

# SUBMISSION TO THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS & INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

November 4, 2022



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Climate-driven disasters and emergencies are increasing in severity and frequency around the world. The Canadian Red Cross continues to witness the disproportionate impacts on the people and communities who contribute the least to climate change, but who are experiencing the most severe consequences. While no region is immune from the impacts of climate change, those experiencing the most vulnerabilities continue to bear the brunt while receiving the least help. This includes women and children, people identifying as LGBTQ2I, seniors, people living with disabilities, refugees, and minority groups.

The extreme flooding in Pakistan is an illustration of these factors at play. From a humanitarian perspective, the situation is dire: in addition to the direct impacts of this severe flooding, a health emergency is unfolding along with millions facing acute food insecurity, all of which will have deep impacts on people for a long time to come. The onset of winter will also present distinct challenges with food insecurity, lack of housing, and health impacts only worsening - Canadians know all too well how challenging winter can be. In the midst of dealing with the devastating impacts of a flood, communities in Pakistan know the worst may be yet to come. Urgent resources are needed to ensure the communities most affected can get out of this crisis, which has already taken a deep toll on the country.

The situation in Pakistan acts as a real-time example of the common trends in climate crisis globally. From our experience, the Canadian Red Cross has identified the following four trends that are increasingly apparent in emergencies and disasters across geographies as a result of climate change:

1. Climate change is a multiplier resulting in compounding emergencies.
2. Protection risks significantly increase during and after emergencies.
3. Refugees, including those undocumented, face specific risks.
4. Early action is the *only* way forward.

## Recommendations:

In light of the urgent humanitarian situation in Pakistan and the growing needs as a result of the climate crisis, we request the Government of Canada to:

1. Scale up the provision of long-term assistance, particularly investing in strengthening health systems in Pakistan. The health impacts of the flood have been extreme and are only set to become worse as winter sets in.
2. Invest in local organizations who understand the immediate needs of communities and can deliver on the ground protection related services. Investment in local capacities is imperative for effective and appropriate services.
3. Ensure dedicated assistance to refugees, including those undocumented, in Pakistan. Accelerate efforts to resettle 40,000 Afghans in Canada. Afghan refugees in Pakistan require immediate assistance and are being doubly impacted, resulting in more severe states of vulnerability from this emergency.
4. Prioritize climate financing, including investing in adaptation and loss and damages.

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## BACKGROUND

On August 25, 2022, the Government of Pakistan declared a national emergency due to persistent monsoon rain resulting in devastating floods covering one third of the country. It is estimated that 33 million people have been impacted while more than 2.1 million homes have been damaged or destroyed. Critical infrastructure across the country has also been severely damaged including more than 1,400 health care facilities, 23,900 schools, over 13,000 kilometers of roads, and more than 465 bridges destroyed.<sup>1</sup> A recent post-disaster needs assessment (PDNA) completed by the Asian Development Bank, European Union, World Bank, and United Nations estimates that the total damages will exceed US \$14.9 billion while the total economic losses for the country is likely to exceed US \$15.2 billion. In total, the loss and damages are estimated at US \$30 billion while US \$16.3 billion is needed for a rehabilitation and reconstruction.<sup>2</sup>

Widespread destruction of crops, agricultural land, livelihood assets and the loss of more than 1.1 million livestock is causing emergency levels of food insecurity. More than 1 in 9 children under five who have been admitted to health facilities are suffering from severe acute malnutrition, while 14.6 million people are facing food insecurity<sup>3</sup>. In many areas, particularly in Sindh and Balochistan provinces, floodwaters have only started to recede. This, coupled with the destruction of water, sanitation, and health facilities has heightened public health risks. Outbreaks of diarrheal disease, measles, skin infections, respiratory tract infections, malaria, and dengue are on the rise. Access to safe drinking water, sanitation, and hygiene are of serious concern.<sup>4</sup> Additionally, 650,000 flood-affected women and girls are pregnant, many of whom are expected to give birth in the coming months.<sup>5</sup> Although many deliveries are often done at home, people displaced from the floods are trying to access health facilities, essential medications, and supplies, which have been greatly reduced.

## **Canadian Red Cross Support to Pakistan Red Crescent Society**

The Canadian Red Cross has been working in Pakistan in support of the Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS) since 2005, following a devastating earthquake that impacted millions. Since then, our partnership has only deepened. The Canadian Red Cross has supported communities across Pakistan during emergency and protracted crises for over a decade.

The PRCS is the leading humanitarian organization in the country that implements long-term programming and responds to disasters and health emergencies. Critically, the PRCS has both a presence and access to many of the worst affected and hard-to-reach locations across the country, which is

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<sup>1</sup> Government of Pakistan, National Disaster Management Agency. Situation Report No. 143: <https://reliefweb.int/report/pakistan/ndma-monsoon-2022-daily-situation-report-no-143-dated-3rd-nov-2022>

<sup>2</sup> OCHA, Pakistan: 2022 Monsoon Floods – Situation Report No.10 (as of 28 October 2022): <https://reliefweb.int/report/pakistan/pakistan-2022-monsoon-floods-situation-report-no-10-28-october-2022>

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> IFRC, Situational Overview: <https://go.ifrc.org/emergencies/6061#details>

<sup>5</sup> UNFPA, Women and girls bearing the brunt of the Pakistan Monsoon floods: <https://pakistan.unfpa.org/en/news/women-and-girls-bearing-brunt-pakistan-monsoon-floods>



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essential during this flood response. With almost 3,000 volunteers, over 650 staff, and 67 branches, the PRCS plays a vital role in emergency management and disaster response across the country. In the immediate aftermath of the most recent floods, the PRCS distributed pre-positioned emergency supplies to people impacted by the disaster. The PRCS, in partnership with the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) has reached 444,770 people with emergency lifesaving assistance, including shelter, health, relief distribution, and water, sanitation and health supplies.

Through IFRC, the Canadian Red Cross has been supporting response operations in Pakistan. To date, the Canadian Red Cross has fundraised more than \$3.9 million in support of the Pakistan Floods Appeal, deployed two personnel to lead IFRC's operation and one communication delegate, mobilized more than 9,500 non-food items, and in partnership with the Norwegian Red Cross recently supported two mobile health units (MHUs) for 6 months. Thanks to the generous support from the Government of Canada, the Canadian Red Cross has mobilized \$1 million in support of the IFRC operation. The IFRC launched an emergency appeal for CHF 40 million, of which only 23% has been funded. The increasing rates of disasters and emergencies due to climate change means more people are being forgotten as the next event comes along.

### **HUMANITARIAN INSIGHTS**

Through our experience responding to disasters and emergencies, both domestically and internationally, we have identified four key trends that persist across geographies.

#### **1. Climate is a multiplier, resulting in compounding emergencies**

Floods often have serious health consequences and threaten the lives of many of the communities most affected with the emergence and re-emergence of diseases. According to the current evidence, widespread damage to health infrastructure, the limited resources, and an increasing burden of illnesses, as well as the increased food insecurity across the globe all pose severe threats to people's safety and well-being. PRCS health workers on the ground continue to be alarmed with what they see daily, especially when dire health conditions are the worst amongst the hardest hit communities: contaminated water, insect bites, lack of latrines, and the like. The overwhelming majority of households (91.4%) reported that since the floods in July, at least one person in their household had fallen sick or had an illness. The most common illnesses experienced by the household members were diarrhoea (64.0%), skin infections (49.0%), cholera (48.9%), pneumonia (44.5%), and malaria (44.3%). Surveys conducted within communities show that community groups were unanimous in noting the lack of health facilities across all districts. Furthermore, as winter sets in, it is predicted to see a rise in respiratory illnesses as well as a spike in COVID-19. Combined with the lack of housing and food insecurity, the health impacts of winter will be extremely severe unless action is taken now.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> PRCS Health Team. Statistics taken from on the ground from assessments and surveys with analysis from CRC Health in Emergencies Team.

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## 2. Protection risks significantly increase during and after emergencies

Incidents of violence rise during and after a disaster due to the shocks on people's safety, dignity, wellbeing, and direct impacts on livelihoods. This unfortunate reality is not only predictable, but preventable.<sup>7</sup> We know from our experience that protection concerns underpin the overall humanitarian context and must not be ignored. Those experiencing the most vulnerabilities including refugees, undocumented migrants, and other marginalized people such as women, girls, seniors, those identifying as LGBTQ2I, and ethnic minority groups face grave risks in accessing services.<sup>8</sup> According to the IFRC, in Pakistan there is a high risk of sexual exploitation and abuse and an increase by more than double of gender-based violence, child protection and other protection concerns since the pre-monsoon period. Deep-rooted gender inequality, including the lack of mobility, preservation of honor and the risk all types of violence, worsened by poverty and illiteracy, is making life more difficult in particular for women, post-flood. Displacement, inadequate access to livelihoods and basic necessities, along with fractured social protection practices have increased protection risks, particularly for the vulnerable groups identified above.<sup>9</sup>

## 3. Refugees face specific risks

In most contexts, refugees and displaced populations are more likely to be marginalized, with less access to critical services and resources. This is only amplified in an emergency. Furthermore, the risks to and precarity of refugees in emergencies is worse in contexts where they are not formally recognized as refugees but rather have another more temporary status or no status at all. Pakistan hosts approximately 3 million Afghans, including 1.3 million registered Afghan refugees, out of whom an estimated 800,000 are hosted in more than 45 flood-affected districts out of 80 affected locations. Four of the worst affected districts in Sindh, Balochistan, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa host the highest number of refugees who already struggled to access basic necessities prior to the floods, which has only further been exacerbated.<sup>10</sup> Importantly, Afghans displaced in Pakistan, particularly those undocumented, experience increased barriers to accessing basic needs including healthcare, legal services, adequate housing and shelter arrangements, and education.<sup>11</sup> It is essential that during emergencies, the needs of refugees including those without status are specifically analyzed and factored into humanitarian responses. Furthermore, a pathway to durable solutions including resettlement should be prioritized.

## 4. Early action is the *only* way forward

Pakistan is well documented to be one of the countries most vulnerable to climate change. This is not the first flood that Pakistan has experienced in recent years. In 2010, devastating floods destroyed 1.7 million homes, damaged 5.4 million acres of arable land, and left entire communities without a source of food or income.<sup>12</sup> During the floods in 2010, the PRCS and other Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement partners

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<sup>7</sup> [Predictable, Preventable: Best Practices in Addressing Interpersonal and Self-Directed Violence During and After Emergencies](#). Canadian Red Cross and IFRC

<sup>8</sup> IFRC Revised Emergency Appeal, Pakistan Monsoon Floods, MDRPK023, 06/10/2022

<sup>9</sup> The Tribune, 26 September 2022: The disproportionate impact of floods on women <https://tribune.com.pk/article/97641/the-disproportionate-impact-of-floods-on-women-1>

<sup>10</sup> IFRC Revised Emergency Appeal: Pakistan Monsoon Floods, MDRPK023, 06/10/2022

<sup>11</sup> IFRC Regional Population Movement Appeal: Afghanistan Preparedness Response, MDRAFRPM21, 25/09/2021

<sup>12</sup> [Pakistan: 6 months after the floods millions remain homeless](#), Canadian Red Cross

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warned that this will not be the last time floods hit the country and that the next time it will be worse. The calls for climate finance remain the same more than a decade after this disaster. We firmly believe that it is time to **stop treating these large-scale events as exceptional**. Instead, they require focused attention on prevention and resilience to adapt to the increasingly severe and frequent disasters as a result of the deepening climate crisis.



### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 1. Scale up the provision of long-term assistance, particularly investing in health system strengthening. The health impacts of this flood have been extreme and are only set to become worse as winter sets in.**
  - The humanitarian needs far outweigh the funds raised for this response. There is an urgent need to prioritize investment in quality, accessible primary and public health services, including mobile and outreach clinics, for the poorest and most marginalized, especially those in the worst flood affected areas.
  - Invest in local organizations that are best placed to strengthen the linkages between health systems and communities to provide community-based services that better address women's health concerns and have access to the hardest to reach areas.
  - Support national and local health leadership to plan and prepare for crises to ensure the continued delivery of Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR) and nutrition commodities and services during humanitarian crises. This is especially critical as over 650,000 pregnant women have directly been affected by the floods, set to give birth in the coming months.
  
- 2. Invest in local organizations who can deliver on the ground protection related services. The crisis around protection occurs often silently. More investment for local actors with protection capacity must occur.**
  - Ensure sustainable funding for skills-strengthening of local responders and local women's organizations, who are well placed to identify and address cultural and other barriers to the safety of women, girls, and other marginalized groups.
  - Ensure humanitarian assistance is informed by a thorough contextual analysis of the differential impact and intersectional needs of affected populations, particularly women, girls and marginalized or excluded populations.
  - Ensure humanitarian actors include child protection and Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) prevention and survivor-centered support (or referral) services and strong community engagement and accountability measures, accessible to women and girls, people living with disabled, and other marginalized communities, as components of every humanitarian response.
  
- 3. Ensure the needs of refugees are considered during response and prioritize pathways to durable solutions.**
  - Refugees, including those without status, face disproportionate risks during emergencies. Invest in local organizations that have access to refugee populations and ensure that their needs are part of humanitarian response planning. Afghan refugees in Pakistan require immediate assistance and have been left severely vulnerable from this emergency.

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- Accelerate efforts to resettle 40 000 Afghans in Canada. Prioritize those living with particular vulnerabilities including people living with disabilities, seniors, people identifying as LGBTQ2I, and ethnic minorities.

#### **4. Prioritize climate financing, including investing in adaptation and loss and damages.**

- After the 2010 floods emergency response the international community should have worked on mitigation measures, knowing there was a high probability of a humanitarian disaster. Let us not make this mistake again.
- The floods in Pakistan are estimated to cost US \$30 billion in loss and damages, while requiring an additional \$16.3 billion for reconstruction and rehabilitation. We urge Canada, alongside the international community, to play a leadership role in the establishment of a loss and damages financial mechanism.
- Mitigation efforts are no longer enough but adaptation funding has lagged mitigation funding. There is urgent need for adaptation at the local level to lessen the secondary impacts of climate crisis. We welcome Canada's leadership in getting countries with higher financial resources to double their adaptation funding by 2025.
- Multi-year funding between disasters is critical to limit humanitarian crises, this is the only way forward.