

# Pakistan: Urbanization, Sustainability, & Poverty

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## Tables of Contents

### Urbanization:

Introduction	2
Causes:	
Labor & Unemployment	3
Afghan Refugees	4
Effects:	
Sanitation, Pollution, and Resources	6
Public Sector Issues	8
Limitations to Addressing Urbanization	9

### Poverty:

Introduction and Macroeconomics	11
Causes:	
Forced Migration	15
Influence/Disparity of Power (Income Gap, Feudalism, and Corruption)	16
Communal Concerns (Water, Education, Government Instability)	19
Limitations to Addressing Poverty	21

### Recommendations:

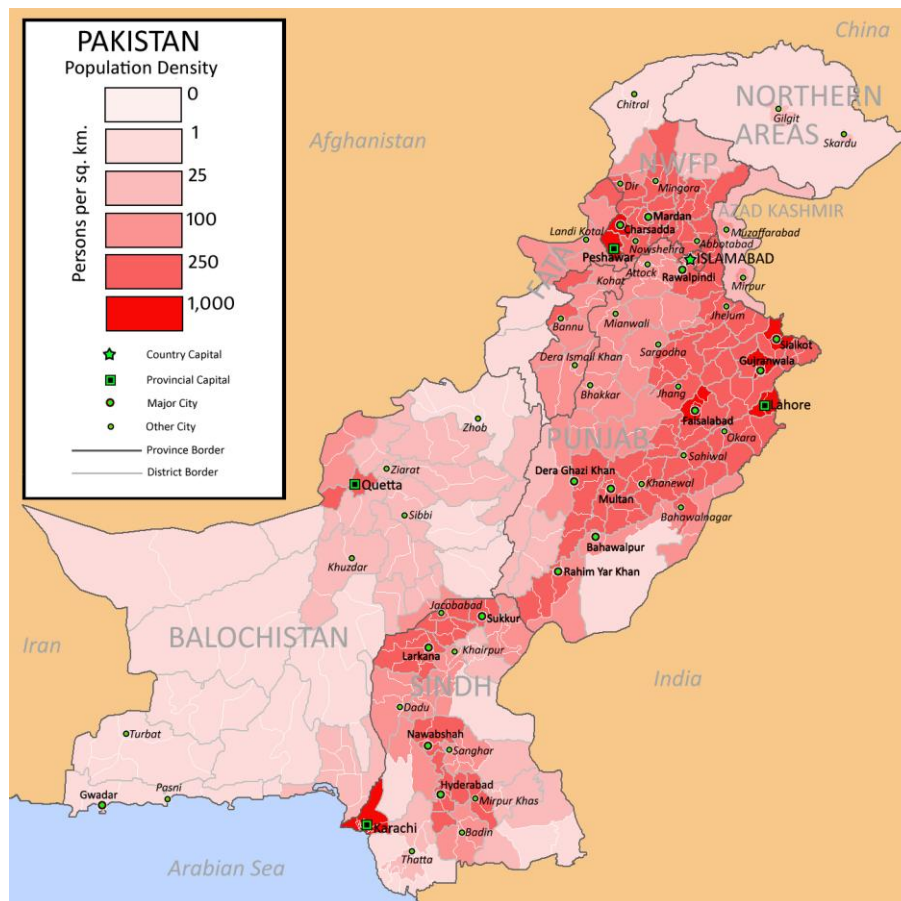
Preventative Refugee Policy	21
Water Resource Policy	22
Unilateral Program on Religious Tolerance	22

<u>Works Cited</u>	<u>24</u>
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## Urban Setting

Pakistan has the sixth largest population in the world with 174 million people and an annual population growth rate of roughly 2% as of 2010, a sharp contrast to their post-independence population of 36 million. The UN projects that come 2050 Pakistan will have a population in upwards of 300 million. Although Pakistan's current population may be just over half of the US, their land mass is only about twice the size of California. Feeding, clothing, housing, and maintaining the quality of life for this dense population is one of Pakistan's greatest challenges. A particularly troublesome challenge has been the uneven distribution.

Pakistan's uneven distribution is exemplified by the high density cities of Karachi, Lahore, and Faisalabad to the east and the sparse plains of Baluchistan as seen below.



Karachi ranks as the world's largest city, even over Shanghai, with a population of 15.5 million and a metro-area population of 18 million. Meanwhile, the entire province of Baluchistan consisting of 347,000 square kilometers only has 12 million in total. This difference is important because when policy makers try to implement social reforms, positive law changes and the like, they more often than not leave out the fringes of society.

Urbanization has been occurring at a steady annual rate of 3%, which isn't a problem in itself, however nearly 40% of the Pakistani population already live in urban areas, only adding to the congestion. "At least one-third of urban residents live in *katchi abadis* and other slums, lacking basic services"(Weiss). Nonetheless, most of this large population consist of young adults, virtually 40% of the entire Pakistani population are under the age of 15. Therefore, urbanization would not be an issue if it were not for the overcrowding that pours out into slums, the complete lack of bare-minimum services necessary for a healthy life, and the gross majority of urban residents being young adults or mere children.

### Labor & Employment

As with any developing country, one of the most important variables affecting day to day families is employment. If there is only one person in the family earning an income, their job naturally takes precedence over everything else. Cities obviously offer a better opportunity to find work no matter what part of the world you are in. However, if one lacks the necessary education required to keep a sustainable job, manual labor becomes one of the few remaining employment options left. Unfortunately as explained in our previous report, Pakistani education has severe issues that have yet to be resolved. Our previous guest speaker, Dr. Sultan-i-Rome underscored how Pakistani education is divided into three competing schools of thought with

little hope of finding a long term solution anytime soon. This has been one of the few obstructions to positive urbanization, since it decreases the available labor for skilled work and forces some 6 to 7 million children to part-time manual labor. Aside from this, the unemployed have somehow been able to find work in the city either through labor-intensive manufacturing or through simple services. Looking at the table below, it is important to note that it not represent the uncomfortably large informal market. The UN has estimated that 66% of the non-agriculturally employed have found work in this informal sector, but Pakistan estimates an even greater amount of 73%.

Employed Labor Force by Sectors ( % )						
		2006-2007		2007-08		
<u>Sector</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Rural</u>	<u>Urban</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Rural</u>	<u>Urban</u>
Agriculture	43.61	59.90	6.52	44.65	60.94	6.21
Manufacturing	13.54	9.22	23.38	12.99	8.37	23.89
Construction	6.56	6.54	6.61	6.29	6.09	6.75
Transport	5.39	4.25	7.99	5.46	4.42	7.92
Services	14.41	10.16	24.10	13.66	9.96	22.39
Others	2.06	1.10	4.24	0.10	0.03	0.26

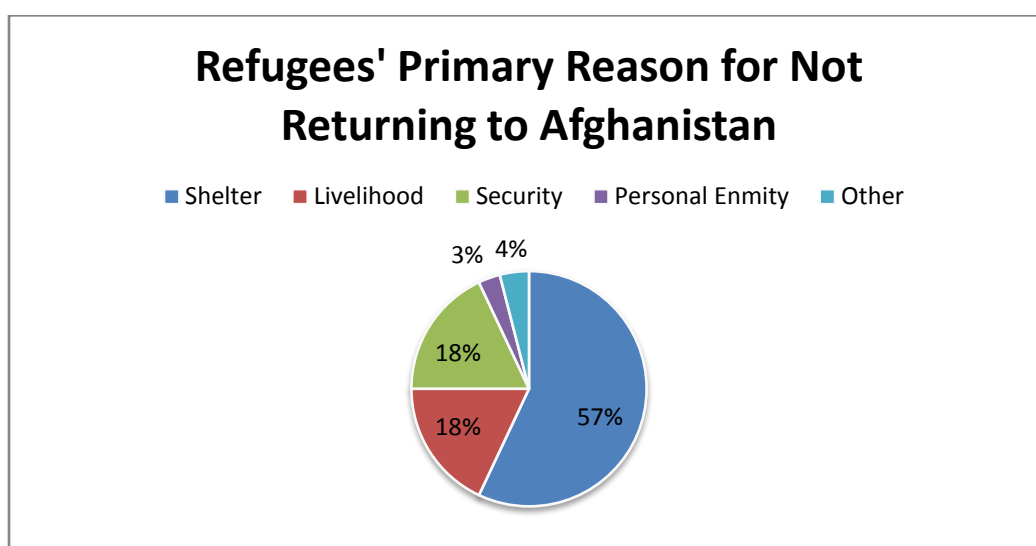
Source: Labor Force Surveys 2001-2008, Federal Bureau of Statistics *Pakistan*

### Afghan Refugees

Pakistan's neighbors, with the exception of China, are either hostile or facing major internal conflicts of their own. With these internal conflicts comes people trying to escape them. Afghanistan had been such an unsafe country that millions for many years have been pouring into Pakistan to escape. After the September 11th attacks of 2001, the U.S. became militant in their efforts to neutralize any further security threats. In an effort to combat terrorism, the U.S. invaded Afghanistan in late October and ousted the Taliban along with many other militants, forcing them to retreat to more discrete locations. "Beginning almost immediately after the



American-led invasion of October 2001, thousands of Afghans per day began streaming back into [Afghanistan]" (Kronenfeld). Once refugees saw this invasion, some felt the US presence would provide a substantial amount of security and decided to return. However, three years later *after* 3 million Afghani refugees had already returned to Afghanistan well over 3 million still remained in Pakistan. Visually this migration is easy to see, the only densely populated city in Balochistan is Quetta which is located right next to the Afghan border. Peshawar and Charsadda in the north are another set of densely populated cities located precariously close to the border. Afghans living in these urban dwellings obviously did not flee Afghanistan with much money, so they have been living intermixed with the Pakistani's slums or katchi abadis.



Source: Data from Government of Pakistan (2005: 59). Total number of 2,517,558 does not include the 531,710 respondents who said they intended to repatriate by the end of 2005.

For those who do return to Afghanistan they usually discover that their claims to land and shelter have been jeopardized, their houses destroyed in the interim of fighting without any means to rebuild or if lucky enough not to have been destroyed, inhabited by squatters in the owners absence. Thus, the incentives for refugees to stay in Pakistan are well established. The next best option that refugees have is to seek work and take advantage of Pakistan's temporary protection before anything goes wrong. Thus, not only have the over-populated cities of Pakistan

seen increased urbanization due to employment interests, they have been forced to embrace another population dump from those who are even more hungry for employment because of their war-torn history.

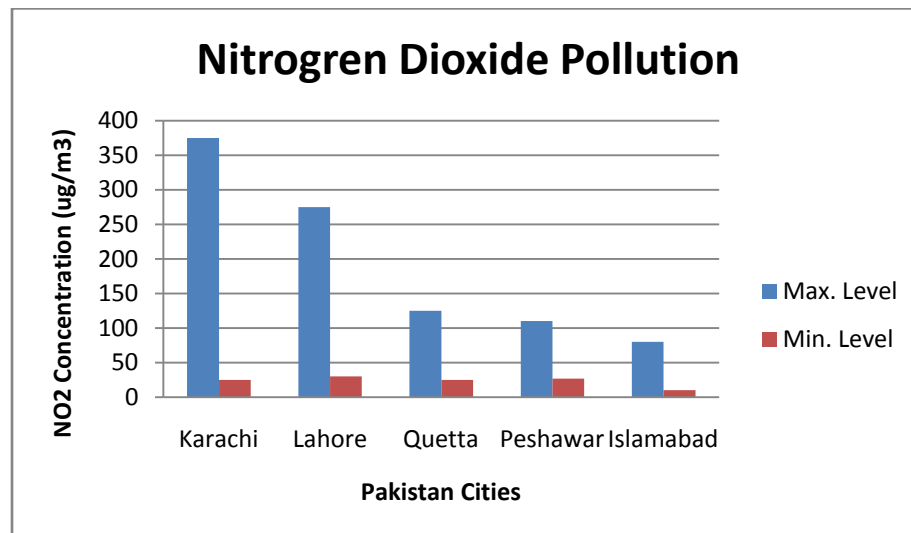
### Sanitation, Pollution, and Resources

Typically, large urban sprawls demand resources from the surrounding nearby area, and if the demand for resources is higher than the rate at which they restore, environmental degradation comes into effect and the sustainability of the city is then called into question. In general, how cities deteriorate their environments is through excessive depletion of natural resources, soil erosion, water pollution, and air pollution. For example, in Punjab, Lahore has had its fair share of water pollution issues.

Aside from the ram shackled, makeshift houses and tents that flood the area, sanitation is one of the first things an observer sees or smells. Just a few years ago, "Bucket latrines or soak pits were being used for the disposal of human excreta and open sewers for the disposal of waste water" (Khan). This severe lack of sanitation produced several diseases and viruses such as typhoid, malaria, diarrhea, dysentery, and scabies. The 0-15 year old children that live in these slums and play in the filthy lanes have fallen victim to many of these health risks. In the city of Lahore some 1,300 tons of hazardous and untreated industrial waste is dumped into the Ravi river every single day (Khan).

This crisis with water pollution by the hand of society and industry has been greatly reducing Pakistan's agricultural sector that many state is the backbone of Pakistan's economy. The polluted water has demolished annual crop yields, and in order to combat this trend farmers have stepped up usage of agro-chemicals in an attempt to combat this effect. However, in their

efforts they have sped up the process of soil erosion which is a long-term issue that takes just as long to restore, if not more. What this means is as long as the water available to farmers is contaminated, soil erosion will occur and as a result the cities will find it more difficult to feed, clothe, and employ their citizens.



Source: Pakistan-EPA/JICA, April 2006

Another formidable environmental problem is air pollution. "The density of transport has increased many folds. The present cities roads infrastructure cannot cater [to] the need of growing automobiles flow. The result is the worsening condition of ambient air quality in Pakistan cities" (EPA). In addition to the emissions from vehicles, manufacturing facilities (although a relatively small sector in Pakistan) billow forth their fair share of 'particulate matter'. "Dust and smoke particles are generally twice the world average, and five times higher than the developed world" (BBC). However, in the latest Pakistan Economic Survey the biggest increase in air pollution has been the two-stroke and diesel-powered vehicles.

As far as natural resources go, Pakistan is rich in natural gas and not much else. Thanks to the rising giant of China, one of the few countries on friendly terms, Pakistan has observed an increase in demand for energy and as a consequence, natural gas. A few other countries are



jockeying for the natural gas, but a significant consumer is still China. In response to this excess of demand, Pakistan has vigorously increased its efforts to produce natural gas and last year posted roughly 50% growth in natural gas production. What Pakistan chooses to do with the revenue could decide the future of their development. Norway for example, also has large deposits of gas at its disposal, but is saving all the returns for long term use. Pakistan could use some of the proceeds to compensate for some of the short-term issues posed by water and air pollution. The beauty of this plentiful natural gas deposit is that Pakistan finally has some hope by which they can improve their below-average quality of life. The only obstacle in their way is how best to spend the proceeds.

### Public Sector Issues

The large metropolitan populations have made living space an issue and as usual a small group of elites have made things worse. "The urban development authorities have systematically shifted public land to a privileged few by sanctioning public land to land development schemes initiated by the military and other privileged groups in the civilian setup" (Haider). Obviously, the Pakistani elite has taken a tip or two from China's urban development strategy. What this means for the average urban dweller is that they now get to see an even larger gap in inequality materialize before their eyes.

Infrastructure is not only in short supply, but is actually depreciating at a rapid rate due to overuse. Less than 1% of wastewater is actually treated due to the vast volume and limited treatment facilities, but an even clearer example is on the streets of Lahore. Here in a city of 7 million, there are fewer than 100 traffic lights, and deteriorating streets with numerous potholes. Because of the colossal amount of vehicles that swarm the city every day, severe traffic congestion has become a norm, placing a serious impediment on commerce efficiency.

### Limitations to Addressing Urbanization

There have been several attempts to help Pakistan's population and urbanization problem, one of the more well known projects was the Orangi Pilot Project initiated in the late 1980's. Orangi is a small portion of the vast Karachi city consisting mostly of urban slums. The project proved extremely successful in its attempt to improve sanitation issues. The community-owned, community-managed infrastructure upgrading program used a strategy of self-reliance to achieve their goals. By minimizing external support and getting local households to help themselves through cooperation, the organization no longer depended on the whim of various donors but the will of the people themselves. On this note there has also been a handful of occurrences of micro-finance lending. However, everything has its limits and this is no exception. A rudimentary list might include economic, functional, but most importantly corruption limitations.

It is a well-known fact that developing countries that lack objective institutions of regulation tend to face a large corruption problem. It is an over-arching shadow that distances Pakistan from its developmental goals. Meanwhile, despite the economic limits of money and resources, there also persists a functional limitation in the forms of transportation and legality to name a few. There is only so far you can go with such hindrances before it becomes particularly important to look for foreign investment.

Afghan migrants have fled to Pakistan, and show very few signs of ever returning. Pakistan has realized that if they cannot send the Afghans back, then they might as well assimilate them into Pakistani society. In 2005, they "issued temporary identity documents allowing Afghans to continue to use minimal health and educational facilities they currently have, as well as the possibility of working in Pakistan"(Kronenfeld). This improvement has given

Pakistan relatively cheap labor, but almost all Afghans still wire money back home on a regular basis to relatives and friends. The world bank estimated a high figure of \$4 billion in revenue lost to Afghanistan. Pakistan may have been able to put the Afghans to work, but there is only so much they can do to retain that value added.

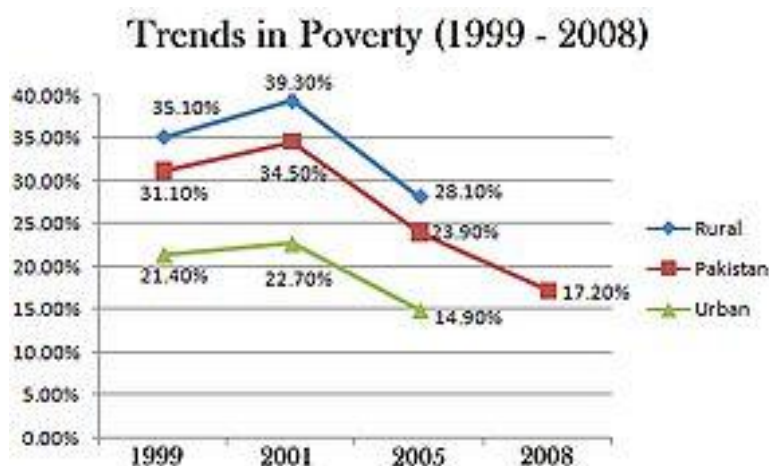
If Pakistan could address the issue of unemployment and standard of living they might be able to at the very least slow the rate of urbanization by diffusing the biggest reason people migrate to cities in the first place, a need for employment opportunities. Yet the very barrier to their objectives is the population itself. Due to the numbers of people there has existed a dilution of economic gain, an increase in landlessness as plots get divided and subdivided among children, and an overstretching of social services almost to the point of rendering them semi-useless. But even though this monumental task Pakistan has before them verges on the edge of near impossible, measurable progress has been made in recent years and there is always more to come.

### Poverty in Scope

Currently, Pakistan faces some serious economic problems. Unfortunately, there is no singular, direct answer to the causes which plague the regions in Pakistan. Many impoverished citizens struggle due to either one devastating problem or a complex blend of rampant social issues. However there is hope, as significant progress has been underway to curtail many problems, namely in 2002-2005, some with measureable success. The following paragraphs will describe the overall situation, while the latter sections will address some of the specific causes to poverty in Pakistan.

According to the Pakistani Center for Poverty Reduction backed by the United Nations Development Program, the poverty level as of the 2007-2008 year is at 17.20% (The News), the

lowest in Pakistan's history. While this is great news for Pakistanis, it should be noted that this figure is still under debate regarding its legitimacy, as it was calculated from the government's Social and Living Standards Measurement Survey (SLSMS) which has been under some scrutiny for their involvement with tampering evidence (Pakistan Daily).



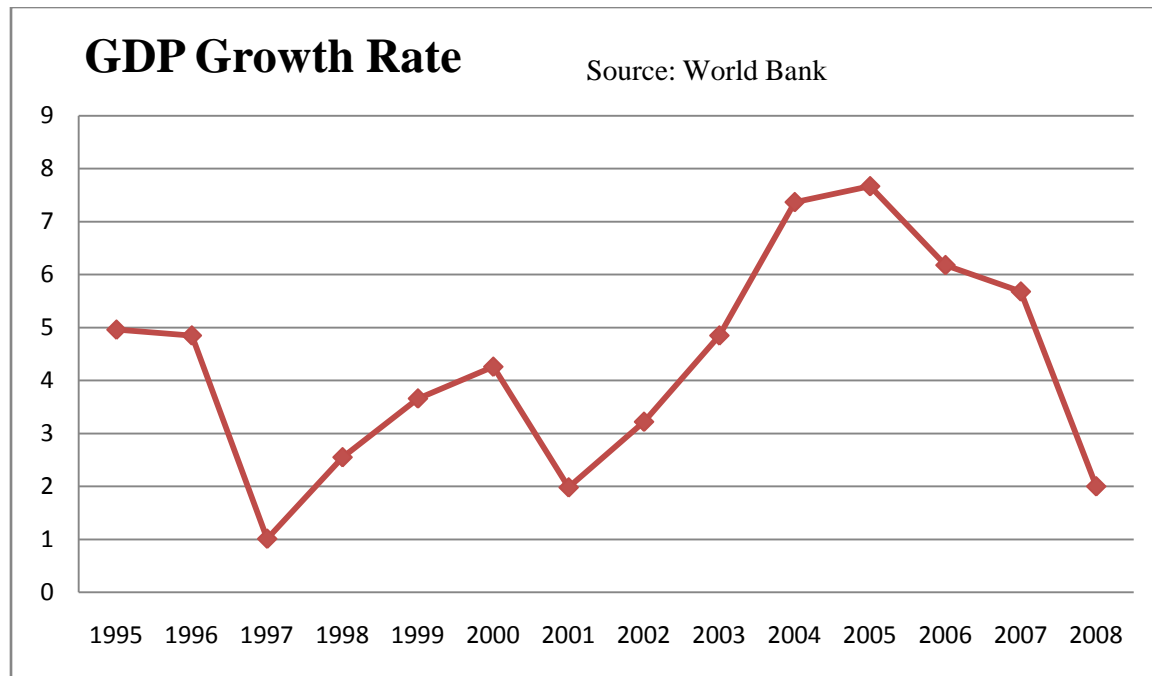
Statistics from the 2009 Human Development Report put Pakistan with 22.6% of the population surviving on only \$1.25 a day and 60.3% on only \$2 a day. Also, the Human Development Index places Pakistan at .572 which is below India (.612), but above Nepal (.553) and Bangladesh (.543).

Further insight into the Human Development Index by province was done by the Asian Development Bank in 2002. This information is somewhat outdated, however it provides evidence to the large gap between urban and rural poverty. Below you can see that by and large most of the poverty comes from the more rural areas in Pakistan and should be the focus of legislative expenditures.

Ranking of Provinces by Urban/Rural and Overall Human Development Index		
Name	HDI	HDI Rank
Sindh (urban)	0.659	1

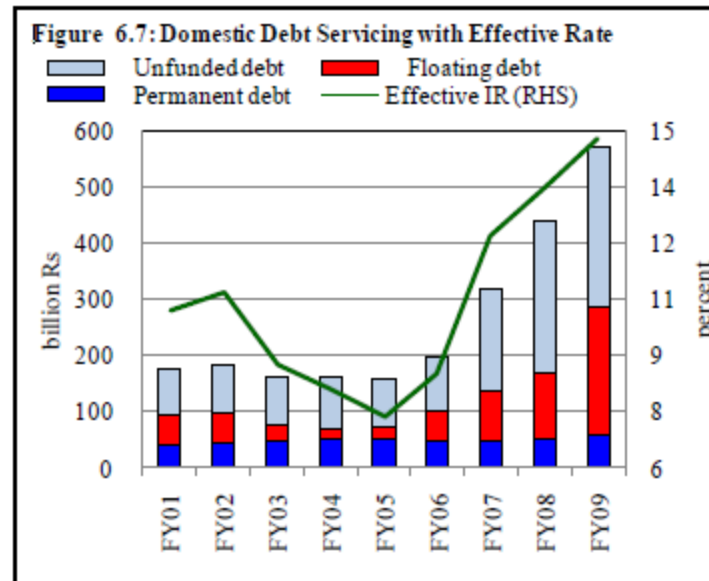
Punjab (urban)	0.657	2
NWFP (urban)	0.627	3
Balochistan (urban)	0.591	4
Punjab (rural)	0.517	5
NWFP (rural)	0.489	6
Balochistan (rural)	0.486	7
Sindh (rural)	0.456	8
Punjab	0.557	1
Sindh	0.540	2
NWFP	0.510	3
Balochistan	0.499	4
Pakistan (Urban)	0.656	1
Pakistan	0.541	2
Pakistan (Rural)	0.496	3

GDP has been fairly resilient over the past decade, as there has been consistent growth even with the onset of several potentially-crippling events like the Asian Financial Crisis, global recessions, post 9/11 reactions, and drastic changes in oil/food prices. To a large degree, the actions put forth by former President Pervez Musharraf have helped steer the country in the right direction. Pakistan was even recognized by the World Bank as being the top economic reformer of the South Asia and in the top 10 globally overall in 2006 (World Bank). What can be seen from the graph below is a significant increase in GDP starting from 2001 (Musharraf enters office) and continuing on until 2008 (Musharraf exits office). Keep in mind, 2008 was a bad year for any country due to the global-wise recession.



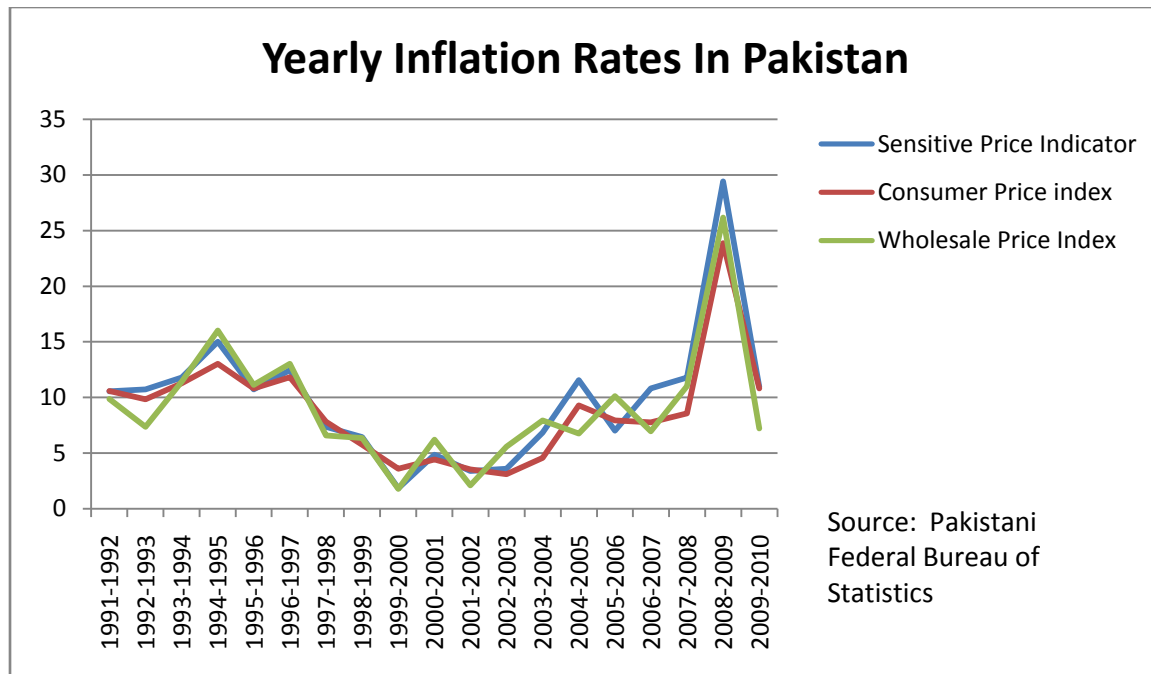
FDI is another topic with considerable success. Some notable years of FDI spending include 2002, which stood at a paltry \$484.7 million, jumping to an impressive \$3.52 billion in 2006, taking in over 7 times the amount in only 4 years (Bank of Pakistan). Progress has continued as in 2008 FDI was recorded at \$5.38 billion (World Bank). On the other hand, debt is something that has been on the other side of the spectrum, having ever increasing amounts of debt with coming years. In 2005, the government issued a Fiscal Responsibility and Debt Limitation Act in order to recognize, plan, and attack this problem and set a goal for the coming years.





The above graph gives a good representation of the broad scope of the banking climate with Pakistan. It shows the continuous rise in debt resulting in an increase in interest rates. This alarming rate in the latter years will need to be addressed in order to maintain a stable economy which is needed to alleviate poverty. If it continues, investment will surely dwindle as it loses its appeal to foreign appeal.

One last macroeconomic detail that should be mentioned is the issue of inflation. The importance of looking at these numbers gives evidence to the purchasing power citizens have with the Pakistani Rupee. From the chart below, it can be seen that the largest problem was during the 2008 fiscal year. Based off of news accounts, the reason for this came as panic set in after speculation arose that former President Musharraf would be impeached out of office (BBC News). This uncertainty caused investors to quickly pull out due to fear of a another chaotic regime change. Also while not displayed below, in recent months inflation has spiked again due to security concerns and the war on terror, disrupting food, gas, and communication prices (Reuters).



### Causes of Poverty: Forced Migration

One aspect of Pakistani poverty which can't be ignored is the subject of forced migration, be it through natural disasters, religious tensions, or armed conflict. Pakistan is home to the world's largest amount of recognized refugees and internally displaced persons at 1.8 million people in 2008 (UNHCR). This doesn't include the additional millions which have resided within the country temporarily and later found permanent living within Pakistan or returned home. Refugees relate to the issue with poverty due to their need for aid/necessities, lack of sustainable income, and impact on social welfare.

In 2005 a large earthquake hit the Pakistan-administered region of Kashmir resulting in a death toll of over 80,000 people and over 4 million left homeless. Those who survived were unable to leave the area for quite some time as transportation and communications were cut off due to the more mountainous landscape. Even to this day, villages like Muzaffarabad struggle to recuperate from the intense losses (USGS).

The War in Afghanistan is another such issue that has brought on millions of immigrants in and out of Pakistan. While this has been considerably covered in the previous chapters, it should be recognized that since the start of Operation Enduring Freedom in October of 2001, the large influx of Afghan refugees entering Pakistan has severely disrupted food and water prices. By location, a large percentage of these refugees find themselves in NWFP or in Balochistan located in camps which have been sporadically closed/repatriated (UNHCR). This continuous flow of concentrated Afghani exodus will only reinforce poverty, helplessness, and anger within the western side of Pakistan.

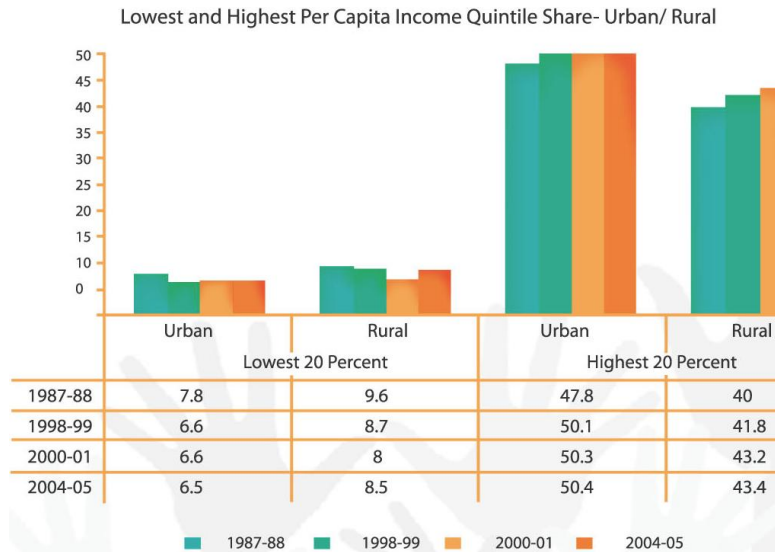
One other reoccurring refugee problem deals with the Taliban conflicts which occur throughout Pakistan, displacing many from their homes with nowhere to go. While there are numerous instances of conflicts between the Taliban and the Pakistani military; the recent crisis in 2009 after Operation Black Thunderstorm emphasizes this point. As reaction to the end of temporary ceasefire in certain regions of NWFP, the Pakistani military went in to take back areas once held by the Taliban (Washington Post). This resulted in over 2.2 million people to be displaced from the area and a scramble for aid to support those in need (Dawn). If this kind of intermittent firefights continue, there will always be an impact to the citizens of Pakistan economically as well as socially.

### Influence/Disparity of Power

Next, the subject matter relating to the causes of poverty is going to look at how things like income inequality, tribal leaders, feudalism, and corruption influence poverty in Pakistan.

The purpose of this section will highlight how stratified the classes within Pakistan are, and how this difference effects the poor and disempowered.

Income inequality is an issue that that been steadily increasing over the years. As seen by the graph below, this is an issue rooted deep in Pakistani history.



Source: Poverty Assessment Update

While the income gap can be attributed to a number of reasons, the root cause for this lies in the feudalist nature of rural society. At this time, Pakistan is deep within a culture where a few rich families own and control hundreds or thousands of acres around their estates. These families typically do not work on the lands themselves, for which they leave that to the indentured tenants and peasants. This results in a widespread poverty as many laborers are locked into debt and are stuck under control. By having this immense power over villages, these landowners tend to flex their economic and social might by influencing the political and judicial realm (The News). Often times, politicians court and woo these families in order to obtain government jobs while ignoring the poor masses. Commonly, these landowners also find themselves having final say

over local disputes and injustice. For example honor killings, like the 5 women in Balochistan who buried alive in 2008, often go unnoticed due to local leaders control over police and communications (USA News). This kind of feudalism severely hinders a citizen's ability to obtain adequate justice for themselves and others, leading to social unrest and resentment.

Corruption it seems, plays a much larger role than just at the local level. Even looking historically at the highest levels of government, problems have persisted. Benazir Bhutto and her husband (now current president Asif Ali Zardari) were convicted of money laundering in 2003 (New York Times). Add that with allegations of pocketing money from Swiss companies for government deals, as well as other French contractors for military defense (New York Times). There have been incidents of Zardari buying millions of dollars worth of clothing, jewelry, and estates with money he supposedly did not have; hiding money in various other bank accounts; allegations of assassinating businessmen and his wife's brother-in-law; and recently he cleaned out his office of all his wife's officials who've had to deal with Zardari throughout Bhutto's reign (BBC News). Adding it up all, Zardari has spent over 11 years in jail for various charges of corruption and other illegal activities. There was also former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif who was ousted from government by Pervez Musharraf through the use of corruption charges and hijacking after he attempted to dismiss Musharraf from his Army Staff General position. Eight years later however, the court decision on this subject was acquitted by the courts (Dawn). Pervez Musharraf was also accused of planning this supposed hijacking as well as a long list of violations resulting in his forced resignation in 2008 (Dawn). This only touches on the seemingly unending list of corruption charges in Pakistan.

It's apparent that corruption in Pakistan is a serious problem. In 2009, Transparency International puts Pakistan as the 42nd most corrupt out of 180 countries. A great deal of unrest

had occurred after the 2007 National Reconciliation Ordinance was deemed unconstitutional by court justices in 2008. This act was meant to provide protection from politicians from charges against them occurring in 1986-1999 (BBC News). This would have allowed the safety of many former and current top officials from being charged, however now it looks to have backfired as it brought light to the current president's dark history (Dawn). Looking back at Pakistan's political environment, corruption is a common tool for politicians to use on another to instigate regime change which has sadly developed an atmosphere where corruption is admissible.

### Communal Concerns

This last analysis of the reasons to poverty will only touch on some of the large problems that have not yet been mentioned. The likes of which include the lack of antiquate water sources, lack of education services, and government policy/stability.

As it is well-known throughout history, improvements to water systems and irrigation have always gone hand-in-hand with improvements to the standard of living. In Pakistan, 90% of available water is used towards agriculture and irrigation, leaving citizens with the remaining 10% for drinking and sanitation (Kugelman). On top of that, the world bank has recently reported that Pakistan stands as one of the top water stressed nations in the world next to Egypt and South Africa (The News). Having this kind of shortage in accessible and clean drinking water will only limit the amount of improvements that can be done the in impoverished areas. The Pakistani government has taken some steps to improve the water systems like the National Sanitation Policy, implementing a National Drinking Water Policy which looks to set quality standards, and other initiatives meant for overall improvement. Unfortunately, these bills and acts correlated



little to impacting the poor quality and service, since over 3 million people still get waterborne infections throughout the country, resulting in 1.2 million deaths annually (Managing Karachi).

Obtaining useful education is another issue which hinders the upward growth for the impoverished in Pakistan. While the absence of decent education is an obvious factor in poverty, the table below displays the depth of this issue.

Level of Education (%) Source: Bureau of Statistics	2006-2007			2007-2008		
	Total	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women
<b>Literate</b>	<b>55.0</b>	<b>67.0</b>	<b>42.4</b>	<b>56.2</b>	<b>68.2</b>	<b>43.6</b>
No formal education	0.2	0.3	0.2	0.4	0.4	0.4
Below Matric	36.2	43.8	28.3	36.5	43.7	28.9
Matric but less than Intermediate	10.3	12.9	7.6	10.7	13.4	7.9
Intermediate but less than Degree	4.5	5.4	3.5	4.6	5.6	3.6
Degree and above	3.7	4.6	2.8	4.0	5.1	2.8
<b>Illiterate</b>	<b>45.0</b>	<b>33.0</b>	<b>57.6</b>	<b>43.8</b>	<b>31.8</b>	<b>56.4</b>

Lastly, poor governance and problems with stability impair the public sector to do anything worthwhile to the citizens of Pakistan. The continuous shift between democratic and military governments creates too much unrest in administration to actually implement any long-term goals. Add this with multiple regimes constantly fighting for power, and it's easy to see how policies set in place by former leaders are soon forgotten. if not reversed. Another problem is the lack of transparency and involvement with budgeting in the government. What happens too often is the political elites set forth ordinances and acts aimed to fix certain things, but little oversight of the projects are done and result in little outcome. For instance, there is a large amount of absenteeism within health and education jobs, because there is no solid form of infrastructure that is needed to maintain proper behavior. Also, there are institutions put in place by officials like schools which only exist on paper and not on the ground. A strong government needs to be in place to ensure that all stages of alleviating the poor are put into motion.

### Limitation to Addressing Poverty

First and foremost, the Pakistani government is the determining factor to how far poverty can be alleviated. It's true that the other issues mentioned thus far are important, but implementation and action needed to improve them require a system of government and an infrastructure strong enough to see that long-term policies are enacted and maintained. Right now, there isn't one in place. What's in place is a regime aiming to solidify its power through military might, instigating ethnic and sectarian fervor, and attempting to undermine other parties through means of corruption. There needs to be a change in the way democracy is done in Pakistan so that they can shift spending toward things other than the military and issue much-needed reforms on land, water, education, and electricity. Once progress is made, officials will have the necessary accountability required to empower citizens to strike back at apathy.

### SAARC Recommendation: Preventative Refugee Policy

It is our humble opinion that SAARC, in order to better handle the current influx of migrants as well as possible future migrants from inhospitable countries in a reasonable regional scope, should set up a multilateral emergency relief fund among member nations for immediate relief resources and infrastructural programs. The infrastructural programs would be an on-going project that would benefit permanent residents in addition to alleviating pressure from large swells of population. The immediate relief resources would work as an effective first response to real-time situations through which providing SAARC member's with crucial time to summon greater relief efforts as deemed necessary. We believe that if SAARC proceeds to implement these two programs, each country will benefit immediately and in the long run by improving their abilities to absorb vast quantities of people with the means to also properly manage it. It has

been said that one should prepare for the worst and hope for the best; if SAARC could efficiently and effectively prepare for the worst all that would be left is to hope for the best.

#### SARC Recommendation: Water Resource Policy

As mentioned previously, better access to clean water is a necessity for the Pakistani people. For over 50 years, Pakistan and India have managed to set aside their differences and abide by a treaty set forth since partition regarding access to the Indus River water supply. Unfortunately the Indus River has now come under dispute, as India has been increasing the amount of dams along the river, causing a major disruption in the flow and availability of useable water for Pakistanis. Our recommendation to SAARC would be to first setup a member-binding committee dealing specifically on the issue of water scarcity and equal access. With this committee, there should be arbitration by unaffiliated SAARC members to resolve potential issues like the Indus River. If this project were to become successful, future endeavors could include more modern and advanced water treatment facilities.

#### SAARC Recommendation: Unilateral Program on Religious Tolerance

Our last recommendation to SAARC is to setup a program that looks to curb religions and ethnic extremism that plagues Pakistan and the rest of South Asia. For decades, religious and ethnic groups have historically been in conflict. Examples of this include the Kashmir conflict, the Taliban conflicts, the longstanding disempowerment of women, countless riots and attacks on religious buildings, and much more. What is needed from this program is a method of educating people that other ways of life are not wrong, just different. This program has to enlighten South Asians that without forgiveness and acceptance, pain and suffering will continue. One potential

method of spreading this message would be through the use of programs like the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP). Through this program (or ones like it), organizers can communicate with the beneficiaries to emphasize tolerance through means of seminars, one-on-one discussions, or prerequisites. Hopefully, this program will gradually effect society's perception on other walks of life.

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