POLICY BRIEF

Systemic Governance Failures and Policy Paradoxes

A Case of Urban Disaster Management in Pakistan

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Executive Summary

Sustainable Development Goal 11 (SDG 11) requires making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. While disaster risk reduction is an integral component of SDG 11, in case of Pakistan, a paradigm shift from reactive crisis management to integrated, accountable urban governance is imperative to build resilient, equitable, and sustainable cities.The tragic collapse of Fotan Mansion in Liyari, disastrous fire incidents in industrial zones and incessant urban flooding incidents in major cities of the country manifest eye-opening case studies related to deep rooted systemic challenges in Pakistan's urban governance and disaster management landscape. This brief identifies three deep rooted and interconnected shortcomings:

- Pervasive data deficiencies that create policy blind spots
- limited foresight capabilities leading to reactive rather than proactive governance
- Political economy distortions – a case of short-term visibility and optics overriding genuine public need

These weaknesses exhibit critical policy paradoxes, trapping vulnerable populations in cycles of risk and undermining efforts towards sustainable urban development. This brief proposes a multi-faceted and multi-sectoral approach aimed at fostering data driven, evidence-based and pro-people policymaking. The brief's key recommendations include establishing comprehensive data infrastructure, cultivating long-term strategic planning and proactive management, realigning political incentives towards preparedness and accountability, rationalising the fragmentation and duplication issues in public sector institutions, empowering local governance through financial autonomy and meaningful citizen participation and strengtheneing district disaster management capability and capacity.

Introduction – 'Mitigation Reflects Performance'

Policy paradoxes surface when conflicting policy objectives lead to detrimental results, or when policies, despite their stated aims, lead to unintended consequences. In case of the **Lyari incident**, a critical paradox emerged: the state's mandate to ensure public safety by declaring a building dangerous and ordering evacuation directly conflicted with the humanitarian imperative to provide basic housing. Sindh Building Control Authority, although declared the building dangerous in 2023, lacked resources and expertise to arrange for a temporary housing for the displaced. This situation forced vulnerable residents into an impossible choice between immediate homelessness and a probable risk of death, effectively paralyzing safety measures. Unfortunately, on July 4, 2025, the five-story residential building, locally known as Fotan Mansion, collapsed in the densely populated Lyari area of Karachi, Sindh. The tragedy resulted in the deaths of at least 27 people, including women and children, and injured many more, displacing dozens of families who lost their homes and possessions.[1]

The Lyari incident is not an isolated catastrophe; it is a critical case study that exposes Karachi's chronic construction failures, including poor building quality, rampant illegal extensions, and compromised regulatory enforcement. The fact that hundreds of other buildings across Karachi, including many in Lyari, have been officially declared "dangerous" or "extremely dangerous" indicates a deep-rooted, city-wide systemic failure rather than an anomaly. In case of urban flooding and fire incidents across the country, be it Lahore, Karachi or any other major city, the situation requires fixing of systemic failures - strengthening and prioritizing disaster preparedness activities over relief measures. Performance is reflected in mitigation efforts while rescue and relief represent an obligatory response. This report aims to explore how such policy paradoxes, exacerbated by inadequate data, limited foresight, and political economy distortions, contribute to urban disaster vulnerability in Pakistan.

Pakistan's Urban Landscape: A Melting p+Pot of Vulnerability

Pakistan is undergoing one of the fastest rates of urbanization in South Asia, with 38.82% of its population residing in urban areas as of 2023[2], and urban growth outpacing overall population growth. This rapid demographic shift, often unplanned and unregulated, places immense pressure on existing urban infrastructure and public services.

ADMN UNIT	RURAL POPULATION %			URBAN POPULATION %		
	1998	2017	2023	1998	2017	2023
PAKISTAN	67.5	63.56	61.18	32.5	36.44	38.82
KP	83.1	83.45	84.99	16.9	16.55	15.01
PUNJAB	68.7	63.14	59.30	31.3	36.86	40.70
SINDH	51.1	48.11	46.27	48.9	51.89	53.73
BALOCHISTAN	76.7	72.38	69.04	23.3	27.62	30.96
ISLAMABAD	34.4	49.63	53.10	65.6	50.37	46.90

Table: 1[3]

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[1] https://www.dawn.com/news/1922670
[2] https://www.pbs.gov.pk/sites/default/files/population/2023/Press%20Release.pdf
[3] The 7th Population & Housing Census 2023 – 'The Digital Census'

The consequences of inequitable distribution of resources among urban areas unfold the reality of urban paradox – Urban sprawl in shape of slums and katchi abadis adjacent to planned housing societies, heaps of garbage near recreactional areas and parks, several economic opportunities in urban centres compromised by deteriorating law and order and lack of affordable public transport. The urban paradox further unveils systemic failure in shape of significant but unresponded housing deficit, essential but in-effectively managed services such as water supply, sanitation, waste management, healthcare, and education that often fail to meet the basic needs of the growing urban population. Compounding these challenges is Pakistan's extreme vulnerability to climate change. The country is highly susceptible to a range of climate-induced disasters, including devastating floods (such as those in 2022), prolonged droughts, severe heatwaves, and frequent earthquakes. Thus, Pakistan is ranked 5th most vulnerable country globally.[4] This climatic vulnerability drives rural-to-urban migration, as rural livelihoods lack resilience to environmental susceptibilities. On the other hand, the migration push more people into already unprepared and overstretched cities resulting into a detrimental feedback loop where climate impacts in rural areas directly exacerbate urban vulnerabilities, as cities face systemic failures, data inadequacies, management capacities and climate resilient infrastructure to absorb these new populations.

Despite cities collectively generating 55% of Pakistan's GDP and Karachi alone contributing 12-15% of the national GDP and 55% of federal tax revenue, the benefits of urbanization are not equitably distributed.[5] For instance, data for Pakistan indicates that children in the urban middle wealth quintile can face a disadvantage in birth registration, immunization, skilled birth attendance, and under-five mortality compared to their rural peers of similar economic standing. The paradox mentioned above proves existing systemic failure, while chasing urban economic growth the focus on inclusive development strategies seems seriously missing. Consequently, a system evolved where prosperity coexists with significant urban disadvantage and vulnerability for a large chunk of the urban populace, particularly those residing in informal settlements that often lack basic municipal services.

The Foundations of Fragility: Data Deficiencies and Limited Foresight

The Blind Spots of Policy: Inadequate, Outdated, or Non-Existent Data

A significant challenge compromising effective urban disaster management in Pakistan is the significant lack of reliable, real-time, and comprehensive data across crucial sectors. This extensive data deficiency creates consistent blind spots for decision makers, planning experts and executioners. Therefore, the impact of insufficient data directly affects urban planning and resource allocation. The blind spots are apparent:

- The urban centres in Pakistan lack a government run, unified digital platform where all disaster related data is logged. Hence, policy makers, urban planners, rescuers and safety experts are left to operate in data vacuum making it difficult to identify patterns, prioritize high risk areas and allocate resources effectively.
- Lack of data related to rapid urbanization trends, Climate effects on urban management, deforestation in cities, concrete-forest ratio hamper timely service delivery, effective resource allocation, and the development of appropriate municipal solutions.

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[4] Pakistan Country Report 2023 – UN Habitat
[5] Urbanization in Pakistan – UNDP Pakistan

- Lack of data related to safety measures in industrial zones result in unchecked and delayed response in terms of required rescue measures. This reflects that even the reactive approach is delayed and flawed let it alone the pro-active approach.
- Urban planners struggle to maintain multi-source spatial data and accurately understand the morphology of cities, particularly in low-income and informal areas. This leads to what has been described as "messy and hidden" urbanization, where significant urban growth occurs beyond official administrative boundaries, in areas not formally designated or planned for, making it difficult to govern or provide services effectively.

The floods in 2022, Liyari building collapse in 2025, fire incidents in industrial zones and several other such instances, although sudden and unfortunate, reflect a scenario where a push factor – a regular check and balance system, remained non-existant; where institutions despite knowing what is coming, failed to perform what was required, where the famous 'Public Sector inertia' hampered effective public service delivery untill it was too late, and then followed by the routine knee-jerk responses to settle the growing dust in print and electronic media. A significant policy paradox arises from these situations: despite the technical potential of modern data collection tools like Geographic Information Systems (GIS), remote sensing, availability of equipment and standard operating procedures to aid urban planning and emergency management, the practical application of available resources is severely limited. This highlights a critical disconnect: the problem is not solely the absence of data or lack of resources, but rather the failure to translate available data into actionable intelligence for critical decision making leading to effective governance and ensuring a mechanism for institutional efficiency.

Area of Data Gap	Specific Gaps	Impact on Policy/Consequences
Urbanization & Spatial Data	Insufficient knowledge of urban dynamics; lack of multi-source spatial data for city morphology; "messy and hidden" growth beyond administrative boundaries	Impedes timely service delivery; poor resource allocation; unorganized development; inefficient urban form
Infrastructure Condition Data	Lack of state-reported data on roadway costs; deferred maintenance liabilities for key infrastructure	Prevents direct view of infrastructure policy sustainability; hinders budgeting and capital planning for repairs
Housing & Informal Settlements Data	Understated true extent of urbanization; lack of detailed demographic data for informal settlements; under-representation of vulnerable populations in surveys	Understated urban issues; exclusion from government services; poor infrastructure in informal settlements; frustrated productivity

Table 1: Key Data Gaps in Pakistan's Urban Management and Disaster Response

The Short-Term Gaze: Limited Foresight Capabilities

Economic planning in Pakistan prioritises short term populist economic goals and knee-jerk macroeconomic stabilization over a long-term strategic and sustainable vision. Interestingly, these prioritised short term planning decisions often remain incomplete as the political expediencies constantly change. Thus, even the short-term policy decisions lack fruit, and institutional stunting remains the only outcome. The foresight issues reflect that Pakistan's annual spending on infrastructure maintenance is notably low, typically less than 3% of the total asset cost, in stark contrast to the 8% spent in many other Asian countries.[6] This systemic underinvestment results in a cumulative "deferred maintenance liability" across critical urban infrastructure. As minor repairs are postponed, costs compound, leading to the decay of physical assets to the point of serious fiscal and tangible consequences, including catastrophic failures and increased safety hazards. For example, the penetrating water crisis in Southern Punjab, Sindh and Balochistan, despite significant investments in dams and infrastructure, demonstrates a failure to plan for changing weather patterns and manage resources with a long-term perspective. The problem is not a lack of initial investment in projects, but a consistent failure to maintain them, ultimately leading to higher costs and renewed crises.

Furthermore, out-dated and consistently un-implemented master plans compromise urban planning in Pakistan. Several strategic plans developed for major cities either remain on paper or obsolete, leading to uncontrolled, unplanned growth, urban sprawl and result in chronicity of the issue. This non-implementation means that construction frequently occurs in high-flood danger zones without proper environmental impact assessments, exacerbating disaster risks with abysmal emergency management. The advisory nature of existing plans and lack of legal enforceability contribute to haphazard development, signifying a fundamental weakness in regulatory enforcement and a profound disconnect between planning and reality – a policy paradox. The systemic preference for immediate, visible development over sustained, planned growth creates a chaotic urban environment highly susceptible to disasters.

The Political Economy of Disaster: When Optics Override Public Need

Electoral Incentives and the Response-Preparedness Divide

Disaster management framework in Pakistan carries patron – client relationship that often prioritize highly visible and apparently humane disaster response efforts over less tangible, long-term preventive and preparedness measures. Citizens too, respond more favorably to immediate relief than pro-actively demanding preventative measures. Thus, greater electoral mileage from distributing immediate relief packages and the optics become priority which distinguishes the disaster framework in Pakistan. This creates a "perverse incentive" for government representatives to underinvest in preparedness, as the benefits of preventive actions are often invisible and do not yield immediate political rewards at the ballot box.

This phenomenon represents a critical policy paradox: the rational pursuit of political survival directly conflicts with the optimal public policy of investing in cost-effective disaster prevention. Despite greater efficiency of spending on preparedness versus response, the public sector is incentivized to choose the less efficient, more reactive path because it yields immediate and visible political returns. This leads to a cycle of reactive governance and repeated crises, where Pakistan continues to face "disorganized efforts to prepare for increasingly common

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[6] Infrastructure maintenance:Pakistan spends below three percent against eight percent in Asia – The Business Recorder 30th November, 2008

flood risks" and other hazards. The politicization of disaster management, and the potential for manipulation of relief efforts, diverts crucial resources and attention from genuine risk reduction and capacity building, thereby perpetuating the nation's vulnerability to recurring natural hazards.

The Lyari Tragedy Revisited: A Microcosm of Macro Failures

Frequent building collapse incidents injure the cosmopolitan stature of the Pakistan's mega-city – Karachi. The Lyari building collapse unveils rampant institutional failures and policy paradoxes that plague urban disaster management framework. Lack of digital 'building registry' database, non-existant regular structural audit mechanism and regularly missing inter-sectoral co-ordination framework clearly point out systemic short-comings in regulatory bodies like Sindh Building Control Authority (SBCA) established with the sole purpose of strengthening the compliance side of building construction regulations. The timeline given below testifies the argument:

Timeline of seven major collapse events

Mar 2020	Jun 2020	Apr 2023	Oct 2023	Dec 2023	Apr 2025	Apr 2025
5-storey in Gulbahar collapsed **27 deaths**	5-storey in Lyari **22 deaths**	Building collapsed during factory fire in New Karachi **4 deaths** of firefighters	Under-construction 3-storey in Shah Faisal **5 deaths**	2-storey gas-explosion-induced collapse in Machar Colony **3 deaths**	Partial collapse in Bhains Colony **1 death** of child	5-storey in Lyari's Baghdadi collapsed **27 deaths**

Event Flow Diagram[7]

In-depth analysis provides justification to the point of systemic failures as the 'Civil Defence' sector mandated with public safety tasks has long been forgotten while the supervisory tier of civic agencies providing municipal services in the areas never asked for input on issues of public safety and importance. The decision making reflect a one-way process with less input from field formations which results in tragedies on regular basis. This also reflects disconnect in planning and policy making side. The recent Lyari tragedy was on the cards after the building - the Fotan Mansion – was officially declared dangerous by the SBCA in 2023. Though multiple evacuation notices had been issued to residents, yet, the residents either denied receiving these critical warnings or felt unable to comply due to the absence of viable relocation assistance. Interestingly, the building was constructed without formal permission and had undergone illegal alterations, which highlights a fundamental breakdown in the regulatory and enforcement chain. The lack of foresight and proactive supervision was glaringly evident in the absence of a viable relocation strategy for families residing in the condemned building. Lack of resources to shelter expectedly displaced families, and no public low-income housing program directly point towards the broader systemic preference for short-term, reactive measures over comprehensive, long-term planning for urban vulnerabilities, decision making issues, lack of supervisory checks and balances and other systemic weaknesses.

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[7] Architects of collapse: Karachi's crumbling buildings by: Yusra Salim – The Tribune dated 13th July, 2025

The incident, claiming 27 lives, illustrate the breakdown in governance as utility providers reportedly failed to disconnect services to the building despite the Sindh Building Control Authority directives indicating a severe lack of inter-agency coordination.

Despite evident risks, the delay in enforcing evacuations due to the "humanitarian issue" of displacement without alternatives, is a vivid example of a policy paradox in action. The state's objective to protect lives through evacuation was rendered ineffective by its failure to provide a basic human right – shelter - for the displaced; forcing vulnerable populations to choose between immediate homelessness and the risk of death. The Lyari tragedy, therefore, is not an isolated incident but a direct consequence of these interconnected macro-level governance and policy failures.

Strengthening the Foundations: Towards Evidence-Based and Citizen-Responsive Policymaking

Addressing the systemic challenges and policy paradoxes highlighted in building control fiasco, institutional de-gradation like in civil defence and urban flooding sectors require a comprehensive, integrated and inter-sectoral approach. A fundamental shift towards evidence-based, proactive, performance-based and citizen-responsive policymaking and execution is crucial for building resilient and sustainable urban environments in Pakistan.

I.   Bridging Data Gaps for Informed Decisions

SDG 11 emphasises that effective management of urban cities is not an option but an obligation of the public sector institutions. The ability to measure critical urban indicators leads to effective management and vice versa. It is not the lack of information or data that hampers service delivery but the lack of mandatory nature of data collection that results not only in mal-administration but also leads to misuse of discretionary authority. Absence of legal mandate for data collection seriously affects disaster risk reduction activities in cities. Be it building collapse incidents, tragic fire episodes in industrial areas or urban flooding events; compulsory and transparent collection of data is a mandatory requirement. For example, collection and reporting of data, as a part of emergency management, is a legal requirement in countries like United Kingdom, United States of America, Japan and others. Why the practice not adopted in Pakistan?

Incident Recording System in United Kingdom, Fire & Disaster Management Authority in Japan and other such systems examplify that successful data collection systems are built on a foundation of legal authority, standardized reporting mechanisms and a commitment to use data for public good. For city managers it is but imperative to create digital data collection platforms with legal backing requiring all agencies involved including SBCA, hospitals, rescue, fire department, local government authorities, police and administration to fill standard fields relevant to the concerned sector. This also involves leveraging modern technologies such as Geographic Information Systems (GIS), remote sensing, and big data analytics for comprehensive city mapping, monitoring urban growth patterns, and spatial planning, rescue and other measures. Integrating data collection platforms with GIS allows the authorities to visualise building collapses, fire incidents and other disasters on a map, draw patterns and high-risk zones prompting a targetted response in shape of inspection drives by the concerned authority.

Building capacity for data collection is just one aspect, translating data into actionable response to prevent future losses require multi-sectoral co-ordination mechanisms to be established. Beyond mere data collection, the

focus must be on developing institutional capacity for data analysis, ensuring data reliability, and overcoming political distortions that limit data utilization. This includes building the capacity of relevant government departments for evidence-based decision-making, execution, monitoring and evaluation.

Laws and regulations for old buildings in Karachi

Mandatory Inspections
All buildings aged 30+ years must be inspected every 3 years

Structural Reports Submission
Owners must submit a certified structural stability report after inspection

Rehabilitation Measures
Repairs, strengthening, or demolition may be required if the building is unsafe

Penalties for Non-Compliance
Fines or imprisonment in case of failure to meet inspection or report requirements

Diagrammatic representation of laws and regulations for old buildings[8]

The approach aims to transform the availability of data into actionable intelligence, thereby addressing the paradox of data existence versus its effective application and moving towards a "smart city" model that optimizes urban efficiency and sustainability, aligning with national visions like the Vision 2025.

II.   Cultivating Foresight and Long-Term Planning

Keeping in view the recurrence of building collapse incidents, industrial fire and urban flooding incidents, a critical shift from short-term, reactive planning to extensive, pro-active, data driven, long-term strategic urban planning is indispensable for mega-cities in Pakistan. This planning must explicitly integrate climate resilience and disaster risk reduction measures. Developing well-researched multi-sector spatial plans and ensuring their legal enforceability, rather than their current advisory status, is paramount to guiding urban growth effectively.

Proactive maintenance and rehabilitation of existing infrastructure must be prioritized to prevent costly failures and mitigate the accumulating "deferred maintenance liability". To address the financial constraints that often drive short-termism, public-private partnerships (PPPs) should be actively encouraged for infrastructure development and maintenance, particularly where public funds are limited. This requires establishing robust financial frameworks and independent regulatory oversight to ensure long-term viability and reduce susceptibility to political influence. Furthermore, phase wise adoption and strict enforcement of the Building Code of Pakistan (BCP-2021) by the provinces is crucial. This code, based on international standards, provides minimum benchmarks for seismic-resilient design, flood-resistant construction, and energy efficiency. Its effectiveness,

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[8] Architects of collapse: karachi's crumbling buildings by: Yusra Salim – The Tribune dated 13th July, 2025

however, hinges on rigorous implementation and continuous capacity building for federal and provincial building regulatory authorities to understand and enforce new regulations.

Finally, implementing climate-resilient urban design principles, such as land use regulations that prevent construction in high-risk flood zones and investing in green infrastructure like parks and wetlands to enhance water absorption, will significantly reduce urban flood risks.

III. Realigning Political Incentives with Public Good – The Performance Management Phenomenon

For Pakistani civil servants, implementation of long awaited performance management frameworks against pre-defined job descriptions have become need of the hour. A robust performance management framework is crucial for public sector reform in Pakistan. The system helps to address the imbalance caused by political economy and realign political incentives with long-term public good. Strengthening and aligning pre-service and in-service training activities with focus on practical aspects of situation management. Value addition in digital and AI skills for government officers and recalibrating recruitment processes to prioritize relevant skills and expertise are also vital for building a merit-based and efficient bureaucracy. These systemic bureaucratic reforms, focusing on optimizing incentives, selection, and training, aim to foster a civil service inherently more responsive to public needs rather than political or personal gain.

Combating patronage and corruption requires transparent processes, robust legal frameworks, and effective anti-corruption measures in land allocation and public projects. Leveraging digitalization can increase efficiency and reduce opportunities for corrupt practices. To counteract the political preference for visible disaster response over less visible preparedness, strategies must focus on making preparedness politically rewarding. This can be achieved through public awareness campaigns that highlight the long-term cost savings and lives saved by proactive measures, thereby fostering greater public demand and electoral reward for politicians who prioritize prevention. Media engagement can also play a crucial role in shifting public perception and political accountability towards preparedness efforts.

IV. Empowering Local Governance and Citizen Participation

Lack of empowered Local Governments in Pakistan have crippled the Governance regime. Article 140-A of the Constitution of Pakistan 1973 mandates establishment of empowered local government system having complete devolution of executive and financial authority. An empowered local government system is crucial for citizen-responsive policy and decision making at grass root level. City governments require greater financial autonomy and the mandate to generate their own revenue and effectively manage building control, local development and municipal services.

Too many cooks spoil the broth as they say; fragmentation of responsibilities and overlapping jurisdiction in public sector provide room for administrative conundrum. Besides this, duplication of responsibility manifests in over-lapping jurisdiction, redundant efforts or competing initiatives. Consequently, the governance regime is marred with in-efficiencies, wasted resources and compromised accountability. Be it road or WASH sector or provision of municipal services in the urban settlements, the departments continue to transfer the burden from one institution to another. This results in distrust among the people.

The issue of systemic failure can be viewed from this lens whereby responsibilities related to building control functions are fragmented to the extent that enforcement and accountability have become a distant dream. Addressing institutional fragmentation by clarifying mandates and improving coordination among urban development agencies is also critical to ensure a cohesive approach to urban planning and disaster management.

Developing comprehensive and inclusive housing policies is paramount to address the massive housing deficit, particularly for low-income groups. This involves formally integrating informal settlements (katchi abadis) into urban planning frameworks, providing security of tenure, and ensuring access to basic services, rather than resorting to forced evictions without viable alternatives. The Lyari tragedy underscored the urgent need for authorities to provide viable relocation alternatives when dangerous buildings are evacuated. This approach acknowledges the reality of informal urbanization and seeks to integrate these communities, addressing the "urban paradox" where urban averages mask deep inequalities.

Finally, promoting meaningful citizen engagement and public participation in urban planning and disaster risk reduction processes is essential. This extends beyond mere consultation to institutionalizing deliberative processes, such as Citizens' Assemblies or Juries, which empower citizens to learn, deliberate, and directly shape policy recommendations. Ensuring inclusiveness, transparency, and a public commitment from authorities to respond to these recommendations can foster trust and strengthen democratic governance, where citizens are not just recipients of policy but active co-creators of a resilient urban future. Empowering communities to participate in disaster reporting and risk reduction programs, as seen in some pilot initiatives, further enhances responsiveness and resilience at the local level.

V.   Strengthening the District Disaster Management Authorities

The weakest link in disaster management framework through out the country is the district disaster management set up. Despite the growing threat the emergency handling capacity at the district level is seriously compromised. The district disaster management authorities lack necessary infra-structure, resources and capacity to respond to the disasters effectively. This inadequacy results in delayed responses, poor co-ordination and insufficient preparedness leaving communities vulnerable and exacerbrating the impact of disaster. Inadequate infrastructure and office facilities, limited technical capacity, shortage of trained staff, lack of modern equipment are some of the issues that hamper disaster response at a critical level – The District. A complete framework for overhauling the district level disaster response is given below:

Target	Required Interventions	Objectives
	- Upgrade Infrastructure - Procurement of Modern Equipments and IT Softwares	- A fully operational, disaster-resilient DDMA office with modern infrastructure and communication systems. - Enhanced emergency response through the procurement of rescue kits, rescue vehicles, and disaster management software. iii. Establish an Emergency Operations Center (EOC) for real-time monitoring and coordination with all line departments – 'A Relay Station'
To transform DDMA into an	Capacity Building of the Staff	Well-trained DDMA personnel proficient in disaster preparedness, response, and recovery.

effective, efficient, and proactive disaster management entity.		• Improved GIS mapping and data management capabilities for real-time decision-making. • Effective emergency drills and simulations improving disaster response efficiency.
	• Developing Strategic Frameworks	• A district-level strategic disaster management framework aligned with national and provincial policies. • Institutionalized Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) ensuring systematic disaster response. • Strengthened monitoring and evaluation (M&E) mechanisms for continuous improvement.
	• Standard Co-ordination Frameworks	• A well-structured multi-stakeholder disaster coordination platform ensuring seamless communication and collaboration. • Strengthened partnerships between DDMA, government agencies, NGOs, and community organizations. • Established community-based disaster response teams for grassroots-level resilience.

Conclusion - A Call for Multi-Sectoral, Integrated and Accountable Urban Governance

The recorded history around the globe is evident that disasters create public and political will for change, leading to establishment of robust, enforceable regulations to ensure compliance and reduce systemic failures. Whether it is the Lyari building collapse or incessant fire incidents in industrial areas or increased vulnerability of Lahore and other mega cities towards urban flooding these stand as a stark reminder that urban disasters in Pakistan are not random occurrences but complex manifestations of interconnected systemic failures. These failures are rooted in pervasive data deficiencies that create critical blind spots, a persistent short-term planning horizon that erodes foresight, and significant distortions within the political economy where immediate visibility and political optics frequently overshadow genuine public need.

The urgent imperative for Pakistan is a fundamental paradigm shift from a reactive crisis management approach to a proactive, evidence-based, and citizen-responsive urban governance model. This transformation demands a holistic strategy that simultaneously addresses the foundational weaknesses identified: building robust data infrastructure for informed decision-making; cultivating a culture of foresight and long-term strategic planning, particularly for infrastructure and climate resilience; implementing comprehensive institutional reforms to realign political incentives with public good and combat corruption; and genuinely empowering local governments while fostering meaningful citizen participation in all stages of urban development and disaster management. Achieving a resilient urban future for Pakistan requires a concerted and collaborative effort from all stakeholders, government institutions at all levels, civil society organizations, the private sector and citizens themselves. By prioritizing human safety and well-being through integrated and accountable urban governance, Pakistan can move beyond merely reacting to disasters and building cities that are truly safe, equitable, and sustainable for the generations to come.

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About Accountability Lab Pakistan

Accountability Lab Pakistan is part of a trans-local network of 13 independent, locally registered, governed, and managed organizations. As a locally registered think tank in Pakistan, Accountability Lab is committed to fostering transparency, accountability, and good governance. With a focus on driving positive change through innovative approaches, the Lab has been at the forefront of initiatives aimed at enhancing the democratic processes in the country.

The Lab's profound impact on the discourse surrounding women's empowerment in Pakistan is a testament to its commitment to catalyzing positive change through innovative and forward-thinking approaches. In the purview of strengthening women's role in the country's development, the Lab has consistently occupied headship by harnessing the power of innovative methodologies, actively contributing to the evolution of inclusive practices in Pakistan. Central to the Lab's mission is its unwavering emphasis on factors such as social acceptability, institutional insulation, and the holistic strengthening of democracy. These core principles not only underpin the Lab's approach but also resonate deeply with the recommendations outlined in this policy brief.