

CLIMATE CHANGE IN PAKISTAN TURNING EXTREME

[KARACHI] Data presented at a seminar on climate change in Pakistan highlighted trends where this South Asian country, which stretches from high, snow-capped mountains to a deltaic coast, could be in for a sharp rise in average temperatures and extremely erratic weather.

The seminar, held last month (29 December), analyzed data in a new report produced by top non-government organizations, LEAD-Pakistan and the World Wide Fund for Nature-Pakistan, with funding from the European Union.

Data gleaned from 56 meteorological stations showed heat waves increasing from 1980 to 2009, a period marked by glacier retreats, steadily rising average temperature in the Indus delta and changes in temperature behavior in summer and winter.

The report, titled *Climate Change in Pakistan*, forecast low agricultural productivity from lack of water for irrigation and erratic rainfall. Conditions in the fertile Indus delta, already facing saline water intrusion and coastal erosion, are expected to deteriorate further.

Ghulam Rasul, chief meteorologist at the Pakistan Meteorological Department and author of the report, told *SciDev.Net* that although Pakistans contribution to global greenhouse gas emissions is low, it is among countries highly vulnerable to climate change.

Pakistan's largely agrarian economy, Rasul noted, is mainly fed by the Hindu Kush-Karakoram and Himalayan glaciers that are reported receding due to global

warming. Pakistans climate-sensitive agrarian economy now faces larger risks from variability in monsoon rains, floods and extended droughts.

Rasul said many of Pakistans 5,255 glaciers have been steadily losing ice mass over the last 21 years. I urge the world to assist Pakistan to deal with climate change because the melting of the Third Pole could result in decrease of the sunlight reflections and add to global temperature rise, he told the seminar.

Qamar uz Zaman Chaudhry, vice-president of the World Meteorological Organisations Asia region, corroborated the reports findings at the seminar, saying that Pakistan was hit by extreme events or floods in 2010, 2011 and 2012 and severe droughts from 1999 to 2002.

A rise in temperature in the Indus delta could impact human health through increased prevalence of diarrhoea, cholera and vector-borne diseases. Human settlements could also be affected by frequent floods, droughts and cyclones, the report said.

According to the report, by the end of the century, temperatures in the deltaic region could increase by four degrees Celsius, affecting weather in the Indus and over the Arabian sea with serious implications for food security.

Crops already impacted include the main staple wheat, which is deficient in size and weight and failing to accumulate optimum starch content, the report says.

Source : <http://www.scidev.net/global/climate-change/news/climate-change-pakistan-turning-extreme.html>