



YOUTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY

IS CLIMATE ACTIVISM REALLY CREATING IMPACT IN PAKISTAN?

Written By

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Youth General Assembly is an autonomous assembly that has been formed in order to provide a credible platform that instigates a true sense of policy & strategy making, equitable administration and non-customary legislative, public speaking and social issues by empowering enthusiasm in youth for being the future ambassadors and democrats.

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1. Introduction

Due to worse socio-economic conditions, climate change is brutally impacting Pakistan and the country is most vulnerable to climatic disasters. These devastating impacts includes extreme weather conditions such as droughts, floods and heatwaves.

Climate activism in Pakistan is started in early 2000s by the efforts of community-based organizations and environmental-related NGOs such as WWF-Pak for raising awareness and running campaigns in addressing climate-related issues and promoting sustainable practices. Later Pakistan National Climate Change Policy 2012 (revised in 2021) and Climate Change Act 2017 were formulated to promote climate actions and resilience under command of government.

2. Climate Change in Pakistan

Pakistan is among the top 10 countries severally affected by climate change. Temperature rise is expected to increase by 3°C-6°C annually by the end of the century. Today most regions of Pakistan face temperature above 50°C. During 2006-2015, sea level rise was observed 1.1mm/yr., and it is expected to increase by 60 cm in the future, most likely to affect the coastal areas of Pakistan. According to World Bank Group, between 1992-2021 Pakistan has faced economic loss of US\$29.3 billion from property damage, casualties, crop and livestock damages due to climate-related disasters. According to National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), in 2022, about 33 million people were affected due to floods and loss of over \$30 billion dollars has been faced in terms of damaged infrastructures, crops and homes. Similarly, Pakistan Agriculture, which contributed 19.2% in countries GDP in 2020-2021, is also severely affected by climate change. Deviation in optimal temperature requirements for the crops like wheat and rice will result in 15% and 20% reduction in wheat yield and rice yield by 2050 by threatening food security. About 40% of Pakistan population lives in marginalized communities and climate change worsen the situation due to economic instability.

3. Climate Activism in Pakistan

In Pakistan, initially Climate activism was driven by NGOs in collaboration with youth-led movements, but eventually government is also getting involved in it by formulating climate change policies. Pakistani youth has started organizing climate awareness campaigns after getting inspired by the global 2019 Greta Thunberg's campaign of Fridays for Future (FFF). NGOs like WWF-Pak and Pakistan Environment Trust, putting their efforts in research, advocacy, climate awareness and capacity building of community to address climate issues. In order to mitigate the climate impacts

in Pakistan, Ministry of Climate Change also collaborates with international bodies like UNDP for funds and to carry out climate resilience Projects in Pakistan.

There are various examples of protest, campaigns and awareness-raising events in Pakistan. These efforts include “**Climate March**” 2019, in which activists from all over the country participated and demand actions on combating climate change. “**Green Squad**”, initiative led by environmental activist Fahad Rizwan who planted trees across the country to minimize impacts of climate change. Youth-led movement, “**Fridays for Future**” also played its role in driving attention of authorities on the urgency to take climate actions. **Quantumverse Laboratory** is also a dynamic hub of innovations, where experts, climate activists and youth organize various executive forums to raise awareness and driving solutions to combat climate change.

4. Impact of Climate Activism

Climate activism in Pakistan has stimulated various substantial policy changes and government actions:

Pakistan National Climate Change Policy was updated in 2021, the focus was on emphasizing the reduction of GHGs, enhancing climate resilience, aligning with global climate goals. **Alternative and Renewable Energy Policy** was revised in 2019 to increase the share of renewable energy (wind, solar, hydropower) to 30% by 2030 in country’s energy mix. Billion Tree Tsunami Project (BTTP) of 2014-2018 and Ten Billion Tree Tsunami Programme (TBTP) 2018, as restoration projects, was launched to combat deforestation, boost biodiversity and mitigate effect of climate change. **Pakistan Electric Vehicle Policy 2020**, aimed to have 30% of electric vehicles running across Pakistan by 2030 to reduce fossil fuels dependency.

In Pakistan, there are several success stories of Community-led initiatives or projects that have played a critical role in climate activism. **BTTP 2014-2018** has been a successful project, also gained international recognition, although initiated by KPK government, but proceeded through community participation and ownership. One billion trees were planted across KPK. Urban “**Clifton Forest**” Initiative in Karachi 2015 led by Shahzad Qureshi. Miyawaki method was used to plant 38,000 saplings most of the plants have become mature trees, aim was to reduce urban heat, increase green spaces and improve air quality. **Mangrove Restoration** in 2015, by the communities, particularly in Indus Delta Region in which millions of saplings were planted. Aim was to protect coastal areas, enhance marine biodiversity and combating climate change.

According to UNDP report 2021, Pakistani youth and literate people who have digital access has more knowledge about climate change. Prioritization of climate related actions is based on its connection with economic implications. Many households espouse money-saving procedures such as turning off lights (76%) to combat climate change. Initiatives like Pakistan Youth Climate Network (PYCN) and FFF Pakistan is also increasing awareness through workshops and clean-up campaigns to encouraging the Youth participation in climate actions and driving behavioral changes.

5. Challenges and Limitations

Various obstacles have been faced by the Climate activists in Pakistan that hampers their efforts to promote climate awareness. These challenges include government repression in which activists encounter restrictions by authorities to advocate effectively. Others are security concerns in terms of violation, lack of financial, technical and expert human resources to conduct research and run campaigns, political instability, lack of public awareness, economic challenges such as unemployment and poverty that dominates the environmental concerns and misinformation due to lack of reliable data on climatic conditions.

Criticism of climate activism in Pakistan results in low effectiveness and inclusivity. These criticisms include elitism, it is argued that needs of elite-groups are considered by compromising the needs of rural and marginalized communities, lack of diversity in gender and socio-economic status among climate activists, follow-up of top-down approach which results in neglecting grassroots engagement and focusing on international attention, communication gaps by using complex languages, deviation from local context by disregarding unique social, environmental and economic factors. These results in solutions that inappropriately address the needs of affected communities.

6. Conclusion

Be a part of sustainable future campaigns in Pakistan! Educate yourself and public on climate-related issues. Reduce waste, Plant Trees, support initiatives of clean energy. Together, we can instigate meaningful transition and protect our planet for ourselves and future generations. Government should invest in renewable energy sources, provide subsidies and loans to consumers and developers of green infrastructures. Government should raise awareness at local level through media by providing incentives and sense of ownership in local people. Government should develop climate education curriculum and provide opportunities for youth to get benefits from Pakistan mitigation targets through jobs and eco-entrepreneurship opportunities.

The writer is a researcher.



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