**[Climate resilience](https://www.dawn.com/news/1799599/climate-resilience)**

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THE screening of development projects through the lens of climate resilience requires a paradigm shift in development planning and budgeting. The International Monetary Fund wants Pakistan to introduce this shift through the FY2024-25 budget. Prodding the ministries of finance and planning, the IMF has prescribed making budget documents more explicit on the nexus between the budget and climate-related action. It has put emphasis on advancing green budgeting, including budget tracking, publishing information on climate-related spending and aligning the next budget with climate change adaptation.

The overall mainstreaming of climate change in development planning involves myriad intricacies. Prioritising the most promising investments in the public sector with a strategic focus on addressing climate concerns requires a wise approach. This entails development planning and financial allocations to pre-empt climate woes through diligently designed adaptation and mitigation projects.

Last year’s floods inflicted losses and damage to the tune of $30 billion on Pakistan. A deeper scrutiny of the factors that triggered this devastation reveal climate-insensitive planning and misplaced priorities. The logical cure to perpetual disasters is removing the bugs from the development process that worsen the impact of extreme climatic factors. The latter can convert hazards into calamities, and removing developmental defects is a prerequisite for averting disasters and mitigating loss and damage.

Climate-sensitive budgeting and mainstreaming of climate change adaptation is often misconstrued as financial allocation for the relevant ministries and departments. In reality, the concept transcends budgets. International expert on climate change adaptation Richard Klein explains the concept as “the integration of policies and measures to address climate change into ongoing sectoral planning and management, so as to ensure the long-term viability and sustainability of sectoral and development investments”.

Development projects must be made climate-proof.

This approach underscores the need for applying a climate lens to development projects. Sectoral policies should focus on adaptation that can be infused into sectoral plans and eventually trickle down to the project level. Applying climate filters at the project level requires an in-depth dissection of every development project with a climate knife and not just marking a perfunctory tick box in the PC-1 pro forma.

Another possibility could be to broaden the scope of the environmental impact assessment to climate impact assessment. This can climate-fence projects. The EIA is mandatory for large-scale, complex and environmentally sensitive projects but has been reduced to a ritualistic drill these days. The process has been trivialised to the extent of circumventing the EIA altogether or conducting it mid-course only to observe a formality. The environmental protection agencies have been rendered spineless. At times, they take a compromised position when projects involve special interests for powerful people.

Once the development process is made climate-proof, setting the right priorities is the next goalpost. Water conservation, disaster mitigation, resilient agriculture, efficient irrigation systems, reducing emissions in brown sectors, renewable energy sources, preventive public health systems, sanitation, storm drainage, and afforestation are some of the key priority areas of the investment portfolio. These sectors need integrated strategies to create synergies, with adaptation agendas in line with the Pakistan National Climate Resilience and Adaptation Plan 2023-2030.

A silver lining is that the glass is not half em­­pty. The Climate Public Expen­di­t­u­res and Institu­tional Review, 2017, for Pakis­tan shows that the country is already spending a sizeable proportion of its budget on sectors contributing to offsetting the impact of climate change. Nevertheless, a significant financial gap still persists as the average costs for annual adaptation to climate change have been estimated at $10.70bn per annum over the next 35 to 40 years.

The provincial governments have to lead from the front as all these subjects fall under their ambit. The provinces are equipped with locally contextualised climate change policies. Climate-sensitive planning and budgeting will have an enduring advantage for the provinces. A robust climate mitigation and adaptation plan will reduce their vulnerability to hydro-climatic disasters, and thus create fiscal space for other developmental needs that are often compromised due to climate-induced torments. Investment in such projects will have multifarious benefits, including disaster mitigation, ecosystem restoration, the greening of the economy and the creation of resilient communities.

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