

ONE YEAR POST-FLOODS: A GLIMPSE OF THE CURRENT SITUATION IN PAKISTAN

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In 2022, Pakistan experienced devastating floods that engulfed significant areas of the country. Approximately one-third of the territory found itself submerged, affecting a staggering 33 million people. Responding to this crisis, the government of Pakistan declared a national state of emergency on August 26, 2022, and issued a global plea for assistance. The period of flooding, spanning from June to August 2022, earned the description from United Nations (UN) Secretary General António Guterres as a "monsoon on steroids."¹

This calamity resulted in the tragic loss of over 1,700 lives, with more than 12,000 individuals sustaining injuries. The aftermath witnessed the destruction of over 2.2 million homes and 4.4 million acres of crops, amounting to a staggering USD 40 billion in economic losses. The episode highlighted the severe repercussions of climate change, global warming, and evolving monsoon patterns, which contribute to the increased frequency and intensity of such catastrophic events.²

The intricate macroeconomic conditions in Pakistan present formidable obstacles in fulfilling the Geneva pledge. The current IMF program emphasizes a stringent fiscal approach that necessitates the elimination of unsupported and ineffectively targeted subsidies. The reconstruction efforts will

¹ Ayaz Gul, "UN Chief Says Flood-Hit Pakistan Facing 'Monsoon on Steroids,' Seeks \$160 Million in Aid," VOA, August 30, 2022, <https://www.voanews.com/a/un-chief-says-flood-hit-pakistan-facing-monsoon-on-steroids-seeks-160-million-in-aid-/6722286.html>

² "One Year After Pakistan Monsoon Floods 2022," OCHA, August 31, 2023, <https://reliefweb.int/report/pakistan/one-year-after-pakistan-monsoon-floods-2022-31-august-2023>

demand extra fiscal capacity. To align with the program's structure, it is imperative to closely oversee reconstruction expenses to prevent any misallocation of fiscal resources.³

Geneva Conference 2023

On 9 January 2023, an International Conference in Geneva was convened specifically to support the affected people of this climate-induced disaster in Pakistan. It was co-hosted by the government of Pakistan UN. The Conference brought together governments, leaders from the public and private sectors, and civil society to support the people and the government to deal with the aftermath of the losses incurred due to floods. The objective was to present the 'Resilient Recovery, Rehabilitation, and Reconstruction Framework' (4RF), which lays out a multi-sectoral strategy for rehabilitation and reconstruction in a climate-resilient and inclusive manner, and, secondly, to secure international support and forge long-term partnerships for building Pakistan's climate resilience and adaptation. Under this plan, Pakistan aimed to arrange 50% of the USD 16 billion reconstruction expenditures itself, while for the remaining amount, it asked for support from the international community in the rehabilitation and reconstruction process. Overall, Pakistan was able to raise approximately USD 10 billion in the form of pledges from states and international financial institutions to support its flood recovery efforts.⁴

Current Situation

One year later, the nation has yet to achieve complete recovery. The region's most severely impacted were already some of Pakistan's most impoverished and susceptible areas. The meagre possessions people once had were swept away. The repercussions extend across the country, with nearly 8 million individuals displaced during the peak of the calamity. However, accurate data on the current number of homeless individuals or those residing in temporary shelters is unavailable. Millions of children are still without access to education, and essential infrastructure awaits repair. Numerous aid organizations report that millions continue to lack access to clean drinking water, contributing to an escalation in child malnutrition rates within the flood-affected regions.⁵

³ Ijaz Nabi, "Responding to Pakistan Floods," Brookings, February 10, 2023, <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/pakistan-floods/>

⁴ Mian Ahmad Naeem Salik, "International Conference on Climate Resilient Pakistan," ISSI, January 25, 2023, <https://issi.org.pk/issue-brief-on-international-conference-on-climate-resilient-pakistan/>

⁵ Associated Press, "Year After Devastating Floods in Pakistan, Some Have Recovered But Many Are Struggling," VOA, June 24, 2023, <https://www.voanews.com/a/hold-for-weekend---year-after-devastating-floods-in-pakistan-some-have-recovered-but-many-are-struggling/7149868.html>

- **Effect on Children**

A study conducted by the Islamic Relief Worldwide has highlighted the profound and enduring consequences on individuals, particularly children, in the aftermath of flooding. In regions impacted by the floods, 40% of surveyed children exhibited stunted growth, and 25% were found to be underweight, reflecting the challenges families face in obtaining adequate food and healthcare. Disturbingly, 80% of mothers reported instances of illness among their children, with outbreaks of ailments such as diarrhoea, malaria, and dengue fever on the rise. UNICEF highlights the ongoing need for humanitarian aid and essential services for millions of children, emphasizing the inadequate funding for recovery and rehabilitation initiatives. In flood-affected districts, over 1.5 million children urgently require life-saving nutritional interventions. Despite UNICEF's appeal for USD 173.5 million for Pakistan to provide crucial assistance, the current funding stands at only 57%.⁶

- **Food Insecurity**

In April 2023, the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) analysis by the World Food Program (WFP) revealed that 10.5 million people, constituting 29% of the rural population, were facing acute food insecurity due to the floods. Of this population, approximately 2.1 million individuals were in IPC Phase 4 emergency, while 8.4 million were in IPC Phase 3 (crisis). Projections indicate a further increase to 11.8 million individuals in the crisis and emergency phases between November 2023 and January 2024, with 9.5 million in IPC Phase 3 and 2.2 million in Phase 4. Simultaneously, the IPC Acute Malnutrition Analysis (AMN) conducted from March to September 2023 found that 2.1 million children were grappling with acute malnutrition. The analysis highlighted that 23 districts were categorized in IPC AMN Phase 4 (critical), five districts in IPC AMN Phase 3 (serious), and four districts in IPC AMN Phase 2 (alert).⁷

- **Impact on Healthcare**

About 2,000 healthcare facilities were destroyed by floods, leading to a surge in water-related diseases as the floodwaters subsided. Among the affected populace, a significant number were children who succumbed to ailments such as diarrhoea, dysentery, dengue fever, and malaria. The World Health Organisation (WHO) reported a staggering four-fold increase in malaria cases in Pakistan post-floods, soaring from 400,000 cases nationwide in 2021 to over 1.6 million cases in

⁶ "One year on from catastrophic floods, millions of children in Pakistan still need urgent support," UNICEF, August 25, 2023, <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/one-year-catastrophic-floods-millions-children-pakistan-still-need-urgent-support>

⁷ "WFP Pakistan Floods Situation Report, September 2023," WFP, November 2, 2023, <https://reliefweb.int/report/pakistan/wfp-pakistan-floods-situation-report-september-2023>

2022. This marked the most severe malaria outbreak in Pakistan since 1973. The prevalence of scabies among children in flood-affected areas is attributed to their contact with stagnant floodwater. Additionally, the enduring impact of the floods on mental health and overall well-being should not be underestimated.⁸

- **Economic Fallout**

The inundation struck Pakistan amid an existing severe economic downturn, exacerbating the financial hardships for millions. This crisis propelled numerous families into poverty, rendering them incapable of affording basic necessities such as food, fuel, and medicines. The economic fallout was approximated at USD 40 billion, necessitating USD 16 billion solely for reconstruction efforts. According to the Post-Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA) Human Impact Assessment, Pakistan's poverty rate is anticipated to surge by 3.7% to 4.0%, leading to the descent of 8.4 million to 9.1 million individuals below the poverty line. Despite these dire circumstances, Pakistan's flood response plan remains significantly underfunded. In January 2023, Pakistan, in collaboration with the United Nations, orchestrated a high-level donor's conference in Geneva. This conference aimed to generate funds for enhancing climate resilience in Pakistan and resulted in pledges surpassing USD 10 billion. However, a noteworthy aspect is that approximately 90% of these pledges are in the form of loans, slated to be available over the next three years and requiring repayment.⁹

Update on 4RF

The government's 4RF framework underscores the importance of effective coordination among federal and provincial governments, development partners, NGOs, and private sectors. This framework serves as the cornerstone upon which the nation will establish and fortify its long-term resilience to natural hazards and climate change. Pakistan has intensified its endeavours to confront the devastating impacts of climate change and revitalize flood-affected regions, gaining momentum since the Planning Ministry launched the 4RF framework. On November 6, 2023, the Central Development Working Party (CDWP) endorsed 21 development projects valued at USD 3 billion. These projects aim to provide assistance to areas affected by last year's floods, encompassing flood

⁸ "A year on from devastating flooding: what is happening in Pakistan?" Red Cross, August 30, 2023, <https://www.redcross.org.uk/stories/disasters-and-emergencies/world/climate-change-and-pakistan-flooding-affecting-millions>

⁹ "Donors pledge more than \$9bn for Pakistan flood recovery," Al Jazeera, January 9, 2023, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/1/9/flood-hit-pakistan-hosts-climate-resilience-meet-with-un-for-aid>

relief, access to clean energy, rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts, and enhancements in agriculture.¹⁰

Recommendations and Conclusion

- Pakistan must enhance its institutional capacities for disaster risk reduction preparedness and development planning. Additionally, it should focus on improving the efficiency of response and recovery within the framework of the 4RF.
- Investing in climate-resilient infrastructure is crucial for Pakistan. Enhanced infrastructure, urban planning, and river management systems can not only contribute to disaster response and recovery but also foster overall resilience.
- Pakistan requires ongoing assistance from both the international community and the government and private sector to address immediate needs in domestic recovery and implement lasting fiscal reforms.
- Careful strategizing and the implementation of climate-resilient agricultural practices are essential for Pakistan to effectively navigate the challenges posed by climate change. This involves leveraging innovative technologies and obtaining specialized training in crop cultivation to ensure adaptability to the evolving climate.
- Urgent measures are required to bolster healthcare and infrastructure in Pakistan, addressing the imperative of effectively responding to future crises and mitigating the severe impacts of climate disasters. This necessitates improved coordination among stakeholders and a substantial increase in funding for healthcare initiatives.

Despite contributing only 0.3% to the cumulative global carbon dioxide emissions, Pakistan is disproportionately suffering the adverse impacts of climate change, primarily stemming from emissions by wealthier nations and fossil fuel companies. The recurring annual monsoon rains pose an ongoing threat, necessitating urgent assistance for vulnerable communities residing in flood-prone areas and those yet to receive support since the onset of the floods.

One year after the devastating flooding, Pakistan continues to grapple with a myriad of challenges. Escalating inflation, a continuing trade deficit, substantial foreign debt, and limited foreign reserves

¹⁰ "Govt approves \$3b projects for flood-affected areas under 4RF," Pakistan Today, November 6, 2023, <https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2023/11/06/govt-approves-3b-projects-for-flood-affected-areas-under-4rf/>

hamper comprehensive economic recovery, indicating a prolonged path ahead. While authorities have implemented measures such as an early warning system on seven major rivers to monitor water levels and the development of a monsoon contingency plan, additional efforts are imperative to build flood resilience, mitigate future disasters, and safeguard lives and property.