[**Paying the climate bill**](https://www.dawn.com/news/1732070/paying-the-climate-bill)

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THE International Conference on Climate-Resilient Pakistan in Geneva has exceeded expectations. More than $9 billion have been pledged to help curtail the effects of last year’s floods which have cost Pakistan over $30bn in ‘loss and damage’. Pakistan’s floods are a classic case of climate injustice.

But the devil lies in the details. Most of the support from the $9bn pledged is likely to be realised over a period of several years. It is yet to be determined how much of this amount will be in the form of grants (versus loans).

There have been several voices of late alluding to the possibility of such funds being diverted. It is a point that has frequently been raised as a pretext for the withholding of funds to Pakistan in the past. Corruption and misgovernance come up as crucial factors in shaping this argument.

Such a line of argumentation is difficult to tackle — from the perspective of both the donor and the recipient. There are tens of millions of flood victims in the country who are in dire need of support; but, at the same time, concerns about possible funding leakages also exist.

‘Colonialism’ is a crucial driver of climate change.

The 2022 floods also spurred debate on ‘climate reparations’ by the developed countries — with the latter being held responsible for the menace of climate change as historical emitters since the Industrial Revolution. In fact, recent scientific research also suggests ‘colonialism’ (which Pakistan is a victim of) as a crucial driver of climate change.

A recent report of the Intergovern­m­e­n­tal Panel on Climate Change, which rev­iews the impact of climate change on populations, “listed ‘colonialism’ not only as a driver of the climate crisis but also as an ongoing issue that is exacerbating communities’ vulnerability to it”, hence putting a greater burden of responsibility on the shoulders of the developed countries.

Believing that former colonies, such as Pakistan, after achieving independence have been free from the effects of their colonial past is to be deluded. The phrase ‘out of the frying pan and into the fire’ appears true for most successor states.

In South Asia, following independence, successor states were ‘colonised’ by their own leaders. Self-colonisation came about through the efforts of local rulers jumping in to fill the power vacuum that the colonisers left behind. They were quick to inherit the malpractices of their former masters and consolidated their control by corrupting the bureaus that were left in place in a manner that ensured their grip over the state. It comes as no surprise then that the ministries and institutions responsible for curtailing the effects of climate change lack infrastructure and the required expertise.

Pakistan’s share of emissions globally is next to nothing in contrast to developed nations. Bring colonialism-related misgovernance into the equation and you will see climate injustice at its ‘finest’.

Corruption within the Pakistani government does not mean that no one has made the effort to combat the effects of the changing climate. Efforts by various NGOs are a testament to the nation’s charitable nature and its willingness to set aside self-interest to help those in need of help to rebuild their homes and lives. In fact, volunteers associated with many of these NGOs reached the affected areas in remote locations well before the government machinery began to carry out its flood relief activities. One example of a self-driven initiative is Intbau Pakistan that has not only designed flood-resistant housing built of mud, husk, bamboo and lime but also provided training to villagers to build such sustainable hou­ses indigenously using low-cost construction material.

In the longer term, it is crucial to understand the linkages between climate change and the type of developmental paradigm that is being pursued. In this regard, the Pakistani government has envisioned a robust plan for resilient development through an initiative named The Living Indus. This has been described as “an umbrella initiative and a call to action to lead and consolidate initiatives to restore the ecological health of the Indus within the boundaries of Pakistan, which is most vulnerable to climate change”.

Going forward, it is imperative for developed countries as donors to make sure that the hard-earned money of their taxpayers reaches the people it is meant for. It should also be an obligation for these countries to put in place a robust monitoring and evaluation system to track the flow of finances and strengthen the capacity of institutions as well as individuals and help them through the transfer of technology where needed.

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