



**Epitome : International Journal  
of Multidisciplinary Research**

**ISSN : 2395-6968**

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***POLICY ADVOCACY, DIPLOMACY AND ACTIVISM TO  
DRIVE CHANGE***

**YOUTH: A CATALYST TOWARDS VOLUNTEERISM  
IN COMBATING DISASTERS**



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*Note: This paper was submitted to Education Without Borders (EWB) Conference in 2011 organized by Higher Colleges of Technology, Government of UAE, and is accepted for publication in 2020.*

## ABSTRACT

The topic is clustered around the fact that how youth can prove a driving force to volunteer in combating disasters like the one mirrored in the shape of 2010 super-floods or deadly earthquake of 2005 in Pakistan. "In many cases, young people will listen more closely to their peers than they will to their parents or other adult figures. Most young people have an adult filter, a listening device that turns itself off when an adult starts to lecture. If you have a message that you want to communicate to young people, you'll have much better luck getting through if the messenger is another young person."(Loring Leifer and Michael McLarney, Younger Voices, Stronger Choices, pp. 4-5) Most of the Youths are working towards the philosophy of 'Action-Reaction'. They help people because they expect them to be helped out when they are in trouble (Independent Sector/Gallup, 1996). Volunteerism is one of the top three activities ranked by teens alongside care for environment & eating healthy (Teenage Marketing and Lifestyle Study, 1998). 73% of the youths believe that communities can be healed up with the

application of their efforts (Do Something Young People's Involvement Survey /Princeton Survey Research, 1998)

Pakistan's demographic transition (from high to low mortality and fertility) has stalled. The economy must grow by 6% a year to meet the needs of its growing population. At present, Pakistan ranks 101 out of 133 countries on the Global Competitiveness Index. By 2030, Pakistan will be more urban than rural, creating huge demand for infrastructure. (The Next Generation Report, British Council, Pakistan, 2009)

Demographic youth dividend if wisely used may result in coping with any alarming challenge. In simple words "We cannot fight nature but we can nurture a force to resist the calamity"

**KEYWORDS:** Youth & Youth Bulge of Pakistan; 2010 Floods in Pakistan & Volunteers; Disaster Management; Project Management; Human Resource Management; United Nations & Earthquake Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Agency (ERRA), Government of Pakistan & Relief Efforts; Use of Social Media in Disasters

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## Chapter 1

### 1.1. Introduction

This is not surprising fact to the world to find young people putting their energies upfront to rephrase “impossible” as “I m possible”. Through the historic trend line of the last decade, Pakistan is in the headlines of combating disasters. Interestingly, a country famous for unstable democratic structure and paralyzed judiciary is keeping the flag fluttering while combating disasters of major scale. It is not due to the fact that the resources are up to the mark fuelling them to challenge the conditions but a masked force is helping them that might seem as little as ‘Stuarts (Stuart little animated cartoon)’ but they proved Herculean and it would be unjust not to call them heroes.

The four major disasters Pakistan faced in the past decade were:

- 1- Combating terrorism, accommodating new influx of refugees from Afghanistan and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) from North Western Pakistan – a continuous process since 9/11 attacks on World Trade Centre (WTC), USA. In 2008/09, Pakistan witnessed the largest internal displacement since World War - II.
- 2- A 7.8 Earth quake in October 2005 that hit Pakistan killing over 80,000 men, women and children.
- 3- 2007 Spontaneous violence after tragic death of Ms. Benazir Bhutto, the former Prime Minister of Pakistan that pushed back country’s infrastructure by 20 years.
- 4- 2010 floods which affected over 200 million individuals in the country. Such floods were not witnessed in Indian Sub-Continent since early 1900.

While keeping our focus to the recent tragic floods, we will enlighten the role of youth in catering the disaster that left millions of people stranded.

A wave of heavy rainfall started in July 2010 in different parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Sindh, Punjab and Baluchistan regions of Pakistan. The Indus River basin was badly affected due to gushing tides. At one point, approximately one-third of Pakistan's total land area was

submerged under water. According to data provided by Pakistani government, the floods directly affected about 20 million people. The destruction caused damage to property, livelihood and infrastructure, with a death toll of close to 2,000. The number of individuals affected by the flooding exceeds the combined total of individuals affected by the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, the 2005 Kashmir earthquake and the 2010 Haiti earthquake.

UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, had initially asked for \$460 million for emergency relief. *He commented that the flood was the worst disaster he had ever seen.* Only 20% of the relief funds had been received as of 15 August 2010. The U.N. had been concerned that the aid was not arriving fast enough, while the World Health Organization (WHO) reported that ten million people were forced to drink unsafe water. The Pakistani economy has been harmed by extensive damage to infrastructure and crops. Structural damages have been estimated to exceed 4 billion USD, and wheat crop damages have been estimated to be over 500 million USD. Officials have estimated the total economic impact to be as much as 43 billion USD. (Wikipedia.org)

## **1.2. Purpose of Study**

### **1.2.1. Objective**

The research was conducted for the purpose of highlighting the role of youth in combating major disasters. It will also provide an insight on the demographic dividend of Pakistan that to what extent Pakistan was rich with youth as a resource in the last decade.

### **1.2.2. Critical Question**

We will critically analyse and support our argument with facts and figures that to what extent the total population of Pakistan is sharing a percentage with youth. How youth was critical and important is resisting the disasters like the one in shape of 2010 floods in Pakistan?

### **1.3. Scope of the study**

This research covers youth contribution in Pakistan during recent floods in 2010. It relies on information collected by national and international organizations, first-hand experience of the researcher and youth involved in humanitarian response. The research does not provide a precise quantitative data; however, it does provide an excellent overview of youth volunteerism and their contribution towards recovery and response process.

### **1.4. Limitation of study**

As it has been only four months since the flood hit the country, not all youth volunteer's contribution has come to surface. Even though this study will capture all available information, the researcher still believe there is a lot more which has gone un-captured. The study was also limited due to area accessibility (hard to reach affected regions).

### **1.5. Delimitation of study**

The study is a focal document of all those institutions and policy makers who are involved in decision making and are keen in realizing the potential of youth consequently making a world better place for themselves to resist disasters.

### **1.6. Research Approach**

It is a qualitative research with inquiry mode of critical framework.

### **1.7. Data Collection Methods**

Observational instincts, eyewitnesses feedback and experts opinionalization were the techniques used for primary collection of data.

Secondary data was collected from research journals, books, magazine articles, online libraries, academic text, and presentations.

### **1.8. Sample Population / Sample Size**

It was difficult to gauge and encircle the sample of larger locality, so it was restrained to the flood affected people of North-West Frontier Province (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) and its youthful dividend only.

The population size of the research was limited to the People of Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

### **1.9. Sampling Procedure and Method**

Convenience Sampling (Non-Probability)

### **1.10. Chapter-wise Scheme of the study**

The scheme follows the pattern;

Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Chapter 3: Conceptual Framework

Chapter 4: Analysis

Chapter 5: Conclusion and Recommendations.



## Chapter 2

### 2.1. Literature Review

Volunteerism, in its conceptual form, includes the individual or collective efforts of willing individuals, known as volunteers, to act in ways which work toward the betterment of oneself, other individuals, communities, and/or society. This definition remains subjective in its ambiguity regarding the meaning of betterment, as well as in the sense that the means to bettering oneself may be in direct opposition to the means necessary to better another individual or society. (nvm.org)

*"If we don't give young people real decision-making authority, we are going to lose them,"* warns Lofquist.

The decision making authority of the people lies in such a quadrant where accessibility not in terms of general accreditation is necessary but involvement of youthful are important at its best as well.

In many cases, young people will listen more closely to their peers than they will to their parents or other adult figures. Most young people have an adult filter, a listening device that turns itself off when an adult starts to lecture. If you have a message that you want to communicate to young people, you'll have much better luck getting through if the messenger is another young person."(Loring Leifer and Michael McLarney, *Younger Voices, Stronger Choices*, pp. 4-5)

Most of the youth are working towards the philosophy 'Action-Reaction'. The people they are helping in are expected to help them if they are gripped into trouble in some other time frame (Independent Sector/Gallup, 1996). Volunteerism is one of the top three activities ranked by teens alongside care for environment and eating healthy (Teenage Marketing and Lifestyle Study, 1998). 73% of the youths believe that communities can be better healed up with the application of their efforts (Do Something Young People's Involvement Survey /Princeton Survey Research, 1998)

The situation is really daunting when in an ongoing relief operation; the youth group skids off the vision to follow their leader. Moreover they summon themselves to lead in the catastrophes and multiply the woes. In fact they deny the verity that they are the key driving

force even serving on the note of being a follower. Lead volunteer is getting blamed for everything that gets wrong and consequently you not only lose a leader but also a key member for your leadership role. If this situation persists, it is likely that your group's morale will take beating, and fellow volunteers may quit due to resenting attitude. We need to build a strategy to deliver volunteerism a factor of change. (O Butch, Get Off the Throne: How To Handle Power- Hungry Leaders).

“Pakistan is a young and increasingly urban society. Half of its citizens are under twenty; two thirds have yet to reach their thirtieth birthday. The population has tripled in less than fifty years. It will grow by around 85 million in twenty years (roughly the equivalent of five cities the size of Karachi, Pakistan). Birth rates remain high by regional standards, especially in rural areas. Pakistan's demographic transition (from high to low mortality and fertility) has stalled. The economy must grow by 6% a year to meet the needs of its growing population. 36 million new jobs are needed in just ten years. At present, Pakistan ranks 101 out of 133 countries on the Global Competitiveness Index. By 2030, Pakistan will be more urban than rural, creating huge demand for infrastructure. Energy use could quadruple; water will be an increasingly scarce resource. Pakistanis are losing confidence in the future. Only 15% believe the country is heading in the right direction. 72% feel economically worse off than a year ago. Only one in ten expect an improvement in the near future. Young people are passionate believers in education, but many have had no opportunity to gain essential skills. Only half of Pakistan's children go to primary school, a quarter to secondary school, and just 5% receive any higher education. The survey of the next generation (18-29 year olds) reveals that a quarter of respondents are illiterate. Half believe they do not have the skills for the modern labour market. Even those with good qualifications are struggling to find decent employment, and are struggling against discrimination and corruption. Disillusion with democracy is pronounced. Only around 10% have a great deal of confidence in national or local government, the courts, or the police. Only 39% voted in the last election; while half are not even on the voters' list. The next generation loves Pakistan, despite the country's failings. It is also civic minded, with nearly half believing education's primary purpose is to learn to be a good citizen or to gain a broad understanding of the world. Many young leaders are no longer prepared to wait for others to act. They are actively seeking opportunities to build a stronger, more peaceful and prosperous society, and to develop a new relationship with the rest of the world. In 1980, Pakistan passed a milestone: the proportion of adults to children and old people reached its lowest level. Ever since, demographic conditions have become

steadily more favourable – a trend that will continue to mid-century” (The Next Generation Report, British Council, Pakistan)

If we use the demographic dividend of youth wisely, we can cope with any challenge with standing. Better policy making towards youth volunteerism in any dreadful situation can deliver in a fruitful manner with outstanding results. A quantifiable amount can rise to foster relations towards the common goal of building interfaith harmony among the nation.

In simple words “We cannot fight nature but we can nurture a force to resist the calamity”

## Chapter 3

### 3.1. Conceptual Framework

Natural disasters are one of the common factors breaking the nexus of economic growth. It is adjudged as pivotal to resist such disasters by formulating strategies to entail its effect. Youth being a key demographic dividend is marking a new beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Ignoring role of youth involvement in development is diminishing with the passage of time. Youth have proved themselves as a key driving force in combating disasters of major scales and their inclusion in decision making paradigm is of foreseeable significance. The purpose of this research was to highlight the importance of youth involvement as a 'First Aid toolkit' in formulating strategies to cope with alarming situations.

### 3.2. Our Focus of Study

We will try to figure out the scale of disasters in Pakistan in comparison to youth involvement in resisting such disasters. The observational focus will be kept closer towards North-West Frontier Province (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) of Pakistan. Youth segmentism in total population and the future demographic dividend prospects will be our key indicators (Fig. 1).

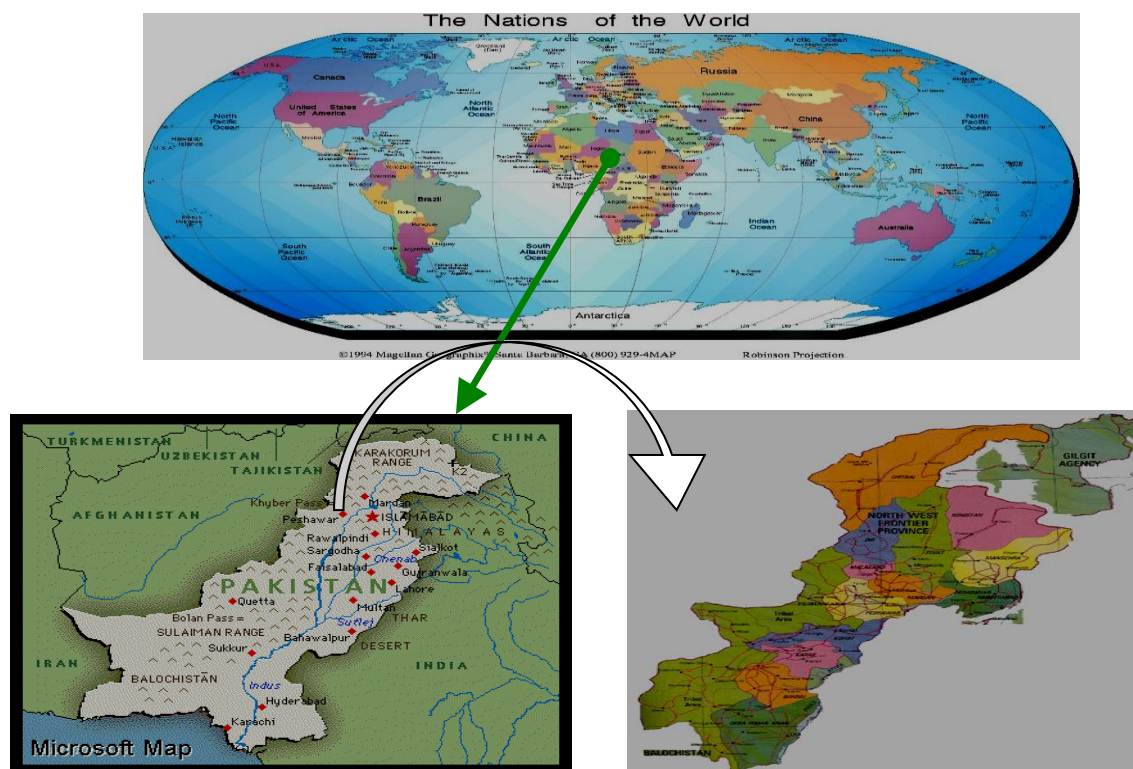


Fig.1. Research Focus flowchart

### 3.3. Data Collection Methods

Observational instincts, eyewitnesses feedback and experts opinionalization were the techniques used for primary collection of data.

Secondary data was collected from research journals, books, magazine articles, online libraries, academic text, and presentations.

### 3.4. Sample Population / Sample Size

It was difficult to gauge and encircle the sample to larger locality, so it was restrained to the flood affected people of North-West Frontier Province (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) and its youthful dividend.

The population size of the research was limited to the People of Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

### 3.5. Sampling Procedure and Method

Convenience Sampling (Non-Probability)

Convenience Sampling, a Non probability sampling was used in conducting the research.

*“Non-Probability Sampling is a sampling technique wherein the samples are gathered in a process that does not give all the individuals in the population equal chances of being selected. In any form of research, true random sampling is always difficult to achieve.”*  
(Experiment-resources.com)

*“Convenience sampling is probably the most common of all sampling techniques. With convenience sampling, the samples are selected because they are accessible to the researcher. This technique is considered easiest, cheapest and least time consuming”*  
(Experiment-resources.com)



## Chapter 4

### 4.1. Analysis

The analysis is based on observation, feedback from the affected and reading from fact files from different print and electronic media.

Pakistan's 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of its total area was submerged under water (Fig. 2). Though the rehabilitation of these affected people is still on but it took them few months to overcome one of worst disasters in the history due to cadre of energetic youth. The total number of affected people as estimated by the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) on 09.08.2010:

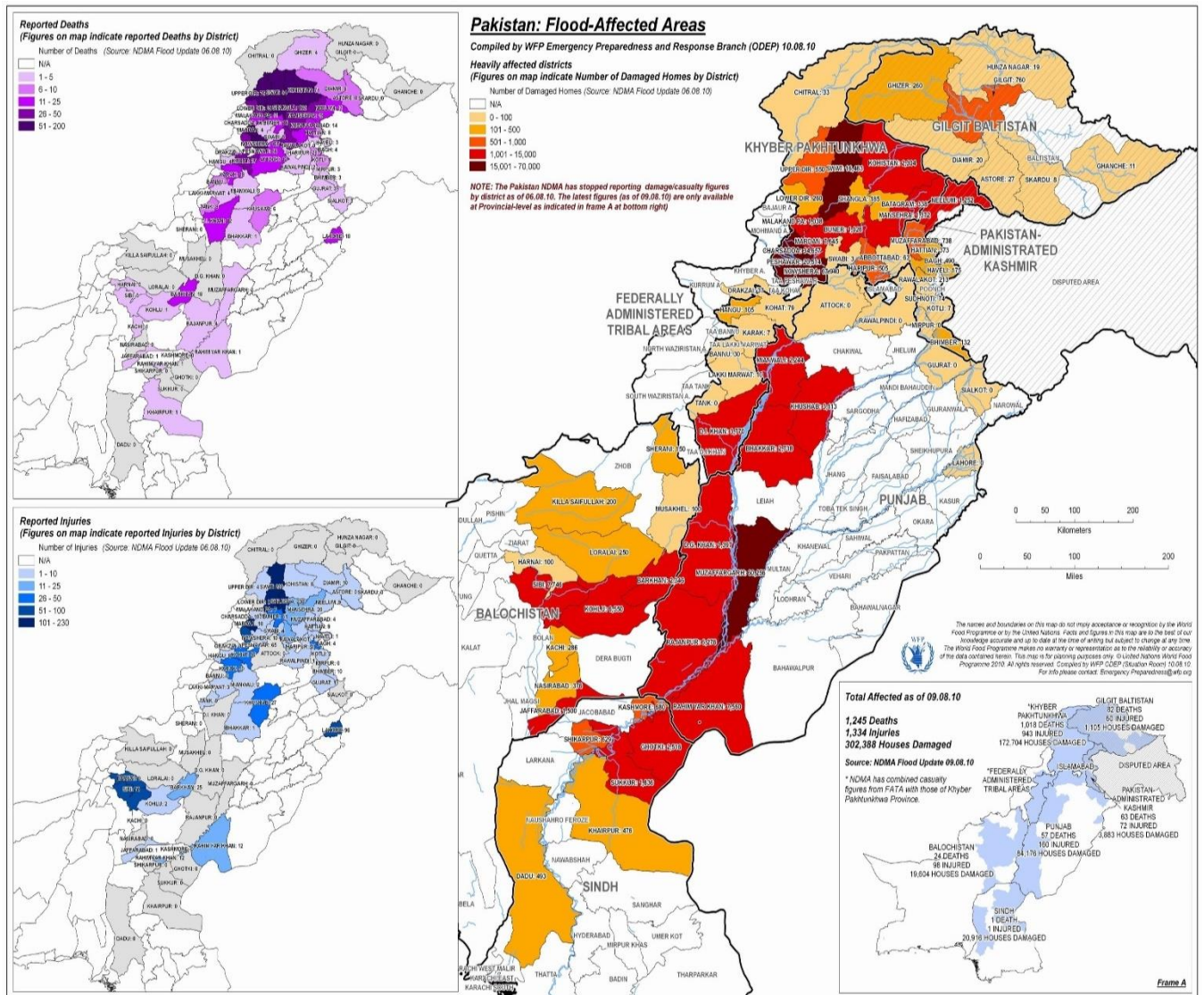


Fig.2.Flood Affected Region of Pakistan (Source: World Food Programme, 2010)

## 4.2. The Demographic Dividend of Pakistan

In 1960, the total population of the world was 3 billion where population of those people that are under the age of 30 was 1.8 billion. In 2010, the figures for total population raised to 6.9 billion where those people whose age was under 30 were 3.6 billion. In 2030, it is estimated that the population of the world will be 8.3 billion where people whose age will be under 30 entail 3.7 billion.

For Pakistan, in 1960 the total population was 41 million, where those whose age is under 30 were 30 million. In 2010, the total population of Pakistan counted 184 million where those whose age remains under 30 counted as 122 million. It is estimated that the population of Pakistan in 2030 will be 148 million where those whose age will be under 30 entail 148 million. (UN, 2008)

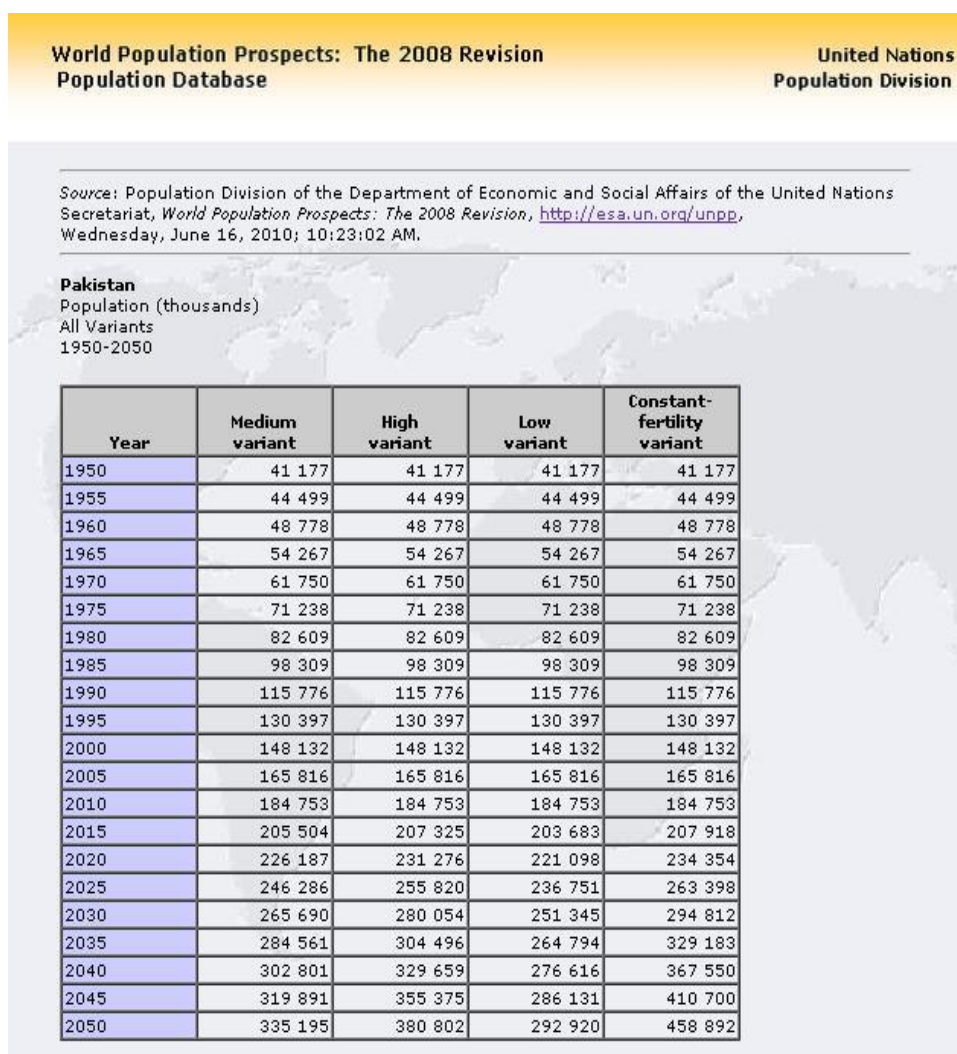


Fig.3. Population Prospects of Pakistan (Source: UN Population Division, 2008)

Pakistan is passing through the rich fertile history of its time with largest demographic dividend on hold. It is probably the main reason that they fought to bring back life into the disasters stricken decade with scarce resources. (Fig. 3)

Where the older populations are of importance to secure the top management slots but the younger population are of substantial importance to support them. Youth inclusion in policy making towards combating disasters is fruitful to pay back its share of dedication.

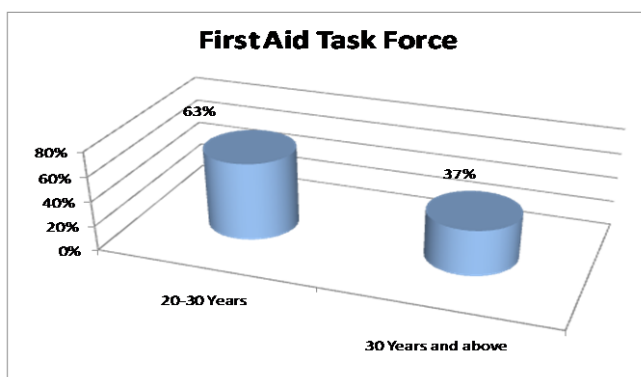
#### 4.3. National and International Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) Activism

Some of the NGOs that were actively involved in pushing the youth efforts during the flood operation on ground were, UNICEF, UNHCR, UNDP, UNESCO, Edhi Foundation-Pakistan, MKRF- Pakistan, Muslim Hands, Islamic Relief, ICRC, ARC, International Rescue Committee, Norwegian Refugee Council, Care International, Save the Children, and Oxfam.

#### 4.4. Youth Involvement

The youth were involved in providing first-hand relief, education at tent villages by setting up community mobilization schools, WASH (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene) and other rehabilitation necessities.

##### 4.4.1. First Aid Task Force



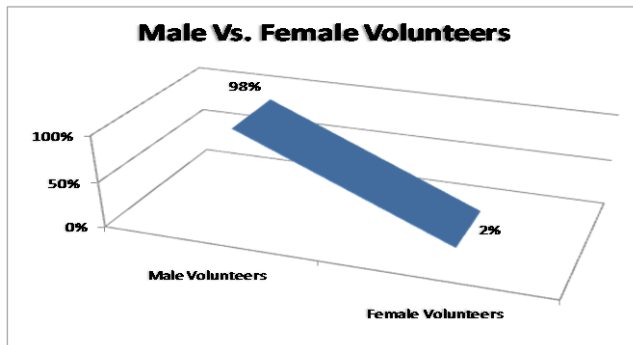
As soon as the disaster struck the country, Task Force were formulated to cope with the situation. It is however a surprising fact that 63% of the total task force observed on the field were under 30 years of age. The one that were above 30 years were not falling under category of old age but still they were

equally supported by young staff to facilitate their operations e.g. Paramedic Staff, Engineers, Food Distributors etc. (Fig. 4)

Fig.4 First Aid Task Force



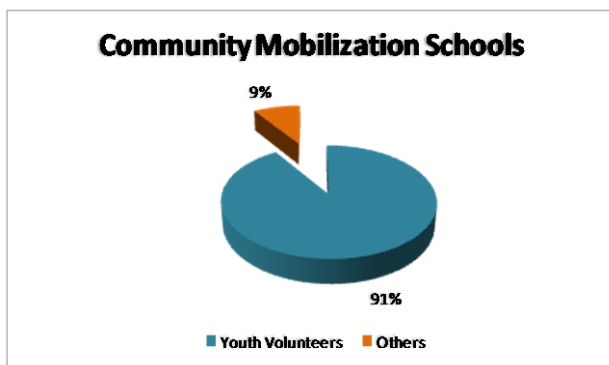
#### 4.4.2. Task Force Nomenclature



The prevailing security situation, religious and social constraints does not allow the female volunteers to go to the field. It was thus observed that most of the tasks on the ground were dominated and supervised by the male volunteers who figured 98%. (Fig. 5)

*Fig.5 Task Force Nomenclature (Male Vs Female Volunteers)*

#### 4.4.3. Community Mobilization Schools

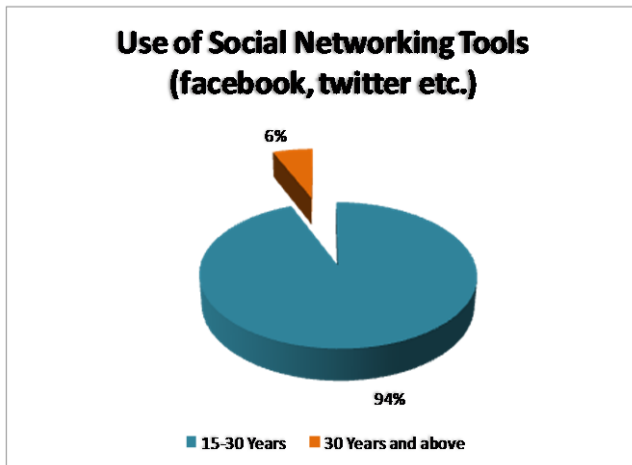


Youth were involved in setting up different community mobilization schools at the affected areas under the umbrella of different NGOs. They not only provided infrastructure, curricula books and uniform but also undertook administrative assignments and even taught at school without charging any child. 91% of those

involved in setting up Community Mobilization Schools were youth volunteers. (Fig. 6)

*Fig.6 Community Mobilization Schools*

#### 4.4.4. Social Networking Tools and Fundraising



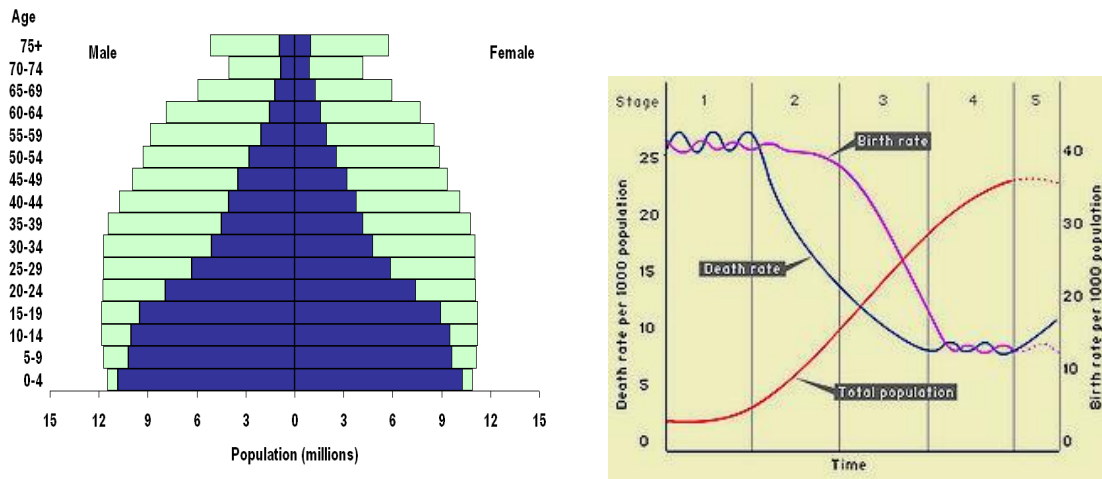
It is right to say that the use and accessibility of technology is yet to achieve its targets but even at places where it is available, most of it is occupied by the youthful. 94% of the social networking tools like facebook, twitter were used to mobilize the community in order to contribute and fundraise towards the flood affected

people. Though most of the control towers to pass signals of mobile messaging were damaged yet the response was healthy to activate the volunteering efforts towards community (Fig. 7).

*Fig.7 Use of Social Networking Tools (facebook, twitter etc.)*

## Chapter 5

### 5.1. Conclusion



*Fig.8 Future Prospects of Demographic Dividend (Source: United Nations, World Population Prospects: The 2004 Revision, CD-ROM Edition, Extended Dataset (2005)).*

It is thus evident that the time where youth population is striking the peak in the pyramid, the results (2000-2010) showed consistency in recovery from the major disasters. In the past decade the trend followed a decreasing pattern in death rate as compared to birth rate which showed significant rise that ultimately ensured greater population share of age less than 30 years. (Fig.8)

Another important facet to involve youth was the use of technology. The messages through networking (twitter, facebook, Skype etc.) were capitalized by the youthful to fundraise for the flood victims and to coordinate the rehabilitation activities to avoid the mess.

The donor community were also largely convinced for the support through networking channels mostly occupied by persons aged below 30. Community mobilized educational institutes were established by young people to ensure the flow of education during hard times.

Food distribution task were performed by teams equipped with young energetic people.

## **5.2. Recommendations**

Create a matrix to involve youth in multi tasks of employment and volunteerism. If the demographic dividend is used properly not only the major disasters can be cured but economic uplift can also be achieved.

Set up a task force of female volunteers to involve their share of contribution as well and to cope up with the social and religious resistance.

An official government level youth volunteer body should be established (e.g. National Volunteer Movement, Govt. of Pakistan) which will coordinate with lower level task force institute established at district level.

Design volunteer training courses and make it part of the academic curricula. The courses should include the opinions of youth that carry expertise and it should be customized towards them.

Fundraising tips modules should be circulated through the social media networks used by youthful.

A profile database, supervised by young people, of the disaster-affected people should be established to keep follow-up till complete recovery and rehabilitation.

Cross-cultural and donor support should be stressed through youth focal teams.

Access of technology to all youth should be enhanced which will result in more social networking opportunities (use of facebook and twitter) that will ultimately lead towards opening a new window of opportunity to fundraise.

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