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Heavy Rains Turn Deadly in Northern Pakistan, Highlighting Infrastructure Vulnerabilities

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Severe monsoon weather continues to batter Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) province, where crumbling rural infrastructure has again proven deadly. In two tragic incidents over the weekend, three children were killed and five others injured after the roofs of mud-built homes collapsed due to relentless rainfall. The events occurred in Lower Dir and Shangla, both part of KP's mountainous Malakand division.

The *Provincial Disaster Management Authority* (PDMA) had issued a warning just days earlier, advising district administrations across KP to brace for heavy downpours and

potential flooding between July 11 and 17. Despite these alerts, vulnerable communities remain exposed to the elements, with little meaningful preparation or improvement to local infrastructure. The lack of state-level readiness continues to have fatal consequences, particularly in remote areas where government support is thin and reactive at best.

In Lower Dir, a mud-roofed house under construction in the Shahi Moro Barawal area, along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border, collapsed on four children. Abdur Rehman, a spokesperson for *Rescue 1122* (emergency medical and disaster response service), told *Dawn.com* that the children were trapped beneath the debris. Two were declared dead on arrival at a nearby hospital in Samar Bagh, while the remaining two are receiving medical treatment.

A second deadly collapse occurred in the Chakesar area of Shangla district, where torrential rain caused another mud-roof to cave in during the night. A five-year-old child died, and a mother, along with two more children, sustained injuries. Rasool Khan Sharif, spokesperson for Shangla's *Rescue 1122*, confirmed the details and noted that residents initially pulled the victims from the rubble before emergency services arrived. The injured were taken first to a rural health center, then referred to a larger hospital in Mingora, Swat.

These events come as the Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) warns of more intense weather in the days ahead. The PMD, based in Islamabad, has flagged heightened risks of *Glacial Lake Outburst Floods* (GLOFs) and flash floods in northern glaciated regions of KP, including Upper and Lower Chitral, Swat, and Kohistan. These areas are already susceptible due to their geography, but the risk is worsened by poor drainage, inadequate construction standards, and years of neglect from successive administrations.

Ten people, eight of them children, died in separate incidents across KP on the same day, with casualties reported in Bajaur, Khyber, Malakand, Kohat, and Lakki Marwat. PDMA officially confirmed six of these deaths. Yet the repeated pattern of such tragedies raises hard questions about how often government “alerts” actually lead to action, especially in regions already struggling with poor services, limited access, and a lack of political influence in Islamabad.

While monsoon rains are an annual occurrence in Pakistan from June through September, their deadly toll in KP reflects deeper systemic issues. These include a lack of investment in housing resilience, poor disaster readiness, and a bureaucratic culture of post-crisis

response rather than prevention. Meanwhile, residents in rural and border districts continue to pay the highest price, often with their lives, for failures beyond their control.

As the wet season continues, calls are growing louder for serious reforms and accountability, not just reactive relief after tragedy has already struck.