**[Climate change is developing world issue too](https://nation.com.pk/03-Feb-2020/climate-change-is-developing-world-issue-too%22%20%5Ct%20%22_new)**

February 03, 2020

It is a frigid early morning in the bucolic centre of deep Southern Punjab. The sunlight is gradually creeping in from the east and radiating upon the now lush green wheat plantations. Amjad Hussain, with a stack of papers tucked in between his cold arms, walks across wheat fields in his attempt to get to the village centre. He frantically checks his back pocket for his cellphone, and once satisfied, let’s his mind go off to a tangent of thoughts. ‘Hope all committee members will make it on time’ – Amjad thinks. ‘They must have filled out the missing evaluation forms’ – ‘If not, it is going to be a long day!’ – he breathes out a sigh as he passes by the local primary school. The signboard outside reads ‘Government Primary High School Kharora Fazil, Kot Adu, Muzaffargarh’ – Amjad catches the school board with his brisk eyes and then hastens up his pace. The village centre is just 5 minutes away.

I still clearly remember Amjad Hussain from 5 years ago. He was the focal person for my previous employer’s farmer rehabilitation program that was carried out in 2014-15 to help farmers whose crops had been inundated by floods due to torrential monsoon rain. This was not the first time that area had been affected by flood and neither the first time that Amjad Hussain had helped us fill out hundreds of evaluation forms. Rather floods and the catastrophic effect that they have on crops had been a constant in the area for a few years now. According to many regional climate experts, the rising average temperatures had affected both the precipitation levels and timing of the South Asian monsoon rainfall season. This change in climate still continues to affect various facets of life in Pakistan and South Asia in general. Studies suggest that it is the agriculture sector and farmers that have been most severely impacted. For farmers like Amjad who are disproportionately most affected, climate change and its effects are not only contents of scribbled out Op-eds or research studies. For them, these effects are part of a changing existential reality that is often hard to escape.

For the past few decades, even those who among us recognise climate change as an issue, have often treated the phenomena without much urgency. But now, given that the world-at-large has been hit by the first wave of climate change symptoms – what the humankind had regarded as a threat not-yet too near its present consciousness, has walked in from the back door.

Amjad’s story in this sense is not unique, rather just one of the many that now afflict countless others in both the developing and the developed world alike. Clear is the imminent need for collective global action before it gets too late.

Given this need for action on a global scale, recently in December 2019 a landmark Climate Change Conference was held in Madrid, Spain from 2-15 December. The conference, which was held in Madrid due to a last-minute change from its venue in Chile due to political unrest, ended in what many observers regarded as a disappointing stalemate. The conference was attended by 26,700 participants, including 13,600 government officials, 10,000 observers and 3000 media personnel. Under the purview of the conference, the 25th Conference of Parties was held as a part of the United Nations Framework of Climate Change (UNFCC). Furthermore, what made this conference more noteworthy than the annual bureaucracy-ridden UNFCC meetings, was the fact that parties to the 2015 Paris Agreement were re-congregating for the first time since 2015 to track progress made towards the goals set in the Paris Agreement in 2015.

Now I am sure that many of you have heard about the Paris Agreement and grand claims that were touted in the international media marking it the most significant collective and actionable achievement since the Kyoto protocol. The Paris Agreement indeed was a significant first step towards having an international agreement that chalks out tangible targets for individual countries to pursue. However, the Agreement is not a legally binding document, and individual states are responsible for their own respective setting of emissions-reduction targets. Furthermore, with the United States backing out of the Agreement under President Trump’s administration – the Agreement fails to bring the second biggest polluter in terms of total CO2 emissions globally on the table. The limited efficacy of the Agreement is highlighted by the fact that many countries are lagging behind in their progress towards meeting their targets that they themselves have set under the purview of the Paris Agreement.

Given its limitations, the Paris Agreement has nonetheless brought various stakeholders from both the developed and the developing world onto a platform where tangible international policy debate can happen. Many of us in the developing world, have for too long now shelved climate change as a first-world policy issue. I too personally once used to adhere to this antagonistic view-point – for certainly, it is the industrialisation of the Western world that has brought us to this point, and we in the developing corners of the world have more immediate issues to address than shifting to cleaner energy sources – like ensuring that our people have food on their table and that our children go to schools. Yet, inescapable is the fact that the effects of climate change transcend boundaries – and increasingly, the evidence is suggesting that it is the poorer developing countries that are disproportionately affected by the changing climate.

In a recent study conducted following the Paris Agreement, it was estimated that if the goal of keeping global temperature increase to less than 2 degrees Celsius was to be met, the world economy would gain $17.5 Billion per year in the long-run (year 2100) as compared to the goal not being achieved.

And in the case the target is not met, the most severely affected regions would be from the developing world. The below figure illustrates how over the next 80 year (till 2100) the % GDP of various regions will be affected: South-Asia, South East-Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa being the most severely impacted regions economically – the % GDPs of these regions will dwindle significantly.

Due to limitations of time and space, we can’t delve in countless other empirical studies that paint a similar picture – these studies are a quick ‘google search’ away from those who wish to implore further. What, however, is more crucial is to home in the point that ‘climate change’ – far from being an imaginative figment of first-world researchers is also both a policy issue and living reality of the developing world. Only once we in the developing world recognise the central role that we have to play in saving the planet can then we help humankind avert this impending catastrophe – and in doing so, we might better our own lives and that of our children.