

Vision:

To have democratic and just society where all people enjoy equal economic, political, socio-cultural and religious right, equitable opportunities and benefits of development process without any discrimination.

Mission:

PATTAN is committed to mainstreaming marginalized and isolated communities, groups and women into political and economic decision-making processes at all levels through mobilization, networking, capacity-building and advocacy for structural and policy change.

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PRESS RELEASE

Pakistan can't manage disasters effectively unless vulnerable and marginalised people are involved in disaster risk reduction planning and implementation. Risk reduction must be made holistically integral to development planning.

Islamabad, 29 July 2022: More than ninety percent disaster-prone communities across four provinces of Pakistan observed they have never been consulted and involved in disaster risk assessment, planning and implementation by state institutions. Equally, they were likely to state that there existed no coherence in development policies as far as disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation concerned. These are the key findings of PATTAN's study on inclusive disaster risk governance – Views from Frontline. A project that is being implemented simultaneously in Pakistan as well as in 52 countries of five continents. Sarwar Bari National Coordinator PATTAN presented the salient features of the study during a two-day long "National Stakeholders' Workshop on DRR and Resilience held in a local hotel on 27 and 28 July.

In Pakistan the study was conducted by PATTAN during 2019-20. More than 1,700 households, 150 NGOS and 150 officials of local governments were interviewed across 15 districts of four provinces. 52% of the community sample consisted of women and 48% men. Besides representatives of disaster-prone communities from 15 districts of four provinces of Pakistan, Chairperson of the Sub-Committee of the Senate for Climate Change, Ms. Seemee Ezdi, Senator Ms. Fauzia Arshad, member Senate Sub-Committees on health, education and interior, Chairman Federal Flood Commission, Mr. Ahmad Kamal, Director General Rescue 1122 Emergency Services, Dr. Rizwan Naseer, Director General Met Office, Mr. Sahibzad Khan, Deputy Chief Pakistan Environmental Protection Agency, Mr. Javad Rabbani, Director General Agri Research Institute Faisalabad, Mr. Muhammad Nawaz Khan Mekan, Assistant Director PDMA KP, Mr. Yadullah Khan; and scholars belonging to think-tanks, universities and labour leaders participated in the workshop.

Ms. Ezdi encouraged the organizers to help improve legislation on climate change and for the involvement of women and communities in DRR. Ms. Fauzia Arshad assured the participants that she would try her best as Senator to improve health education and participation of women in disaster management. She also observed that state was responsible to fulfill its role to making citizens part of planning. Dr. Rizwan Naseer of 1122 said Pakistan has too many laws on disaster management and too many disaster management institutions and this created confusion and tensions, while the country lacked effective accountability mechanism. Mr. Ahmad Kamal said the country has no third tier of governance and that was the main reason for lack of policy implementation. He elaborated his point by giving examples from Bangladesh, India, and Japan. He also pointed out at the absence of political will and non-implementation of the River Act. Mr. Khan of Met Office that this year 400% more rains have already fall. Poor and inadequate infrastructures are more responsible for destructions than rains, he observed.

Mr. Abdul Qadir of PATTAN Board said hazard and people centered disaster discourse was must for the country.

Bari of PATTAN said for decades disaster narrative has been 'nature' focused. Most governments and disaster experts tend to blame unprecedented natural events for destruction. This narrative was an attempt to hide their poor planning and governance. He strongly suggested to have paradigm shift on disaster narrative should we want to improve DRR.

The study ranked five disasters as most frequent and most devastating in the following order – flooding, earthquake, diseases/epidemics, pollution, heavy rainfall. Many respondents of the study also believed poverty and inequality were disasters. More than one-third of disaster hit people were likely to state that disasters severely cause economic losses. When they were asked who helped you the most in the aftermaths of disasters, only 16% mentioned government, 31PC and 34PC said friends/relatives, and NGOs/religious organisations respectively. Therefore, it may be concluded that the state is likely to have failed in the wake of disasters, while primordial social networks and NGOs play substantive role. The current wave of urban and rural flooding substantiates findings of PATTAN's study.

The study also shows that almost half of respondents believed that disaster related losses have gone up manifold in recent past and almost same percentage of the people were likely to say that complete rehabilitation and recovery was not possible.

The study also found higher percentage of disability in disaster-prone areas than the national average. For instance, one in five persons had some form of disability, while 37% said they had chronically ill family members. Policy makers and disaster management authorities must consider this seriously while planning rescue, evacuation and recovery plans.

PATTAN's study also aimed to measure awareness level of disaster-vulnerable people about environment and DRR policies/projects and their involvement and participation in risk reduction assessment, planning and implementation. Contrary to the stated policy of NDMA and NDM Act 2010, in the last 12 years, as many as 97% respondents observed they had never been approached and consulted or made aware of DRR policy and plans. In response to 'who in your view is responsible' of this exclusion most of them stated various factors including nexus of local influential and corrupt state officials.

While concluding the workshop Sarwar Bari said 'don't blame the nature, blame the governance.' At the end of the workshop, all the participants formed a national committee that will be responsible to campaign for the following measures and recommendations:

- Pressure political parties to make DRR and community participation in all stages of planning and implementation part of their election manifestoes.
- Alignment local government laws of provinces with the National Disaster Management Act 2010.
- Establish local governments across all provinces and set minimum standards for all provincial LG system considering Article 140A of Pakistan's constitution.
- Pressure governments to make community and women's participation legally mandatory in decision-making and implementation structures and processes according to the NDM Act 2010, public policy on DRR, SDGs and SFDRR.
- Strive to establish disaster risk reduction committees at each level of local government structure.
- Build capacities of disaster-prone communities through periodic training and education.
- Enhance sensitivity of students through education curriculum and drills.
- Build linkages of rural communities with urban networks and social movements.
- Develop vulnerability centred disaster narrative and don't blame the nature and hazards, expose factors responsible for poor governance.

The draft study report is available on request.

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