

Youth Participation In Post-Flood Governance (2025): Opportunities And Barriers In Punjab, Pakistan

Fareeha Amjad
fareehaamjad63@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The research paper explores the significant role of youth organization regarding post- flood governance in 2025. Further, the study not only highlights the nature of their involvement in recovery planning but also identifies key factors that both hinder and promote their active participation. Besides government-led initiatives, this research also makes a significant contribution to participatory governance and disaster management in Punjab, Pakistan.

Moreover, it critically examines the policy framework involving youth engagement to demonstrate how volunteer networks were assembled during this crisis. It also highlights the essential contributions of youth in recovery efforts. By using Chironi, Della Porta and Milan's (2024) framework of crisis participation and Hart's Ladder of Participation, this study deeply examines the different barriers, such as institutional distrust, rigid bureaucratic systems, gender norms and short-term-based projects, which continuously affect the meaningful participation of youth organizations in the crisis response.

Likewise, the research uses a qualitative design to analyze the grey literature, policy briefs and disaster management reports produced by humanitarian organizations such as Al-Khidmat Foundation and Relief Web during and after the 2025 monsoon season. Despite the government initiatives, youth mobilization continues to be framed through volunteerism rather than formal policymakers. Consequently, young people remained absent from district coordination bodies, policy formulation and planning committees that actually shaped the post -flood recovery. Overall, this research offers evidence-based insights to advance more inclusive and effective disaster governance models for future emergencies.

Keywords: Youth Participation, Flood 2025, Disaster Management, Barriers, Grey Literature, Participatory Governance

INTRODUCTION

As weather patterns are changing all over the world, climate change has led to greater environmental variability, with floods becoming ever more frequent and intense. These floods are driven by rising temperatures, increased glacial melting, shifting precipitation patterns, and coastal erosion. The impacts of such floods are massive, damaging socio-economic stability and the environmental situation worldwide. Pakistan, in particular, has been at the forefront of experiencing the severe effects of these climatic disruptions. Further, the recent 2025 floods in Punjab, Pakistan, proved to be one of the most devastating events in history, exposing in-depth institutional weaknesses within the governance system of the province and causing the deaths of numerous people. Various cities and villages of Punjab were targeted by heavy monsoon rainfall, ruining the infrastructure of the province. Due to the deprived urban planning system, along with flash floods and heavy rainfall of the recent monsoon season, the cross-border dam water and release from reservoirs resulted in water reaching full capacity, particularly in the rivers of Ravi, Sutlej, and Chenab. This incident not only tested the credibility of government institutions but also highlighted the role of youth organizations in governance and the recovery processes. In this research, the term "youth" is defined according to the common ground of the United Nations.

Youth is defined as individuals who at the age of 15 to 24, leave mandatory schooling and begin to seek their first employment opportunities. Furthermore, regarding Pakistan, the National Human Development Report for 2017 defines youth as those aged 15 to 29. However, age is often used as the simplest way to define youth group, particularly when related to important milestones such as completing education or entering the workforce. Youth organizations play a crucial role in engaging young people in different disaster management projects. For instance, during the 2025 Punjab floods, youth organizations were actively involved, providing rapid damage assessment and the distribution of emergency aid (ReliefWeb, 2025). Their dedication, energy, and grassroots engagement show the immense potential for participatory governance, especially in a 2025 post-flood context, where rebuilding requires civic engagement as well as institutional capacity. Youth organizations and volunteer networks took on many responsibilities during the 2025 floods, not just handing out emergency supplies. They provided food, water, shelter materials, medical help, and other essentials to people in need. For instance, Alkhidmat Foundation's flood report from 14 July to 23 August 2025 noted 7,934 volunteers, 141 emergency rescue operations, 655 people rescued, and large-scale distribution of food, water, shelter, and medical aid in Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Gilgit-Baltistan.

Hence, this introduction establishes the demographic, social, and institutional significance of youth participation in Punjab's post-flood context. It also identifies gaps in current research and sets the stage for a closer look at how young people can contribute to the disaster management process. The following sections explore the policy framework, NGO reports and the real-world operational experiences of youth organizations during and after the floods.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Punjab's Disaster Context and Governance

Due to numerous river systems crossing the Punjab, its geographical location remains at extreme risk of seasonal flooding. In the past, because of a lack of efficient coordination, institutional readiness and enduring deficiencies in community involvement, the floods of 2010 and 2022 left a devastating impact (Relief Web, 2025). In the 2025 floods, similar systemic difficulties were noticed, which resulted in devastating tremors in significant areas across Punjab province, including Muzaffargarh, Layyah, Sialkot, Rajanpur, Dera Ghazi Khan, and others (Relief Web, 2025). For disaster management in Punjab, two authorities are responsible for developing, coordinating, and carrying out the policies, named as The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) and its provincial equivalent, the Provincial Disaster Management Authority Punjab (PDMA). In addition, Pakistan's National Disaster Risk Reduction Framework (NDRRF) offers a core framework during emergencies, but the actual practice still revolves around administrative and accountability issues (Relief Web, 2025).

Recently, the Government took an initiative to train 2 million people about disaster risk management, primarily focused on youth as stakeholders, under the program named the Prime Minister's Youth Program (PMYP) (Dawn, 2025). The foremost humanitarian non-governmental organizations (NGOs) which supported these policy initiatives were the Pak volunteers, Rescued 1122 clubs and Al-Khidmat Foundation. They played a crucial role during the unusual circumstances and crisis. They not only offered necessary help such as temporary shelter, but also their efforts were focused on providing emergency aid and saving as many lives as possible (Relief Web, 2025). Similarly, to encourage citizens to adopt eco-friendly practices, particularly students, women, youth and communities, the Chief Minister's Green Credit Program (CMPGCP) was introduced, which motivates young people to involve actively in

environmental and rehabilitation projects while subsequently rewarding them for taking quantifiable green acts. Therefore, these initiatives are a great symbol of the importance of resilience efforts for demonstrating these growing policies at both Federal and provincial levels. Figure 01 shows the in-depth analysis report by ReliefWeb; the graph shows the number of households that were damaged during the 2025 flood across different districts of Punjab.

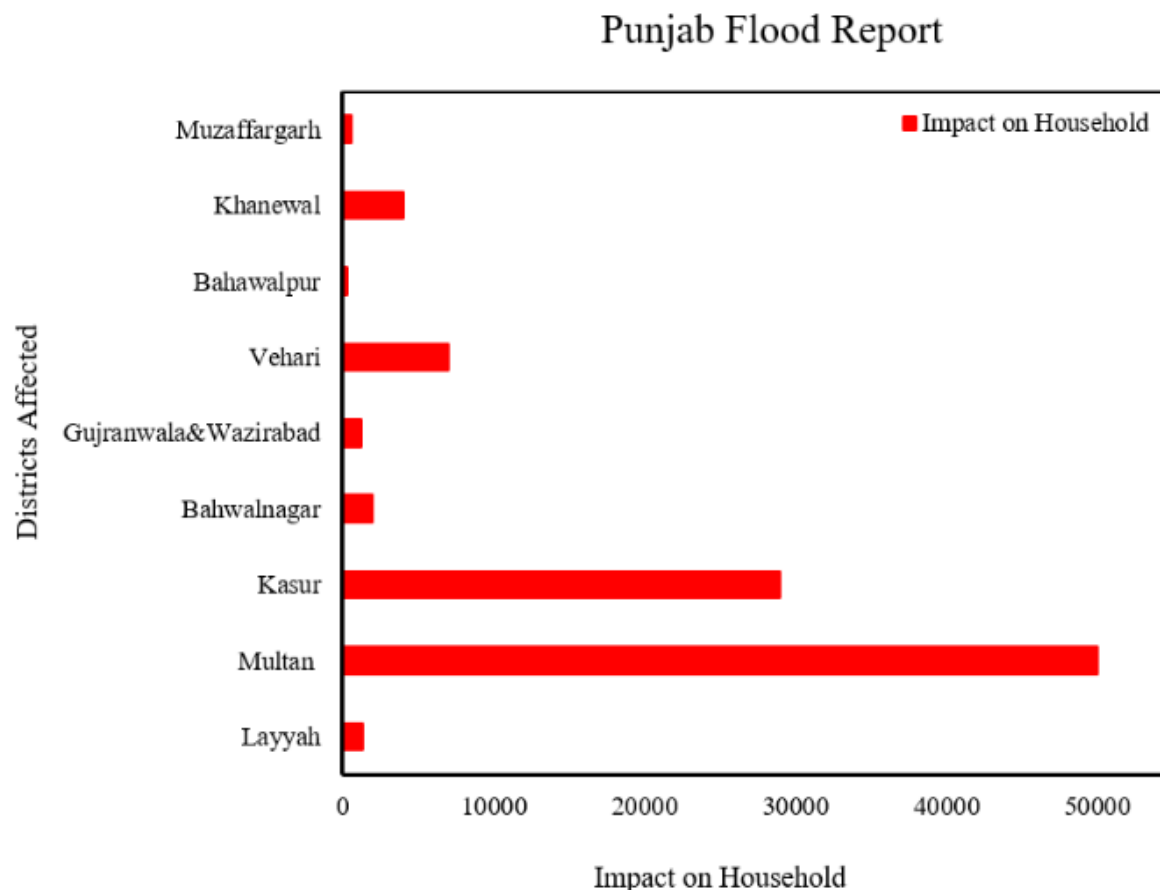


Figure 01. Analytical report on situational impact of flood disaster 2025 on Punjab Districts

Youth Participation and Civic Engagement in Time of Crisis

Scholars have evidently explored crisis as a catalyst for youth engagement in social and political circles. According to Daniela Chironi, Donatella della Porta, and Chiara Milan (2024), in times of crisis, youth involvement can be rallied by challenging traditional systems and enabling young people to assert new means of influence. Despite this, they argue that unless governmental institutions actively design and implement inclusive mechanisms, participation tends to remain merely symbolic. Similarly, Fernandez and Shaw (2013) emphasise that youth can play a transformative role in disaster risk reduction (DRR), citing the Philippines as an example. Likewise, youth-led humanitarian organizations in Pakistan, such as the Al-Khidmat Foundation, Pak Volunteers, and Rescued 1122 Youth Clubs, played a vital role in responding to the floods. They mobilized thousands of volunteers in South Punjab, focusing on

establishing temporary shelters, delivering clean water, and conducting rescue operations (Al-Khidmat Foundation, 2025).

Integration of Youth Organizations in Post-Flood Governance

Youth groups can play a vital role in conducting various stages of the post-flood recovery process, such as damage assessment, ration distribution, emergency aid, reconstruction, and policy learning. Relief Web 2025 and the NDMA 2025 Punjab reports also highlight the roles of youth groups in conducting rapid assessments of affected communities, coordinating with NGOs, and supporting the rehabilitation campaigns. Moreover, current collaborations among PDMA Punjab, NGOs such as the Al Khidmat Foundation, and youth programs under the PMYP highlight the importance of networking. Likewise, the Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS) runs a Youth and Volunteer programme that builds youth networks across the country for emergency response, community awareness, rescue, relief, and disaster-risk reduction. Which is led by the Youth and Volunteer Officers Punjab and supported by 10 volunteers, the assessment team visited different villages of Jhang to check living conditions and find out what the community needs most. They used the KoboCollect app to gather detailed information from 30 families affected by floods to understand the damage and what is needed for recovery.

Theoretical Insights

Globally, active youth participation in post-crisis governance strategies has gained traction through frameworks that prioritize resilience and inclusiveness. Fernandez and Shaw's (2013) Philippines case study also demonstrates that youth involvement improves rehabilitation procedures and fortifies long-term readiness. This policy evaluation also examined the role of the Sangguniang Kabataan (SK), which are the youth councils at the village level in Infanta and Makati. The results show a significant gap between the policy's intended goals and its actual implementation. Further, national law requires teenagers to participate in Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), but the authors found two major problems that limit their involvement. First, many lack knowledge about the legal system. Second, there are financial limitations. Fernandez and Shaw (2013) explain that for participation to be more than a formality, we need strong institutions, adequate funding, and targeted teaching on legal and procedural issues. Moreover, research on participatory governance shows that young people play an important role in post-crisis situations and can influence decisions during recovery and reconstruction, rather than simply accepting institutional choices. Therefore, we should evaluate government responses—like the one after the floods in Punjab—not just on how aid was distributed, but also on how well they encouraged young people to take part in the recovery process.

In a nutshell, this literature argues that involving young people in official decision-making processes through advisory councils, leadership roles, and inclusion quotas can turn disaster management into a proactive resilience environment. International frameworks such as the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR, 2024) also require this adjustment to promote youth leadership as change

agents. Besides, Youth organisations must be given a needed seat on advisory councils when these councils are formed or when inclusion quotas are used in provincial and district decision-making. The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC, 2025) endorsed this approach and ensured that youth issues, often overlooked in traditional settings, were incorporated into post-flood planning and budgeting. Hence, promoting leadership roles helps balance power in participation efforts and allows young people to volunteer and be involved in decision-making.

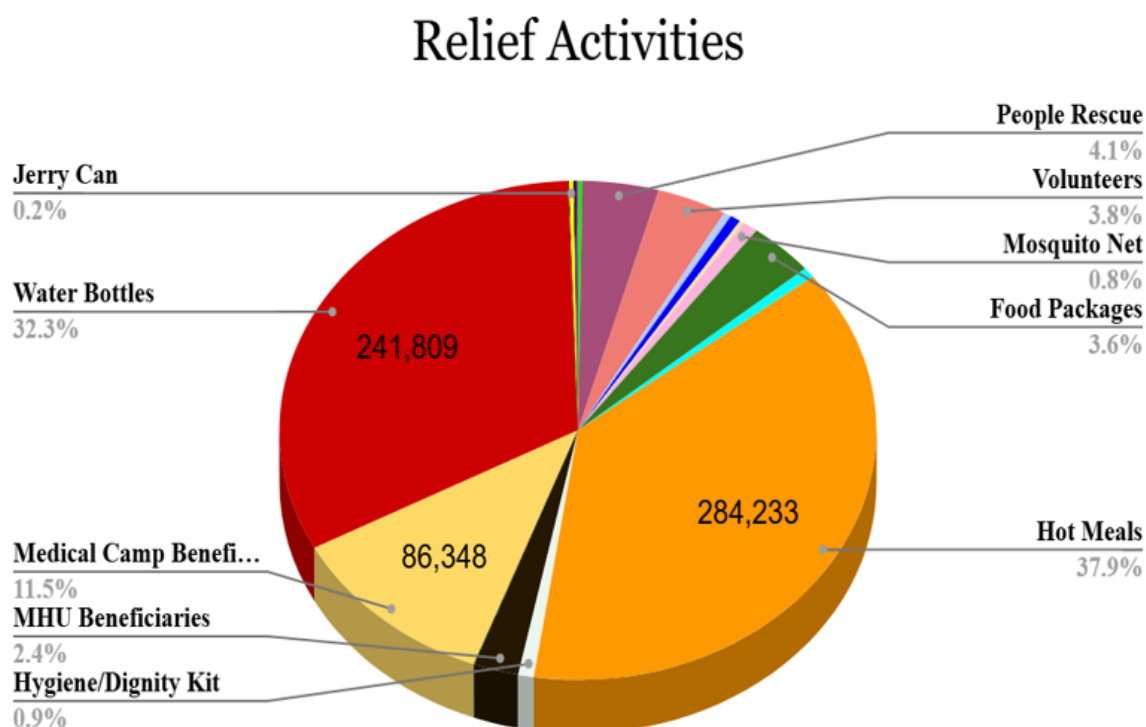


Fig. 2: The report for relief activities conducted by Alkhidmat Foundation across Punjab during the Flood Disaster (2025)

METHODOLOGY

This paper discusses to what extent Punjab youth organizations participated in post-flood governance and recovery planning following the 2025 floods, and what factors have empowered or hindered their meaningful participation.

Moreover, the focus of this research is to find out how well youth organizations are involved in recovery planning and disaster management situations after floods in Punjab. The study will identify the barriers and challenges that were faced by the youth during and after monsoon floods in different districts of Punjab.

Research design

This research utilizes a qualitative analysis rooted in an interpretive approach. This is justified because the research questions assess the “meaningfulness” and “extent” of youth participation and are solely focused on subjective experiences and institutional understanding rather than quantitative methods. The interpretive approach allows for the exploration of post-flood context, recognizing that policy-based documents and organizational reports require critical reading to uncover underlying patterns of inclusion and exclusion.

As the research relies exclusively on Grey Literature (policy documents, NGO reports, civil society assessments) for the following main reasons: Timeliness and Relevance. To analyze the 2025 floods and immediate post-disaster response, the relevant organizational reports from IFRC and UNDP, and local NGOs are mandatory to understand the current institutional practices within the province of Punjab. Unlike the traditional scholarly database, grey literature is often posted by government institutes (e.g., on the PDMA website or ReliefWeb), which ensures transparency and wider accessibility.

Data Sources:

As per the scholarly context of this research, data sources are limited to publicly accessible documents. Focusing on the Punjab province’s flood response, all the documents must have been created from the beginning of August/September 2025 to October 2025. These sources are categorized as follows: Government bodies: PDMA, NDMA and relevant governmental initiatives, e.g., PMYP and CMPGCP. International Governmental Organizations e.g., IFRC, UNDP and UNICEF. Local NGOs/Civil Society: Annual reports, blog posts, and operational summaries. (e.g., Al-Khidmat Foundation and Relief Web)

Data Analysis:

The research will employ a multi-layered qualitative and thematic analysis to examine factors that enable or hinder youth participation. Finding recurrent patterns and pointing central themes are part of this approach. On the other hand, discourse analysis will critically evaluate how youth are portrayed in policy narratives whether as volunteers, passive beneficiaries, or formal policymakers. For this, the first step demands examining grey literature to identify recurring behaviours of youth using Chironi, della Porta,

and Milan's (2024) crisis participation framework, which examines youth involvement through three primary analytical dimensions: structural context, political capacity, and contestation as they will serve like groundwork for the core data analysis.

Political capacity includes the internal resources and organizational skills required for youth actors to mobilize and develop workable solutions, such as organizational expertise, effective networking, and funding access. Structural context refers to institutional rules, legal access, and policy obligations. Contestation addresses the nature of youth engagement in immediate responses, such as tokenistic roles, poor cooperation and lobbying.

DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS:

The findings of this research portrays a complicated picture of youth participation in post-flood governance in Punjab following the 2025 floods. Using Chironi, Della Porta, and Milan's (2024) framework on youth participation in times of crisis, the findings revealed that young people contributed through solidarity-driven civic actions, community support, and social movements, but had few opportunities for institutional political participation. To explain the exclusion, this section synthesizes evidence around four analytical aspects and then suggests practical implications.

1. Youth mobilization during crisis:

Flood responses from NGOs and International Governmental Organizations (IGOs) demonstrate that young people played an important part in disaster response. For instance, in Pakistan Floods 2025 Update report stated that around 160,552 people have been reached through online engagement in Burner, Mansehra, Shangla and Swat. (UNICEF, 2025).

Similarly, more than 28,257 volunteers in Punjab assisted with rescue operations, food distribution, and shelter provision, according to the Alkhidmat disaster management report on monsoon floods (2025). In 2025, a report summarizing flood relief efforts in Punjab and other regions was released by the NDMA.

As per Chironi et al. (2024), framework for crisis participation these volunteer mobilizations demonstrate community togetherness but do not result in official decision making within government mechanism. Their framework argues that youth visibly filled critical gaps, yet their roles remained informal and rarely acknowledged in the institutional policy-making process.

2. Youth-led initiatives: Innovation without integration

District-wide, youth-driven efforts ranged from digital crisis mapping to volunteer coordination. This fits under the category of innovative civic agency identified by Chironi et al. (2024). However, official recovery planning did not incorporate such youth-led initiatives, according to district-level planning documents and a situational analysis assessment (ReliefWeb, 2025). Also, in September 2025, the Prime

Minister's Youth Programme announced plans to train two million young people in disaster-risk management over three years. The programme also introduced a volunteer force and Green Youth Clubs to encourage youth participation. These steps show that institutions increasingly see young people as important contributors to disaster preparedness and response. Still, there is evidence of formal youth involvement in post-flood recovery planning and decision-making. For instance, the Government of Pakistan's September 2025 development update explains that the Recovery and Reconstruction Unit works with PDMA's, federal and provincial ministries, departments, and district administrations to coordinate damage assessments and guide recovery planning. However, youth organizations are not listed among these formal partners. Thus, youth innovation was present, but it was not formally integrated with governance.

3. Role of youth in recovery planning:

While over 500 temporary safety shelters were built throughout Punjab (NDMA, 2025; UNOCHA, 2025), youngsters were primarily responsible for operational tasks such as ration distribution and sanitary management. They did not, however, participate in the planning committees in charge of infrastructure restoration or livelihood recovery (ReliefWeb, 2025). According to Chironi et al. (2024), unless political structures make room for young people to be included in formal policy frameworks, crises can increase civic engagement but not institutional power. In the post-flood setting of Punjab, this tendency was particularly evident.

4. Exclusion of youth from governance roles:

Why were youth excluded from governance roles? Thematic analysis indicates four major barriers to meaningful participation of youth:

1. **Institutional distrust:** Youth are seen as volunteers, not governance actors. Multiple agencies mandate that youth are not institutionalized in committees. (UNOCHA, 2025; ReliefWeb, 2025). Both show that the youth were just mobilized for logistics and distribution support but not included in recovery planning, policymaking and coordination groups. This highlights the institutional belief that young people lack the technical and policy expertise to handle the disastrous situation within their communities.

2. **Gender and social norms limiting leadership roles:** Young women face additional barriers to leadership in local response. (UNICEF, 2025) reports that social norms restrict women from participating in the relief committees and general activities to cope with emergency response. As a result, female participation is largely invisible at the governance level, making it limited for female youth to accomplish leadership roles within their community.

3. **Rigid bureaucratic systems:** Top-down planning and funding shortages marginalize non-state actors (NDMA, 2025). NDMA- and PDMA-led structures prioritize administrative work, where district

committees and government departments dominate decision-making. This leaves little room with limited space for non-state actors such as youth organizations, even though they have local knowledge and volunteers on the ground. Rigid bureaucratic communication within procedures, such as delays in fund approvals and limited cross-communication within departments, further marginalized the youth-led initiatives, preventing them from participating meaningfully beyond their support

4. Short-term support: Several government initiatives, such as the PMYP disaster training program (Dawn News, 2025) and CM Green Punjab, exist but are either temporary or short-term projects (Hussain and Khan, 2025). These programmes are solely focused on provisional mobilization rather than lasting, fruitful impact on internal infrastructure. For instance, these programmes run on campaign-based funding. In district committees, there is no permanent platform for active youth participation.

These barriers underline Chironi et al.'s argument that meaningful youth participation in disaster situations requires formal stabilized political structural mechanisms, not just traditional civic energy.

Hart's Ladder of Participation

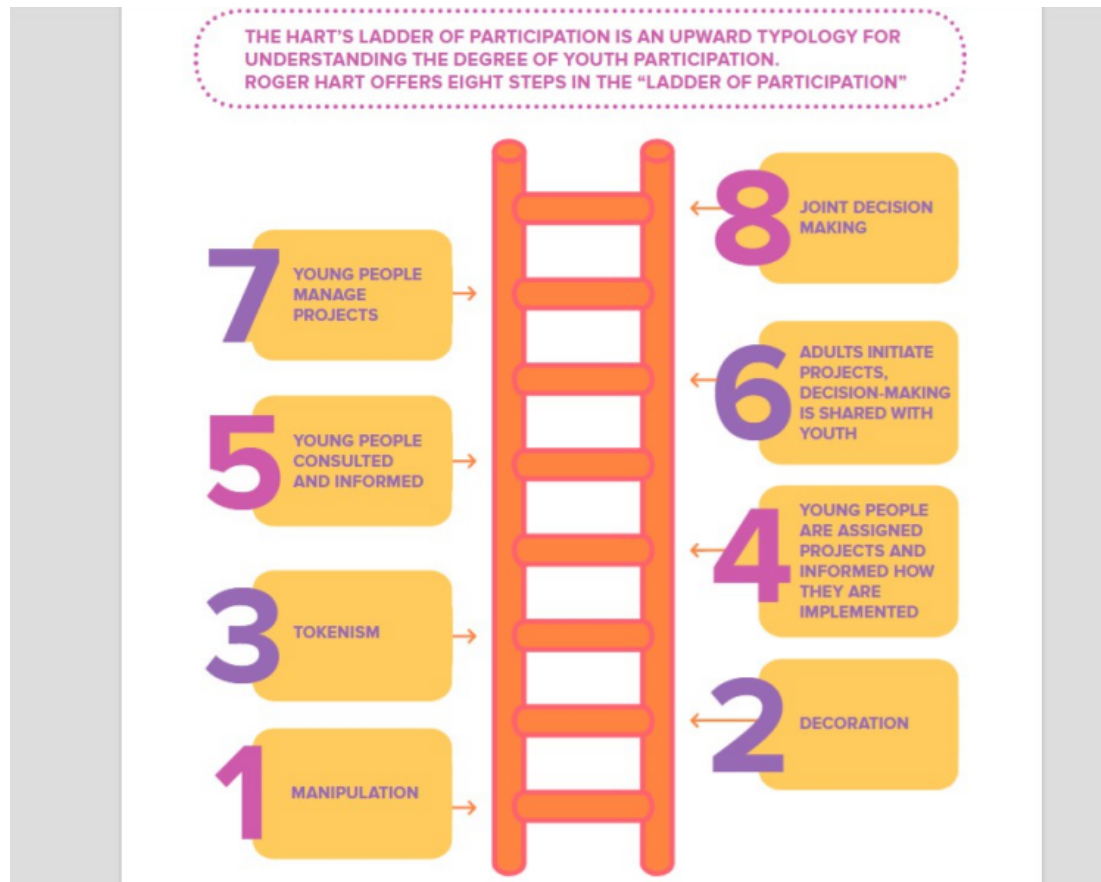
Rogger Hart's offers eight steps in the ladder of participation to illustrate a better understanding of youth participation in decision-making. The lowest three rungs in the ladder involve decoration, tokenism, and manipulation, which describes the role of young people in formal decision making have little influence. Whereas the central rungs explain the prominent role of young people, such as being assigned to community projects, being consulted, and decisions being shared with them. However, adults remain in charge of the decision-making process. Furthermore, the upper rungs in the ladder of participation significantly emphasize their active involvement through

two core steps, for instance, young people manage projects and joint decision-making. In general, Hart's ladder of participation assists in verifying if the degree of youth involvement in a post-flood context is genuine or just for show.

Here are some informative observations regarding the involvement of youth in various government programs:

First, the Prime Minister Youth Program aims to train two million young individuals in disaster risk management. Therefore, their roles are primarily as implementers rather than as decision-makers, limiting their input in shaping policies (Dawn News, 2025). Second, in the Chief Minister's Punjab Green Credit Program, youth participate by conducting awareness campaigns and engaging in tree-planting initiatives. Nevertheless, they are not included in the planning committees that guide these efforts. Finally, during government consultations, youth have access to disaster information, but they remain excluded from formal decision-making processes (UNOCHA, 2025). These patterns show a trend where young people

are involved in implementation and awareness but often lack a voice in development planning and actual decision-making.



To enhance communication between youth and government entities, the following steps should be implemented:

Punjab Disaster Management Authority should establish youth representation in disaster management authorities. This would ensure that the perspectives and needs of young people are considered in decision-making processes. Formation of Youth Advisory Councils dedicated to disaster governance would provide a platform for young individuals to share their opinions and contribute to policy development. Punjab Meteorological Department (PMD) should incorporate data collected from young people into the government's recovery planning process, so that it can boost the strategies and development initiatives designed to respond to disasters effectively. Ultimately, the government of Pakistan should expand such training initiatives to not only train young minds for specific skills, but such initiatives should also create equal opportunities for young women, specifically from marginalized communities of Pakistan, for practical engagement. Local NGOs, Federal and provincial governments

should encourage young females to participate as volunteers and social mobilizer within their community-related issues so that typical societal norms could be broken.

CONCLUSION

In a nutshell, the paper highlights the need for integrated strategies to alleviate the severe impacts of recurring floods in Pakistan and youth participation in disaster. Further, the 2025 Punjab floods demonstrated substantial youth capability for community-level disaster response, but the evidence of their formal integration into post-flood governance and recovery planning remains inadequate. This distinction is important because participation in relief activities does not necessarily constitute meaningful participation in governance. The research therefore identifies a gap between the operational involvement of youth organizations and their institutional presence in recovery decision-making. Addressing this gap would require mechanisms through which youth organizations can participate not only in emergency response but also in assessment, planning, coordination, and monitoring of recovery efforts. Hence, even though many young people get the opportunity to do voluntary work through youth organizations, their overall effectiveness is limited by the absence of established strategies.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my mentor, Syed Ali Akash, for his endless help, support, and guidance with my research.

REFERENCES

Alkhidmat Foundation. (2025). *Punjab floods situational update* – 15 September 2025. Alkhidmat Foundation Pakistan.

<https://alkhidmat.org/backend/images/flood/report/files/175817848768cbacb767acc.pdf>

Building Resilience: UNDP's Response to Pakistan's Recurring Floods. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

<https://www.undp.org/pakistan/building-resilience-undps-response-pakistans-recurring-floods>

Chironi, D., della Porta, D., & Milan, C. (2024). The political participation of young people in times of crisis: a framework for analysis. In D. Chironi, D. Della Porta, & C. Milan (Eds.), *Handbook on youth activism* (Chapter 01). Edward Elgar Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781803923222.00010>

Dawn. (2025, September 11). PMYP to train two million youth in disaster risk management.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1941047/pmyp-to-train-two-million-youthin-disaster-risk-management>

Fernandez, G., & Shaw, R. (2013). Youth participation in disaster risk reduction in Infanta and Makati, Philippines: A policy review

<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s13753-013-0014-x>

Government of Pakistan Ministry of Planning and Development& Special Initiatives (2025):

<https://pc.gov.pk/uploads/pub/monthly-development-update-september-2025>

Hussain, T., & Khan, S. A. (2025). Green Punjab Program: A Comprehensive Overview. Scribd.

<https://www.scribd.com/document/863389442/Green-Punjab-Program-A-Comprehensive-Overview>

International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies IFRC. (2025). Pakistan Monsoon Floods 2025 - Operation Update #1 (MDRPK028)

<https://reliefweb.int/report/pakistan/pakistan-monsoon-floods-2025-operation-update-1-mdrpk028>

National Disaster Management Authority NDMA. (2025). National Monsoon Floods SitRep—October 2025. National Disaster Management Authority.

<https://www.ndma.gov.pk>

ReliefWeb. (2025). Punjab Floods 2025: Situational analysis report.

<https://reliefweb.int/report/pakistan/situational-analysis-report-punjab-floods-2025>

Pakistan Red Crescent Punjab (2025): Detailed Need Assessment (DNA) Survey – Day 3, Tehsil Jhang, District Jhang

<https://prcpspunjab.com/2025/11/11/detailed-need-assessment-dna-survey-day-3-tehsil-jhang-district-jhang>

UNOCHA. (2025). Pakistan Situation Report: Monsoon Floods (10 October 2025). United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

<https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/pakistan/pakistan-situation-report-1-monsoon-floods-intersector-coordination-group-10-october-2025>

UNICEF Pakistan. (2025). Floods 2025 update—12 September 2025. United Nations Children’s Fund.

<https://www.unicef.org/media/174206/file/Pakistan-Floods-2025-Update-12-September-2025.pdf.pdf>

UNICEF(Hart’sLadder) <https://www.unicef.org/ukraine/media/591/file/English%20version.pdf>

United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR). (2024). Words into Action: Engaging Children and Youth in Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience Building.

<https://www.undrr.org/words-into-action/engaging-children-and-youth-disaster-risk-reduction-and-resilience-building>