



BUILDING BARRIERS, SHIELDING COMMUNITIES: NDRMF'S RESILIENCE PROJECTS IN AJK

Safeguarding Communities in Neelum Valley

Torrential rains and flash floods struck several districts of Azad Jammu & Kashmir (AJK), causing widespread damage to homes, infrastructure, and livelihoods. Districts including Muzaffarabad, Poonch, Kotli, Haveli, Jhelum Valley, and parts of Neelum bore the brunt of the calamity, leaving communities struggling to cope. Such extreme weather events, intensified by climate change, highlight the urgent need for improved early warning systems, resilient infrastructure, and community preparedness in disaster prone regions like AJK.

HoD, Media & Communications, NDRMF
Reema

AJK, Neelum, UC Rait Mohala,
Gabion Wall, Length 585 Feet

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However, in Neelum district, the story was different. Thanks to the 10 flood protection schemes constructed under the National Disaster Risk Management Fund (NDRMF), vulnerable villages were spared from destruction. At Union Council Kundal Shahi, gabion wall structures held firm against the floodwaters, shielding families living along the riverbanks.



According to project data, each protection site safeguarded 20 to 35 households, directly benefiting between 220 to 350 people. In total, thousands of residents in Neelum Valley were protected during the recent flooding.

Among the many who witnessed the difference was Zeeshan Sheikh, a resident of Kundal Shahi village, Dullar. Sharing his experience, he said:



Zeeshan Sheikh, resident of UC Kundal Shahi village, Dullar

"In the 2010 floods, many houses in our village were damaged and people lost their belongings. This time, the floodwaters were even stronger, but the protection wall built here saved our homes and property. We are grateful for this initiative because it protected us from suffering the same fate again."

While expressing relief, Zeeshan also appealed for more such structures to be built, adding:

"These walls saved our village, but there are many other areas still vulnerable. We request that more protective schemes are constructed so that other families can feel the same safety we experienced."

Flood Protection Schemes AJK, Neelum, UC Kundal Shahi, Rait Mohalla

Residents of Rait Mohalla expressed that the gabion wall constructed in their area proved to be a lifeline during the recent flooding.

"The floodwaters could not reach our houses because of the wall. It stood like a shield and saved both our homes and belongings," they shared.

The community, while thankful for the protection, also appealed for more such structures to be built in surrounding vulnerable sites to ensure wider safety for families living near the riverbanks.



UC Kundal Shahi, Village Satra 01 Gabion Wall, Length 120 Feet

AJK has long remained vulnerable to floods and related hazards. With recurring disasters in the past particularly in **Bagh, Neelum, and Sudhnoti** the region has been repeatedly exposed to floods and landslides.

The flood of 2010, followed by heavy rains from 2012 till 2016, left deep scars on these districts, destroying homes, livelihoods, and vital infrastructure.

Recognizing the urgent need to enhance resilience in disaster prone areas of AJK, NDRMF stepped in to support a comprehensive disaster risk reduction project, implemented in partnership with the Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS) and AJK Communications and Works department. Building on lessons from past disasters including the floods of 2010 and the heavy rains, the project was designed to both protect and empower local communities.

Alongside these hard measures, soft components ensured long term resilience by training community members and volunteers through Community Based Disaster Risk Management (CBDRM) and Community Emergency Response Trainings (CERT). With PRCS's vast volunteer network, around 88 local volunteers were trained to act as first responders.

Resilience projects in AJK
Total invested PKR 766,818,978

Flood protection schemes in AJK
PKR 94,198,997

Districts	Schemes
Hattian	4
Bagh	7
Neelum	10

Landslide stabilization schemes
in AJK PKR 638,477,761

Districts	Schemes
Sadhnoti	5
Poonch	3
Bagh	1

UC Kundal Shahi, Village Dullar 01, Gabion Wall, Length 155 Feet

One of the most impactful interventions was the construction of flood protection walls in 10 villages of Neelum Valley, which shielded entire communities from the destructive force of recent flash floods.

In Neelum district, which has been repeatedly hit by severe floods, NDRMF prioritized 10 flood protection schemes at most vulnerable sites, constructed gabion walls along rivers, in villages across Union Council Kundal Shahi, where gabion wall structures were built to shield local communities and infrastructure.

During the recent flooding, these protective walls proved highly effective, safeguarding villages and directly protecting around 20 to 35 households, directly benefiting between 220 to 350 beneficiaries at each site.

These outcomes reflect how NDRMF's targeted investments have provided a reliable shield and strengthened the protection of vulnerable communities in flood and landslide prone areas of AJK. This investment highlights NDRMF's commitment to reducing disaster risks in AJK by not only preventing immediate damage but also ensuring long term safeguard and resilience for some of the most vulnerable communities.

- As per sites completed, 1.75 KM of the land was saved against floods, in four project implementation districts including Neelum, Hattian, Bagh, and Sudhnoti.
- As per the sites completed, 2.16 hectares of land will be saved against landslides, in respective district.



While NDRMF's investments have proven vital in shielding vulnerable communities from disasters, the increasing intensity of climate change demands a shift from reactive responses to proactive resilience building. This is at the heart of NDRMF's mandate to move from risk to resilience and continued efforts must focus on scaling up such measures to safeguard the future of AJK and beyond.

UC KUNDAL SHAHI, SATRA 2, GABION WALL, LENGTH 150 FEET

To reflect on these efforts, CEO NDRMF Bilal Anwar emphasized that, *NDRMF remains unwavering in its commitment for disaster resilience in AJK, as demonstrated by our flood management and resilience building interventions undertaken in collaboration with local government and communities.*

It is also recognized that a lot more is yet to be done given the emerging climate change and disaster challenges. We encourage and invite our development and funding partners to come forward and work on this shared responsibility for the region.



Through these interventions, NDRMF continues to safeguard lives, protect communities, and strengthen climate and disaster resilience across AJK