



**ISLAMIC
RELIEF
CANADA**

Islamic Relief Canada Submission to the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development Re: Pakistan

Islamic Relief Canada

Islamic Relief is one of Canada's largest Muslim charities. We provide humanitarian relief in over 30 countries around the world and build resilient prosperous communities through our relief and development program efforts.

Islamic Relief is part of a global network of offices which has been operational in Pakistan for over 30 years now. We have a long and well-established reputation within communities and with the government — and it's because of these relationships that we have access to difficult-to-reach areas.

We currently have over 400 staff working in Pakistan, with 100 of these specifically working in Balochistan, one of the provinces most affected by flooding — where over half of the population already lived in extreme poverty prior to the floods.

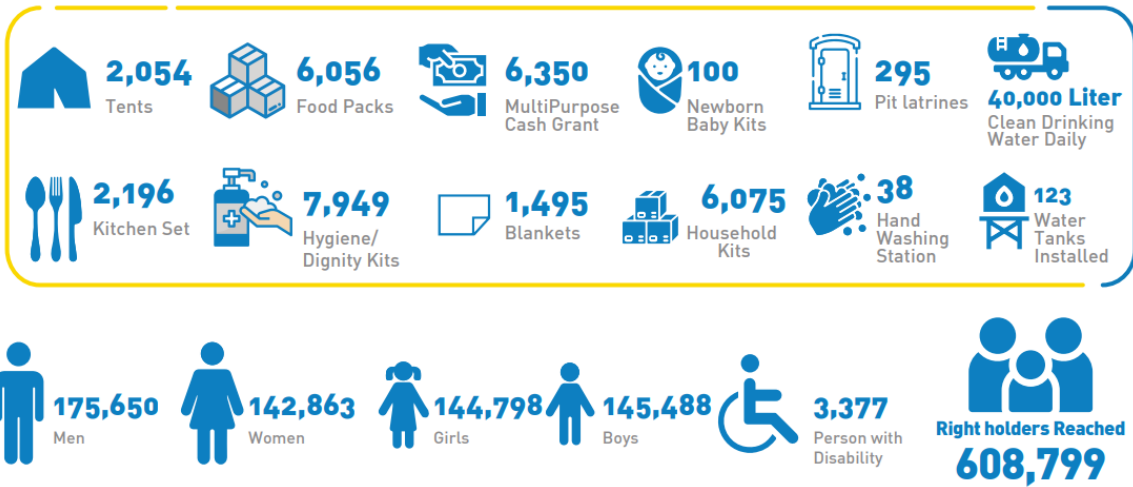
Islamic Relief Response to the Pakistan Flood Situation

Islamic Relief was one of the first to respond on the ground when the Pakistan floods hit. Our local teams have been working around the clock to ensure needs are being met. Our response has been active across Balochistan, Sindh, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

- Over the past couple of months, **we have been able to assist 608,799 individuals** — as per Islamic Relief's October 31, 2022 Situation Report.
- We have been quick to provide multipurpose cash grants, tents, food packs, newborn baby kits, clean drinking water, hygiene and dignity kits – including for women — water tanks, latrines and other necessities (See Figure 1 below.)
- Due to a huge loss of roads and infrastructure in flood affected areas, many places were not receiving aid. Connecting roads had been submerged underwater thus blocking the way for teams on ground. Islamic Relief, with support from the Special Services Group of Pakistan Navy, has been able to **use helicopters to provide lifesaving assistance** to communities that had no other way of getting support.
- We have begun the **early recovery and rehabilitation phase** in the most prone areas - especially for health and hygiene, food security, safety and shelter, and protection with safeguarding. Millions have lost their homes and shelters in the floods.

In response, Islamic Relief is providing semi-permanent and permanent shelters, and we are also responding to the huge need to earn livelihood, provide psychosocial support —

especially for women — and to get children back to their studies with temporary learning centers.



*Figure 1: Islamic Relief Pakistan flood response as of Oct. 31st, 2022

Recommendations to the FAAE

Recommendation 1: That the Government of Canada continue the current matching funds model.

We are grateful to the Government of Canada for launching the matching fund, of which close to \$1.5m in funds will be deployed through Islamic Relief to those who need it most on the ground in Pakistan.

While there have been many discussions around the various matching funds models, IRC finds the current model of **dedicated matching funds** to be the most efficient, credible and effective, for the following reasons:

- Participating organizations are pre-approved so campaigns can be launched within days
- Provides a guarantee of program quality standards and credibility across the board

- **Evidence that the model leads to increased and new donor engagement** — For example, from the Humanitarian Coalition’s Lebanon appeal, it was noted that 80% of central donors were *new* and that 74% of them indicated they do not give regularly to international appeals through other channels. This data demonstrates that the model works to attract and engage donors.
- Through GAC incentivizing collaboration, Humanitarian Coalition members are able to attract more media attention and engage with the corporate sector on humanitarian issues.

Earlier matching fund models faced a number of challenges:

- **A very large number of organizations were included, making overall administration of the fund difficult** — For example, the previously model of pooled matching funds, which were originally rolled out for the Boxing Day Tsunami (2004-2005) in Indonesia, allowed any organization claiming to be responding — true and effective or not — to claim their donations would be matched. Our understanding is that it created an overwhelming situation for Global Affairs Canada, (GAC) as they had to administer dozens, if not hundreds, of attestations submitted by groups, and then subsequently channel the funds accordingly
- **Long fund allocation and repayment times** — Older models were slow to launch and slow to process and therefore slow to distribute funds.. The present model of dedicated matching funds can be launched within days. This reduces the timeline from activation to implementation by weeks or months. Pre-approved organizations with established SOPs and retroactivity provisions – such as like the Humanitarian Coalition and its members – can already begin programming before they even receive the funds. For Pakistan, the Humanitarian Coalition was able to issue letters of commitment to members even though the final aggregate proposal had not yet been approved or contracted.
- **No guarantee of programming quality standards, with potential damage to everyone’s credibility** — The previous model allowed any organization that claimed to be responding on the ground to submit their attestation to GAC about their fundraising. At the time, GAC would then pool these funds and determine how best to make allocations. This raised critical credibility questions and reputational risk for the sector in terms of donor expectations against reality.

Islamic Relief Canada has raised \$5.5 million dollars for the Pakistan floods since the middle of August 2022 — demonstrating that Canadians from coast to coast care about the crisis and are heeding the call of the matching funds and are willing to donate more. The Humanitarian Coalition as a collective raised more than **\$8.5M** from the public. That represents more than **31,000 Canadians** (estimate, based on average gift), from every corner of the country (every province and territory.)

Recommendation 2: The Government of Canada must not be short-sighted, but commit to a sustained investment in Pakistan's long-term development.

Islamic Relief Canada recognizes that the Pakistan floods situation will not be solved in the immediate term, and is sure to have long-term impacts. We are working hard to address the immediate crisis and develop strategies to mitigate repercussions in the coming years.

The situation is devastating. Over 33 million Pakistanis have been impacted by the flooding, losing land, businesses, and the ability to earn a dignified livelihood. As a result, much of the country has become entirely dependent upon humanitarian aid and assistance.

As I noted in my spoken testimony, most of the rural parts of Pakistan rely on agriculture or animal rearing as their primary source of both food and income. The flood waters have killed over a million livestock and have drowned millions more acres of crop fields — pushing millions more into hunger and extreme poverty. In fact, Islamic Relief's findings in Balochistan and Sindh already reveal that 90% of people affected by the floods will face long-term food shortages. Without proper investment into climate-adaptive, sustainable long-term development, the 2022 Pakistan floods will undoubtedly have a crippling impact for future generations.

The Canadian government's investment into Pakistan's long-term development is critical in order to ensure proper recovery and rehabilitation for the nation, and could include the following:

- **Increase Canada's Official Development Assistance (ODA) budget:** Canada's ODA budget has grown as a result of support directed toward response to, and recovery from, the global COVID-19 pandemic and increases in climate financing. However, Canada's ODA remains comparatively low — a reality that must be addressed by the government to ensure proper support for Pakistan and other countries around the world that are shielding the impact of climate-induced disasters.
- **Increase Canadian investment into sustainable and climate resilient programs.** Islamic Relief has been at the forefront of developing climate-adaptive sustainable development and disaster risk reduction (DRR) programs for years. One such example can be found in Balochistan — one of Pakistan's poorest provinces, where over half the population was already living in extreme poverty and facing crippling drought prior to the floods. Islamic Relief has built strategic flood walls that were able to prevent destruction during the recent flooding. We have also developed and invested in innovative farming schemes, such as water-conserving drip irrigation systems that are proven adaptations to drought and other conditions caused by a changing climate.
- **Extend debt relief to Pakistan:** Notably, one element of this crisis is that a country like Pakistan — when you look at their GDP and debt financing — is incredibly vulnerable by not being able to invest in climate-resistant infrastructure. Canada and other industrialized nations have a responsibility to consider the possibility of debt swaps to ensure Pakistan is not overburdened by debt repayments. Instead, many of these external debts could be forgiven and converted into climate-adaptive interventions.

Recommendation 3: Ensure the Government of Canada is meeting our climate targets and fulfilling our commitments to the international community

The international community has acknowledged that the recent flooding crisis in Pakistan was manmade and climate change-induced. There are over 7,000 glaciers melting in the north of Pakistan, and with monsoon rains breaking the record of the last 30 years, both these factors contributed immensely to water levels rising in dams and rivers, resulting in the floods that we now see.

Despite contributing less than 1% in the global carbon footprint, Pakistan is the 8th most climate-vulnerable country in the world. Islamic Relief has for several years been working closely with communities, governments and the Pakistan Ministry for Climate Change to develop climate-adaptive programming and policy at the local, regional and national levels in Pakistan. Earlier this year, in March 2022, Islamic Relief Canada teams were on the ground in Pakistan and Kashmir conducting research to better understand climate change's disproportionate impact upon women and children; (report available.)

Pakistan is in a state of climate crisis — from deadly heat waves at the start of the summer to flooding at the end of the season, and ongoing changes in weather patterns that are wreaking havoc on some of the world's most vulnerable communities. As an industrialized country, Canada contributes significantly to overall global greenhouse gas emissions, for which the Global South — including Pakistan — is paying the highest price.

The Government of Canada must act quickly to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions and ensure we are meeting our climate targets. Moreover, we must take accountability in recognizing our role in the climate crisis Pakistan is facing, and renew our long-term commitment to assisting those impacted by the floods.