Local Level Responsibility for Climate Change in Pakistan


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by Saleem Janjua

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I.INTRODUCTION

Saleem Janjua writes that "increasing the capability to adapt at the local government level in Pakistan will definitely lessen susceptibility to the effects of climate change at provincial and federal levels. Hence, in Pakistan, we must begin planning our adaptive reactions now at grass-root level to help lessen some of the environmental, economic and social impacts of climate change."

Saleem Janjua is the Climate Change Adpation contributor to the NAPSNet Weekly Report, and the Editor of AdaptNet.

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II. ARTICLE BY SALEEM JANJUA

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In January 2000, the Musharraf Government introduced a decentralization programme called as the 'Devolution of Power'. This programme was put into practice after holding general local government elections in August 2001. The Musharraf Government implemented this restructuring programme through instituting the new Local Government Ordinance 2001 and through the obliteration of executive magistracy through revisions in relevant laws. In addition to devolving administrative and expenditure responsibilities to local governments, the decentralization also involved, to differing degrees, changes in the administrative level of decision-making, the accountability of the decision-making authorities (political and bureaucratic) and the nature and amount of fiscal resources available. After implementing this devolution programme, local governments in Pakistan were established at three levels: district; tehsil; and union. This system remained fully functional for almost seven years. However, the Government has now brought an amended local government system in 2013, which envisages restoration of the old mayor system for the metropolitan cities and the chairman-led district councils, while dispensing with the nazim and naib nazim cadre of the Musharraf era.

Local governments in Pakistan did exist in different patchy periods prior to the implementation of Musharraf's devolution in 2001 and current devolution in 2013, but those local governments did not have any noteworthy responsibility, and (especially in rural areas) were almost non-functional. The majority of the tasks and actions were handled and administered at the provincial level. However, after devolution in 2001 (and amended in 2013), most of the public services, including environmental protection and management, that had been previously under the purview of provincial governments were transferred to the local governments, substantially increasing their scope and responsibilities.

Climatic changes and significant weather events (droughts, inundation and storms) are global concerns but they have many insinuations at the local level. Changes in climate will also have an effect on Pakistani local governments (urban, rural and coastal) by altering the settings of diverse types of infrastructure including construct systems (streets, roads, flyovers, drinking water and sewage lines etc), natural systems (trees, water bodies, atmosphere etc.) and living systems (education, health, human wellbeing etc.). Pakistani local governments require infrastructure that can endure future climatic changes to ensure they are reliable and continue to provide local services. Presently, Pakistani local governments have managerial, fiscal and decision-making powers. But concurrently they are also facing the challenge climate change poses to local government resources, infrastructure, and services. Therefore, Pakistani local governments need ways to adapt to climatic changes.

Adaptation to climate change at the local government level entails a close relationship between the public sector, business bodies, planners, engineers, scientists and local non government organizations as adaptation requires taking action to lessen the impacts of climate change and making the most of new opportunities that may arise. The literature considers that the types of adaptation measures employed should depend on the impact of climate change on the region and on individual economic sectors. I believe that increasing the capability to adapt at the local government level in Pakistan will definitely lessen susceptibility to the effects of climate change at provincial and federal levels. Hence, in Pakistan, we must begin planning our adaptive reactions now at grass-root level to help lessen some of the environmental, economic and social impacts of climate change. As no significant work has been done on climate adaptation in Pakistan so far, this indicates that there are some barriers. Therefore, it requires an immense understanding of what the barriers to change

are.

III. NAUTILUS INVITES YOUR RESPONSES

The Nautilus Peace and Security Network invites your responses to this report. Please leave a comment below or send your response to: nautilus@nautilus.org. Comments will only be posted if they include the author's name and affiliation.

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Nautilus Institute
608 San Miguel Ave., Berkeley, CA 94707-1535 | Phone: (510) 423-0372 | Email: nautilus@nautilus.org