

# ONE YEAR AFTER THE FLOODS: PAKISTAN STRUGGLES TO REBUILD

The worst monsoon floods to strike Pakistan in almost a century affected 20 million people—ten million of them children—in the summer of 2010. One year later, many are still struggling to survive.

Millions of people in Sindh and Punjab provinces are living in temporary shelters with cramped living conditions, poor sanitation and little access to clean water or nutritious food. Already high rates of acute malnutrition have reached extreme levels.

In April 2011, Save the Children conducted a survey of over 2,300 households in eight flood-affected districts to find out how well children and their families were coping in the aftermath of the flood.



*Azra brought Nadia, seven months, to the Muradabad Rural Health Unit, in the Muzaffargarh District, Punjab, Pakistan. Photo credit: CJ Clarke/Save the Children.*

Our survey found continuing trauma from the floods has left nearly half of children suffering nightmares, phobias, shyness and aggression. Others have been driven to use glue or hashish in an effort to cope with their feelings.

The education system has been severely weakened with 10,000 schools damaged by flooding or wear and tear from being used as temporary shelters. In many areas, as many as 47% of parents say there are no teachers, and a third of households report a substantial decrease in school attendance.

Even before the floods struck, Pakistan was struggling with crippling governance and infrastructure deficits, as well as health and education systems unable to cope with the scale of demand.

Pakistan faced chronic challenges including acute malnutrition, high maternal and newborn mortality and significant levels of illiteracy. In Sindh province, the survey found only one in 20 girls aged ten to 18 had completed their primary education.

The floods deepened inequalities and increased the vulnerabilities of children and women across the country.

## The challenges

Our survey identified a grim picture of life in post-flood Pakistan\*:

- In some of the worst hit areas 23% of children were found to be acutely malnourished. Up to 6% had severe malnutrition in the worst hit areas.
- Parents report child labour has risen by up to a third in some parts of Pakistan.
- More than 2,000 schools are yet to reopen
- In some areas, more than eight in ten families have not yet been able to rebuild their homes.
- Incomes have declined by up to 71% since the floods in some of the worst affected areas.

The floods have left children traumatized with nearly half of parents in our survey saying their children were showing distressed behaviour, such as aggression, shyness, and fears of water and open spaces. Many have had to go out to work to support their family, and school attendance, already low in Pakistan, has fallen still further.

Meanwhile rebuilding homes has been painfully slow; in one district, one in six families are still living in tents. On average, over a third of households

\*All unreferenced figures in this update come from Save the Children baseline survey, April 2011.

# OUR LARGEST EMERGENCY RESPONSE

surveyed have not been able to rebuild their homes, rising to eight in ten in some districts. Rebuilding has been slow mainly because most of those people who have lost their homes do not own the land where they live, and the landlords often refuse to let them build permanent structures. A shortage of money and skills, and rampant inflation in the cost of building materials are also slowing progress.

## Save the Children's response

The response to the Pakistan floods is the largest emergency response ever in Save the Children's history – but there is still much more to do.

Save the Children has reached nearly four million people with humanitarian aid so far, of which 1.8 million are children. While in the immediate aftermath of the flood we provided emergency relief, we have also been helping people rebuild their lives for the long-term. Save the Children has ensured that:

- 1.3 million people have received food aid.
- 1.2 million people have received some kind of health treatment for diseases including malaria, diarrhea, and chest infections.
- Nearly 900,000 have received shelter.
- Treated 25,000 children and 12,000 pregnant or breastfeeding women for malnutrition and assisted 2,392 breastfeeding women with feeding problems for their infants and young children under 2 years
- Got 15,000 children back to school, or enrolled for the first time.
- Rebuilt 251 transitional shelters in Jacobabad
- Helped 297,000 people in food for work schemes, and 66,850 people via cash for work schemes
- Given 150,000 children access to child-friendly play spaces.

Save the Children has treated more than 25,000 children and is giving skilled support to 2,392 mothers to re-establish and increase breastfeeding their children and improve child care practices, a crucial way of preventing malnutrition in young children. However, even one year on from the flooding more than 1,200 children per week are being admitted for treatment.

When this year's monsoon floods come, Save the Children is concerned that the effect could be even worse than last year because of the huge number of people still displaced from their homes, without livelihoods and weakened by lack of food.



Save the Children are helping flood-affected communities survive by educating communities on preventing pneumonia and training health workers to identify dangerous diseases and working on improving water, sanitation and hygiene in camps, schools and villages. Photo credit: CJ Clarke/Save the Children.

Save the Children is the world's leading independent organization for children in need, with programs in 120 countries, including Canada. Save the Children is made up of 29 member organizations working together worldwide.

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