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## COURTING CATASTROPHE? HUMANITARIAN POLICY AND PRACTICE IN A CHANGING CLIMATE

Editors Siri Eriksen, Lars Otto Naess,  
Ruth Haug, Aditi Bhonagiri and  
Lutgart Lenaerts



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# Climate Change and Disasters: Institutional Complexities and Actors' Priorities for Mitigation, Adaptation and Response

Bahadar Nawab<sup>1</sup> and Ingrid Nyborg<sup>2</sup>

**Abstract** Over the last decade, Pakistan has faced several major disasters, involving both natural hazards and conflict. These crises prompted tremendous national and international response, and triggered the Government of Pakistan to establish new institutions, policies, strategies and action plans. Donors, humanitarian and development organisations, however, tend to follow their own policies, plans and interests, which may be quite different from the government entities dealing with humanitarian efforts, climate change and disaster. To what extent do these different perspectives affect the ability of the government to respond effectively and coordinate with humanitarian and development organisations during different phases of a crisis? This article examines the existing institutions, policies and perspectives that guide how government, humanitarian and development organisations, and community members understand risk and vulnerability, and respond to climate changes. It suggests how knowledge sharing and coordination might be improved to better face the challenges of risk and vulnerability reduction in the future.

**Keywords:** climate change, vulnerability, disaster risk reduction, humanitarian response, humanitarian policy, knowledge sharing, coordination, Pakistan.

## 1 Introduction

Since its independence in 1947, Pakistan has experienced 16 major disasters that have caused severe human and economic loss (Government of Pakistan 2010). The location and topography of the country together with institutional, social and economic vulnerability have contributed to Pakistan's frequent and severe experiences of natural hazards in the form of earthquakes, floods, droughts, cyclones, glacier lake outburst flooding, landslides, avalanches and resultant disasters (Government of Pakistan 2012). While not all of these have been triggered by climatic events, the occurrence of such frequent and severe hazards weakens Pakistan's

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ability to prevent disaster, putting it as the eighth country most vulnerable to climate change (Maplecroft 2012; Malik *et al.* 2012). The effects of recent hazards have been particularly devastating. Heavy monsoon rains in 2010 triggered floods that affected 20.5 million people, leaving at least eight million homeless, and causing massive damage to infrastructure countrywide (*ibid.*). Before resettlement of affected households, the country had consecutive floods between 2011 and 2015 which badly affected agriculture, as well as infrastructure of health, education and other sectors. These floods are not merely a result of more frequent and heavy precipitation; deforestation throughout Pakistan contributes significantly to increases in the occurrence and intensity of floods (Mahmood, Khan and Ullah 2016; Ahmed *et al.* 2015; Government of Pakistan 2014, 2010). Also, the 2013–15 drought in Sindh resulted in huge losses in agricultural production, affecting people's income due to less production and agricultural labour. These occurrences revealed the vulnerability of Pakistani society and economy to disaster.

While damages and losses have been massive, they could have been significantly reduced if disaster risk reduction measures had been incorporated into physical, social and economic development to address both the proximate and root causes of vulnerability. The lack of attention to high levels of social vulnerability and weak institutions in particular have led to most of the hazards in Pakistan becoming complex disasters with long-term consequences. For example, Pakistan has been confronting grave humanitarian challenges since 2010, due to consecutive floods across the country, and militancy and counter-military operations in Swat and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) (2010–16). Military offensives against militant groups have displaced hundreds of thousands from FATA, bordering south-eastern Afghanistan, which has greatly increased people's vulnerability to further hazards. While government capacity to respond to such complex challenges has gradually improved, the sheer scale and frequency of the crises demands significantly more investment in human, financial and technical resources for strengthening both civil society institutions and the relatively weak state apparatus.

The links between climate change and sustainable development are particularly important to understand. In Pakistan, climate change poses a major risk to achieving the social, economic or environmental sustainable development goals (Khan *et al.* 2016; Government of Pakistan 2012). Disasters in the recent past have, for example, had far-reaching implications on the food security of the country in terms of reduction in crop production and harmful effects on livestock health (Task Force on Climate Change 2010). They have also destroyed the livelihoods of countless rural households whose land has been rendered useless, sometimes indefinitely. Reducing risk and vulnerability to climate change must therefore also include investments in social, political and economic development.

Current climate change risk reduction approaches in Pakistan are, however, not sufficient to address the complexity of climate-related

disasters. Lack of institutional support and low adaptive capacity to climate change have been cited as some of the main reasons for this (Shahbaz *et al.* 2014). Climate change and disaster-related institutions and policies in Pakistan are new, and therefore, relatively weak. During the major floods in the 1970s and 1990s and up until the large-scale earthquake in 2005, for example, the Pakistan Army carried out rescue and relief activities as there was no institutional arrangement for disaster risk management in the country. At the same time, increasingly frequent floods, drought, glacier lake outburst floods (GLOFs), and landslide hazards motivated the government to join the international discourse on climate change and disaster management and develop comprehensive policy and measures for disaster response, risk management and preparedness. Interest in longer-term risk reduction and climate change adaptation also emerged in government ministries dealing with environmental, agricultural, forestry and water issues. The main government institutions or line departments with some mandates to deal with climate change, adaptation and disaster risk management or reduction in Pakistan are now:

- Ministry of Climate Change (MoCC)
- Pakistan Climate Change Authority (new, inter-ministry)
- National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA)
- Earthquake Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Authority (ERRA)
- Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA)
- Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS)
- Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security (MoAFS).

This list reflects a recognition of the need for a broader approach to climate change and disasters. These institutions have developed explicit policies, strategies and action plans to address short- and long-term aspects of climate change in several ministries. However, these interventions remain more reactionary than visionary, and have not included any long-term consultative process to formulate clear goals and objectives commensurate with ground realities. They also do not address the need for broader social and economic reforms that might contribute to reducing longer-term vulnerability. As a result, they have different and sometimes conflicting priorities and response mechanisms.

In this article, we look at the ways in which different actors such as government, humanitarian and development organisations understand key concepts such as climate change adaptation (CCA), disaster risk reduction (DRR) and vulnerability, and explore how this has formed their development of policy and approach. We then look closely at how power and politics impact their ability to support longer-term adaptation processes. We end with a discussion of how

a better understanding of context, power and politics could lead to improvements in both humanitarian policy and practice in reducing the vulnerability of people to climate change.

## **2 Methods**

The research was qualitative, based mainly on interviews and document analysis. As a first step, all the climate- and disaster-related documents in Pakistan since 2000 were thoroughly reviewed. In addition, we have also examined the policies of selected humanitarian and development organisations.<sup>3</sup> Heads of the most relevant national climate change and disaster management institutions and those involved in formulating and executing policies, strategies and action plans were carefully identified and selected. Ten federal, provincial and district government officials from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and Sindh were interviewed to understand their working model and how they coordinated with other institutions. The heads of five selected humanitarian organisations and their relevant field staff (eight) were interviewed to learn how they prioritise their interventions and contribute to government demands and initiatives.

To understand ground realities, three villages in Swat KP in the north and two villages in Thatta, Sindh in the south were chosen. The criteria used to select the villages included topography and geography of the districts, the intensity of the flood/drought and its consequent damages, as well as the government and humanitarian interventions. In each selected village, ten interviews with the village leadership (both individually and in groups), a minimum of six focus groups (formed according to wealth, gender and livelihoods) and key informants (nine in Swat and eight in Thatta) using semi-structured question guides and life stories were conducted. Also, a workshop was organised in Islamabad where almost 40 representatives of different humanitarian and development organisations participated and shared their activities and views of their work in disaster risk management (DRM) and DRR.<sup>4</sup> Secondary data provided by the government and humanitarian organisations on their policies and activities in DRR and DRM were also consulted and analysed.

## **3 Key concepts and approaches**

A major focus of this article is on analysing climate change-induced disasters and the role of the institutions which are relevant in designing policy and implementing practice. The literature helps us in better understanding how institutions and organisations are framed and how they work. For example, institutions, according to Hasan (2001), are the frameworks within which human behaviour, environment and resource use patterns are structured through mutual interactions. They can range from formal legal organisations to informal patterns of practice (Leach, Mearns and Scoones 1999). They can represent 'rules of the game' (North 1990), provide frameworks in which people resolve conflicts and peruse their objectives (Commons 1970), and structure the relationships of people in various units of polity and economy (Hall 1986).

According to Scott, institutions are ‘cognitive, normative and regulative structures and activities that provide stability and meaning to social behaviour. These are transported by various carriers – cultures, structure and routines – and they operate at multiple levels of jurisdiction’ (Scott 1995: 33). Different state, humanitarian and development actors perceive the roles of institutions dealing with climate change disasters quite differently. Some see the role of the state as purely regulative and enforcing, involving setting rules, legislation, monitoring, inspecting and compliance through the policy of carrots and sticks (North 1990).

One reason for adopting regulative instruments in state institutions is that states prefer to pass laws, not necessarily to properly address an issue, but to gain force (see Dornbusch and Scott 1975). Humanitarian and development organisations also represent formal institutions in which decisions on policy and practice are made. Much of the behaviour of actors, however, is only apparent in informal practices outside of or embedded in more formal institutions. This study uses an actor-oriented approach to try to understand more informal institutional behaviour, in order to better understand power relations as they are practised.

In terms of climate change, this article makes an important distinction between hazards and disasters. A hazard is a situation which poses a level of threat to life, health, property or environment. A disaster, on the other hand, is a hazard combined with vulnerability (Hazards + Vulnerability = Disaster) (Alexander 1997). Vulnerability is about reducing exposure and risk and improving resilience within the existing socio-political context (O’Brien *et al.* 2015).

It is also important to distinguish between DRM and DRR, two of the most used terms in climate change discourse in Pakistan. DRM is mainly concerned with improving coping capacities in order to lessen the adverse impacts of hazards and the possibility of disaster. This is often the main focus of humanitarian organisations that are concerned with preparedness. DRR is the concept and practice of reducing disaster risks through systematic efforts to analyse and manage the causal factors of disasters, including through reduced exposure to hazards, lessened vulnerability of people and property, wise management of land and the environment, and improved preparedness for adverse events (UNISDR 2017). Both mitigation and adaptation is included in DRR, where mitigation refers to the prevention of hazards reaching populations, and might involve, for example, hazard-resistant construction to reduce vulnerability.<sup>5</sup> Adaptation, on the other hand, involves reducing vulnerability through adjustment in natural or human systems in response to actual or expected climatic stimuli or their effects (IPCC 2014).

Vulnerability is a key concept connected to risk reduction. Here we make a distinction between outcome vulnerability and social/contextual vulnerability, in order to understand the rationale behind the choice of different interventions by different actors. According to O’Brien *et al.* (2015), *outcome vulnerability* involves reducing exposure to a hazard, while

*contextual vulnerability* refers to the social, economic and political context which hinders or enables individuals and groups to respond to changing conditions in the longer term. She argues that while addressing both of these types of vulnerability are necessary, most efforts are focused on outcome vulnerability.<sup>6</sup>

#### **4 Institutional complexities and choices in interventions**

Following the 2005 earthquake, and in light of consecutive floods, droughts and other crises, the government established several disaster management bodies and institutions, of which ERRA and NDMA (at national, provincial and district levels) are the most central. It also re-organised and re-named existing government ministries (i.e. changed the Ministry of Environment to the Ministry of Climate Change) to show that DRR and CCA are high on their agenda. The main policies and strategies developed by federal institutions are the:

- Environment Protection Act 1997 (MoCC (previously Ministry of Environment))
- National Environment Policy 2003 (MoCC/Minister's Office)
- National Disaster Risk Management Framework 2007 (NDMA)
- National Disaster Management Plan 2010 (NDMA)
- National Rangeland Policy 2010a (MoCC)
- National Climate Change Policy 2012 (MoCC/Minister's Office)
- National Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan 2013 (MoCC/Minister's Office)
- National Disaster Risk Reduction Policy 2013a (NDMA)
- National Agriculture and Food Security Policy 2013b (Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security)
- National Forest Policy 2014 (MoCC)
- Pakistan Climate Change Authority Mandate 2016 (inter-ministry).

However, despite some progress, these institutions are still not able to implement any concrete mitigation and adaptation measures. There are several reasons for this. Firstly, with hazards occurring more frequently and intensely, these institutions are too young to develop the skilled human capital, knowledge and experience necessary to address such complex issues. Secondly, politics and power relations among and between government bodies and humanitarian and development organisations hamper their effectiveness. Who is responsible for what, and who is accountable to whom is often unclear, and becomes even more complicated in areas where security issues persist (as in FATA and Swat). Funding has also influenced the ways in which institutions



function, collaborate or compete. For example, the MoCC and NDMA which initiated climate and disaster policies, are dependent on line departments which under the recent eighteenth constitutional amendment were decentralised to the provinces, and are thus no longer reporting and accountable to the federal ministries. Thirdly, there exists a diversity of understandings of vulnerability, which in turn leads to very different types of interventions, many of which are neither sustainable nor transformational. For example, if one views vulnerability as being at risk of exposure to a hazard, avoidance or structural protection might be the chosen measure. On the other hand, an understanding of vulnerability as being at risk in terms of one's weak position in society and inability to adapt, would instead address the root causes of vulnerability such as poverty, lack of political voice, or gender inequality. An important aspect of this is whether the government and humanitarian organisations have the knowledge to understand the complexities of how and why different people experience hazards differently, and adapt or fail to adapt to the challenges of climate change.

The broader institutional landscape in Pakistan in the field of CCA and DRM and reduction is complex, with government, humanitarian and development organisations often competing for space and power. Policies are as well spread across several government bodies and represent different perspectives on how to address climate change challenges. This makes it difficult for implementers to make concerted efforts, and rather leads to disconnected and competing initiatives. What is clear, however, is that these institutions do not operate in a vacuum, and are subject to the broader political, economic, social and international context in which they work. While the international community has been involved in development work in Pakistan for decades, there has been a marked increase in the involvement of humanitarian organisations as disasters have become more frequent. Both the 2005 earthquake and the 2010 flood saw a huge influx of international humanitarian organisations intent on providing relief. Particularly since the 2010 flood, humanitarian organisations have become more interested in how they, too, might play a role not only in preparedness, but in DRR and prevention.

The government authorities mentioned frame their policies and strategies according to their own interests and priorities – they are not necessarily in coordination with other relevant provincial ministries and departments. Also, most of these policies are designed by high-level officials in consultation with donors, and not necessarily through participatory processes which might have aligned them with ground realities. Government officials explained, for example, that most policy strategies and action plans are framed mainly by consultants which are funded by donor organisations who rarely consult district-level line departments or local communities who have lived with climate change for decades. Therefore, most of these policies are donor-driven and only in response to climate change, disasters, the Millennium Development Goals (MGDs) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

**Table 1 Focus of government and NGO policies on climate-induced disasters**

Policies/strategies	Disaster mitigation	Emergency response	Adaptation	Social vulnerability
<b>Ministry of Climate Change:</b>				
Climate change policy	Strong	Strong	Strong	Strong
Climate change policy implementation action	Strong	Weak	Strong	Weak
Climate change authority mandate	Strong	Weak	Strong	Weak
Environmental policy	Fair	Weak	Neglected	Neglected
Rangeland policy	Weak	Strong	Weak	Neglected
Food security and agriculture policy	Neglected	Strong	Fair	Neglected
Forest policy	Strong	Weak	Neglected	Neglected
<b>NDMA:</b>				
Disaster risk reduction policy	Strong	Fair	Neglected	Strong
Disaster management plan	Neglected	Strong	Neglected	Weak
Disaster risk management framework	Neglected	Strong	Neglected	Neglected
Earthquake rehabilitation and reconstruction policy	Weak	Strong	Weak	Neglected
Pakistan Red Crescent principles	Neglected	Strong	Neglected	Weak
<b>NGOs:</b>				
Humanitarian organisations	Weak	Strong	Weak	Weak
Development organisations	Strong	Weak	Depends on NGO	Weak

Source Authors' own.

These policy documents are well written, covering internationally debated aspects (mitigation, adaptation, emergency response and social vulnerability), but they lack action plans with time frames and resources for implementation. There is also little emphasis on social vulnerability. At the same time, due to devolution of power to provinces, the roles and responsibilities in implementing these policies are somewhat unclear and provinces lack financial and human resources to implement them.

The above-mentioned policies were analysed according to their emphasis on four key climate change aspects: disaster mitigation, emergency response, adaptation and social vulnerability (Table 1). The degree of emphasis given to each of these aspects in the documents was evaluated as strong, fair, weak or neglected, depending on how central the focus was (to what degree the policy owned the concept), how important it was as a part of the implementation strategy and action plan, time frames, and its reflection in budget allocations. This was also complemented by data from the field on implementation.

As shown in Table 1, there is variation in focus both within the government and between humanitarian and development non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Within the MoCC, the climate change policy, action plan and climate change authority strongly emphasised mitigation and adaptation, while these aspects are rarely incorporated in the environment and other sectoral development policies where real investment on the two should be made. The NDMA, on the other hand, continues to focus on response and has neither the mandate nor the resources and capacity for mitigation and adaptation. Due to frequent disasters in Pakistan, humanitarian organisations focus on response and have little time and resources to work in disaster mitigation, or adaptation. Development NGOs work mainly in disaster mitigation, with a select few (mostly in agriculture) involved in adaptation. Aside from the attention given in the climate change policy and disaster risk reduction policy, both the government and NGOs have neglected the issue of social vulnerability.

These different areas of interest, focus and understanding create tension between government, development and humanitarian organisations when it comes to real interventions. The MoCC aims for strong mitigation and adaptation but it would cost around US\$9.7 billion, which is almost equivalent to the cost of an average single flood event in Pakistan (Government of Pakistan and UNFCCC 2011). This shows that the planned global adaptation fund of around US\$100 billion is a gross estimation, leaving developing countries with limited possibilities to invest either in adaptation or mitigation.

The policy documents represent a wide-ranging effort on the part of the government in identifying hazards, risk, vulnerability, climate change and disaster-relevant mitigation, response and management efforts. However, the documents also confuse both central government and its line departments as well as NGOs, as they often talk about the same things with slightly different connotations. The policy documents overlap and are confusing in terms of institutional vulnerability, definitions, jurisdictional conflicts, policy disconnects and resource gaps. For example, the MoCC strongly emphasises mitigation and adaptation, but has no initiatives in the recent past in support of these policies. Likewise, NDMA policy strongly focuses on social vulnerability, but in practice implements mainly disaster mitigation and outcome vulnerability. These federal government institutions have big communication gaps among themselves and with the provincial line ministries and departments. This hampers effective disaster risk management and reduction in Pakistan. The policies fail to assign responsibilities for who will do what to achieve DRR in Pakistan. The DRR draft policy appears to be a supplement of the National Disaster Risk Management Framework (2007–12), but fails to integrate the changes due to devolution of power into provinces.

In addition to the disconnect between policy and implementation, these policies suffer from lack of political commitment, funding, skilled human resources, coordination, fragmentation, overlapping and unclear

agendas among government agencies horizontally and vertically. For example, there is no mechanism where the MoCC, NDMA or other federal ministries can force provincial governments to prioritise policies and relevant interventions and their implementations. Provinces are not bound to those policies and they often implement their own sector-specific development agendas which are not necessarily in line with the MoCC and/or any other federal government policies. As a result, institutions are especially weak at the district levels where real implementation should occur. Government programmes and policies often end up with vague interventions and support that do not help much in reducing people's exposure to physical hazards. In addition, local elites capture much of the resources intended for the most vulnerable, limiting even further the possibility of addressing the resource and information needs of the most vulnerable.

How the government will implement these ambitious policies is thus still a big question mark. The link between longer-term CCA and DRR remains unclear in most of the policies and in organisations dealing with disaster response, early recovery, rehabilitation and development. This includes a fundamental lack of understanding of the relationship between risk and vulnerability, and in particular social vulnerability to climate change (Nyborg and Nawab, this *IDS Bulletin*).

Humanitarian and development organisations must relate not only to Pakistan's policies, but to their own organisation's policies as well. Until recently, NGOs were undertaking mitigation and adaptation advocacy and networking in Pakistan either on their own, through general-purpose fora such as the Pakistan Humanitarian Forum (PHF),<sup>7</sup> the Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC),<sup>8</sup> and the UN/NDMA-led cluster and working groups. In late 2011, the ability of INGOs to undertake DRR activities more concertedly increased significantly with the establishment of the National DRR Forum, a network of more than 100 organisations including civil societies, NGOs, INGOs, donor agencies, government officials and academics. This is an informal group of civil society organisations voluntarily coming together on issues of common interest in the field of DRR/M and CCA, at the national level in Pakistan. The purpose of the DRR Forum is to enhance coordination, communication and information sharing on DRR/M and CCA among all relevant stakeholders in order to promote, improve and integrate DRR and CCA in emergency and development programmes in Pakistan (DEC 2012).

The biggest challenge for humanitarian organisations and government institutions alike lies in the area of more 'preventive' activities which touches on the realm of DRR. While many development organisations and ministries, and particularly those working on agriculture and livestock systems, have been dealing with the challenges of climate change in Pakistan for many years, the idea of prevention is a new area for those organisations and government bodies used to responding to disaster. The concepts of risk and vulnerability in particular can take on

very different meanings depending on one's conceptual and practical universe of experience.

#### **4.1 Power and politics in choice of intervention**

How government, humanitarian and development actors actually choose activities depends on a combination of factors. First is their underlying understanding of risk, vulnerability and adaptation, which varies greatly according to their particular knowledge base and donor interest. The national government has knowledge on policy and political processes at higher levels but they often have less experience in the field. This gap could easily be filled by the local departments at the district level but they are often not consulted during policy formulation and thus the policies are not evidence-based. Development organisations are good at participatory processes but they lack relief and rehabilitation experience which is a landmark of humanitarian organisations. Local communities have rich knowledge about the impacts of climate change and how they might adapt to it. But they alone cannot cope with such huge and sudden hazards. They clearly and cleverly observe slow climate change phenomena and adapt their livelihoods and infrastructure accordingly – something which needs to be understood and strengthened by government and humanitarian actors. Researchers are good in understanding and generating knowledge and technological innovation on CCA and DRR, but generally they cannot convince policymakers and practitioners in bringing real change. Action research would be an exception, but is not common in Pakistan.

Second is the politics around interventions, and the ways in which powerful interests influence the decisions of which approach to take in terms of response. One of the biggest barriers for humanitarian interventions in Pakistan to move into mitigation and adaptation mode is the political and institutional constraints. The national and provincial governments, for example, are often headed by different political parties who have different interests and agendas, and could be additionally contradictory to humanitarian and development organisations' mandates and interests. There are still barriers between humanitarian and development funding and institutions, which make it difficult to share knowledge and foster collaboration across government departments and between humanitarian and development actors, government and NGOs, and donors and organisations. There are a few recent initiatives, however, which try to address this. One is the creation of the Pakistan Climate Change Authority, a cross-ministerial council on climate change (see previous section). In terms of knowledge sharing, the DRR Forum, which includes members of the Pakistan Humanitarian Forum, is playing an important role at national level to share knowledge among organisations. The government, however, is unfortunately not active in these fora, particularly the NDMA and PDMA. Recent government restrictions on humanitarian and development organisations concerning their mandate, funding sources and versatility is also hampering their work and coordination. Even more important is whose knowledge is counted when decisions on

funding take place. Such decisions are often taken in UN systems and by donors – not necessarily considering national researchers and local knowledge.

What is more critical, however, is what happens at the district level, where the competence and capacity of government officials is extremely limited, and organisations seldom cooperate. There is little awareness at this level of the relationship between hazards and a broader understanding of how the political, social and economic context influences vulnerability. Here, the politics of knowledge are in play, where those with power in terms of funding and political clout decide how issues are defined and addressed (Tanner and Allouche 2011; Eriksen *et al.* 2015). In government, activities and approaches remain dictated by line departments, and brought together only in emergencies by the district administration. Strong donor steering of local organisations, often through a contracting system, discourages local competence-building and participation of communities in designing assessments and interventions. In this way, knowledge of vulnerabilities at the local level remains inaccessible, since all the decisions have already been made at higher levels.

The lack of voice and involvement of a broader set of community members will allow inequalities that determine vulnerability to persist. Understanding people's perceptions about climate change and disasters is becoming an increasingly important tool in fostering better adaptability and ultimately human transformation (Chaudhary 2011; Yi, Ismail and Zhaoli 2012). Local perceptions and knowledge of local risks on issues around climate change and disasters are important because it is the communities themselves that make decisions on how they best could adapt to changing scenarios (Kansiime 2012). For example, sensitivity of ecological regions, changes in temperature, rainfall pattern and floods and drought are more likely to be seen in studies of local dynamics and practices than by only examining regional or global trends. Understanding how local communities recognise climate change-induced crises and how they cope is quite crucial for designing better mitigation and adaptation measures (Thomas, Twyman and Oshbar 2007).

## 5 Conclusions

Pakistan has recently developed discrete institutions and policies for climate change and disasters. However, in spite of some progress, the government has to go a long way to materialise and implement the policies, and achieve the targets. Poor coordination on policy action plan between central government and the provinces, knowledge gaps and stakeholder coordination hamper efforts in addressing disaster mitigation, CCA and DRR.

The main actors, for example government, humanitarian and development organisations, researchers and the local community have different understandings, interests and approaches to climate-induced disasters and how to address them. Listening to and understanding each other is one issue, and agreeing on an action plan and prioritising

interventions is another. Those with power in the form of either political clout or funding have the authority to define which issues are important, without consulting critical knowledge from other actors, and particularly local people directly affected by hazards and disasters.

Based on these conclusions, we can identify three areas as important in ensuring that humanitarian policy and practice contributes to reducing the vulnerability of people to climate change and disasters in Pakistan. First, there is the need for significant capacity building at all levels of government and within NGOs as to how to identify not only the vulnerable, but the drivers of that vulnerability in that particular context. Second, there is a need to design processes where a broad range of community members are brought into the decision-making process at district level. This will involve capacity building of both community members and district government staff, with the facilitation by a body or actor trusted by government, NGOs and local community members. Finally, investments in mitigation and adaptation in developed countries will have the greatest effect in reducing climate change. In countries such as Pakistan which suffer from the consequences of poor climate policy in the global North, funding for reducing hazards alone will not prevent disasters – an investment in people’s capacity to adapt is key to preventing disasters.

### Notes

- 1 Associate Professor/Head, Department of Development Studies/ High Mountain Research Center, COMSATS Institute of Information Technology (CIIT) Abbottabad, Pakistan (bahadar@ciit.net.pk).
- 2 Associate Professor, Department of International Environment and Development Studies (Noragric), Faculty of Landscape and Society, at the Norwegian University of Life Sciences (NMBU) (ingrid.nyborg@nmbu.no).
- 3 The policies for humanitarian and development organisations represent a composite based on reviews of policy documents, as well as interviews with staff. The policies and interviews were chosen at random from the list of members of the Pakistan Humanitarian Forum (PHF) and the Disaster Risk Reduction Forum (DRR).
- 4 ‘How can Humanitarian Actors Contribute to Climate Change Adaptation? Exploring Innovative Approaches to Thinking Long-Term in the Short Term’ held on 21 November 2014, in Islamabad.
- 5 Or in global climate change circles, it refers to the reduction of greenhouse gasses (UNISDR 2013).
- 6 See Nyborg and Nawab, this *IDS Bulletin* for a more detailed discussion of this distinction.
- 7 A forum of 50 international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) working in Pakistan, established in 2002.
- 8 A network of 13 UK-based aid organisations responding to emergencies worldwide.

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