Resilient to climate change

Climate change adaptation to protect communities against future risk, Pakistan

Pakistan continues to experience alarming changes in weather patterns. With the recent record-breaking floods, over 33 million people were affected, and 8.3 million acres of crops damaged. The Aga Khan Foundation (AKF) is using a community needs-informed approach to improve the resilience of communities to the impacts of climate change.

The problem

Pakistan is the 8th most vulnerable country in the world to climate change[1]. In 2022 Pakistan received rainfall which was 186% higher than the national 30-year average[2]. Over 33 million people were affected with 1,700 lives lost pushing between 8.4 and 9.1 million people into poverty. There are multiple factors compounding climate change risks such as the acceleration in deforestation, which has left upstream areas highly volatile. This has diminished the natural protective buffer which renders downstream areas more prone to floods. This is compounded by limited protective infrastructures and climate-resilient buildings that can withstand shocks. The impacts are largely intensified by two underlying factors: the growth in unplanned construction; and insufficient awareness of climate-smart practices by communities.

The partner

The Aga Khan Foundation (AKF) is a private not-for-profit, established in 1967 by His Highness the Aga Khan. AKF brings together human, financial and technical resources to address some of the challenges faced by the poorest and most marginalized communities in the world. With an emphasis on women and girls, AKF invests in human potential, expanding opportunities and improving quality of life. AKF has built a strong presence in Pakistan, with a community needs-informed approach in its program regions to respond to critical emergencies and development gaps.

The philanthropic solution

The project is designed to promote climate resilience through mitigating and managing the triggers upstream and improve the adaptive capacity of communities to deal with the adverse impacts of climate change. AKF will enhance physical means and measures to safeguard communities against future risks, reduce pressure on lean natural resources and promote nature-based adaptive and regenerative agricultural practices for economic recovery and growth. The project will work in key calamity-hit districts where AKF's existing presence on the ground and strong capacity can be leveraged to deploy cost-effective solutions. Key activities include a combination of 'grey' infrastructure as well as 'nature based' solutions:

1. Construction of protective infrastructure in disaster prone/flood affected areas like dams or land terracing
2. Construction of productive irrigation infrastructure to catalyze sustainable use of uncultivated land
3. Reclaiming barren lands through a large-scale afforestation effort
4. Supporting farmers to adopt climate smart agriculture practices such as scale up of climate smart varieties of vegetables and cereals
5. Targeted technical and financial assistance to agro-businesses
6. Capacity building of local communities and knowledge generation

The evidence

AKF has built a strong presence and trust in the communities in which it is working since 1982, and replicated the model across all of Pakistan, whilst and has been a leading actor in Disaster Risk Reduction, preparedness and response since 1998.The design of the project is rooted grounded in on AKFs community-rooted and -driven approach and the interventions are based on an the needs assessment conducted in the wake of the floods to identify priority needs

The solution and interventions proposed are based on tried and tested models which have yielded results in terms of enhancing resilience to climate change over the years.

The impact

Over the course of the project AKF will:

- reach an anticipated 3,500 households/26,250 individuals, of which 50% are women.
- build capacity of 30 agro-businesses proposing green solutions to promote natural and regenerative farming
- plant 250,000 trees as part of this activity through a social forestry model

Source: 1 Global Climate Risk Index (2021), 2 Pakistan's National Disaster Management Authority (2022)

All programmatic data provided by The Aga Khan Foundation. The UBS Optimus Foundation is a grant-making foundation that offers UBS clients a platform to use their wealth to drive positive social and environmental change. The Foundation selects programs that improve children's health, education and protection, ones that have the potential to be transformative, scalable and sustainable as well as programs tackling environmental and climate issues.

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