

Pakistan's Dual Crisis: Floodwaters and public health emergency

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Pakistan is consistently ranked among the top 5 countries prone to climate change mentioned by the United Nations Habitat in 2023, while the country is ranked 7th most vulnerable to climate change and 8th most affected country by climate change according to the German Global Climate Risk Index (GCRI).¹ Pakistan is a land that has deserts, glaciers, mountains, and coastal regions, but due to insufficient infrastructure, lack of preparedness and planning, and poor functional skills, it is more vulnerable to natural disasters like floods.² The intensity and number of flood events and flash floods have notably increased in Pakistan, a phenomenon of concern. There were 21 flood events from 1950 to 2010 but the super flood of 2010 caused 1985 deaths and displaced 20 million people. The second catastrophic flood of the monsoon hit Pakistan in 2022 and caused the deaths of 1033 people, affected 33 million people, and displaced 5.4 million people.³ Now Khyber Pukhtankhwa was hit by the historic worst flash flood, while the eastern province of Punjab faced the biggest flood in its history. Due to that, the level of the three rivers rose and submerged 2300 villages, and according to the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), 881 people were killed, 1100 injured, and 1.5 million displaced as a result of torrential monsoon rains and floods.⁴

Floods created an atmosphere for the microorganism to multiply and become a source of transmission. Waterborne-diseases such as cholera, diarrhoea, and typhoid were commonly encountered, especially in children, due to contaminated water. Simultaneously, stagnant water became a source for mosquitoes which increased the chances of malaria and dengue. Moreover, the displacement of people from one area to crowded

areas or shelters increased the spread of respiratory diseases.⁵ The government should declare a health and rehabilitation emergency and propose and implement a comprehensive healthcare plan with the help of national and international non-government organizations (NGOs) to deal with this natural disaster. Now it is the responsibility of the government to take fast and swift actions such as the establishment of rapid response teams, relief teams and centers that have basic facilities, vaccination drives among the affected people and provision of medication and supplies. Moreover, the government and non-government organizations (NGO) should provide clean water, hygienic food, slanted drains, shelters, and public health workers should initiate a public awareness campaign to deal with this disaster.

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