

## Tabadlab Policy Roundtable 15 – Is Climate Change Going to Stifle Urban Growth?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7R7jkhFEns0>

### Policy Brief

South Asia is home to some of the most vulnerable countries in the world when it comes to climate change. Tabadlab Policy Roundtable hosted a conversation with experts in urban infrastructure, climate change, geography, forestry, and agriculture from Pakistan, India and Afghanistan. The panelists discussed issues of governance and planning, urban transport, water management, and the awareness of climate change in South Asia.



**Muhammad Rizwan**  
Senior Transportation  
Engineer



**Marvi Mazhar**  
Architect/Heritage Consultant



**Nastraullah Elham**  
Climate Justice Activist,  
Founder and President LPV



**Dr. Gopa Samanta**  
Professor of Geography at the  
University of Burdwan, India

### Recommendations

- Allow professionals to lead planning and implementation rather than bureaucrats
- Conduct extensive research on urban planning, mapping and climate change
- Government authorities should plan ahead for unpredictable climate shifts
- Limit public vehicles and invest in eco-friendly public transport infrastructure

### Discussion Summary

#### ● Urban Planning in Coastal Cities

With only 30 percent of India's population living in cities, the urban growth rate is high. The government needs to plan ahead for the impact of climate change on coastal cities, particularly as cyclones, flooding, and lockdowns become a stark reality. Even in Karachi, reclamation has gone unchecked with no thought to rising water levels or flooding.

#### ● Trusting the Experts

South Asian countries are held back because projects are led by bureaucrats and not professionals, especially when it comes to the improvement of drainage systems. Cities, like Karachi, need to have qualified experts devise a clear framework to tackle the planning and implementation of complex environmental issues arising. Skilled overseas Pakistanis are also a great resource to utilize for expertise.

#### ● Mapping the Neighborhood

Constant construction and cementization has led to no urban spaces being planned. Hence, the need for effective mapping and urban design is essential to plan spaces through an evidence-based approach. Cities should also plan walking and cycling paths for reduced vehicle use. They should provide good public transport systems, like buses, to reduce the use of motorcycles, and support shorter car trips.

#### ● Autonomy in Urban Governance

The 74<sup>th</sup> constitutional amendment in India has encouraged participation in urban governance. Yet funding is dependent on the state, meaning that central and local schemes mix up urban planning and infrastructure instead comes under specific departments rather than local governments. Cities also have no independent plans for tackling climate change, leaving that to the state.

#### ● Climate Change Diplomacy

Interdependence and globalization cause cities and countries to affect each other's environment through shared coastal ecosystems, rivers or even just geographical proximity. The political relations in the South Asian region are affecting the development of sustainable energy solutions.

#### ● Climate Awareness

Cities like Kabul, which are developing countries, are highly vulnerable to climate change but are, at least for now, more focused more on their economic progress and stability. Without proper awareness, the affected communities in Afghanistan are unable to stand up to governments and corporations.