

## CLIMATE JUSTICE AND CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM IN PAKISTAN: BUILDING RESILIENCE FOR RIVERINE AND VULNERABLE COMMUNITIES

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### Abstract

The paper examines Pakistan's constitutional and institutional readiness to introduce climate justice following the monster 2022 and 2025 monsoon floods. It integrates the doctrinal analysis of the facts in the constitution (including Article 9A and of the post-Leghari jurisprudence) with a critical policy audit of NDMA, PMD, UN OCHA, and situational reports to follow how a range of legal gaps and governance failures contributed to the increased vulnerabilities of millions of people. Combinations of quantitative evidence of displacement, mortality, infrastructure loss, and qualitative governance evaluations are synthesized to point out five key failures: fragmented federal-provincial responsibilities, lack of data to vulnerable population, inadequate shelter and social protection, infrastructure designed based on the past climate norm, and short-term funding of relief. It states that small judicial interventions are not enough but there is a need to reform the system. The paper suggests a detailed action plan: a new constitutional clause, a Green Amendment, to affirm the right to a healthy and stable climate; a National Climate Resilience Act, to coordinate roles and reporting; a statutory Climate Migration and Displacement Framework; stress-testing infrastructure; and standardized protocols on disaster data; and innovative climate finance. Finally, it includes short- and medium-term actions and indicators to transform constitutional promises into equitable and responsible adaptation to the most climate-impacted populations in Pakistan providing a viable legal roadmap with quantifiable standards that can guide policymakers, courts, and civil society to become resilient.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Disabilities are more vulnerable in case of disasters, or they are more exposed to food insecurity and displacement, and are more susceptible to gender-based violence (Ngcamu, 2023). These trends suggest that the problem of

climate change in Pakistan is a question of justice, which increases the impact of social inequalities and continuity of hierarchies (Dawn, 2024).

The country has put in place several frameworks to manage these risks such as the National Climate

Change Policy (2012, revised 2021), Pakistan is a pioneer in the climate crisis across the globe since it has been ranked as one of the most susceptible nations to climatic changes in the world (Climate Change Performance Index [CCPI], 2025). There are also a number of environmental shocks experienced in the country such as, glacial melting, heat waves, rising sea levels, droughts, and floods that endanger the economy, displacing populations, and putting pressure on the national systems of governance. By 2022, over 33 million individuals were displaced due to monsoon floods, more than US \$30 billion of infrastructure was damaged, and millions of people became food insecure (United Nations Pakistan, 2025; Center for Disaster Philanthropy, 2023). The problem of extreme droughts and farmers in Sindh and Punjab just a year later demonstrated the instability of the Pakistan climate system and the growing unpredictability of water sources (Al Jazeera, 2025). Attribution research affirms that climate change caused by humans added 50-75 percent of rainfall that resulted in the 2022 floods to exacerbate the losses among populations already at risk (World Weather Attribution, 2022).

These climate changes have not only ecological impacts but also very social impacts. Farming and pastoral communities living in rural areas are exceptionally susceptible to the variations in rainfall patterns and groundwater scarcity, and cities are subject to frequent floods caused by inadequate drainage and uncontrolled development (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2024). The distribution of vulnerability is also unequal: women, children, elderly people, and people with the National Adaptation Plan (2023), and the Balochistan Climate Change Policy (2024) (Baloch, Rehman, & Ali, 2025). The net-zero emissions goal that the country has set by 2050 is also being realized, as well as its Nationally Determined Contributions under the Paris Agreement (Global Change Impact Studies Centre [GCISC], 2024). Nevertheless, its implementation is still piecemeal and reactive. The provincial structures are always underfunded, and federal obligations have no binding mechanisms (Masud & Khan, 2024). Even such liberal court interventions, as the

Leghari v. The federation of Pakistan (2015) that acknowledged climate change as the one affecting constitutional rights to life and dignity have not been entirely incorporated into sustainable governance structures (Leghari v. Federation of Pakistan, 2015; Lahore University of Management Sciences [LUMS], 2023).

The article fills in these gaps by contextualizing climate governance in Pakistan in terms of constitutional accountability and climate justice. It claims that Pakistan will be left in the crisis management cycle unless justice is incorporated in climate policy and legal practice. The article is divided into seven sections. The methodology is described in section 2. Section 3 looks at new climatic realities. Part 4 examines legal and constitutional frameworks. Part 5 explores vulnerability and inequality. Section 6 criticizes the gaps in governance. Section 7 suggests justice-based reforms. Section 8 provides recommendations, and Section 9 gives the final words in terms of emphasizing the necessity of a justice-oriented restructuring of climate governance in Pakistan.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

The qualitative legal research approach adopted in this article is the integration of doctrinal, policy, and critical approaches. The doctrinal section explores the provisions of the constitutions, the statutory provisions, and judicial interpretations that define the climate governance in Pakistan. It will make possible the investigation into the perspectives on the rights of life, dignity, and equality in relation to the environmental protection and climate justice. A policy approach is also employed to examine national and provincial climate policies in conjunction with the doctrinal analysis that assists in determining whether the domestic commitments are in line with the international commitments of the country.

Moreover, it is a critical assessment of the article whose concept is climate justice and vulnerability theory. This method highlights the disproportionate impact of climate change on the oppressed groups and identifies the disconnect between the law and the reality. The approach,

which integrates doctrinal reasoning, policy analysis, and normative theory is a balanced approach to assess the positive and negative aspects of the existing climate policies in Pakistan. It is not only dedicated to explaining the available laws and policies; it also aims at critically looking at their effectiveness in addressing the increasing environmental issues

### 3. Climate Change in Pakistan: Emerging Realities

The climate crisis in Pakistan is marked by more and more extreme and severe extremes. In 2022, the catastrophic floods, which left millions of people homeless and covered a third of the territory in a meter of water, point to the magnitude of climate disasters (Shahbaz, Liaqat, and Ali, 2024). Sindh and Punjab experienced extended droughts, and the farmers could not recuperate amid the last crisis when more floods occurred (Siddique Akbar, Asif, Rizwan Safdar, and Navid Yousaf, 2024). Such a cycle of floods and droughts indicates the tendency of climate change to undermine livelihoods and governmental capacity and leave vulnerable populations in a state of constant crisis.

International withdrawal of glaciers in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Gilgit-Baltistan makes the threat more dangerous. The Indus River system is fed by melting Glaciers; however, they are melting more rapidly increasing the number of glacial lake outburst floods, threatening the lives of populations downstream (Al Jazeera, 2025). In the meantime, the destruction of natural resilience has been caused by deforestation and soil erosion, which have rendered the monsoon rains more destructive. These environmental shifts prove to show that global warming intensifies the local weaknesses and it becomes not merely an environmental problem but a question of life and death.

These disasters are costly to the economy. The 2022 floods alone led to losses worth USD 30 billion, which overloaded the fiscal resources and revealed the reliance of Pakistan on foreign aid (United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction [UNDRR], 2025). Governance issues contribute to this financial vulnerability, as the aid

delivery usually follows the politically related regions and leaves marginalized communities out (Ali, Khan, Azhar, and Raheem, 2024). Change in climate is therefore not a mere environmental problem but also a social and political crisis that further increases inequality and erosion of government legitimate.

### 4. Constitutional and Legal Frameworks

The Constitution in Pakistan has provided concrete and extensive ground in the governance of the environment and climate. This was a historic move as Article 9A was added to the Constitutional Amendment 26 stating that “Every person will have the right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment (Rajper, Khuhro, and Iftikhar, 2024). This provision places environmental protection as one of the rights of the highest order and the state must act in advance to provide clean air, safe water, sound ecosystems, and preparedness to disasters. Contrary to the utilization of judicial interpretation in the past, Article 9A actually introduces sustainability into the constitutional text and creates a criterion against which the actions and the activities of the government may be assessed (Saleem, Tasgheer, & Fatima, 2023).

In addition to Article 9A, rights are available to give a wider framework. Article 9 (right to life) has traditionally been interpreted to cover a healthy environment (Hameed, Saeed, & Shahid, 2025), whereas Article 14 (dignity of man) safeguards against environmental damage that jeopardizes health and physical integrity (May & Daly, 2023). Articles 23-24 (property rights) are particularly significant when floods, droughts, or displacement affect the access to a house and land (Khan, 2024a). Article 25 (equality before the law) should be implemented when the effects of the climate are more likely to hit women, children, and marginalized communities, meaning that the state must provide equal protection in adopting and relief measures (Hassan & Khan, 2024). Collectively, these provisions constitute a constitutional provisions framework that places environmental protection and climate resilience as enforceable rights.

This framework is supported through judicial mechanisms. High Courts have the power to interpret fundamental rights in Article 199, which grants them the authority to do so (ibn Munir, 2024) as done in the landmark case of Leghari v. As in the Federation of Pakistan case, in which the Lahore High Court cited climate inaction as a constitutional right violation and created a Climate Change Commission to manage adaptation. Article 184(3) provides the Supreme Court with the original jurisdiction over material matters and allows it to respond to the structural shortcomings of climate management (Nadeem, Qasim, and Ibrahim, 2023). Articles 153-154 establish an interprovincial water, energy, and environmental coordination mechanism in the Council of Common Interests (CCI) (Naseem, Mahmood, and Naazer, 2022) and Article 155 expressly resolves the interprovincial water disputes that are essential in the flood and river management (Ahmad, Khan, and Waheed, 2025). Article 8 further stipulates that any legislation and executive action must be in line with the principles of the essential rights, that the responsibilities in the field of environment and climate should remain the higher (Barkat, Anjum, & Shaikh, 2025).

This constitutional structure is supplemented by statutory laws. With the Pakistan Climate Change Act of 2017, the national policy is coordinated by Climate Change Council and Climate Change Authority (Masud and Khan, 2024). The National Disaster Management Act of 2010 regulates disaster management by establishing federal, provincial, and district disaster preparedness and response agencies (Rahman, Rahman, Rahman, and Shaw, 2025). PEPA established the national standards of environmental quality and impact assessment, which became provincial with the 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment in 2010, resulting in the provincial environmental laws in Punjab, Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Balochistan (Paul, 2024). Water Apportionment Accord (1991) (Sattar & Azeem Shah, 2023) and the Indus River System Authority Act (1992) (Ahmad, Cuddy, Podger, Yu, and Perraud, 2023) control water governance, whereas older regulations, such as the Canal and Drainage Act (1873) (Saddiqa, Batool,

Gill, and Khan, 2022), were related to the embankment and irrigation systems. Forestry and biodiversity come under the jurisdiction of the Forest Act (1927) (Kamal and Haq, 2023) and provincial forest and wildlife laws which are both essential to ecosystem-based adaptation.

Both the federal and state governments have developed comprehensive frameworks at the policy level. National documents are the National Climate Change Policy (2012, revised 2021) (Masud & Khan, 2024) and the National Adaptation Plan (2023) (Mumtaz, 2024), and they establish the general mitigation and adaptation objectives. States have also introduced their own policies: the Punjab Climate Change Policy (2023) (Usman, Wasim, and Yawar, 2023) is based on the agricultural and industrial adaptation; the Sindh Climate Change Policy (2022) (Mobeen, Kabir, Schneider, Ahmed, and Scheffran, 2025) is on coastal resilience, waterlogging, and urban flooding; the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Climate Change Policy (2016, updated in subsequent strategies) Although these policies are not binding in law, they show a great level of commitments that are ever relied upon by the courts and the civil society to have the government answerable to lack of action.

Combined, Article 9A, and basic rights jurisprudence, case law, statutes and national and provincial climate policies create a multi-layered governance framework. The second issue, though, is how to put them into practice: how to make sure that the constitutional promises and elaborate policy guidelines are being worked out in all provinces in accordance with federal requirements and made viable by efficient institutions. The commitment made in Article 9A without this may well be a dream instead of being a transformative one.

### 5. Vulnerability and Inequality in Climate Impacts

The effects of climate change affect Pakistan in an uneven manner; they largely impact marginalized communities, which are vulnerable as a result of structural disparities (Adnan et al., 2024). Females, children, the aging population, and the disabled are more vulnerable to floods, droughts,

and heat waves and usually do not have access to health services, safe shelter, and social services (Amnesty International, 2025). These inequalities became extremely visible due to the displacement of millions of people created by the 2022 floods into provisional camps with low hygiene levels, food, and security, where women and girls would remain highly exposed to gender-based violence (Ullah, Haijun, Shah, Alotaibi, & Rauf, 2024).

Greater effect of climate shocks is felt by rural communities as they depend on agriculture and cannot adjust very well. Droughts and floods have ravaged smallholder farmers in Sindh and Punjab and left many of them in debt, managing to migrate (Bajwa, Khan, & Helwing, 2023). The same case is in Balochistan whereby, the destruction of ancient irrigation systems and ground water extraction has rendered complete settlements homeless, forcing the people of the area to rely on humanitarian assistance (Bugti, 2025). Conversely, the distribution of climate risks is also unequal among urban elites, who have access to private infrastructure, insurance, and are able to travel internationally, staying relatively safe. The other vulnerable group is children and the youth. Floods and displacement are climate-related consequences of disruption of education, which increases the poverty cycle and prevents future opportunities, particularly in the rural regions of rural girls (Khalid, Hafeez, Junaid, and Aeman, 2024). The fact that climate change is not just a short-term problem can be seen in the long-term consequences of these disruptions as they are not only a threat to human development but also a barrier.

City poor have got their own problems particularly in the megacities such as Karachi and Lahore where flooding is a frequent occurrence and the informal settlements are flooded. These are communities that live in high-risk zones with little or no help provided by the governments and are susceptible to water borne diseases, livelihood loss

and even forced eviction (National Disaster Management Authority [NDMA], 2024; Anwar, Leng, Ashraf, & Haider, 2024). The disparity in the distributions of adaptation resources further increases the disparity: the richer districts tend to be prioritized in the relief and reconstruction processes, and the marginalized groups are excluded in both planning and recovery processes. Climate vulnerability is highly interacting with gender inequality. In Pakistan, women tend to have no right to land ownership, a formal job, and financial loans, which makes it difficult to get back on feet following their losses due to climatic changes (Begum, 2025). Cultural prohibition of women mobility in times of disaster may result to women risking their lives by failing to access shelter or aid, an outcome that would lead to loss of lives and displacement. Although the need to make policy frameworks gender-sensitive is acknowledged, its implementation following is minimal at both federal and provincial levels (Waqar & Hafeez, 2025).

Migration also increases disparity caused by climate. Whole communities that are either moved by floods or droughts tend to settle in precarious positions where they have to overstretch the urban infrastructure and compete over scarce resources. The legal issues that are also brought up by this displacement include the acknowledgment of climate migrants under the constitution of Pakistan, which already has no clear provisions concerning the rights of these migrants.

Such tendencies reveal that the problem of climate crisis in Pakistan is not only environmental but inherently social, which strengthens the hierarchy of classes, sexes, and territories. Unless vulnerability and justice frameworks are explicitly brought to climate governance, the current inequalities will simply increase, undermining adaptation and resilience.

**Table 1**

Climate Vulnerability and Inequality in Pakistan (2025 Monsoon Floods)

Disaggregated impacts of the 2025 monsoon floods by vulnerable category (national and provincial snapshots)

Category	Quantitative Impact (2025 Floods)	Justice&Constitutional Implications
<b>Total Affected Population</b>	6.9 million people affected nationwide	Demonstrates scale of constitutional duty under Article 9A (clean, healthy, sustainable environment).
<b>Displacement</b>	2.9 million displaced; only 150,000 in official shelters (95% outside state support)	Exposes governance failure: rights to life (Art. 9) and dignity (Art. 14) not safeguarded for majority.
<b>Children</b>	255 child deaths (27% of total fatalities); 320 child injuries; malnutrition risk for 5,000 in Punjab	Highlights systemic neglect of vulnerable groups; failure to operationalize child protection within disaster governance.
<b>Gender</b>	525 adult men and 151 adult women dead (as of Sept 8)	Unequal risks: men exposed in rescue/property defense; women exposed to displacement, GBV, and exclusion from relief.
<b>Elderly</b>	No disaggregated national data available	Reflects data blindness → undermines equality (Art. 25) and prevents targeted protection.
<b>Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP)</b>	504 deaths (~50% of total fatalities), 1.6 million affected; caused by flash floods & cloudbursts	Mortality epicenter: shows need for localized constitutional duty to protect communities from rapid-onset disasters.
<b>Punjab</b>	4.7–5.1 million affected; 1.9 million displaced; 1.05 million acres farmland destroyed	Livelihood crisis: underscores link between climate change, right to property (Arts. 23–24), and food security.
<b>Sindh</b>	171,000 affected; 70% of Manjhand submerged; sustained medium/high flood at Kotri Barrage	Reveals downstream vulnerability; strengthens argument for integrated federal–provincial constitutional accountability.
<b>Balochistan</b>	30 reported deaths, severe early floods; major under-reporting due to remoteness	Data gaps reinforce marginalization of peripheral provinces; equity principle requires federal responsibility.

Source: NDMA (2025); Pakistan Meteorological Department (2025); World Weather Attribution (2025).

In addition to the general inequalities already mentioned, more recent provincial-scale data provided by the 2010, 2022 and 2025 floods also indicates that climate extremes are most heavily concentrated in Pakistan. Sindh and Balochistan are the regions of excessive rain, and their anomalies are much more than the rest of the world, whereas Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa regularly experience cloud bursts and the risks of rivers. Gilgit-Baltistan, however, is threatened with GLOFs and mountain flash floods in particular. These statistical numbers indicate that climate

injustice is not an international phenomenon but also an internal one with certain provinces incurring unequal human, economic, and environmental burdens.

Bar chart of rainfall patterns (percentages difference with the baseline of 1981–2010) in Punjab, Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Balochistan and Gilgit-Baltistan. The 2022 and 2025 monsoons created extremely high anomalies of the Sindh and Balochistan, highlighting the disparities in flood exposure in the region.

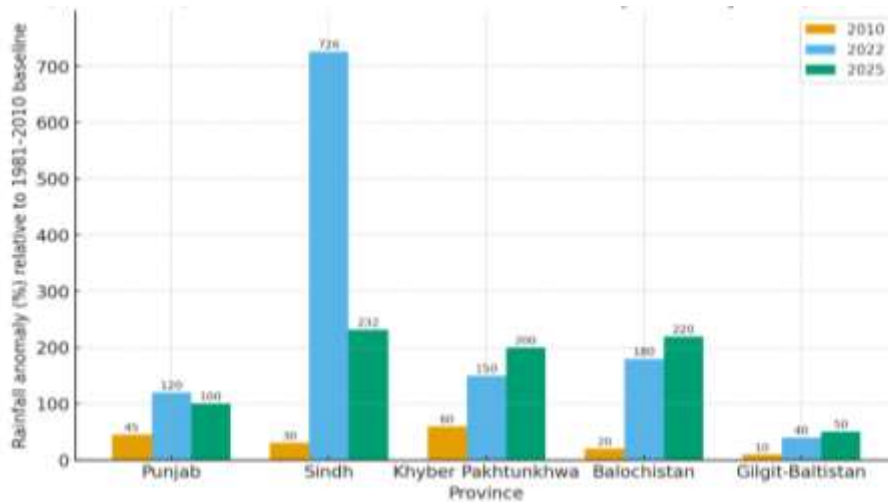


Figure 1 Provincial Rainfall Anomalies in Major Rainy Years.

Source: World Weather Attribution (2022, 2025); Pakistan Meteorological Department (2022, 2025); NDMA/ReliefWeb (2025).

### 6. Governance Gaps and Critical Analysis

Weak institutional fragmentation, financial dependence, and weak accountability compromise the governance of the climate in Pakistan. Even though the country has implemented various frameworks National Climate Change Policy (2012, revised 2021), National Adaptation Plan (2023) and provincial strategies, including the Balochistan Climate Change Policy (2024) implementation is irregular because of overlapping mandates and lack of coordination between the federal and provincial governments (Arif and Mahsud, 2024). This fragmentation leads to the duplication of efforts, slowness in the distribution of resources and the lack of unity in actions.

Governance is also undermined by financial dependency. The revised Nationally Determined Contributions in Pakistan are determined to reduce its emissions by 50 percent by 2030, and almost 90 percent of the target is based on foreign assistance (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2025). Depending on external financing, it is susceptible to evolving global priorities, and within the country, fossil fuel subsidies are still a threat to the renewable energy

promises. This discrepancy between high hopes and national facts harms credibility and strength. The poor institutions are also another obstacle to adaptation. The environmental courts and provincial agencies in most cases do not have the required technical skills and resources and corruption and elite capture tend to channel the relief and reconstruction efforts to the politically relevant constituencies (Ullah, Rana, Kosar, & Sarwar, 2025). These flaws were revealed during the mismanagement following the 2022 floods when most of the displaced households were not involved in aid. These failures only make the people more distrustful and diminish the grounds of legitimacy of climate governance.

Such countries as Bangladesh have shown greater institutional cohesion through adopting adaptation into development strategies and setting up clear climate funds as compared to others. The failure of Pakistan to create the same systems reveals not only institutional flaws, but also failure to have a long-term plan, which can connect climate governance and constitutional accountability. Unless these matters of governance are resolved, Pakistan will continue to be involved in reactive disaster management, rather than developing into proactive resilience-building.

Table 2

**Governance Gaps in Pakistan’s Climate Response (2025 Floods)**

Major institutional and operational failures revealed by the 2025 floods and their constitutional/justice implications.

Governance Gap	Quantitative Evidence (2025 Floods)	Constitutional/Justice Implications
<b>Shelter &amp; Relief Capacity</b>	2.9 million displaced; only 150,000 housed in 1,580 official camps → 95% outside formal protection	Failure to secure rights to life (Art. 9) and dignity (Art. 14); exposes reliance on informal coping rather than state responsibility.
<b>Disaster Data Deficiency</b>	No standardized reporting for elderly; Balochistan’s displacement/affected population data largely absent	Violates equality before law (Art. 25) by leaving vulnerable groups invisible in planning and relief allocation.
<b>Infrastructure Inadequacy</b>	Chenab peaked at ~1 million cusecs (rare event, >design capacity of barrages); breaches required to save cities	Shows failure to anticipate climate extremes; undermines state duty under Art. 9A (clean, healthy, sustainable environment).
<b>Financial &amp; Institutional Weakness</b>	239 bridges destroyed; 12,569 houses damaged; relief distribution skewed toward political constituencies	Demonstrates corruption/elite capture → weakens constitutional promise of equal protection and fair distribution of state resources.
<b>Transboundary Water Coordination</b>	India released water into Ravi, Chenab, Sutlej without Indus Commission protocol; Punjab inundated with 1.9 million displaced	Highlights absence of institutionalized water-sharing obligations; constitutional accountability must extend to interstate water governance.
<b>Health &amp; Social Protection</b>	Rising cases of waterborne disease in Punjab; 100 nutrition centers disrupted, 5,000 children at risk of acute malnutrition	Weak state capacity violates Art. 14 (dignity) and Art. 25 (equality), especially for children and displaced families.

Source: NDMA Situation Reports (2025); Pakistan Meteorological Department (2025); ReliefWeb/UN OCHA Updates (2025).

Short, heavy rainfall precipitation also increases the challenge of governance. Cloud bursts can devastate local infrastructure and governance within hours unlike slow-onset floods which can be partially forecasted. The fact that they have repeatedly appeared in cities e.g. Rawalpindi and Gujrat and in susceptible mountain districts e.g. Buner means that current institutions are not ready to deal with localized climate shocks. These incidents prove that climate governance should

not be based on river surveillance only but also should involve systems capable of responding to hyper-localized and abrupt risks.

Line graph of short-period, high intensity incidents of rainfall, reported annually. The trend is on the rise throughout the period with sharp spikes in 2022 and 2025, indicating the escalation of extreme precipitation and the growing threat of disasters to mountain and urban settlements.

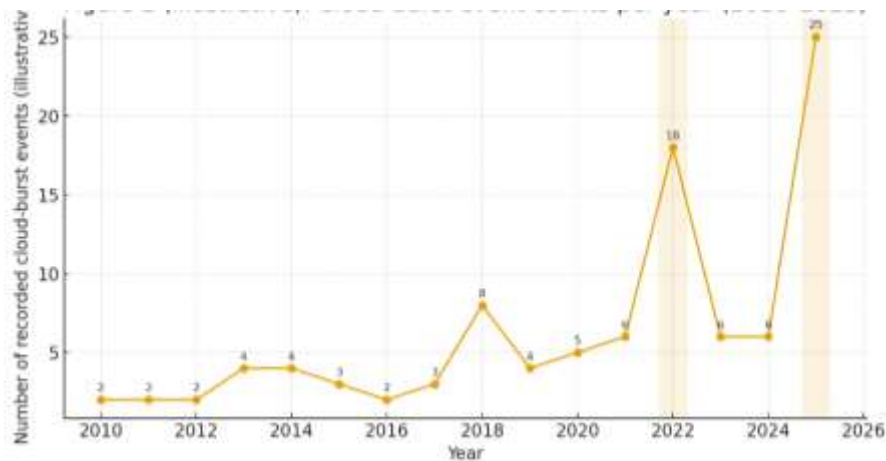


Figure 2 Pakistan (2010-2025) Record-Breaking Cloud Burst Events.

Source: Pakistan Meteorological Department (2010–2025); APP News Reports (2025); Concern Worldwide (2025); Climate Central (2025).

### 7. Towards Climate Justice and Reform

To solve the climate crisis in Pakistan, it is important to leave disjointed policy responses to the concept of justice which puts equity and accountability at the heart of governance. This change can be provided by constitutional rights. Expanding upon the case of *Leghari v. Federation of Pakistan*, Courts may also apply the interpretation of rights to life, dignity and equality to have binding obligations on the state to take up climate adaptation and mitigation measures. Once climate justice is incorporated into the interpretation of the constitution, it would be more enforceable, as climate protection would stop being a policy choice but a legal requirement. There is also need to strengthen provincial structures. Although there is potential in local adaptation planning as seen in the Balochistan Climate Change Policy (2024), other states in Sindh, Punjab, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa lack such strategies and an adequate budget. A legal binding and sufficient funding of provincial policies would enable the adaptation measures to be tailored to the particular geographic and social contexts e.g., coastal threats in Sindh as well as glacial threats in Gilgit-Baltistan.

Litigation can be very effective in terms of implementing responsibility. As seen in the experiences of such countries as Kenya and

Bangladesh, strategic lawsuits can help governments take more significant adaptation steps and fulfill international obligations. By expanding the jurisdiction of climate jurisprudence in Pakistan to cover not only individual entitlements but also structural correction, like to demand budgetary allocations to climate resilience, institutions may be enhanced to be more responsive and accountable.

It is also important to have inclusive governance. Climate decisions should also be reached not only by engaging women, youth, and marginalized communities as beneficiaries, but as participants too. Community-based initiatives in rural Pakistan provide evidence that women leadership in disaster preparedness and management of water improves the resilience of the locals. The inclusion of such forms of participation makes the process of adaptation solutions equitable and tailor-made to the particular scenario, taking into consideration the needs of the most vulnerable people.

Creative financial mechanisms are also prospective. The fact that Pakistan has been relying on the global aid is a reason why alternative sources of funding have to be sought, including green bonds, blue bonds, and special Islamic climate funds. By using the Loss and Damage Fund that was inaugurated at COP27, and

ensuring that there is transparency in resource management, there can be both improved domestic credibility and international support. Pakistan cannot afford not to undertake these reforms as the country will continue to depend and erode the resiliency over time.

Lastly, education and awareness of climate should be included in governance policies. More schools, universities and civil society organizations should be climate literate and this would assist the communities to analyze policy frameworks and hold leaders to account. This transformation of the technocratic model by rights-based and justice-oriented model would ensure that the climate governance is not only effective but also socially credible.

Overall, to promote climate justice in Pakistan, one should constitutionalize the rights of the environment, deepen provincial systems, institutionalize participatory governance, and develop new financial approaches. These are reforms that are grounded in justice, which are needed to ensure the cycle of vulnerability is broken and a strong future is established.

## 8. RECOMMENDATIONS

The climate crisis in Pakistan needs to be solved by the power of constitutional reform, legal provisions, pragmatic adaptation methods, and community-based solutions. The first one is constitutional recognition. In order to make the environmental protection a requirement to be met, Pakistan needs to come up with a Green Amendment to ensure that the right to a safe, clean and stable climate is enshrined in the Constitution making environmental protection a binding obligation. This would mean that the courts would hold governments to account on their inaction on climate, so that climate governance would not be changeable policy priorities, but would form a part of the constitutional framework of Pakistan.

In addition to this, there needs to be an enactment of a National Climate Resilience Act that will coordinate the federal and provincial roles, enforceable targets on adaptations and mitigation, and annual accountability reports to parliament. To render the pledge of Article 9A worthwhile,

provincial climate policies should be turned into wishlists and hard commitments. Punjab, Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan have come up with provincial climatic frameworks, which are not legally binding. Based on Article 9A, a National Climate Resilience Act must compel provinces to incorporate their policies into binding provincial statutes supported by annual reporting to the Council of Common Interests. This would not only integrate federal and provincial climate action but also hold to account major territories including coastal protection in Sindh, drought resilience in Balochistan, glacial monitoring and forestry in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and agricultural adaptation in Punjab. Constitutionalizing such commitments under Article 9A, Pakistan will be in a position to establish a rights system whereby provincial governments are obligated by law to offer protection to vulnerable groups, particularly those residing in riverine and disaster-prone areas.

It is also important to increase the judicial and administrative capacity. The environmental courts are to be empowered with technical know-how and expanded jurisdiction to be able to deal with the disputes involving climate. Case law, e.g. *Leghari v. Federation of Pakistan*, shows that the courts can acknowledge the issue of climate inaction as a government failure; but the continued change requires the long-term institutionalization and not the short-term judicial commissions.

In addition to the legal framework, practical adaptation measures are also important to safeguard the vulnerable populations. There ought to be a national disaster-resilient housing initiative to offer affordable, stilt houses in the rivers affected by floods, earthquake resistant buildings in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and drought tolerant eco homes in Balochistan. The riverbanks and floodplains need reinforcement by a combination of both engineered embankments and natural ones such as mangrove replenishment, wetland restoration, and vegetative buffer strips. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Gilgit-Baltistan Glacier and river surveillance based on satellite imaging and community-based early warning systems should be integrated in order to reduce the risks associated with sudden landslides and floods.

At the community level, there is the formation of local adaptation councils at the level of union councils with representation of women, youths and small farmers. These groups would administer adaptation funds, disaster preparedness and equitable delivery of relief. Preparation of community-based disaster response teams on the evacuation, first aid, and emergency resource management would strengthen localized resilience and close collaboration with district administrations. To promote the knowledge of adaptation, awareness and education programs about water conservation, safe farming methods, and flood safety drills should be incorporated in the schools and also in the training programs of the village.

It should also offer special protection to riverine communities who continuously experience floods as well as forced migration. Riverine Communities Protection Framework must ensure safe homes, right to relocate and compensation, as well as investing in floating schools, mobile clinics and water safe shelters to facilitate continuity of education, healthcare and dignity during annual

floods. Water management societies headed by the community members ought to be established to maintain embankment and equitable distribution of the water resources. Where the migration is inevitable, the policy on climate migration must provide land-to-land compensation, housing, and livelihood assistance to avoid the creation of urban slums and social marginalization.

Lastly, the system of climate financing in Pakistan should not rely on donors anymore. The projects that provincial green and blue bond markets might finance include hydropower and reforestation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, restoring ecosystems in the coast and deserts in Balochistan, and sustainable agriculture projects in Punjab and Sindh. Pakistan has a demographic advantage that can be used by creating a Youth Climate Corps that enlists volunteers to monitor glaciers, restore deserts, and prepare against floods. Pakistan can shift to a proactive climate resilience disaster management model through constitutional changes, inter-provincial cooperation, and community empowerment to end the reactive disaster management strategy.

Table 3

Constitutional and Policy Reforms for Climate Justice in Pakistan

Reform package proposed in the article, tied to concrete evidence from the 2025 floods and constitutional rationales.

Problem Exposed (2025 Floods)	Quantitative Evidence	Proposed Reform	Justice/Constitutional Rationale
Weak constitutional protection	6.9 million affected; rights protection left to ad hoc judicial activism ( <i>Leghari case</i> )	<b>Green Amendment:</b> Enshrine “right to a safe, clean, and stable climate”	Makes climate resilience a binding obligation under Art. 9A, not discretionary policy.
Fragmented governance	Punjab: 4.7–5.1 million affected vs Balochistan: under-reported; lack of federal-provincial harmonization	<b>National Climate Resilience Act:</b> harmonize federal/provincial annual reporting to CCI	Ensures equal protection (Art. 25) and accountability across provinces.
Shelter & displacement crisis	2.9 million displaced; 95% outside formal camps; rising urban slums risk	<b>Climate Migration &amp; Displacement Framework:</b> relocation rights, land-for-land compensation, fair housing	Embeds dignity (Art. 14) and property rights (Arts. 23–24) in adaptation law.
Infrastructure failure	Chenab reached ~1 million cusecs (beyond design capacity); 239 bridges destroyed	<b>Mandatory Barrage Stress Testing &amp; Infrastructure Upgrading</b>	Secures right to life and security (Art. 9) through anticipatory adaptation.

<b>Data blindness &amp; inequity</b>	No elderly-disaggregated data; child deaths = 27% of total fatalities	<b>Standardized Disaster Data Protocol</b> (age, gender, disability)	<b>National Operationalizes equality</b> (Art. 25) by ensuring invisible groups are protected.
<b>Transboundary water risk</b>	India's upstream releases worsened Punjab flooding; Indus Commission suspended	<b>Binding Early Warning &amp; Water Release Protocols</b> under constitutional duty	Extends state responsibility under Art. 9A to international water governance.
<b>Financial dependency</b>	\$30+ billion losses (2022) and heavy reliance on donor aid in 2025	<b>Green &amp; Blue Bonds; Loss &amp; Damage Fund integration</b>	Enhances sovereignty & resilience, making justice actionable beyond aid cycles.

9. CONCLUSION

The challenge of combating climate crisis is critical in Pakistan. Recent disastrous floods, drought and melting ice glaciers have not only shown how vulnerable the ecology is, but also how many flaws the administration has. This article demonstrates that the only solution is not piecemeal responses but constitutionalizing the climate justice, enhancement of institutional capacity as well as making the adaptation strategies inclusive and fair. Pakistan can introduce environmental protection as a policy that is enforced in its laws rather than being a discretionary policy by including the right to a stable climate in its constitution.

Nonetheless, it is not just a matter of constitutional reform. The practical change would entail the connection of legislation to concrete measures: climate-resistant housing, protection of riversides, changes in agriculture, local councils that can empower women and marginalized communities. It also involves special considerations to riverine communities, the life of which is always influenced by the Indus and its tributaries, a yardstick on whether Pakistan can be able to administer justice to its most vulnerable groups.

By taking this opportunity and introducing constitutional change, innovative finance and community-based adaptation, Pakistan can escape the spiral of disaster response and establish a strong framework to withstand. By so doing, it would not just safeguard its people and ecosystems but it would also be a role model of justice in climate governance in the Global South.

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