Title: How effective are existing organizations and resources in managing recent flooding in Ghizer, and what measures can strengthen future preparedness?

Abstract

This report analyzes the 2025 floods in Ghizer District, Gilgit Baltistan, which erupted due to cloudbursts and glacial lake outburst floods (GLOF) and caused devastation in Talidas Rawushan, Yasin, and Dain Ishkomen. Hundreds of houses, schools, bridges, and agricultural lands were lost, leaving thousands displaced and without basic services. Reliefs were pooling mostly from the non governmental organizations especially Aga Khan Development Network and local organizations, while government's support was slow and short lived. To collect armchair information, local people and social worker were interviewed, who highlighted severe preparedness gaps: lack of early warning systems and stokpiles, disrupted healthcare and education, and lack of psychological support. At the same time, community solidarity and youth mobilization helped people to survive. The analysis emphasizes the urgent need for hazard mapping and safer habitat planning, locally managed early warning systems, pre-positioned emergency stockpiles, climate-sensitive rebuilding of schools, homes, and clinics, and stronger enforcement of no-encroachment policies. The report further recommends establishing a National Green Skills Corps to equip youth with climate-resilient skills in construction, agriculture, and disaster preparedness. Together, these measures offer a pathway toward reducing vulnerability and strengthening resilience in Ghizer against future climate-induced disasters.

Introduction

Pakistan ranks among the top ten countries most affected by climate change over the past two decades, facing rising temperatures, shifting rainfall patterns, and increasing frequency of climate-induced disasters. The country's annual mean temperature has already increased by 0.5 °C in the last fifty years and is projected to rise by up to 5 °C by the end of the century.

This warming trend is particularly severe in the northern regions, where rapid glacier melt fuels glacial lake outburst floods (GLOFs) and flash flooding. The National Climate Change Policy of Pakistan identifies GLOFs as a major hazard, especially for mountain communities in Gilgit-Baltistan.

Ghizer district, is in Gilgit Baltistan, Northern area, which witnessed disastrous floods in 2025. The areas which suffered most are Talidas Rawushan, Yasin, and Dain Ishkomen. The floods were caused by cloudbursts and glacial lake outbursts due to sudden and heavy rainfalls. These places nestled beneath the snowcapped Hindu Kush Mountains and are home to many existing and newly formed glaciers. These glaciers and glacial lakes are a source of life support for the locals, but at the same time they pose a great threat when the accumulated lakes melt down, also called glacial lake outburst flood (GLOF). These villages, due to their geographical locations, are highly vulnerable to natural disasters, which gained attention after the intense floodings in 2015. The region's climate, characterized by cold, moist conditions and warm summers, experiences peak rainfall during June, July, and August, contributing to snow and glacier melt and cloudbursts, consequently increasing stream flow in the Gilgit river.

Extent of Recent Flooding in areas of Ghizer Gilgit Baltistan

Talidas Rawushan

Figure 1 Before and After Glacial Lake Outurst

Taldidas Rawushan is in Ghizer District of Gilgit Baltistan region and geographically defined by longitude 36°13'16.9"N and latitude 73°31'31.1"E. Talidas Nallah in Rawushan is home to

many glacial lakes, and these glacial lakes give rise to the stream which flows into the Gupis river also called Gilgit River.

The weather in the region is cold and moist with warm summers. The area was hit by GLOF during the month of August on 22nd when Gilgit Baltistan was hit by heavy rainfall of 24.1 mm (about 0.95 in), which is above the average rainfall (Pakistan Meteorological Department, 2015). This high rainfall and a sudden flashlight caused the lake in Nallah to melt down, which brought debris and mud along its way, eventually destroying the whole village.

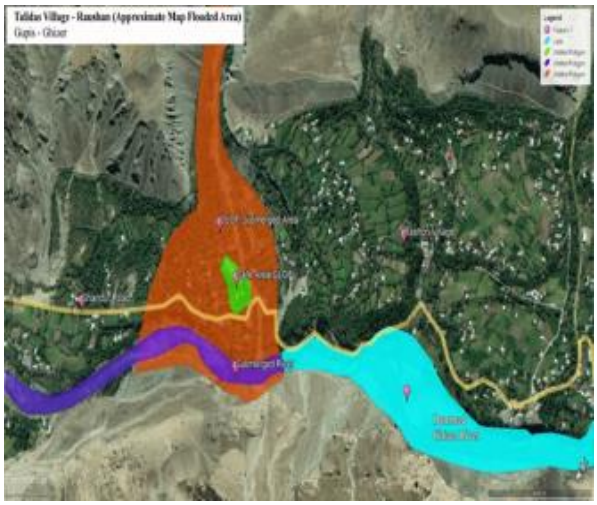

Figure 3 Red color shows entire Talidas hit by flood, Light blue color shows artificial lake, Purple color shows the road blocked by flood

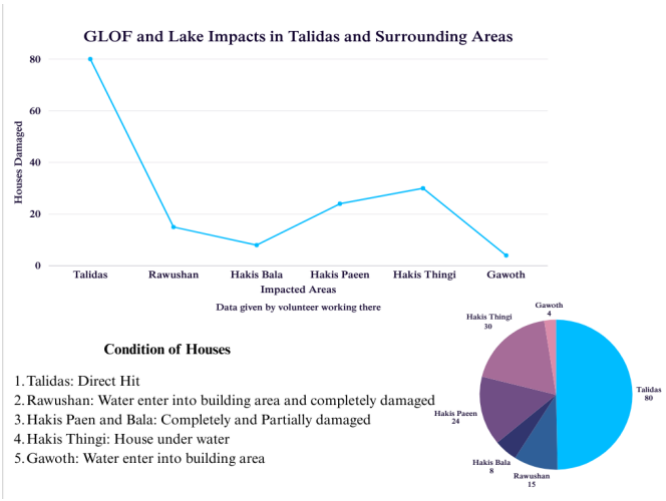

Figure 2 Houses damaged by GLOF in Talidas Rawushan

After the initial HVRA in 2013, it showed the existence of huge glacial lakes in the mountainous regions of Gilgit Baltistan along with heavy sediments in their ways (Anwar & Barcha 2020), which could cause hazardous glacial lake outburst floods, this could also lead to secondary hazards in the form of artificial lake, which was created due to blockage of Ghizer river by the flood in Talidas. It was 2:50 PM early in the morning when the glacial lake started to melt down and people were alerted by a shepherd to evacuate their houses. As shown in figure 2, the red highlighted area shows the place Talidas which had 80 houses, now have been completely washed away except the area highlighted with green color.

Due to huge flooding, the Ghizer river remained blocked for 8 hours, which created an 8-kilometer-long artificial lake (Nagri & Taj, 2025). This lake has submerged 160 houses, 30 shops, 8 Kilometer Road, along with livestock, schools, Jamat Khana, Mosque, and vital resources of other valleys – Rawushan, Hakis, Hakis Thingai, Gawoth, Moula Abad and Maduri (Jabeen, 2025). Moreover, 30 poles and 5 transformers are also submerged, leaving communities without electricity.

The road, which was blocked by the flood was the main road connecting Gilgit with other regions like Yasin, Gupis, and Phander and it was the only way through which goods and people's daily needs were being transported. Although the area suffered from the flood, but the blockage of road made transport of goods more expensive, and those who are living in upper side of the area faced a surge in price on each essential items, this frustrated the people living in these areas (IBEX Media Network, 2025).

Yasin

Yasin valley is in Ghizer district, Gilgit Baltistan and geographically defined by longitude 36°22'42.8"N and latitude 73°20'06.4"E. The recent events of floods in Yasin were mostly due to cloudbursts, which hit three locations – Thoi, Sultanabad, and Barkolti.

Thoi Yasin

Figure 4 Crops washed away

Figure 5 DJ High School damaged by flood

Figure 6 Houses damaged

The flash flood in Thoi has damaged 8 houses completely and 9 houses have partially been damaged (Shahi, 2025). Local report highlighted that the floods in Local Council Thoi have caused extensive damage to public property and essential infrastructure. Among the most affected were two main water channels for agricultural land at Dapis, the main water channel

from Dapis to Dalkoi, and the WASIP water chamber situated between the two villages. The AKESP school in Dalkoi/Dapis also sustained severe damage. Furthermore, water channels for agriculture were destroyed across multiple areas, including Dalkoi to Gainchel, Khasrber to Baramdass Ishkaiber, Harp to Karim Abad, Harp to Magjirat, and Rahim Abad, where both the main water channel and the secondary channel from Dasper to Rahim Abad via Draskin and Shote were affected. Similar destruction occurred to water channels from Nalti to Ishqamdass and from Thalti to Ishqamdass, along with the AKESP school in Ishqamdass. In addition, the water channel linking Laponi, Ratingkushi, Waljikan, and Burdashing to Nalti was badly damaged. The pedestrian bridge at Chegirkin was also swept away, further worsening connectivity in the region. Since there were no high scale causalities were reported, but a 7-year-old minor girl lost her life.

Barkolti and Sultanabad Yasin

Figure 7 Road blocked by flood

Figure 8 Houses damaged

Figure 9 Trees and crops washed away by flood

In Barkolti on 14 August 2025, the flash flood ruined everything that came on its way, this includes 8 houses, schools, water tank (jagonews24.com, n.d.-b), and interms of agriculture it ruined standing wheat fields, cherry and apple trees (Pamir). In addition to destroying homes, the floods also swept away livestock, machinery, and vital infrastructure. Tragically, a 70-year-old man, father and his son lost their lives in this disaster (IBEX Media Network, 2025). In addition, the bridge connecting two side of Barkolti has also been broken, and water bases are also broken, due to which more than 400 houses lack access to clean water (Nadir Shahi, 2025a). In Sultanabad, the flash flood has damaged the crops, trees, and several houses (Ullah Azad, 2025). People were forced to leave their houses to stay safe.

Dain Ishkomen

Ishkomen valley is in Ghizer district, Gilgit Baltistan and geographically defined by longitude of 36°31'36.8"N and latitude of 73°50'48.5"E. This region faces high risk of Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GLOF) due to presence of Badswat Glacier. Past GLOF incidents in 2015 and 2018 had shown their disastrous impacts on the residents in the region (Anwar & Barcha). In 2025**,** the area of Daen was struck by a severe flash flood induced by cloudburst, further highlighting the valley's vulnerability to climate-induced disasters.

Damages Caused by Floods

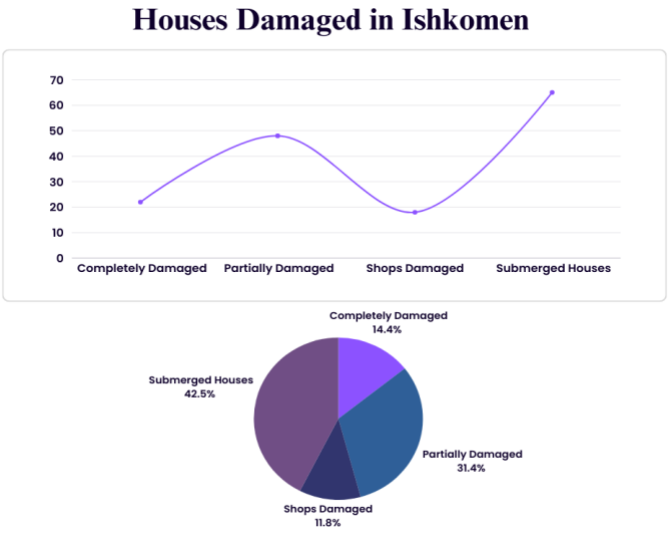

Figure 10 Houses damaged by flash flood

Figure 11 Asia's longest suspension bridge destroyed by flood

The flood has caused devastation in the region on large scale, GBDMA reported that the flood hit eight areas in the villages of Faizabad and Dadaabad (Ashraf, 2025). It has destroyed 22 houses, 18 shops, partially destroyed 42 houses and submerged 65 houses, as shown in figure. Moreover, it has caused devastation to the agricultural land and the local forests. In addition, a Jamat Khana and DJ High School Building is also destroyed by the

flood. The historic bridge, which was main mode of travel, and trade for the people of Dain has also washed away, due to which about 10,000 residents were stranded in Dain.

Flood Reliefs

Responsibility for disaster management in Pakistan lies with the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) and its provincial and regional branches, including the Gilgit-Baltistan Disaster Management Authority (GB-DMA). At the district level, administrations and Union Councils are tasked with implementing preparedness and response strategies. When the flood hit Talidas, then after 2 days Pakistan Army helped the people with food, medicines, and other needs (jago). However, government presence in Ghizer has been minimal and short-lived, often limited to compensation announcements and rescue operations carried out by the army.

Figure 12 AKDN distributing ration among flood affectless

Figure 13 AKDN's helicopter airlifting patients for proper checkup in Gilgit Medical Center

By contrast, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have been far more active in providing sustained support. The Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN), through its agencies such as the Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (AKRSP) and the Aga Khan Agency for Habitat (AKAH), has been consistently engaged in disaster relief and preparedness. AKAH in particular has introduced community training and small-scale preparedness programs, although its coverage remains limited. It has given support to 109 families (about 800 individuals), and nineteen stockpiles have been supplies to Gilgit Baltistan, Chitral, and

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (Aga Khan Development Network, 2025). Although it distributed tents and emergency kit, the Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (AKRSP) helped the communities by repairing roads and provided pipes to restore drinking and irrigation water. Aga Khan Health Service Pakistan's (AKHSP) medical camps are present there 24/7, and in Punial and Ishkomen they have treated 380 patients by providing counselling and awareness session on good hygiene and safe water (Aga Khan Development Network, 2025). Moreover, they conducted three medical camps in Khalti, Thoi Yasin, and Talidas, examined 511 patients. Due to the flood in Talidas, the way to Phander, Yasin, and Gupis was completely blocked, so AKDN helicopters transported 6230 kg of food items and medicines to stranded families in farside of Talidas. The helicopters were also used to airlift patient who were in critical conditions, and a total of 30 critical patients were airlifted for their treatment.

Figure 14 HBL foundation distributing ration among flood affectles

Figure 15 Al Khidmat foundation with ration

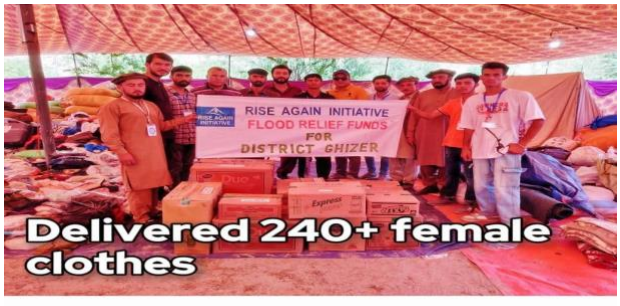

Figure 16 Local organization distributing ration

Figure 17 Serena Hotel Pakistan distributing ration

Habib Bank Limited (HBL) foundation also distributed 1000 ration packages to the flood affected people in Talidas Rawushan, Dain, Khalti, and other areas (Aga Khan Development

Network, 2025). Serena Hotel Pakistan also distributed ration among residents of Talidas and Khalti which can be used for one month. Other NGOs active in Ghizer during floods include the Red Crescent Society, Alkhidmat Foundation, Hamari Taqaat, International Khatm e Nabwat Movement, and smaller non-profits, alongside student-led volunteer groups. They distributed cloths, medicines, hygiene kits, blankets, and cash among the flood affected people in Ghizer.

Pakistan has tried to improve flood preparedness through the GLOF-II Project, installing sensors and alarms near glaciers, but these rarely reach remote communities. In Ghizer, no reliable early warning or weather stations exist, and people rely on traditional knowledge or mosque and mobile alerts. It evident from Talidas disaster that when the flood erupted in Nallah, then a local shepherd named Wasiyat Khan communicated people via phone call and saved many lives (Shah, 2025). Some areas have early warning systems, but they are not functional. Preparedness resources are also lacking, with no pre-stockpiled food, medicine, or shelters. Aid typically arrives after disasters, and while the government announces compensation, delays force communities to depend on ad hoc relief and volunteer support.

Local Inquiry

Figure 18 Online interview taken via WhatsApp video call

Figure 19 Interview taken via offline phone call

Primary data was collected by conducting interviews via phone calls with the residents of affected villages in Ghizer, including Talidas, Daen, and Yasin. Moreover, 2 social activists were also interviewed, who are actively working in flood affected areas from day 1. This inquiry provided rich information about the community experiences, available resources, and

pressing gaps. Information from every interviewee is presented combinedly to omit any repetition.

These local inquiries reveal that most of the immediate support after floods came not from the government but from non-governmental organizations and community groups. Respondents highlighted the active role of AKAH, AKRSP, AKDN agencies, the Red Crescent, and Alkhidmat Foundation, along with smaller organizations such as Hamari Taqat, Rise Again Initiative, Organization for Educational Change, Yaran e Khair, and Naveed-e-Falah. Students and youth volunteers also played an extraordinary role, often taking semester breaks to contribute to relief work by distributing food, clothing, and shelter materials.

The services provided focused primarily on emergency relief. Food, clothing, blankets, and hygiene kits were supplied by NGOs and local volunteers, while temporary shelters in the form of tents or community halls were set up in some places. Many families, however, were forced to seek refuge on mountain tops for safety. Health services were delivered sporadically through mobile clinics and visiting doctors, including AKDN mobile health units. Education was severely disrupted, as schools were destroyed or submerged, leaving children without proper facilities. In some cases, makeshift classes were organized in Jamat Khanas or open spaces, but these were insufficient for long-term learning.

When asked about preparedness resources, respondents consistently noted the absence of early warning systems or weather monitoring stations. One interviewee recounted how a shepherd noticed the glacier bursting in Talidas Nallah and used his basic Nokia phone to call villagers and warn them to evacuate. Others described the use of mosque loudspeakers to spread word of impending floods. Stockpiles were also lacking. In the first days after the flood, families survived by pooling food from unaffected areas. Relief supplies only arrived later through donations and NGO distributions.

The groups identified as most vulnerable were children, the elderly, women, and disabled individuals. Children were particularly affected due to the destruction of schools and the loss of their educational materials. Elderly people and those with chronic health issues struggled to move during evacuation. Women faced hygiene and sanitation challenges without clean water or proper facilities. Disabled persons were left especially vulnerable due to the lack of support for mobility or medical needs.

In terms of infrastructure, residents noted that the nearest hospital was in Gupis for the people of Talidas, for the flood affecties of Thoi, the hospital was in Yasin proper which usually takes 1 hour, but due to flood it now takes 3 – 4 hours, and for the flood affecties of Dain, the hospital is in Gahkuch which, which cannot be accessed due to breakage of bridge. Many local clinics and dispensaries were destroyed by the floods. Schools, including government primary schools and Diamond Jubilee institutions, were submerged, leaving children without access to formal education. Traditionally, mosques, schools, and community halls had served as safe spaces during emergencies, but in this flood they too were damaged, forcing families to seek safety on exposed mountain tops.

When asked about gaps, residents told us about the lack of reliable shelters, the severe disruption of education, the absence of early warning systems, poor access to healthcare, and the lack of psychosocial support for traumatized survivors. Many respondents stressed that although food and clothing eventually arrived, what was missing was a sense of safety, stability, and long-term recovery planning.

Analysis

Resources Available

The recent floods in Ghizer revealed both the strenghth of the community union and deep gaps in disaster preparedness. It showed that during and after flood there are resources on which community could reply, but still there are major pithols which left residents highly vulnerable, increasing suffering.

Concerning immediate assistance, the most effective help in Ghizer came from the network of non-profits, community organizations, and unpaid helpers. The Aga Khan Development Network, particularly through its subdivisions like AKAH, AKRSP, and AKHS, was vital in supplying food supplies, shelters, tubes for restoring water, and mobile medical facilities. The Red Crescent, Alkhidmat Foundation, Hamari Taqaat, along with other non-profits, gave out food rations, sanitation supplies, covers, and attire. Students and young volunteers from the vicinity also gave exceptional assistance, suspending their university studies to gather contributions and help families impacted by the flooding firsthand. Community unity stood out as a considerable asset, with individuals combining food and supplies during the initial days of the crisis, prior to outside help becoming available. Medical care was inconsistently accessible via mobile medical units arranged by AKHS as well as visiting physicians. In critical situations, AKDN choppers executed airborne transportation, delivering more than 6,200 kilograms of sustenance and drugs, and saving seriously sick individuals. Some short-term learning plans were additionally implemented within Jamat Khanas alongside outdoor environments, providing a minimal continuation of schooling.

Resources Unavailable

Despite these efforts, critical gaps severely limited preparedness and recovery. The most glaring absence was the lack of reliable early warning systems. While Pakistan has installed sensors under the GLOF-II project (*UNDP Pakistan*, n.d.), residents reported that these were non-functional or ineffective in reaching remote communities. In the case of Talidas, it was not technology but a local shepherd who warned villagers by phone, saving lives. Preparedness resources were also lacking. Ghizer lacked pre-stockpiled food, medicine, and shelter, forcing families to rely on delayed aid. Education suffered heavily as many schools were destroyed, leaving children without safe classrooms or materials.

Healthcare access was severely disrupted, and hospitals in Gupis, Yasin, and Gahkuch became unreachable due to damaged roads and bridges. Mobile health camps provided only temporary relief, leaving thousands untreated. Shelter was another urgent need, with families forced to live in tents or on mountain tops under harsh conditions. Traditional safe spaces like mosques and community halls were also destroyed, leaving no reliable refuge.

Apart from the lack of physical resources, emotional and social support was also missing. Survivors, especially children and women, had no help to cope with the tension. The loss of agricultural lands, livestok, and belongings, added to their struggles, and delays in government compensation made people lose trust.

Recommendations

Ghizer and Gilgit-Baltistan disaster floods remind us of pragmatic long-term solutions for enhancing preparedness and reducing exposure among the population. Top of the list is

hazard mapping and habitat planning for safety. Settlements creep into hazard zones for lack of new maps and land use policies. Drawing up high-resolution hazard maps of every village, accompanied by risk levels colour-coded (red for high, yellow for moderate, green for safe) would allow officials to use the maps for guiding settlement developments and zonings respectively. Pre-determined relocation benefits from hazard zones, together with pre-identified safety havens, would provide households safe options pre-disaster.

Another critical step is enhancing early warning systems (EWS). Existing measures such as GLOF-II have failed in distant valleys. Pakistan needs to set up reliable, community-linked EWS utilizing multiple media—SMS, local radio, mosque loudspeakers, and trained volunteers—to disseminate alerts in a timely manner. Such systems will need to be locally controlled, and community emergency response teams (CERTs) will need to be trained and capable of monitoring glaciers, running alarms, and conducting evacuations.

Stockpiles and supplies for preparedness must become institutionalized, as well. Stocks of food, water, medicines, blankets, tents, and emergency supplies, stored in community warehouses within every Union Council, would be replenished before the monsoons and summer melts, and would bring an end to dependence on late-arriving aid and get through the first of a disaster's critical 72 hours.

Complementarily, at the infrastructure level, green building policies will have to be adopted for risk mitigation. Houses, schools, and clinics will have to be rebuilt with flood-resistant, climate-sensitive designs, and guidelines will have to be compatible with the Pakistan Green Building Code 2023. Retrofitting of exposed existing infrastructure will have to be encouraged. Concurrently, rigorous protection of natural flood channels will be required. River and stream-blocking encroachments escalate disaster impacts; enforcement of no-

encroachment policies, supported by significant compensation and resettlement plans, will safeguard natural hazard buffers.

One transformative suggestion is the establishment of a National Green Skills Corps (NGSC). By training rural youth in the skills of flood-proof construction, renewable energy, sustainable forestry, glacier observation, and climate-resilient agriculture, Pakistan can create a force of empowered workers enabled to protect communities and ecosystems. Not temporary aid, but these skills bring lasting resilience so disasters of the future will be reduced through community-based work.

Finally, policy integration and accountability are important. Environmental impact assessments must be mandatory for all development projects in GB, and sector policies in agriculture, water, and tourism must include adaptation strategies for climate change. Accountability processes must be visible, spending of funds transparent, and performance checked at specified intervals for public participation and efficiency.

Conclusion

The 2025 Ghizer floods revealed the extent to which inadequate preparedness, exacerbated by the consequences of climate change, endangers mountainous settlements. Villages at Yasin and Talidas were erased, roads and bridges got swept away, and families were displaced from their residences without water, nourishment, and medical aid. If the response was rapid from volunteers and NGOs, the government response was slow and limited. The tragedy was exacerbated by major shortcomings, including inadequate early warning, vulnerable infrastructure, absence of pre-stocks, and limited psychosocial support. Improved resilience in the future requires hazard mapping, community-based warning, resilient infrastructure, and in-country stocks, alongside equipping youth in green skills and inclusion

of adaptation to climate in plans. Ghizer will only be resilient against future climatic disasters through proactive, collective action.

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