



## **Human Security Challenges in the Face of Rapid Urbanization: A Study of Islamabad's Urban Landscape**

Daniya Gardezi

Management Trainee Officer, NUST Institute of Policy Studies

Email: [daniyagardezi@gmail.com](mailto:daniyagardezi@gmail.com)

### **Introduction**

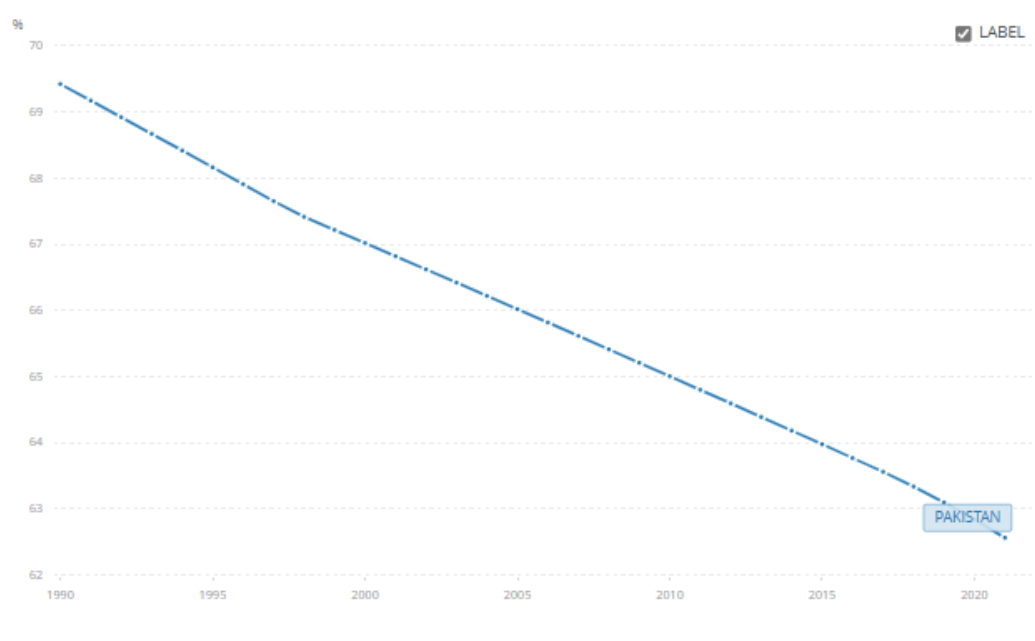
Urbanization is the process through which a society becomes increasingly urban, with a growing proportion of its inhabitants residing in cities and other urban regions, moving away from rural settlements. It is a phenomenon that has been observed for centuries, but it is especially significant today as more and more people move to cities around the world and cities are becoming limited in their capacity to cope with this influx. This phenomenon is only expected to grow in the future. It is estimated that by 2050 more than two thirds of the world's population will live in cities, up from about 54 percent recorded in 2015<sup>1</sup>. It is generally well understood why more and more people are attracted towards the cities from rural areas, however, the social fabric in Pakistan through history has been such that people have always been more inclined towards a more rustic lifestyle. One that emphasizes on simplicity, self-sufficiency, and closeness to nature. A way of life in which fundamental needs are met through agriculture practices, with a Do-It-Yourself (DIY) approach to building and maintaining structures and utilities, as well as a focus on traditional crafts and skills such as woodwork, weaving, and blacksmithing. This is one of the reasons why Pakistan still has one of the largest percentages of rural population among the world

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<sup>1</sup> Zurich Insurance Group. "The Risks of Rapid Urbanization in Developing Countries." Zurich, 15 May 2018, [www.zurich.com/en/knowledge/topics/global-risks/the-risks-of-rapid-urbanization-in-developing-countries](http://www.zurich.com/en/knowledge/topics/global-risks/the-risks-of-rapid-urbanization-in-developing-countries).

at 63% in 2021<sup>2</sup>. While this is still a large percentage, there has been a sharp decline in this number with every passing year since the 1990s. The question which arises is that if the Pakistani people preferred a traditional and rural lifestyle, what changed in the last 30 years that cities experienced mass migration and urbanization at unusually rapid rates? Moreover, an unplanned phenomenon like this comes with its fair share of risks. Since cities contain a higher concentration of people, physical assets, infrastructure, and economic activity, risks that manifest at the city level have a significantly greater potential to disrupt society than ever before. This poses a threat to human security and the way of life for everyone involved. It is essential to study what these risks of unplanned urbanization and a consequent urban sprawl are in developing countries like Pakistan.

Figure 1: Rural population as a percentage of total population in Pakistan (1990-2021)



Source: World Bank

<sup>2</sup> World Bank. "Rural Population (% of Total Population) - Pakistan." The World Bank, 2023, [data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.RUR.TOTL.ZS?locations=PK](https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.RUR.TOTL.ZS?locations=PK).

Simply put, people move from rural areas to big cities with hopes and dreams of a better life. But if these people are not facilitated and assisted by the government which has suitable policies in place, they are more likely to end up living in worse conditions than before. Unplanned urbanization or failure of urban policies exacerbate the social disparities and inequalities which gives rise to health issues, crime, and a myriad of other problems.

Urbanization is not necessarily a negative phenomenon. It has significant positive effects on economic, cultural, and sociological growth. Cities that are well-managed are both efficient and effective. However, it is extremely important that the drivers of this movement are studied so strategies can be devised as to how the living standards of people can be improved regardless of the areas they live in, and then appropriate urbanization policies are formulated for those who choose to migrate.

### **Exploring the Causes of Urbanization in Pakistan**

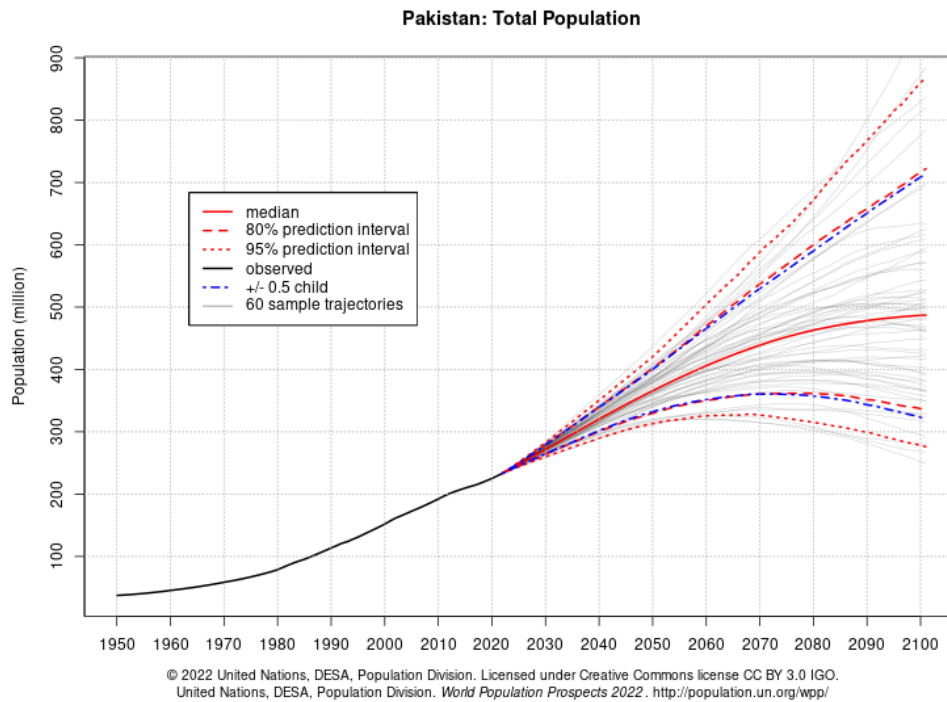
Population growth and urbanization are inextricably linked because as the population grows, more people relocate to cities in quest of a higher standard of living. This pattern has been observed in many regions of the world, notably in emerging countries where fast population increase has resulted in huge urbanization. The same pattern has been observed in Pakistan over the past several years. The current annual population growth rate in Pakistan is 1.82% which is the 48<sup>th</sup> highest in the world, and the current total population in number is 239, 116, 122 and the UN estimates the July 1, 2023, population at 240,485,658<sup>3</sup>. This number is only expected to increase in the future as population projections predict that by 2092, the total population of Pakistan will peak at around 404 million people, before gradually declining<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> World Population Review. "Pakistan Population 2022." World Population Review, 2022, [worldpopulationreview.com/countries/pakistan-population](https://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/pakistan-population)

<sup>4</sup> United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs Population Division. World Population Prospects 2022. United Nations, 2022.

Figure 2: Population Projection by United Nations Population Division



This graph produced by the United Nations Population Division shows a probabilistic population projection for Pakistan. This projection is based on various assumptions about future fertility, mortality, and migration patterns based on existing data. This form of projection provides predictions of future population size and age structure. This graph depicts population trends throughout time from 1950 to 2100. The black line in the middle of the graph depicts the "medium variation" scenario, which is the most likely prediction of future population increase assuming that fertility rates progressively fall over time. According to this scenario, Pakistan's population would continue to expand, reaching a peak of approximately 404 million people in 2092 before dropping gradually.

This projected increase in the population of Pakistan is likely to become unsustainable for cities if the existing lack of policies and urban planning persists. Overpopulation can have significant consequences on human security and in order to mitigate these effects, governments and policymakers must plan for sustainable development and take steps to manage population growth.

As population increases, the pursuit of better economic opportunities is the most powerful pull factor that drives individuals or communities to migrate. When economies grow, so do job prospects and wages in cities. In addition to better employment opportunities, the growth of the manufacturing and service sectors is also concentrated in cities. This development necessitates a large labor force, which is an attractive factor for rural migration. Thus, large numbers of people from rural areas are drawn to cities because they believe their opportunities for finding jobs or improving their economic situation are better there.

However, the question of whether people moving towards urban areas for economic development actually achieve it is complex and depends on several factors. While urbanization can provide economic development opportunities for some individuals, it is not a guaranteed path to economic success. Several factors, such as education and skills, job availability, and cost of living, can affect whether people achieve their economic goals through urbanization.

Lack of access to education is another contributing factor towards urbanization, especially in developing countries like Pakistan where there is a great urban-rural disparity in access to educational facilities. The Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurements Survey 2019-2020 by Pakistan Bureau of Statistics reports that on a national level, 32 percent of children are out-of-school in 2019-20<sup>5</sup>. Overall regional comparisons suggest that out-of-school children are greater in rural areas (37%) than in urban areas (22%). Other challenges in rural education in Pakistan includes limited access to quality educational facilities, low enrollment rates, high dropout rates, and a lack of trained teachers. The floods of 2022 have further worsened the situation in Sindh and Balochistan. UNICEF reports that schools for more than 2 million children in Pakistan remain inaccessible due to devastating floods<sup>6</sup>, and the most flood-affected areas in Balochistan and Sindh are rural.

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<sup>5</sup> Pakistan Bureau of Statistics. "Key Finding Report of PSLM District Level Survey 2019-20." Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2020, [https://www.pbs.gov.pk/sites/default/files//pslm/publications/pslm\\_district\\_2019-20/Key\\_Finding\\_Report\\_of\\_PSLM\\_District\\_Level\\_Survey\\_2019-20](https://www.pbs.gov.pk/sites/default/files//pslm/publications/pslm_district_2019-20/Key_Finding_Report_of_PSLM_District_Level_Survey_2019-20).

<sup>6</sup> UNICEF Pakistan. "Schools for More Than 2 Million Children in Pakistan Remain Inaccessible Due to Devastating Floods." UNICEF, 29 September 2014, [www.unicef.org/pakistan/press-releases/schools-more-2-million-children-pakistan-remain-inaccessible-due-devastating-floods](http://www.unicef.org/pakistan/press-releases/schools-more-2-million-children-pakistan-remain-inaccessible-due-devastating-floods).

In today's globalized world, access to technology is a crucial factor for economic development, education, and healthcare. Especially with the rise of freelancing opportunities and distant learning possibilities, the youth tends to be more inclined towards settling in urban areas where internet connectivity and technological infrastructure is better. In Pakistan, rural areas lack access to basic technological infrastructure, such as the internet and communication technologies. According to a study conducted by Google and Kantar in 2021, a Karachi-based research company, 66% of urban population has access to the internet whereas only 47% of the rural population has access to the internet in Pakistan. This lack of easy access to technology can lead to several challenges, including limited access to information, education, and employment opportunities. This trend of settling in cities is especially observed in university graduates in Pakistan who come to cities for their education, and receive awareness on how they can better utilize the technological infrastructure for career progression, and thus choose to settle there.

Moreover, government policies in Pakistan tend to be city-centric, with a significant focus on the major urban centers such as Karachi, Lahore, and Islamabad. This is largely due to the fact that these cities have large populations and are centers of economic activity and political power. Major development projects such as the construction of highways, airports, and industrial zones tend to be focused on the major cities. Similarly, policies related to education, health, and social welfare are often designed with the needs of urban populations in mind. Rural areas often lack basic infrastructure such as paved roads, reliable electricity, and access to clean water, which hinders economic growth and social development and pushes the rural population towards the cities.

Post 9/11, Pakistan has faced brutal waves of terrorism, particularly in the northwestern regions of the country. These attacks have targeted both civilians and security forces and have led to widespread displacement and internal migration. The displacement due to conflict in Pakistan has particularly affected the northwestern regions of the country, such as Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). Many people have had to leave their homes and move to urban

areas such as Peshawar, Lahore, and Karachi in search of safety and economic opportunities. Additionally, the conflict in Afghanistan has led to a significant influx of refugees and migrants into Pakistan, which has contributed to increased urbanization and population growth in these cities. Besides terrorism, Pakistan has been prone to natural disasters, including earthquakes and floods, which have caused significant internal displacement in the country. The 2005 Kashmir earthquake was one of the deadliest disasters in Pakistan's history, with an estimated 3.5 million people displaced. The earthquake affected the northern regions of Pakistan and caused significant damage to infrastructure, homes, and livelihoods. Many of the displaced people were forced to seek shelter in makeshift camps, and others who were economically better off, chose to migrate to cities like Rawalpindi and Islamabad. The same pattern was repeated in 2010 when Pakistan was hit by one of the worst floods in its history, which affected more than 20 million people and displaced millions of others.

## **The Urbanization Paradox**

### **Analyzing the Effects of Rapid Urbanization on Human Security**

Human security is the protection and well-being of citizens from various threats that can negatively impact or disrupt their quality of life, livelihood, or lifestyle. In the context of urbanization, human security encompasses a range of concerns that arise from rapid urban growth and expansion. We have established the causes that drive individuals or communities to migrate to cities, however, it is important to understand to what extent is urbanization a critical driver of social instability, failure of infrastructure, water crises & the spread of infectious diseases. The relationship between urbanization and development is a complex one because on one hand, people move to cities in the pursuit of better prospects and living standards. However, if the cities run out of their capacity to ensure a good quality of life for all citizens and the government also does not take proactive measures, the migrants from rural areas can end up in worse conditions than before. The paradox lies in the fact that urbanization can both contribute to and hinder development, depending on how it is managed and the policies that are put in place to mitigate its negative impacts. For example, while

urbanization can create opportunities for economic growth and poverty reduction, it can also lead to urban poverty, slum formation, and inadequate access to basic services.

One of the major impacts of urbanization is the potential for social instability. As cities become more densely populated and diverse, social and economic disparities can increase, leading to tensions and conflicts between different groups. This can manifest in various ways, including political unrest, crime, and violence. According to Wilson and Kelling<sup>7</sup>, urbanization increases opportunities for criminal behavior. The authors discuss that various factors associated with urbanization that are believed to contribute to the rise of crime in urban areas include breakdown of traditional social structures, population density and social disorganization, poverty and income inequality, and alienation and anonymity in urban settings (Wilson and Kelling 1982). In a study<sup>8</sup> conducted by Hassan et al. in 2016, the autoregressive distributed lag model was used to find long term relationships between crime and its determinants in Pakistan. The findings confirmed that poverty, economic growth, and urbanization significantly increase crime in Pakistan in the long term (Hassan et al. 2016). The same pattern is observed in the most urbanized areas of Pakistan. For example, Rawalpindi, which is one of the most urbanized parts of Punjab, has the highest rate of crime among other major cities of Pakistan<sup>9</sup>.

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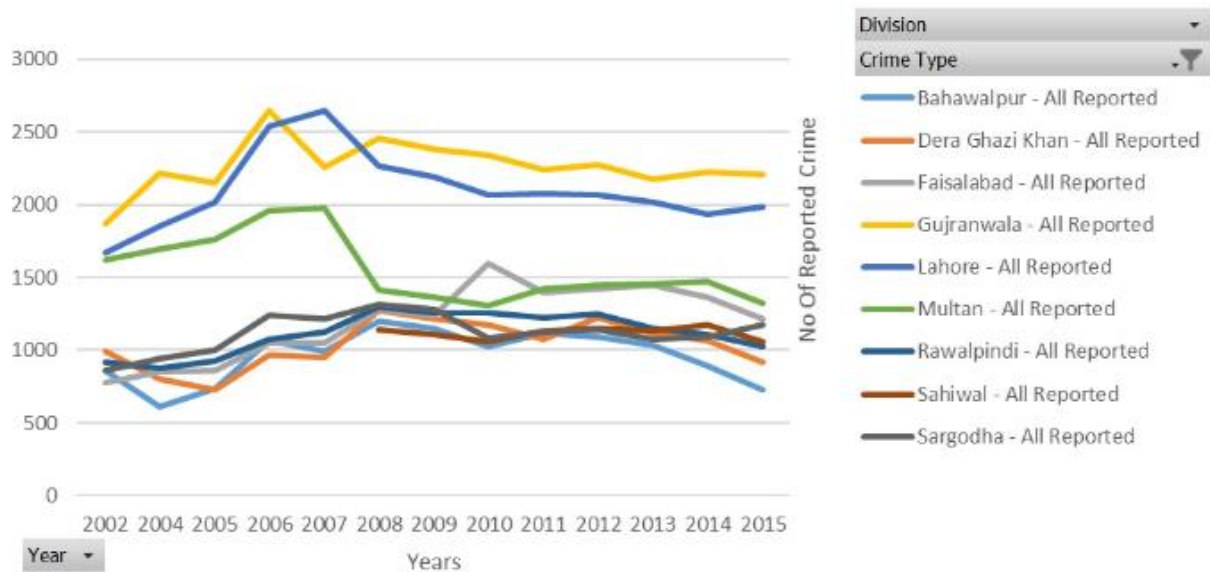
<sup>7</sup> Wilson, James Q., and George L. Kelling. "Crime and Modernization: The Impact of Industrialization and Urbanization." Oxford University Press, 2007.

<sup>8</sup> Hassan, Muhammad Shahid, Muhammad Shahid Akbar, Ayesha Wajid, and Noman Arshed. "Poverty, urbanization and crime: Are they related in Pakistan." International Journal of Economics and Empirical Research.

<sup>9</sup> "Crime Statistics." OpenData Pakistan. <https://opendata.com.pk/blog/crime-statistics>.



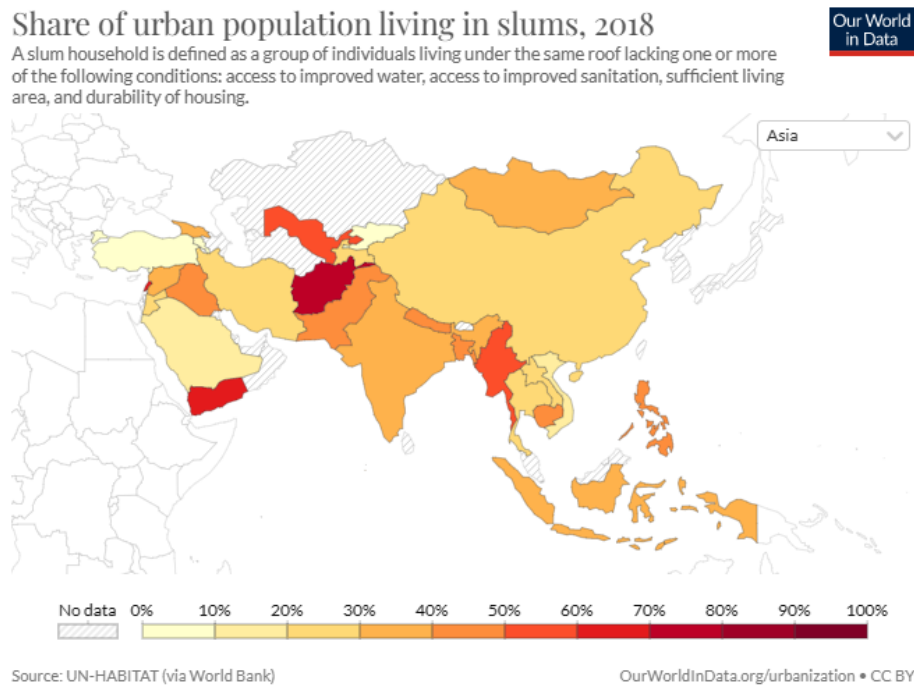
Figure 3: The trend for all reported crimes in cities of Punjab, normalized per 100,000 people.



Source: Open Data Pakistan

Rapid urbanization also tends to put a strain on the infrastructure of the city, and this can become a major hindrance towards development if not addressed. The rapid influx of people to cities can quickly overwhelm existing transport systems, leading to congestion and increased travel times. This can result in economic losses as people spend more time commuting and goods take longer to reach their destinations. Inadequate water and sanitation systems can also lead to health problems, with people exposed to contaminated water and poor sanitation facilities. This causes the spread of waterborne diseases, which can have a significant impact on public health. Moreover, rapid urbanization can exacerbate existing inequalities in access to infrastructure. Those living in slums or informal settlements are often the most vulnerable to inadequate infrastructure and poor living conditions, which can lead to social unrest and political instability. The lack of access to basic infrastructure and services can also limit opportunities for economic and social mobility, which can perpetuate poverty and inequality.

Figure 4: Share of urban population living in slums in Asia



Source: UN-Habitat via World Bank

According to the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), approximately 40% of Pakistan's urban population lives in slums, which is one of the highest percentages in Asia. This translates to about 22 million people living in informal settlements with inadequate access to basic services such as water, sanitation, and electricity. This is an alarmingly high number and says a lot about the seriousness of the threat of human security posed by rapid urbanization.

Slums are characterized by poor quality housing, overcrowding, and lack of infrastructure. The rapid pace of urbanization in Pakistan has led to a shortage of affordable housing, which has pushed many low-income residents to settle in slums. The issue is compounded by the fact that the government has not been able to keep up with the demand for housing and basic services, resulting in a backlog of infrastructure needs. This large urban population in slums poses a cyclic threat to human security as it increases the risk of disease outbreaks, crime, and social unrest. Furthermore, the presence of slums in urban areas can create a cycle of poverty and exclusion. Poor living conditions can lead to a lack of education and job opportunities,

which can perpetuate the cycle of poverty and increase the likelihood of future generations living in slums.

Densely populated urban areas can provide a fertile ground for the transmission of diseases, particularly if basic hygiene and sanitation standards are not met. This can result in outbreaks of infectious diseases such as cholera, tuberculosis, and influenza. A research study on the "Health Status and Hygiene Practices in Slums" in Lahore, Pakistan found that almost 9.2% of the survey respondents reported having unhealthy family members. The study also revealed that the majority of slum dwellers (60%) suffer from gastrointestinal tract-related problems. Waterborne diseases were also found to be more prevalent in slums compared to Bangladesh and India due to the low quality of drinking water, poor hygiene and sanitation practices, and the presence of an open sewerage system. The incidence of dengue fever was lower in 2014 compared to 2011. The study also found that only 57.2% of the residents have access to health units, which contributes to the poor availability of healthcare in the slums of Lahore<sup>10</sup>

Water crises are also a significant concern in urban areas, where the demand for water often exceeds the available supply. Urbanization can exacerbate this problem by putting further strain on water resources, leading to water scarcity and the need for costly water management and conservation measures.

Rapid urbanization in Pakistan has also had a significant impact on the environment, leading to degradation in various forms. One major concern is air pollution, which is exacerbated by the growing number of vehicles and industries in urban areas. For example, Lahore, one of the largest cities in Pakistan, has been ranked among the most polluted cities in the world<sup>11</sup>. The high concentration of particulate matter in the air has been linked to respiratory diseases and premature deaths. Moreover, the need for housing due to rapid urbanization has also led to the destruction of natural habitats,

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<sup>10</sup> UNICEF. "Profiles of Slums and Underserved Areas of Five Largest Cities of Punjab, Pakistan."

<sup>11</sup> "Karachi Sixth, Lahore Atop List of Most Polluted Cities in World." Pakistan Today, 26 February 2023, [www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2023/02/26/lahore-atop-list-of-most-polluted-cities-karachi-sixth-in-world/#:~:text=According%20to%20the%20Air%20Quality%20Index%20\(AQI\),extremely%20hazardous%20to%20the%20health%20of%20the%20citizens.](http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2023/02/26/lahore-atop-list-of-most-polluted-cities-karachi-sixth-in-world/#:~:text=According%20to%20the%20Air%20Quality%20Index%20(AQI),extremely%20hazardous%20to%20the%20health%20of%20the%20citizens.)

particularly forests and wetlands. This has had a significant impact on biodiversity, with many species losing their natural habitats and facing extinction. For example, the wetlands in Lahore have been severely degraded, leading to the loss of migratory birds and other wildlife. Rapid urbanization has also contributed to the generation of waste and the accumulation of plastic, which has become a major environmental hazard. Improper waste management practices, such as open dumping and burning of waste, have led to the release of toxic substances into the environment and the contamination of soil and water.

A case which can aptly illustrate all of these effects of rapid urbanization is the city of Islamabad. Rapid urbanization has left a profound impact on Islamabad, the capital city of Pakistan. Despite being a relatively new city, the past six decades have seen a massive influx of people from all over the country, turning Islamabad into a quintessential example of urbanization's significant effects.

### **A Case Study of Rapid Urbanization in Islamabad**

Islamabad is the capital city of Pakistan and a planned city, designed to accommodate a population of around 1 million people. However, due to rapid urbanization, the population has greatly increased, and the city is now home to over 2 million people. The city plan of Islamabad has not been revised to accommodate any of these changes. This exponential growth has put immense pressure on the city's infrastructure, including transportation, water and sanitation systems, waste management, and housing. The city's urbanization has also brought various social, economic, and environmental challenges, such as air pollution, traffic congestion, rising crime rates, and inadequate access to healthcare and education. Given these challenges, it is imperative to understand the impact of urbanization on human security in Islamabad.

Originally, the master plan of Islamabad was a comprehensive urban development plan that was designed to guide the growth and development of the city. It was formulated in 1960 by a Greek architect named Constantinos Apostolou Doxiadis and was later revised in 1985. For the needs of that era, it was a well-made plan. The master plan aimed to create a well-organized and well-planned city that would serve as the capital of Pakistan. It laid out a detailed framework for the city's land use,

transportation, housing, and other infrastructure. The plan also included provisions for green spaces, parks, and recreational areas. One of the key features of the master plan was the division of the city into different zones based on land use. The transportation system was also a critical aspect of the master plan. The plan aimed to create a well-connected city with an efficient transportation system that would cater to the needs of the growing population. The plan included provisions for a network of roads, highways, and public transportation as well. However, what was once an excellent city plan has now become an outdated model with a focus on mere aesthetics rather than the actual infrastructure of the city. The following are the biggest challenges faced by the residents of Islamabad:

### **1. Poor housing quality and affordability**

The population dynamics of Islamabad are witnessing a significant shift towards a younger cohort, which is gravitating towards the city to pursue better job prospects and establishing nuclear family units. It is essential to acknowledge the specific housing requirements of this demographic group. However, the current state of housing in Islamabad is unable to cater to the needs of this segment. The moderately priced properties are observed to be of subpar quality and the better options being unreasonably expensive. This trend in the housing market has exacerbated the existing social inequality in Islamabad.

### **2. Water and sanitation**

Due to excessive pumping by departments and people to meet water requirements, Islamabad's groundwater level is dropping at an alarming rate of 5 to 8 feet per year. Groundwater levels in the federal capital have dropped fivefold in the last five years, with drops of six feet in 2013, ten feet in 2014, and 16, 23, and 30 feet from 2015 to 2017. According to reports, the water demand in Islamabad has reached 220 million gallons per day (MGD), while the supply is only 70 MGD. Simli Dam, Khanpur Dam, tubewells, and Rawal Dam are the four principal sources of water for Islamabad. If the proposed extension of Khanpur dam is executed, the water crisis of Islamabad

could possibly be resolved, according to CDA officials<sup>12</sup>. Even other solutions to this problem would require direct intervention by the federal government, but there is no progress in this area as of yet.

### **3. Land management**

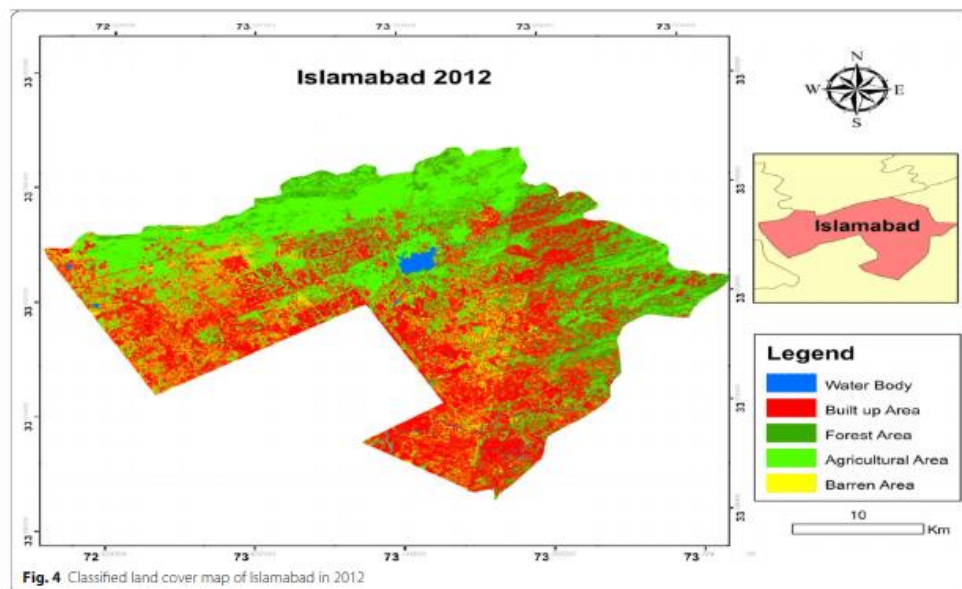
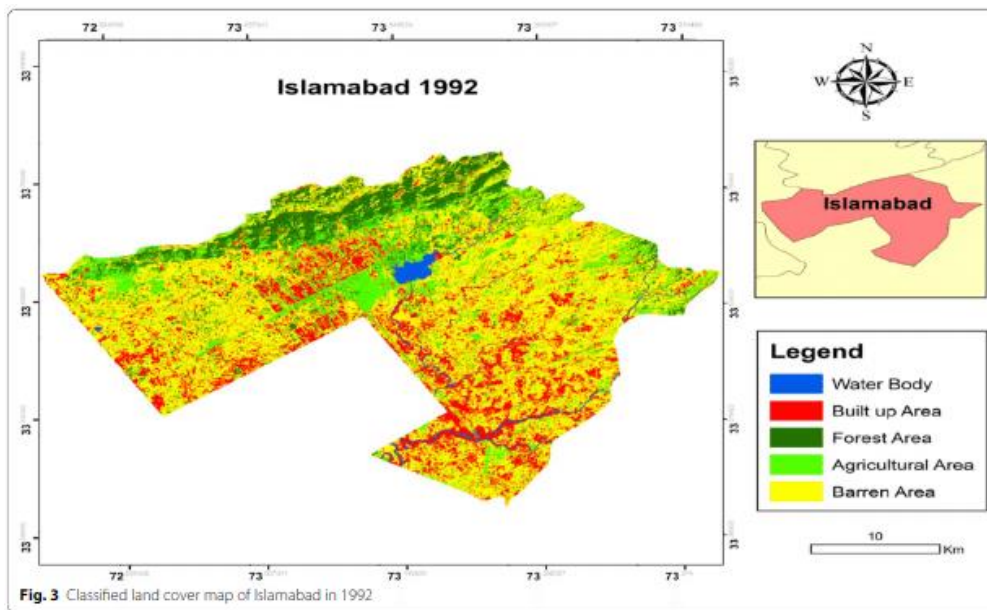
Islamabad was once a well-planned city with zones designated according to land-use, however, with the city expanding quickly the government has struggled to manage the land effectively. As a result, informal settlements have emerged in the city. The land mafia has been operating in the city, illegally occupying and selling land, which has caused various social and environmental issues. In 2021, the Capital Development Authority (CDA) declared 140 housing societies in Islamabad to be illegal. The unplanned settlements, illegal constructions, and the unchecked spread of slums have further complicated the land management issues in Islamabad. These challenges are not only causing hardships for the urban poor but are also impacting the overall development of the city. Moreover, due to population growth and industrialization, the forested areas of Islamabad have also experienced a sharp decrease in area. In a study by Hassan et al., it was found through spatial land use land cover (LULC) analysis that there is approximately 49% decrease in forest cover in Islamabad since the last 20 years i.e. from 1992 to 2012<sup>13</sup>.

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<sup>12</sup> "Three Decades On, CDA Yet to Overcome Water Scarcity." Dawn, 6 June 2021, [www.dawn.com/news/1627612](http://www.dawn.com/news/1627612).

<sup>13</sup> Mubeen, Muhammad and Saleem, Muhammad. "Dynamics of Land Use and Land Cover Change (LULCC) Using Geospatial Techniques: A Case Study of Islamabad, Pakistan." 2016.

Figure 5: Spatiotemporal change in the land use patterns of Islamabad (1992 vs. 2012)



**Table 3** Area statistics and percentage of the land use/cover units in 1992–2012

Land use and land cover categories	1992		2012		1992–2012 Changed area (%)	Annual change (%)
	Area (ha)	Area (%)	Area (ha)	Area (%)		
Water body	1416	1.57	1579	1.75	+11.5	+0.58
Built up area	16,281	18.09	51,039	56.73	+213.5	+10.67
Forest area	12,136	13.49	6138	6.82	-49.42	-2.47
Agricultural area	10,336	11.49	29,000	32.23	+180.6	+9.03
Barren area	49,789	55.35	1678	1.87	-96.63	-4.83

Source: Hassan et al. (2016)



#### **4. Traffic management**

Once designed to be a walkable city, Islamabad is now becoming a city with one of the highest traffic volumes in the country. In 2022, it was reported that there are 1.3 million registered vehicles in Islamabad which has a population of 2.6 million, which suggests that the roads and highways are facing an overwhelming amount of traffic<sup>14</sup>. The Deputy Commissioner's office has released official figures that indicate an additional two to three thousand vehicles are registered each month, suggesting that the burden on the roads will continue to increase significantly in the future, as a result of widespread migration from other provinces.

#### **Recommendations**

##### **a. Revising the master plan of Islamabad**

Markus Daeschel, in his book "Islamabad and the Politics of International Development in Pakistan", argues that Islamabad's development was largely driven by international development agencies, such as the World Bank, which saw the city as a model for development in other parts of the world. However, he also highlights the tensions and contradictions that arose from this approach, including issues of inequality, displacement, and resistance from local communities. This is an accurate assessment as time has proven that the master plan of Islamabad has not taken into account the needs of the underprivileged. This has contributed to the disproportionate development and uncontrolled urbanization in Islamabad, which is one of the most pressing issues faced by the city. Therefore, the master plan of Islamabad should be revised to accommodate the city's expansion and changing urbanization patterns.

##### **b. Intergovernmental relationships**

Intergovernmental relationships are also key to successful urbanization. National, regional and city governments need to be connected and share a similar vision. This

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<sup>14</sup> The News International. "Record Number of Vehicles Causing Traffic Issues in Islamabad." The News International, 16 May 2021, [www.thenews.com.pk/print/946937-record-number-of-vehicles-causing-traffic-issues-in-islamabad](http://www.thenews.com.pk/print/946937-record-number-of-vehicles-causing-traffic-issues-in-islamabad).



is particularly relevant in the case of Islamabad since it is geographically connected to Rawalpindi, which falls under the Punjab Government. The federal, provincial, and local governments need to come together in order to formulate effective strategies and ensure timely implementation.

### **c. Empowering *Kacchi Abadis* (Slums)**

Over the past two decades, the number of slums in and around Islamabad has increased significantly. While there were only 12 slums around the city about 20 years ago, there are now more than 42. The population in areas such as Sihala, Tarnol, Rawal Dam, Bani Gala, Barakahu, and Golra has increased, leading to the growth of new slums, including in sectors like I-12 and I-14. This expansion is putting additional pressure on the city's already scarce natural resources. It is estimated that more than 100,000 people live in over two dozen slums located in sectors G-7, H-9, F-6, F-7, I-11, and I-12<sup>15</sup>. This large number of population in informal settlements is living under subpar conditions, highly vulnerable to negative economic and climate shocks. The modus operandi to control this crisis so far has been to eradicate the poor through forced evictions, which has not been entirely successful, rather it has worsened the conditions of the poor dwellers. Therefore, there is an urgent need for slum upgradation. Various studies have also proven that such activities can greatly increase urban productivity.

### **d. Rural development**

Rural development can be a solution to the negative effects of rapid urbanization by addressing the root causes that drive people to migrate to urban areas. For example, investment in agriculture and rural industries can create job opportunities and improve livelihoods in rural areas, reducing the need for people to migrate to urban centers in search of employment. Infrastructure development in rural areas, such as improving access to roads, electricity, and basic services, can also help to make rural areas more attractive places to live and work. This can include investment in healthcare, education, and sanitation facilities. Moreover, policymakers need to focus

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<sup>15</sup> UNICEF. 2020. "Profile of Slums/Underserved Areas of Islamabad City – The Federal Capital of Pakistan."

on decentralizing city-centric policies by shifting resources away from urban centers and towards local communities in rural areas. This can help to ensure that development policies and programs are better tailored to the needs and priorities of rural communities and can support the creation of more locally-led initiatives that can address the unique challenges faced by these communities.

## **Conclusion**

Rapid urbanization poses significant human security challenges that require urgent attention from policymakers, civil society, and other stakeholders and the solutions must involve approaches that are multi-dimensional and inclusive. In the case of Islamabad, rapid urbanization has brought about significant challenges that threaten the well-being and livelihoods of its residents, particularly those in underprivileged communities. The city's infrastructure, public services, and governance systems have struggled to keep up with the demands of a growing urban population, leading to inadequate access to basic services and increased social inequality. This is why the master plan and urban policies must be revisited and more inclusive policies must be designed. This may involve investing in infrastructure and public services in underserved areas, improving governance systems and public participation mechanisms, and promoting policies that support affordable housing, environmental sustainability, and social inclusion. By taking a holistic approach to urban development that prioritizes human security, Islamabad can build a more resilient and equitable urban landscape that benefits all of its residents.