006) framework, codes were generated from the data, patterns were identified, and themes were developed to capture participants' experiences and perceptions. This approach allowed the exploration of systemic governance challenges and operational realities from the perspective of frontline actors.

## **4. Data Analysis and Discussion**

### **4.1. Governance Inefficiencies and Policy Gaps**

The findings reveal that governance inefficiencies and gaps in policy frameworks significantly undermine the protection and support of displaced or marginalized populations. Participants consistently reported that while government policies exist on paper, their implementation is often slow, fragmented, and ineffective. The lack of coordination between federal, provincial, and local authorities exacerbates vulnerabilities, leaving affected communities without timely access to services and assistance. Participants emphasized that ambiguities in roles and responsibilities among different government tiers contribute to delays and inconsistent service delivery. One participant highlighted

this issue, stating, “Government policies exist on paper, but when displacement occurs, the execution is slow and fragmented. Different departments blame each other, and the displaced communities suffer while waiting for assistance.” This statement underscores the structural inefficiencies in governance, where bureaucratic inertia and interdepartmental conflicts impede effective crisis response, leaving marginalized groups exposed to risk and hardship.

The study also found that emergency response frameworks lack clarity and inclusivity, particularly in addressing the needs of returnees, migrants, and ethnic minorities. Participants reported encountering gaps in social protection programs, housing assistance, and employment reintegration services. In many cases, the absence of proactive measures forced individuals to rely on informal networks or personal resources, increasing their socio-economic vulnerability. Such reliance further entrenches inequities, as those without social capital or community support are disproportionately affected. Additionally, participants highlighted the disconnect between policy formulation and field realities. While governments may draft policies aimed at protecting vulnerable populations, participants noted that frontline implementation often fails to reflect local conditions, cultural contexts, or logistical constraints. This misalignment creates a perception of government inaction, reducing public trust and reinforcing marginalization.

These findings resonate with broader literature on governance challenges in developing contexts, which emphasizes that policy gaps, coordination failures, and bureaucratic inefficiencies often exacerbate the impacts of displacement and social vulnerability. In the present study, the participants’ experiences illustrate how structural deficiencies in governance are not merely administrative issues but directly affect people’s lives, access to resources, and ability to recover from crises. Overall, the results suggest a pressing need for clearer governance mechanisms, well-defined roles, and accountability frameworks. Effective coordination between federal, provincial, and local authorities, combined with responsive policy execution, is essential to mitigate the vulnerabilities faced by displaced communities and ensure equitable access to services. This theme highlights that governance inefficiencies are both structural and systemic, requiring comprehensive reform rather than piecemeal interventions.

#### **4.2. CSO Capacity and Resource Limitations**

The findings indicate that civil society organizations (CSOs) play a crucial role in providing services to vulnerable and displaced populations, yet their capacity is often constrained by funding shortages, limited staffing, and logistical challenges. Participants consistently described how these limitations hindered the ability of CSOs to deliver timely and comprehensive assistance, particularly in remote or hard-to-reach areas. Despite their commitment, resource constraints forced difficult decisions about prioritization, leaving certain communities underserved. Several CSO members emphasized that limited financial resources were a central barrier. Inadequate funding affected the procurement of essential supplies, the ability to maintain transportation for field staff, and the implementation of long-term programs. Participants noted that these challenges were compounded by the unpredictability of donor support, which often limited the flexibility of interventions and constrained planning for sustained service delivery.

Staffing shortages further restricted CSO reach and impact. Participants explained that field teams were often overextended, covering multiple locations with insufficient personnel. One participant highlighted this reality, stating, “We try our best, but with limited staff and resources, it is impossible to cover all affected areas. Sometimes we must prioritize certain communities, leaving others underserved despite knowing their needs.” This quotation reflects the difficult trade-offs CSOs face, balancing their mission to assist vulnerable populations against the practical limits of their operational capacity. Logistical challenges were also frequently cited. Participants described difficulties in accessing remote regions due to inadequate infrastructure, harsh terrain, or security concerns. These constraints further limited the ability of CSOs to monitor needs, deliver services consistently, and respond rapidly to emerging crises. In some cases, the combination of logistical and financial limitations resulted in fragmented interventions that failed to reach all those in need.

The findings suggest that CSO effectiveness is closely tied to resource availability and organizational

capacity, highlighting a systemic gap in support for civil society actors working in vulnerable contexts. While CSOs demonstrated adaptability, resilience, and commitment, their overall impact was constrained by structural limitations, reducing the equity and comprehensiveness of service delivery. Overall, the results underscore that strengthening CSO capacity through stable funding, adequate staffing, and improved logistical support is essential to enhance the effectiveness and reach of interventions. Without addressing these constraints, civil society efforts will continue to operate under significant limitations, leaving critical gaps in assistance for marginalized or hard-to-reach populations.

### **4.3. Challenges in Transparency and Accountability**

The findings highlight that transparency and accountability are significant concerns in the delivery of aid and services to displaced and vulnerable populations. Participants consistently reported that the absence of robust oversight and monitoring mechanisms undermined equitable resource distribution, fostering mistrust toward both governmental bodies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). These systemic shortcomings not only affect the effectiveness of interventions but also shape the perceptions and engagement of beneficiary communities. Participants described situations where aid and resources were allocated but failed to reach intended recipients due to weak reporting structures and lack of enforcement of accountability standards. One participant emphasized this issue, stating, *“Even when resources are allocated, there is little monitoring. Displaced families sometimes do not receive what is promised, and no one takes responsibility. This erodes trust in both government and NGOs.”* This quotation reflects the recurring frustration among affected communities who perceive aid mechanisms as unreliable and, in some cases, biased or mismanaged.

The study also revealed that weak accountability exacerbates existing inequities, particularly for marginalized groups such as ethnic minorities, women, and residents of remote areas. Participants noted that when resources are unevenly distributed, communities with less social or political leverage are more likely to be excluded, intensifying their vulnerability. This dynamic highlights that transparency is not merely an administrative concern but a critical factor in promoting fairness and social equity in service delivery. Participants further indicated that lack of oversight often creates an environment conducive to corruption or misuse of resources, whether by intermediaries, local officials, or service providers. In the absence of clear monitoring protocols, displaced communities are left with limited recourse to challenge or report discrepancies. This undermines the legitimacy of aid programs and reduces the willingness of beneficiaries to engage with service providers, perpetuating cycles of mistrust and inefficiency.

Despite these challenges, participants expressed the importance of institutionalizing accountability measures, including regular audits, public reporting, and community involvement in monitoring processes. Strengthening these mechanisms was seen as essential not only for improving service delivery but also for rebuilding trust between communities, governments, and civil society actors. Overall, the results demonstrate that transparency and accountability are critical for ensuring equitable access to resources, reducing systemic inequities, and enhancing the credibility of governance and aid mechanisms. Addressing these challenges requires institutional reforms, clear operational standards, and participatory monitoring systems to safeguard both efficiency and social trust in service provision.

### **4.4. Theme 4: Collaboration between State and Non-State Actors**

The findings indicate that collaboration between government agencies and civil society organizations (CSOs) is widely recognized as essential for effective service delivery, yet participants consistently reported that coordination remains weak, ad hoc, and often ineffective. While both state and non-state actors possess complementary capacities—governmental authority and resources, CSOs’ local knowledge and flexibility—participants emphasized that the absence of structured collaboration undermines the overall effectiveness of interventions for displaced and vulnerable populations. Participants highlighted that informal or sporadic communication between agencies limits planning, monitoring, and accountability, resulting in gaps in service provision and duplication of efforts. One participant explained this challenge, stating, *“We work with the government when possible, but*

*communication is sporadic. There is no formal platform for joint planning or monitoring, which reduces the effectiveness of our interventions.*” This quotation reflects the frustration shared by many CSO representatives who seek partnership but encounter systemic barriers that hinder coordinated responses.

The study revealed that lack of institutionalized platforms for collaboration exacerbates inefficiencies. Without regular coordination meetings, shared data systems, or joint monitoring frameworks, interventions often fail to align with community needs or avoid redundancies. Participants noted that this fragmented approach particularly affects emergency response situations, where timely decision-making and resource allocation are critical. Delays or miscommunication between actors can leave displaced communities underserved or reliant on informal support networks. Additionally, participants stressed that collaboration challenges are compounded by differences in organizational mandates, priorities, and capacities. Government agencies may be constrained by bureaucratic procedures, while CSOs face resource and staffing limitations. These structural differences, when combined with weak communication channels, hinder synergistic action, reducing both coverage and impact. Participants emphasized that shared strategic planning, joint training, and integrated monitoring mechanisms could significantly enhance intervention outcomes.

Despite these challenges, participants expressed optimism that strengthened partnerships could improve the resilience and responsiveness of displacement interventions. Coordination enables actors to leverage each other’s strengths—CSOs’ contextual knowledge and community trust, and government authority and resources—to deliver more comprehensive, equitable, and sustainable services. Overall, the findings suggest that effective governance and service delivery require formalized collaboration mechanisms between state and non-state actors. Institutionalizing joint planning, resource sharing, and monitoring platforms is critical to ensuring integrated responses to internal displacement, enhancing efficiency, and reducing the vulnerability of affected communities.

## **5. Conclusions**

This study provides an in-depth examination of governance challenges and civil society involvement in addressing internal displacement in Balochistan, Pakistan. Findings reveal that government policies and emergency response frameworks are hindered by structural inefficiencies, unclear responsibilities, and delayed execution. Civil society organizations play a crucial role in filling service gaps, advocating for displaced communities, and promoting accountability. However, their efforts are constrained by resource limitations, staffing shortages, and logistical challenges. Transparency and accountability remain central concerns, with inadequate oversight mechanisms contributing to inequitable aid distribution and eroding trust among displaced populations. Collaboration between state and non-state actors is inconsistent, highlighting the need for formal coordination mechanisms, joint planning, and monitoring platforms. The study underscores the ethical and practical dimensions of national responsibility, emphasizing that governments must provide equitable protection and assistance while enabling civil society actors to operate effectively. Policy recommendations include strengthening governance frameworks, enhancing CSO capacity, ensuring transparency in resource allocation, and developing structured collaboration between government and non-governmental actors. By documenting the perspectives of frontline CSO members, this research contributes to understanding the operational realities and governance challenges associated with internal displacement in Balochistan. It provides evidence-based insights for policymakers, humanitarian organizations, and scholars aiming to enhance the protection, assistance, and durable solutions for internally displaced populations in fragile contexts. The study emphasizes that effective governance, ethical responsibility, and robust civil society engagement are integral to addressing the ongoing displacement crisis.

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