

Context

61% of Pakistan's 200 million population lives in rural areas. Currently, more than 40% of people living in these areas depend on agriculture for their livelihoods. These communities rely heavily on natural resources, such as soil and water, and have low levels of development in terms of health, education, infrastructure and alternative economic opportunities. Climate change is expected to have widespread negative impacts on agricultural productivity. In Pakistan's semi-arid regions, farm incomes, livelihood options, and food security all face increasing challenges from rising temperatures, erratic rainfall, floods and droughts.

Pakistan's agrarian economy is also fast transforming into a more industrial and service-based economy. As rural areas lack alternative economic opportunities, many people who have relied on farming are now migrating to towns and cities in search of better futures. Despite this, national policy-makers have overlooked the impact of internal migration in development discourse.

Aims

We aim to understand how climate change can expose already vulnerable communities and economies in semi-arid lands to new risks, and explore the potential of rural-to-urban migration as a strategy to increase the resilience of those communities. We do so by considering both the economic opportunities rural-to-urban migration may introduce, and the impacts of migration on family members who do not migrate.

Results

- Rural families – especially farming households – are increasingly affected by extreme events like heatwaves, floods and droughts, which cause frequent crop failure, lower crop yields and heavy financial losses.
- Future climate projections for Pakistan show an increase in temperature throughout the country and a decrease in rainfall in the monsoon belt, which is mainly arid and semi-arid. These changes will directly affect agricultural productivity and drive increasing numbers of people out of rural areas, unless alternative economic opportunities are provided in villages.

Pathways to Resilience in Semi-Arid Economies (PRISE) is a five-year, multi-country research project that generates new knowledge about how economic development in semi-arid regions can be made more equitable and resilient to climate change. PRISE aims to strengthen the commitment of decision-makers in local and national governments, businesses and trade bodies to rapid, inclusive and resilient development in these regions. It does so by deepening their understanding of the threats and opportunities that semi-arid economies face in relation to climate change.

Where we work: Senegal, Burkina Faso, Kenya, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Pakistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan.

Member organisations: Overseas Development Institute, UK (lead organisation); Grantham Research Institute for Climate Change and the Environment, UK; Innovation Environnement Développement en Afrique, Senegal; Sustainable Development Policy Institute, Pakistan.

Country Research Partners: Regional Environmental Center for Central Asia, Tajikistan; University of Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso; Kenya Markets Trust, Kenya; Mountain Societies Research Institute, Kyrgyzstan.

PRISE research projects:

Research area 1: Migration futures in Asia and Africa: climate change and climate-resilient economic development.

Research area 2: Migration, remittances, adaptation and resilience in arid and semi-arid regions of Senegal and Tajikistan.

Research area 3: Harnessing opportunities for climate-resilient economic development in semi-arid lands: adaptation options in key sectors.

Research area 4: Enabling environment for private sector/multi-stakeholder action to strengthen resilience to climate change.

Research area 5: Property rights, investments and economic development in the context of climate change in semi-arid lands.

Research area 6, Part 1: Cross-boundary multi-scale governance of semi-arid lands: Implications for climate resilience and economic development.

Research area 6, Part 2: Resilience to climate-related shocks and stressors in Kyrgyzstan: developing resilience indicators to predict well-being.

Research area 7: Water governance in semi-arid lands: political and economic insights for the management of variability and extremes in a changing climate.

- Remittances have real potential to improve the resilience of rural families, who can invest those funds in land, property, agriculture and businesses. Such investments can protect their livelihoods and provide them with additional ways to make a living.
- Migrants transfer valuable knowledge and information back to rural areas, such as awareness about improved seeds, cropping methods, business skills, and expanding social networks, all of which can improve livelihoods. Migrant families are therefore more able to adapt to unexpected negative climate impacts.
- Most migrants are young men; they are viewed as more capable than women and older men of earning outside their home villages and facing the hardships of settling in a new area. This is because of cultural traditions, higher levels of education and skills, and better health.
- Women are restricted from migrating independently because of societal conventions and limited access to resources, such as money, land and education. This means that when male family members migrate, the women who remain often face extra responsibilities, such as managing farms and fetching water, as well as household chores and childcare.

Policy recommendations

- The Ministry of Climate Change could support rural poverty reduction and economic gains from labour mobility by recognising the adaptation benefits of migration, and integrating migration into the National Adaptation Plan (NAP). Policies facilitating planned migration could support improved climate adaptation for migrant families, and mitigate their risk of displacement. Providing potential migrants from rural areas with the relevant technical and vocational skills can help them compete in the jobs market alongside their urban counterparts. This could be done in tandem with district-level Technical Education and Vocational Training Authorities (TEVTAs).
- Through support programmes, public-private partnerships can boost the rural economy by helping rural migrant families channel their remittances into productive uses, such as developing small-to-medium businesses. For example, banks could partner with local government to introduce loan schemes for village households. Doing so could enable migrants to invest remittances in productive ways, such as setting up small enterprises for agriculture value addition, or the storage and packaging of agricultural products.
- Local governments that enable expanding economic opportunities for women will support inclusive growth and reduce the risks of male out-migration on the rural economy. This can be done through providing women-owned cottage industries with access to credit, lowering the guarantee requirements for women to access credit, and aiming microfinance options specifically at women.

Impact

‘The Ministry of Planning, Development and Reforms would be quite eager to know how people can bring innovation in their behaviour to better adapt to climate change, and how migration [can] transfer new information to rural areas that can improve lives in the villages.’

Dr. Asma Hyder, Member, Social Sector & Devolution, Ministry of Planning, Development and Reforms, Pakistan

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CARIAA
Collaborative Adaptation Research
Initiative in Africa and Asia



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