



Pakistan Humanitarian Forum

The Pakistan Humanitarian Forum was formed in 2003 to coordinate and strengthen the efforts of international NGOs working in disaster management. The forum comprises 41 of the largest international NGOs operating in Pakistan.

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100 days on: Pakistan's flood survivors need a surge of support Pakistan Humanitarian Forum briefing note

Just as the people and state institutions of Pakistan were recovering from the mega-floods of 2010, they were hit by another calamity. The monsoon floods of 2011 represent one of Pakistan's worst disasters in terms of the number of people affected. Almost five million people have been affected in Sindh province and another 300,000 in Balochistan according to the latest assessmentsⁱ – about half of them children. Approximately 1.87 million people were initially made homeless; around 700,000 remain displaced. At least six million acres have been ravaged by floods with approximately 2.3 million acres of crops lost.ⁱⁱ Yet, this emergency has received little global attention.

One hundred days after the 2011 floods began, millions of men, women, and children urgently need vital assistance including clean water and sanitation, healthcare, food, shelter, and cash. Yet, instead of scaling up their relief and recovery efforts, Pakistani authorities and aid agencies have struggled to conduct even limited operations because sufficient resources have not been made available. Although Islamabad belatedly called for the world's help on 7 September and the UN launched its floods appeal for \$357 million 11 days later, the floods response has received just a trickle of funds from international donors. Two months after the disaster began and one month after its launch, the UN appeal was only 18 per cent funded. Aid agencies in the Pakistan Humanitarian Forum have struggled to keep relief operations going and have been unable to expand them. One hundred days on, the UN appeal remains just 37 percent funded.ⁱⁱⁱ Only the US and the European Commission have contributed significant sums to the floods response.^{iv}

As a result, an under-resourced relief effort has left several million people with little or no aid. Disease and illness are on the rise and, with winter about to begin, there is a grave risk of a public health crisis. Opportunities to help hundreds of thousands of farmers plant their winter crops in November have been missed, increasing the risk of hunger in a region where food shortages and malnutrition are already at emergency levels in many places. As the world's rich economies pump billions of euros and dollars into their banks and treasuries, they should not forget the world's poorest and most vulnerable families.

As with previous disaster responses in Pakistan, there have been herculean efforts by local communities, many government officials, and scores of Pakistani charities and relief organisations, as well as international aid agencies and private donors inside and outside the country, to help flood-affected people. The Pakistani armed forces once again led the initial rescue and relief operation. Many lives have been saved and hundreds of thousands of people have received life-saving assistance.

However, more should have been done both before and after the floods began. The UN estimated in June that monsoon floods could affect up to five million people partly because inadequate rehabilitation and reconstruction work after the 2010 floods had left many people extra vulnerable. NGOs warned that Pakistan was not ready to cope with another major flood – warnings that were largely ignored. As the number of flood-affected people passed first one then two million in August, the authorities delayed letting in experienced international NGOs to respond. Restrictions on the kind of aid that NGOs could provide (e.g. unconditional cash grants) and slow visa processes for foreign aid workers contributed to delays and complications.

Fundamentally, Pakistan must stop staggering from one crisis to another. It has made progress in building its ability to manage disasters – many of the right policies and entities are already in place – but much greater investments are needed to prevent every flood, drought, or earthquake from becoming a human disaster. Climate change is increasing the threat of weather-related shocks. The World Bank has estimated that just \$27 million spent appropriately could greatly reduce disaster risks. The Pakistani government should allocate such sums now, followed by further sustained investments, which are achievable if Pakistan mobilises its revenues and resources more effectively. Alongside reforms to clarify the roles of national and provincial disaster management authorities and to strengthen their capabilities, such measures would help Pakistan respond better and recover more quickly from disasters, with less reliance on outside help – saving not only lives but money too, for both Pakistan and its donors.

Each disaster is a reminder to act – yet it is a lesson that has not yet been learnt. As the floodwaters recede, a stronger, safer, more self-reliant Pakistan can emerge – but only if the right decisions are taken.

Recommendations

International donors should:

- Provide timely and adequate support for an expansion of the relief and recovery effort by rapidly and substantially increasing funds for the UN floods appeal until it is fully funded. Support for flood recovery and reconstruction activities in particular should be used as a cost-effective opportunity to improve the resilience of hazard-prone communities and thus protect development investments.
- Place disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation principles at the heart of their country strategies for both relief and development, in line with the Global Platform on Risk Reduction, including allocating at least 10 per cent of all humanitarian and recovery spending to DRR.
- Support the Pakistani government to fulfil its obligations under the Hyogo Framework for Action by developing its disaster management capacity and supporting increased investment in community-based disaster risk management through long term multi-year funding.

The Pakistani federal government should:

- Make sure that the unmet humanitarian and early recovery needs of flood-affected people are addressed adequately, appropriately, and impartially. This can be done by allowing relief agencies to provide aid that is tailored to people's different needs, including cash grants, for as long as it is needed, and by ensuring that all organisations and institutions involved in providing assistance do so on the basis of need regardless of gender, location, religion, class, or political affiliation.
- Ensure that flood-affected families receive appropriate support to return home in a process that is voluntary, safe, informed, and dignified, or to resettle freely, in accordance with their constitutional rights and international guidelines on internally displaced persons.
- Save lives and money by investing at least \$27m in disaster risk reduction immediately as the World Bank recommends, followed by long term investment of at least one per cent of all national development funding, sustained by increased tax revenues.
- Define more clearly the roles and responsibilities of government bodies responsible for preparedness, disaster management, and reconstruction at the federal, provincial, and district levels, and lead intensified efforts to strengthen their capacities through greater human, financial, and technical resources.
- Update the National Floods Management Plan, simplify and improve early warning systems, designate safe breaching locations, and mitigate risks by repairing flood protection structures. Also, map future flood hazards.

Provincial governments should:

- Ensure that the unmet humanitarian early-recovery needs of flood-affected people are addressed adequately, appropriately, and impartially for as long as they are needed and solely on the basis of need regardless of gender, religion, class, or political affiliation.
- Make Provincial Disaster Management Authorities more effective by investing resources to provide well-trained permanent staff with clear roles and responsibilities.
- Improve the viability and sustainability of disaster risk reduction measures by ensuring that affected communities and civil society organisations, including women's groups, are consulted on preparedness, response, and long term reconstruction plans.

ⁱ Multi Sector Needs Assessment finalised by the UN-led Humanitarian Country Team and the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), 10 November 2011

ⁱⁱ NDMA Summary of Losses/Damage Due to Rains in Sindh, 17 November 2011

ⁱⁱⁱ Source: UN OCHA 28 November 2011

^{iv} The EC had contributed \$47.9 million in humanitarian aid (\$22.7 to the UN appeal) and the US had donated \$45 million (\$35.2 to the UN appeal) by 28 November 2011 (source: UN OCHA; USAID; EC).