

'MONSOON ON STEROIDS' – UN SECRETARY-GENERAL ANTONIO GUTERRES'S VISIT TO PAKISTAN

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(Views expressed in the brief are those of the author, and do not represent those of ISSI)



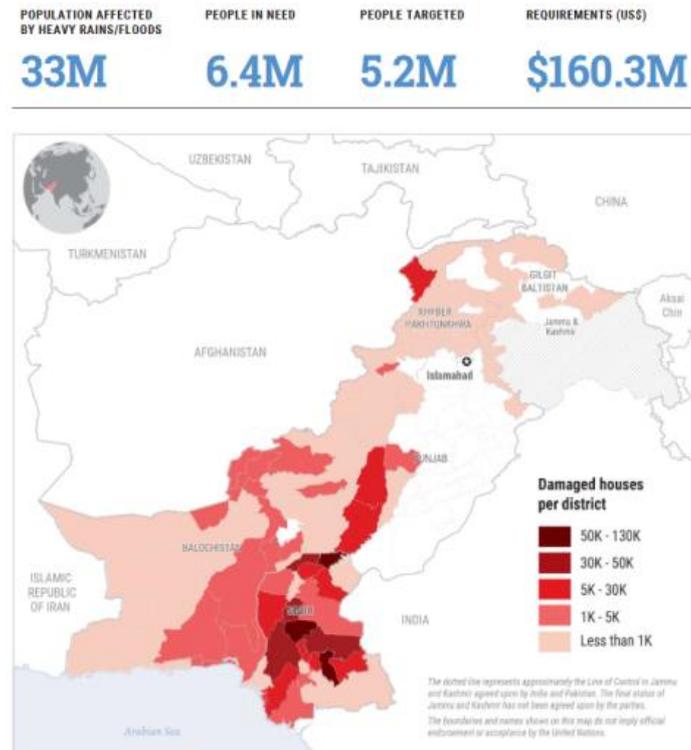
To show solidarity with the people of Pakistan UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres visited Pakistan for two days – 9th and 10th September 2022 – to take note of the flood-affected areas and pledge the UN's support in the time of catastrophe. He visited some of the worst-affected areas in Sindh and Balochistan and met with residents, some of whom were directly impacted by the floods and had lost their loved ones, homes, and everything they owned, amid the near-continuous monsoon rainfall, flash flooding, and rain-induced landslides.¹ During his visit, he urged the international community to step up and play a proactive role to help countries like Pakistan which are more vulnerable in the wake of the climate change crisis.

Since mid-June 2022, Pakistan has witnessed an extreme monsoon which has led to the country's worst flooding in a decade. Pakistan received nearly twice as much rain than the 30-year average in the quarter through August, totalling 390.7 millimeters (15.38 inches).² According to Pakistan's National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), the floods have affected more than 33 million people and destroyed or damaged more than 1 million houses. At least 1,100 people were killed by floodwaters that inundated tens of thousands of square kilometers of the country. The NDMA

1 UN chief sees 'great heights' of human endurance and heroism amid 'climate carnage' in Pakistan, UN News, September 10, 2022, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/09/1126411>

2 Vijdan Mohammad Kawoosa, Aman Bhargava, Anand Katakam and Manas Sharma, "Floods in Pakistan," Reuters, September 1, 2022, <https://graphics.reuters.com/PAKISTAN-WEATHER/FLOODS/akpezbxgvr/>

Chairman Lt-Gen Akhtar Nawaz cautioned regarding the changing weather pattern in Pakistan and highlighted four major indicators of climate change were witnessed — an early arrival of summer and minimum period of spring season; four major heat waves due to which the forests caught fire in different areas; an early advent of monsoon and more rains in during this season, adding even rains heavily lashed those areas which had very minimum chances in the past.³



Source: Pakistan 2022 Floods Response Plan: 01 Sep 2022 - 28 Feb 2023 (Issued 30 Aug 2022)⁴

The UN further launched an urgent appeal to raise \$160m to help Pakistan and call on the international community that Pakistan needs massive financial support.⁵ The UN Secretary-General called for a global response to the flood destruction in Pakistan and characterized it as not a question of solidarity or generosity but a question of justice and global response.⁶

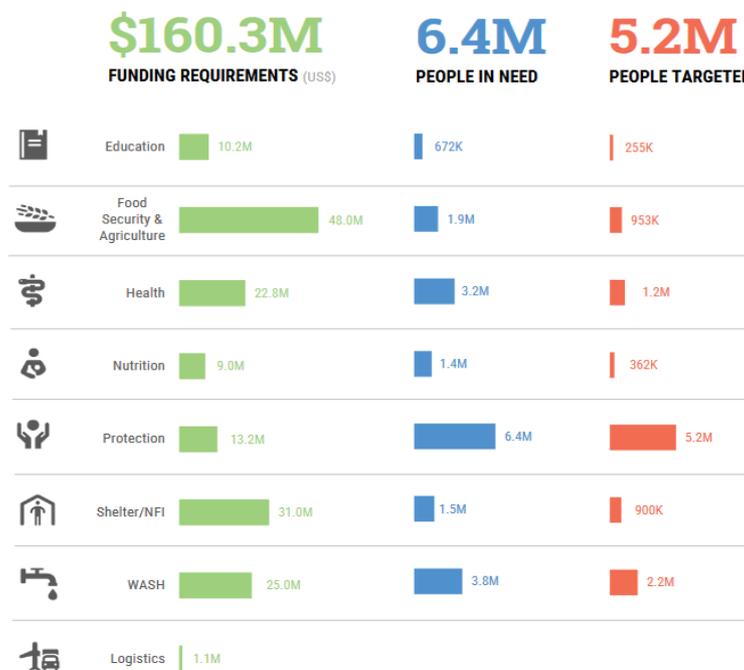
³ NDMA distributes compensation cheques among flood victims; Relief goods handed to affected people, News, July 22, 2022, <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/975728-ndma-distributes-compensation-cheques-among-flood-victims-relief-goods-handed-to-affected-people>

⁴ "Pakistan 2022 Floods Response Plan: 01 Sep 2022 - 28 Feb 2023 (Issued 30 Aug 2022)," Relief Web, August 30, 2022, <https://reliefweb.int/report/pakistan/pakistan-2022-floods-response-plan-01-sep-2022-28-feb-2023-issued-30-aug-2022>

⁵ Abid Hussain, "UN Chief Visits Flood-Hit Pakistan, Appeals For 'Massive' Help," UN News, September 9, 2022, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/9/9/un-chief-visits-flood-hit-pakistan-appeals-for-massive-help>

⁶ UN chief sees 'great heights' of human endurance and heroism amid 'climate carnage' in Pakistan, UN News, September 10, 2022, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/09/1126411>

Moreover, UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, is mobilizing resources and staff to scale up its assistance in Pakistan to support local communities and refugees in areas devastated by the catastrophic floods.⁷ UNICEF responded by helping to deliver safe drinking water; lifesaving medical supplies; therapeutic food supplies; and hygiene kits to children and families and established temporary learning centres and supported the protection and psychosocial wellbeing of children affected by these devastating floods.⁸ In addition, the World Food Programme (WFP) and Humanitarian Response Facilities (HRF) established a network of warehouses across Pakistan at the request of the Government of Pakistan for easy distribution of relief support and response. It further expanded its humanitarian assistance through food relief, malnutrition prevention, and livelihoods assistance as well as supported the broader logistics response, helping to assess and coordinate where and how relief can be delivered to flood-ravaged areas.⁹



Source: Pakistan 2022 Floods Response Plan: 01 Sep 2022 - 28 Feb 2023 (Issued 30 Aug 2022)¹⁰

⁷ "UNHCR Scales Up Response To Catastrophic Floods In Pakistan," UNHCR, September 2, 2022, <https://www.unhcr.org/asia/news/briefing/2022/9/6311bba14/unhcr-scales-response-catastrophic-floods-pakistan.html>

⁸ "Devastating Floods in Pakistan," UNICEF, September 16, 2022, <https://www.unicef.org/emergencies/devastating-floods-pakistan-2022>

⁹ "Pakistan Floods: With Families in Limbo, Efforts to Rebuild Lives Focus On the Longer Term," WFP, September 1, 2022, <https://www.wfp.org/stories/pakistan-floods-families-limbo-efforts-rebuild-lives-focus-longer-term>

¹⁰ "Pakistan 2022 Floods Response Plan: 01 Sep 2022 - 28 Feb 2023 (Issued 30 Aug 2022)," Relief Web, August 30, 2022, <https://reliefweb.int/report/pakistan/pakistan-2022-floods-response-plan-01-sep-2022-28-feb-2023-issued-30-aug-2022>

Relief and Assistance Mechanisms:

During his visit, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres suggested multiple mechanisms to curb the effects of climate change, and highlighted methods that can help if not prevent but address the issue and its aftermath. The mechanisms will be undertaken by the UN and the agencies operating under it in the flood-hit areas for smooth relief and assistance operations. The mechanisms will help in short and mid-term relief efforts and also address the crisis in a post-recovery scenario.

1. *Climate financing* - as a method to help countries recover and adapt.¹¹
2. *Debt Relief*: Mechanisms for debt relief for climate-vulnerable countries such as Pakistan.¹²
3. *Debt Swaps*: Using debt swaps as a method in which the debtor nation, instead of continuing to make external debt payments, would make payments to finance climate projects.¹³
4. *Post-Disaster Reconstruction Plan*: Proposing climate resilient infrastructure and recovery and reconstruction of affected areas by the UN agencies,¹⁴ and flexible donor funding.
5. *Government-Led Recovery*: the WFP is leading a government-led recovery plan to ramp up relief operations to deliver food, nutrition and livelihood assistance concurrently and will continue to do so in the next three months.¹⁵
6. *Pakistan's Disaster Preparedness*: the WFP in partnership with government authorities in Pakistan is beefing up disaster preparedness; by supplying four large government-managed warehouse blocks, pre-equipped with relief supplies.¹⁶

¹¹ Asif Shahzad, Charlotte Greenfield, "U.N. chief urges support for flood-hit Pakistan," Reuters, September 11, 2022, <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/un-chief-visits-areas-pakistan-devastated-by-floods-2022-09-10/>

¹² Asif Shahzad, Charlotte Greenfield, "U.N. chief urges support for flood-hit Pakistan," Reuters, September 11, 2022, <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/un-chief-visits-areas-pakistan-devastated-by-floods-2022-09-10/>

¹³ Asif Shahzad, Charlotte Greenfield, "U.N. chief urges support for flood-hit Pakistan," Reuters, September 11, 2022, <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/un-chief-visits-areas-pakistan-devastated-by-floods-2022-09-10/>

¹⁴ <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/un-chief-visits-areas-pakistan-devastated-by-floods-2022-09-10/>

¹⁵ "Pakistan Floods: With Families in Limbo, Efforts to Rebuild Lives Focus On the Longer Term," WFP, September 1, 2022, <https://www.wfp.org/stories/pakistan-floods-families-limbo-efforts-rebuild-lives-focus-longer-term>

¹⁶ "Pakistan Floods: With Families in Limbo, Efforts to Rebuild Lives Focus on the Longer Term," WFP, September 1, 2022, <https://www.wfp.org/stories/pakistan-floods-families-limbo-efforts-rebuild-lives-focus-longer-term>

Responsibility of the Global North:

The UN Secretary-General remarked on the seriousness of the devastation in Pakistan as “never seen climate carnage” on such a scale and blamed wealthier countries for contributing to the devastation.¹⁷ The climate crisis has also triggered a debate about the responsibility of the Global North toward the climate change crisis in the Global South. Heavy industrialization of the Global North contributes more than 90 per cent of the excess emissions that are driving climate breakdown in the developing countries of the Global South. The impact is felt hardest in the countries of the Global South, which are already suffering the brunt of heat waves, droughts, floods, crop failures and human displacement and Pakistan is no exception.¹⁸ To bridge this gap the UN climate summit on November 22 will address and highlight the needs of vulnerable countries, especially those related to adaptation, resilience, and loss and damage. To ensure a fair, ambitious, and robust response from the global north the UN has called for an Enhanced Implementation ‘ACT2025,’ that lays out the five areas all governments – the G7 in particular– needs to deliver on before and during COP27.¹⁹ The areas include;²⁰

1. Bridge the mitigation gap toward limiting global temperature rise to 1.5°C.
2. Deliver high-quality and scaled-up finance flows, especially to the most vulnerable.
3. Enhance efforts to implement adaptation measures.
4. Secure finance for loss and damage.
5. Implement the Paris Rulebook to hold countries and non-state actors accountable.

Despite Pakistan’s negligible contribution to cause climate change, it is one of the most vulnerable countries to its effects. It has witnessed record-breaking heat waves, and floods which have not only affected daily life but have also contributed to a significant loss in the agriculture sector, infrastructure, and death.

¹⁷ “‘Never seen climate carnage’ like Pakistan floods, says UN chief,” UN News, September 10, 2022, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/9/10/never-seen-climate-carnage-like-in-pakistan-un-chief>

¹⁸ Jason Hickel, “The Global South Has The Power To Force Radical Climate Action,” Al Jazeera, June 29, 2022, <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2022/6/29/the-global-south-has-the-power-to-force-radical-climate-action>

¹⁹ “Allied for Climate Transformation by 2025 (ACT2025),” World Resources Institute, <https://www.wri.org/initiatives/allied-climate-transformation-act2025/resources/cop27-call-enhanced-implementation>

²⁰ “ACT2025 –Call for Enhanced Implementation,” <https://files.wri.org/d8/s3fs-public/2022-05/act2025-cop27-call-enhanced-implementation.pdf>

The devastating impact of the floods is a wake-up call for Pakistan. It has not only contributed to the humanitarian side of the crisis but has also significantly affected and impacted the infrastructure of the country. The floods have caused damage to nearly 3,500 km of roads and 149 bridges have impeded the ability of people to flee to safer areas, as well as compromised the delivery of aid to people in need along with internet outages attributed to widespread internet cuts.²¹

While Pakistan is keen to understand and address the climate change crisis, it cannot fight it on its own. It needs help and support from countries and the international community who contribute the most to the cause as not only their moral obligation towards the most affected countries but also to help minimize the cost and damage in wake of the devastation.

²¹ "Pakistan 2022 Floods Response Plan: 01 Sep 2022 - 28 Feb 2023 (Issued 30 Aug 2022)," Relief Web, August 30, 2022, <https://reliefweb.int/report/pakistan/pakistan-2022-floods-response-plan-01-sep-2022-28-feb-2023-issued-30-aug-2022>