
Navigating Climate Change and Ethnic Mobility in Pakistan: Political Implications for Achieving SDG 13

Ali Murtaza ¹, Sania Zahra ², Abdul Rauf Khan ³, Laiba Imroze ⁴

¹ National Defence University, Islamabad. Email: murtaza_panhwar007@hotmail.com
sa.zahra96@gmail.com abdulraufkhan128@gmail.com laibaimroze@gmail.com

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Abstract

The worldwide demographic changes resulting from climate change affect Pakistan just as much as other nations. Extreme weather patterns along with erratic rainfall temperature rise and persistent droughts have driven major population movements throughout the country along with large-scale migration within Pakistan's borders. The environmental challenges in Sindh Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa become worse for marginalized ethnic groups because of these population shifts. The research examines how climate change interacts with ethnic population movements and political leadership in Pakistan to achieve Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 13: Climate Action. The research investigates climate change-induced population displacements which disturb cultural systems develop several patterns of migration among ethnic groups and control how resources are distributed while affecting political rights to land ownership. The analysis evaluates present-day policy responses to determine their capacity to handle the particular vulnerabilities experienced by moving ethnic groups. This research demonstrates that Pakistan's climate adaptation plans need community-focused strategies because they reveal their unique social and political impacts. The development of sustainable climate policies requires understanding how environmental crises affect ethnic populations because this knowledge will help build resilience avoid conflicts and promote lasting stability. To achieve SDG 13 in Pakistan society needs a complete framework which will merge climate action approaches with social justice programs and government system enhancements.

Keywords: Climate change, ethnic mobility, SDG 13, Pakistan, governance, migration, displacement, sustainability

Introduction

Climate change represents a critical worldwide concern which creates major social as well as economic and political effects. Climate-induced disasters from floods to droughts to heatwaves alongside sea level rise trigger massive population movements all across the planet. The climate vulnerability of Pakistan as a nation leads to extreme environmental changes that endanger both economic sustainability and social unity and governmental systems. Many communities from rural and marginalized areas have been compelled to migrate because extreme weather events such as

erratic monsoons glacial melting and prolonged droughts have made their lives unsafe and deprived them of resources and economic possibilities¹. The climate-induced displacement in Pakistan primarily affects marginalized ethnic communities who face worsening social and political inequalities because of these circumstances. The Sindhis along with Baloch and Pashtuns and additional ethnic groups face marginalization regarding their political representation economic opportunities and access to vital resources. The movement of people because of climate change produces conflicts between residents and displaced populations creates conflicts over natural resources and modifies historic population patterns². Political dynamics together with governance strategies and policy responses experience changes at both local and national levels because of these developments. This research investigates the impact of climate change migration on Pakistani political decisions and policy development specifically regarding Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 13: Climate Action. The study investigates how environmental migration affects voting behaviour government policies and state actions toward environmental emergencies. The research evaluates the deficiencies within Pakistan's existing climate policies together with international frameworks used to manage these climate challenges³. This research evaluates existing Pakistani policy frameworks to demonstrate the immediate necessity of developing climate solutions which integrate ethnic population risks with population distribution changes into sustainable governance systems. Pakistan faces increased socio-political instability long-term governance challenges and enhanced inequality when ethnic communities affected by climate change are not included in policy decision-making⁴. This research shows that it is essential to develop thorough policy changes which unite social justice with climate resilience because they need to deliver an implementation of SDG 13 that preserves environmental sustainability and promotes equitable development.

Literature Review

The existing literature on climate change in Pakistan predominantly focuses on environmental degradation and the management of climate-related disasters. A significant portion of this research delves into the consequences of climate change on natural resources, particularly land and water scarcity, as well as the impact of extreme weather events such as floods and droughts. These studies underscore the urgent need for effective disaster preparedness and response mechanisms while also exploring strategies to mitigate the harmful effects of environmental changes. Furthermore, several works analyze the governance systems that have been implemented to address climate challenges, evaluating the policies and institutional responses at both the national and local levels. These studies explore how governmental and community-based initiatives can enhance resilience to climate change, contributing to the sustainability and recovery of affected regions. However, despite the comprehensive coverage of environmental issues, there remains limited research exploring the political implications associated with the movement of ethnic populations displaced

¹ Irshad, A. (2022). Climate change and Pakistan's economy. *The News International*. Retrieved from <https://www.thenews.com.pk/tns/detail/1006921-climate-change-and-pakistans-economy>

² Ahmed, S. (2021). *Climate-induced displacement and ethnic marginalization in Pakistan*. *Journal of Environmental Studies*, 45(3), 234-256.

https://www.academia.edu/69463551/Climate_Induced_Migration_in_Pakistan_Global_discourse_local_realities_and_governance#:~:text=This%20study%20makes%20comparisons%20between%20popular%20global%20perspectives,regions%20of%20Pakistan%3A%20Balochistan%2C%20Sindh%20and%20Khyber%20Pakhtunkhwa.

³ UNEP. (2020). *Sustainable Development Goal 13: Climate Action*. United Nations Environment Programme. <https://www.unep.org/topics/sustainable-development-goals/why-do-sustainable-development-goals-matter/goal-13-climate>.

⁴ Government of Pakistan. (2021). *National Climate Change Policy*. Ministry of Climate Change and Environmental Coordination. <https://www.mocc.gov.pk/Policies>.

by climate-induced disasters. Afzal and Akhtar (2020) are crucial in this context as they explore how climate change can be mainstreamed into Pakistan's policy processes, offering valuable insights into how climate policies can be better integrated into national governance⁵. Their study is significant as it emphasizes the need for a more coordinated approach to addressing climate challenges, highlighting the importance of institutional frameworks that address both environmental and political dynamics, especially concerning ethnic mobility. Recent research has begun to bridge the gap between climate-induced migration and political management. Imran (2013) highlights the complex interactions between climate change and political dynamics in Pakistan, specifically in the context of how migration driven by environmental stressors affects political governance. Imran's work is particularly relevant as it examines how the displacement of ethnic groups, caused by the environmental degradation of their homeland, introduces challenges related to integration, resource allocation, and social cohesion in host areas. Imran's study draws attention to the political strains these migrations impose on Pakistan's governance structures, such as tensions over citizenship, land rights, and access to resources, all of which are pivotal in achieving SDG 13 (Climate Action). This research sheds light on the urgent need for policies that not only address climate adaptation but also provide for the political integration of displaced communities, thereby contributing to a more comprehensive approach to climate governance in Pakistan⁶. Both perspectives are essential for understanding the intersections of climate change, ethnic mobility, and political governance, and their insights are invaluable for navigating the political implications of achieving SDG 13 in Pakistan.

Methodology

The research uses qualitative methods to analyze academic literature and policy reports about climate change together with ethnic mobility and governance in Pakistan. The research evaluates academic literature about climate displacement effects on social structures and political systems through selected publications in environmental studies political science and migration research. The study conducts a review of official government reports together with international climate assessments to find out about policy approaches and their achievements in dealing with displacement issues. This research uses existing studies to demonstrate missing elements in existing policy structures which require inclusive solutions to reduce climate change effects on disadvantaged ethnic populations.

Findings

1. Climate-Induced Displacement in Pakistan

Pakistan stands as one of the world's most vulnerable nations regarding climate change because it experiences severe weather events including heavy floods prolonged droughts and extreme heatwaves. Rural ethnic populations throughout Sindh Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have been compelled to migrate because of climate-related disasters⁷.

⁵ Afzal, S., & Akhtar, S. (2020). *Mainstreaming climate change in policy processes of Pakistan*. Institute of Strategic Studies Research Papers. <https://issrapapers.ndu.edu.pk/site/article/download/89/48/61>.

⁶ Imran, Z. (2013). *Climate change and its impact on the political dynamics of Pakistan*. Center for International and Security Studies at Maryland. https://cissm.umd.edu/sites/default/files/201907/climate_change_and_its_impact_on_the_political_dynamics_of_pakistan_72313.p.

⁷ Irshad, A. (2022). *Climate change and Pakistan's economy*. *The News International*. <https://www.thenews.com.pk/tns/detail/1006921-climate-change-and-pakistans-economy>.

Displacement Trends

National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) alongside international climate reports show that climate-connected population movements continue to increase. The rural population of Sindhi, Baloch and Pashtun ethnic groups faces displacement to urban areas because their farmlands become destroyed and they lack sufficient water⁸.

Year	Estimated Climate Migrants (millions)	Major Affected Areas
2015	0.8	Sindh, Punjab, Balochistan
2018	1.5	Sindh, Balochistan, KP
2021	2.3	Sindh, Balochistan, Punjab
2023	3.2	Sindh, Punjab, KP

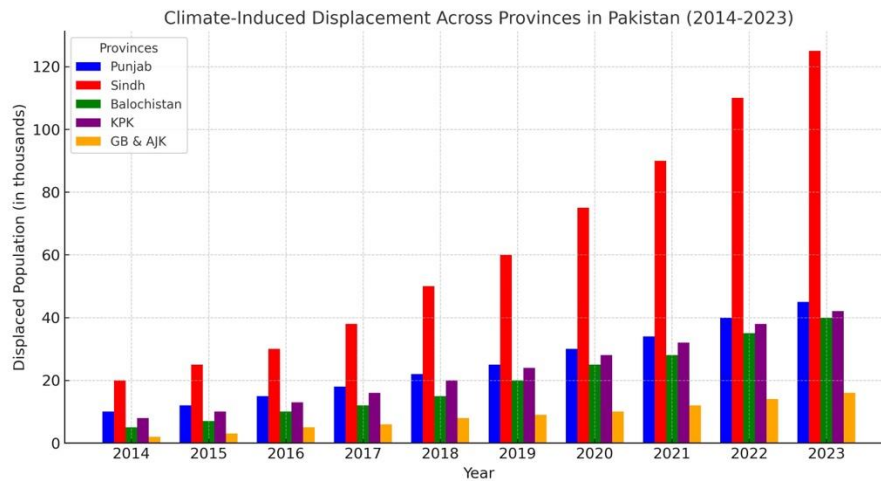
Socio-Economic Impacts of Displacement

Agricultural communities in Sindh and Balochistan suffer the most from the economic losses which result from climate change. The combination of recurring droughts and devastating floods makes it impossible for farmers to maintain their activities thus leaving thousands without their main source of income⁹. The lack of stable income forces numerous people to move toward urban areas to find employment. Large numbers of resettled ethnic groups are currently migrating toward Karachi and Lahore which creates overwhelming demand for city infrastructure. The quick surge of migrants creates excessive demand for residential housing medical services and job positions which surpasses the available local resources. The movement of displaced communities into new areas generates increasing social conflicts between residents. The combination of disputes about resource-sharing territory battles and political representation conflicts arises between local populations and newcomer groups who attempt to live alongside each other¹⁰. The urgent requirement demands complete climate adaptation policies which must handle environmental elements together with socio-political effects. GraphGraph

⁸ National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA). (2025). *National Disaster Management Authority*. <http://www.ndma.gov.pk/>.

⁹ Ahsan, A. (2022). Climate Change and its impacts in Pakistan. *Pakistan Today*. Retrieved from <https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2022/06/17/climate-change-and-its-impacts-in-pakistan/>

¹⁰ Ibid



2. Governance Challenges

National climate policies lack integrated social protection measures for ethnic groups who need to migrate because of climate change.

Policy Frameworks and Implementation Gaps

The government of Pakistan has created climate adaptation plans through the National Climate Change Policy (2012) and the Pakistan Climate Change Act (2017) yet their actual implementation faces major obstacles.

Policy	Key Provisions	Implementation Challenges
National Climate Change Policy (2012)	Climate adaptation strategies	Weak enforcement mechanisms, lack of funding
Pakistan Climate Change Act (2017)	Establishment of Climate Change Council	Limited integration with social policies
National Adaptation Plan (2021)	Protection of vulnerable populations	No clear mechanism for displaced ethnic groups

Institutional Barriers

The insufficient and uncoordinated responses from governmental organizations stem from their absence of unified planning when dealing with climate-induced displacement. The development of a unified strategic plan between organizations becomes critical because independent climate change management strategies cannot protect affected communities from emerging threats¹¹. The current climate adaptation budget levels prove insufficient to help the growing number of displaced people because of insufficient funding. Limited money availability blocks sustainability solutions from advancing and thus causes long-term failure in adaptive measures¹². The current policies fail to address the essential socio-cultural and economic needs of displaced ethnic communities. The exclusion of affected populations grows worse because their nonparticipation in decision-making

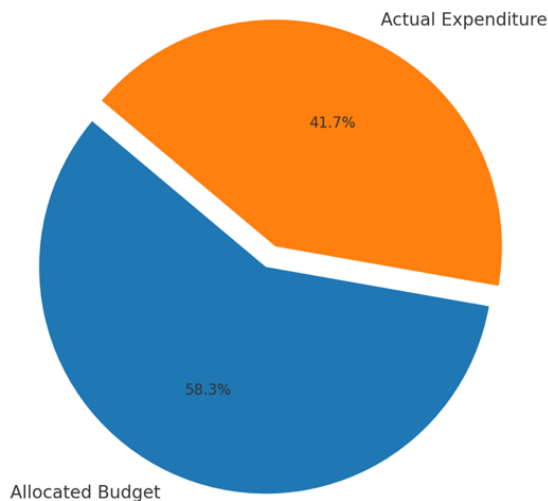
¹¹ Afzal, S., & Akhtar, S. (2020). *Mainstreaming climate change in policy processes of Pakistan*. Institute of Strategic Studies Research Papers. <https://issrapapers.ndu.edu.pk/site/article/download/89/48/61>.

¹² CPDI. (2024). *Evaluating Trends in Climate Change Budgeting Priorities in Pakistan*. Centre for Peace and Development Initiatives. https://cpdi-pakistan.org/?sdm_process_download=1&download_id=24964.

blocks their access to vital resources and stability opportunities. The policy framework must unite coordinated actions with adequate funding to include every affected group¹³.

Graph

Budget Allocations vs. Actual Expenditure for Climate Adaptation in Pakistan



3. Impact on Political Structures

The movement of people due to climate change modifies voting populations of urban areas which leads to shifts in political power.

Changing Voter Demographics

The migration of ethnic groups has transformed voting behaviour in major cities because their new populations affect local political elections and representation. The migration of ethnic groups has transformed voting behavior in major cities because their new populations affect local political elections and representation.

Election Year	Region	Impact of Migration on Electoral Outcomes
2018	Karachi	Increased Pashtun voter influence in certain constituencies
2021	Lahore	New Sindhi Settlements Affecting Provincial Seat Distribution
2023	Quetta	Baloch displacement leading to shifts in political alliances

Ethnic Political Mobilization

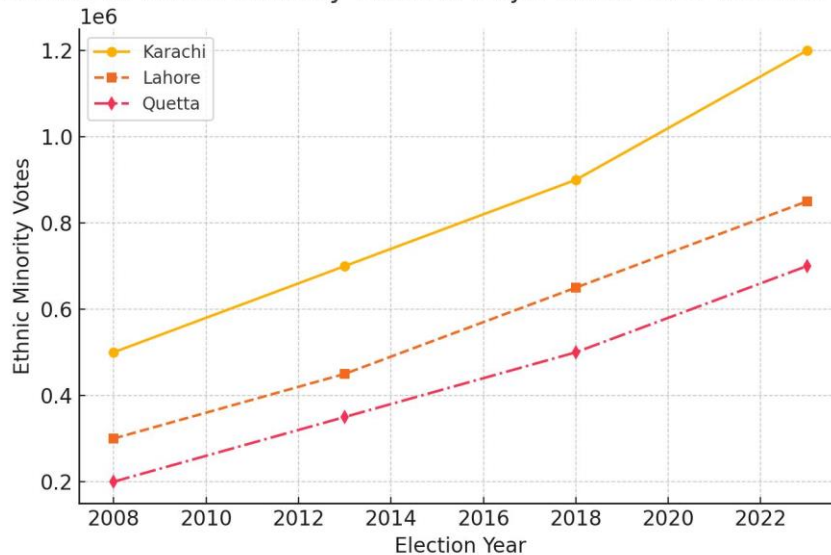
Ethnic political parties have emerged because climate-induced displacement forces affected communities to search for political representation and advocacy for their rights. The displaced groups join political organizations which advocate for their rights to increase their influence in

¹³ Government of Pakistan. (2021). *National Climate Change Policy*. Ministry of Climate Change and Environmental Coordination. <https://www.mocc.gov.pk/SiteImage/Policy/NCCP%202021.pdf>.

governance¹⁴. Ethnic migrant groups create mounting pressure on local government institutions to use public funds equally between all communities while providing enhanced opportunities for participation in policy decisions. New political tensions emerge because residents compete more intensely with migrant groups who recently arrived in the area¹⁵. Government officials need to implement governance strategies aimed at inclusive representation to balance different community interests because resource distribution conflicts along with employment abilities and political influence frequently lead community relations to deteriorate¹⁶.

Graph

Growth of Ethnic Minority Votes in Major Cities Over Election Cycles



4. Policy Gaps and Recommendations

The Pakistani government has established national climate policies yet does not maintain frameworks to assist ethnic migrant populations.

Identified Gaps

The absence of proper climate migration policies in Pakistan prevents the government from establishing organized assistance and relocation plans for displaced ethnic populations. The Pakistani government has failed to create specific guidelines to assist populations who need relocation due to climate change¹⁷. The limited participation of local stakeholders during policy development makes this situation worse since those affected people who need to share their perspectives are excluded from the process. Weak solutions emerge from the current exclusion of displaced population needs because they fail to address specific situations¹⁸. Environmental

¹⁴ Nisar, N. (2022). *Climate-Induced Migration in Pakistan*. Centre for Strategic and Contemporary Research. <https://cscr.pk/explore/themes/energy-environment/climate-induced-migration-in-pakistan/>.

¹⁵ Hurxthal, A. (2024). *King Center initiative: Climate Change and Political Mobilization in the Global South*. King Center on Global Development. <https://kingcenter.stanford.edu/news/king-center-initiative-climate-change-and-political-mobilization-global-south>.

¹⁶ Simon, M. (2023). *Key predictors for climate policy support and political mobilization: The role of beliefs and preferences*. *PLOS Climate*. <https://journals.plos.org/climate/article?id=10.1371/journal.pclm.0000145>.

¹⁷ Hayat, S. (2021). *Pakistan's policymakers must address climate migration*. *Climate-Diplomacy*. <https://climate-diplomacy.org/magazine/conflict/pakistans-policymakers-must-address-climate-migration>.

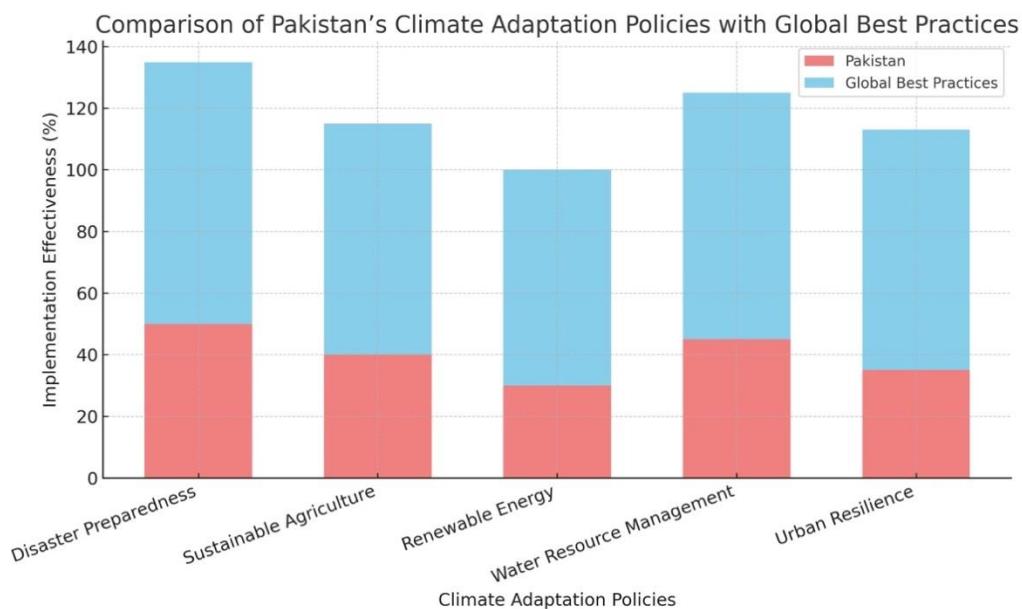
¹⁸ Nisar, N. (2022). *Climate-Induced Migration in Pakistan*. Centre for Strategic and Contemporary Research. <https://cscr.pk/explore/themes/energy-environment/climate-induced-migration-in-pakistan/>.

migrants face limited legal protections because their property and financial security lack proper legal safeguards. Policymakers need to establish complete protection strategies which have legal backing to defend climate-affected populations because these communities face increased threats of discrimination and economic exploitation¹⁹.

Recommendations

Social protection policies need climate adaptation measures to succeed in helping displaced ethnic communities affected by climate change. The government must create funding programs together with income generation systems to support economic stability for those who need to migrate. Cities need proper urban planning to handle the growing number of migrants by offering housing and employment opportunities to stop social conflicts and protect resources. The establishment of committees leads to improved climate governance by facilitating collaboration between different departments of governmental organizations. Local ethnic communities need to take the lead in developing climate adaptation strategies because such approaches must specifically address their particular challenges and requirements.

Graph



Conclusion

The climate crisis in Pakistan demands governance solutions that integrate ethnic population movements with climate protection initiatives. Climate change extends past environmental issues because it combines political and socio-economic elements which create increased social inequalities. The regions of Sindh and Balochistan endure severe consequences from extreme weather patterns rising sea levels and changing agricultural regions that harm ethnic minority populations living there. Moving to cities results in economic challenges for communities because they find themselves with inadequate legal protection and weak political representation. SDG 13 requires a dual strategy to unite environmental sustainability practices with political inclusion efforts to fulfil its targets. The development of climate resilience requires policymakers to establish

¹⁹ Van Dijk, L. (2024). *Pakistan Tables Climate Refugee Bill to Address Climate-Induced Displacement*. *Climate Court*. <https://www.climate-court.com/post/pakistan-tables-climate-refugee-bill-to-address-climate-induced-displacement>.

local programs that solve ethnic community-specific challenges while making climate resilience a national focus. Warning systems and disaster preparedness programs for vulnerable areas with large ethnic populations should receive support through sustainable livelihood programs for displaced communities. Protection measures must establish climate migrants as an independent susceptible population group for legal institutions to deliver access to housing and work opportunities and political engagement rights. Governing bodies need to develop new systems which prevent ethnic minority groups from exclusion in decisions affecting their welfare. The distribution of resources plays a vital role in managing climate change alongside ethnic population movement. Flawless climate adaptation funding allocation depends on how much climate change and migration patterns influence individual locations and regions. Public-private partnerships should enable the improvement of resilient infrastructure throughout urban and rural areas and support sustainable development initiatives. The lasting political effects of climate migration demand immediate assessment because they influence voting patterns national governance frameworks and social connections between different ethnic groups in cities. Future studies need to examine how previous elections have evolved and how global climate governance standards relate to developing Pakistan's systematic climate governance system. The inclusion of ethnic mobility principles within climate action strategies enables Pakistan to build a sustainable future where every community remains protected from climate change impacts. The implementation of inclusive policies to handle climate-induced displacement will enhance social cohesion and support Pakistan's progress toward achieving SDG 13.

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