


Climate adaptation challenges for Pakistan

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Pakistan, similar to other developing countries, is undergoing an evolution from an agricultural based society to an industrialized country. This evolution is characterized by high population growth, rapid urban development, inadequate infrastructure, soil erosion, and environmental pollution. The experts are of the view that Pakistan's economy, major resources, and people are in jeopardy; that such socio-economic stresses and disparities cause vulnerability to climate change. In Pakistan, climate change together with other socio-stresses (e.g.; population growth, urban expansion, economic growth, globalization) is having substantial impacts on its major sectors and services including; water, agriculture, forests, industry, fisheries, biodiversity, community health, business, tourism, transport and public services. Hence, adaptation to climate change is imperative for Pakistan. The capacity of much of the population to cope with climate change impacts is limited due to lack of access to social capital, low per capita income, and administrative and political disconnected functionalities at federal, provincial and local government levels. I believe that the vulnerability of the Pakistani population to climate change impacts can be reduced through adaptive governance, predominantly at the local government level, which may embrace climate-centered development, mainstreaming climate adaptation into planning of development activities, bureaucratic and political transformations and cooperation at local, provincial and federal levels.

Pakistani local governments should plan, develop and implement their long term action programs for climate change adaptation. In this way the most pressing local adaptation needs would be categorized after identification of the required local resources (human and financial). Moreover, Pakistani local governments would be aware of how climatic changes impact on various sectors locally and their consequent vulnerabilities. Also, this will highlight where priority intervention might lessen the climate change impacts, and facilitate local governments of Pakistan to adapt (soft solution) rather than react (hard solution) when the wreck has already been done.

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