

Grades K-12

# WHEN DISASTER STRIKES

## FLOODING IN PAKISTAN

A cross-curricular educational resource designed to support the elementary and secondary guides **When Disaster Strikes**, **Understanding Humanitarian Emergencies**

# WHEN DISASTER STRIKES: FLOODING IN PAKISTAN

## *A Humanitarian Emergency Response*

### OVERVIEW

On July 27, 2010, the first of what would eventually be a series of heavy monsoon rains arrived in Pakistan, largely affecting the northwestern province of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa. Monsoon season takes place from July to September every year in Pakistan and averages about 63.5 millimetres of rainfall per month. In a mere three-day span from July 28 to July 30, Pakistan received over 203 millimetres of rain! Imagine your neighbourhood receiving more than three months worth of rain in less than 72 hours. This is what happened to the country of Pakistan, and it immediately killed more than one thousand people while displacing millions of others.

The rapidly rising water levels have driven people out of their homes, leaving them without shelter, food or access to clean water. In some areas of Pakistan, water levels rose three metres high, which is about the same height as an adult elephant! People have been forced onto rooftops and even up trees in order to protect themselves from the surge. Large areas that were once filled with villages, schools and agricultural crops are gone, now occupied by riverbeds and outpouring floods. Many have taken refuge in buildings on higher grounds.

Another serious consequence of the heavy monsoon rains is the widespread damage that has been inflicted on Pakistan's infrastructure, presenting yet another obstacle to locals. The destruction of roads, bridges and power lines has made rescue and the delivery of aid by international aid agencies such as UNICEF significantly more difficult.

The contamination of wells has left millions of people without access to clean water. The threat of waterborne diseases such as cholera and diarrhea are of great concern, especially for the millions of children affected by this natural disaster.

UNICEF is working hard to deliver food, clean drinking water, health supplies, vaccines and clothing to the children and families of Pakistan who have been affected by this natural disaster. They are striving towards the restoration of water supply systems in flood-affected areas such as Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, where hundreds of thousands of people have regained access to safe drinking water through restoration of tube wells and water trucking.

A combination of media is being used by UNICEF and partners to communicate health and hygiene messages that promote the prevention of waterborne diseases. In the meanwhile, water filters, soap, buckets and containers for carrying water are also being distributed to families in need.

UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, in response to witnessing the flooding in Pakistan, said, *"I will never forget the destruction and suffering I have witnessed today. In the past, I have witnessed many natural disasters around the world, but nothing like this."* These floods are reported to be the worst in the region for the past 80 years.

### FURTHER RESOURCES:

Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) – Pakistan Floods Leave 20 Million Homeless

<http://www.cbc.ca/world/story/2010/08/14/pakistan-floods-homeless.html>

In flood-devastated Pakistan, 3.5 million children are at risk of disease

[http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/pakistan\\_55580.html](http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/pakistan_55580.html)

UNICEF emergency aid arrives in Pakistan amidst continuing flood crisis

[http://www.unicef.org/pakistan/reallives\\_6422.htm](http://www.unicef.org/pakistan/reallives_6422.htm)

## CLOSE YOUR EYES AND IMAGINE THIS



Flood-affected Saima, 10, lives in a UNICEF-supported camp in the Rahim Yar Khan district of Pakistan's Punjab province.

*It's a September morning. You wake up on the floor of the gymnasium in the local high school. Your dad went back to save some of your family's belongings, so this morning, he isn't there. Instead, you're sharing this space with hundreds of people from surrounding villages. Some faces look familiar, but no one has much in the way of belongings. Hungrily, you walk down the main hallway to the cafeteria. Instead of fries and sandwiches, you pick up your family's rations of clean water, soap and food, mostly high-energy biscuits for your two-year-old brother. From there, it's time to take your youngest siblings to the nurse. They must have ingested some contaminated water because they are now sick with diarrhea and in need of oral rehydration salts. The nurse informs you that they will be vaccinated against polio and measles as a precaution. Only now can you think about going to class. Instead of walking down the hallway and grabbing a seat in a classroom, you walk out the door and into one of UNICEF's child-friendly school tents. You, and 150 other children, will continue your education in this tent until the floodwaters recede and reconstruction of your school can begin.*

Millions of children like 10-year-old Saima are in similar situations in the flood-ravaged areas of Pakistan. After fleeing their homes due to rising water, millions of families are living in makeshift shelters around the country, often inside schools or beside roads. Crowded living conditions such as these increase the likelihood of diseases such as measles and polio, and waterborne illnesses such as cholera and dysentery. To prevent such unnecessary secondary emergencies, UNICEF is working to provide vaccinations, clean water and oral rehydration salts to those in camps.

While many homes and livelihoods have been lost, organizations such as UNICEF are committed to ensuring that children do not have to give up their right to education. In fact, for many girls, including Saima, this is their first opportunity to go to school. So far, UNICEF has established Temporary Learning and Recreation centres. These centers are 'child-friendly' spaces in which girls and boys can continue with their education and participate in recreational activities. These tents are stocked with school-in-a-box kits, educational toys and staffed by caring adults to help the children through the traumas they are facing in the world around them. By keeping the routines of learning intact, UNICEF safeguards children's right to education, even in times of disaster.

For children like Saima, the flood has brought an unforeseen opportunity that they hope will continue once the floodwaters have receded. Going to school is Saima's 'lifetime dream coming true.'

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Imagine you lost your home to flooding. Where would you go? What would you ask for?
2. The first stage of the emergency response to the flooding addresses the immediate needs of the survivors.
  - a) Brainstorm what kinds of things might be needed during this period.
  - b) What will be necessary one month from today? One year from today?
3. Article 24 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child states that children have the right to clean drinking water. How does clean water, and access to it, impact our lives? As a class, list the various ways water plays an important role in the development of a community. In smaller groups, research how these different uses of water will be affected by the flooding. For example: It is not only important to have clean water to drink, but to cook with. How might it affect a community if its people are using dirty, contaminated water to wash and prepare their food?

## PHOTO ACTIVITY FOR ALL GRADE LEVELS

Examine these photographs.

- Choose one photo and write a story about what happened after the flash.
- Or you can choose to write or record a reflection as a person from the photo writing 10 years in the future about what it was like during the flood and the aftermath.
- As an alternative, the teacher can prepare a bag of items that may or may not be useful to individuals in a flood zone. Have students role play the role of one individual from a photo and an aid worker who pulls something from the bag. The student who is the individual from the photo should be prepared to say why the item the aid worker is offering is useful or not. Ensure the bag has enough items for all students to participate in both roles. Use conflicts of opinion as discussion points.



*On 4 August, a girl sits on a cot at an outdoor camp in Jala Bela Village in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa Province. Eighty per cent of the village's homes have been destroyed, and an estimated 2.5 million of the province's 3.5 million residents have been affected by the disaster.*



*On 21 August, children sit on a desk, part of a large pile of desks, chairs and other supplies in a classroom in Karachi, the capital of Sindh Province. The school has been turned into a shelter for people displaced by flooding.*



*On 16 August, UNICEF Regional Director for South Asia Daniel Toole (right) watches boys playing a board game at a secondary school in Nowshera District, Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa Province.*



## ACTIVITIES FOR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

1. Research water-borne illnesses. What is the occurrence of these in Pakistan? Canada? During natural disasters/humanitarian emergencies? How do aid agencies, like UNICEF, protect children from waterborne illnesses in an emergency?
2. In groups, write a public service announcement about issues affecting students in Pakistan. Film or perform your PSA and share it with your class or at a school assembly. See this PSA from MTV for ideas – [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xmXuUELSkZU&feature=player\\_embedded](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xmXuUELSkZU&feature=player_embedded)
3. In the form of a comic strip or booklet, create a timeline of events after monsoon season ends in Pakistan and all floodwaters have receded. What do you think need to be the first steps towards building back better?

## ACTIVITIES FOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

1. Research waterborne illnesses. What is the occurrence of these in Pakistan? Canada? During natural disasters/humanitarian emergencies? How do aid agencies like UNICEF protect children from waterborne illnesses in an emergency?
2. In groups, write a public service announcement about issues affecting students in Pakistan. Film or perform your PSA and share it with your class or at a school assembly. See this PSA from MTV for ideas – [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xmXuUELSkZU&feature=player\\_embedded](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xmXuUELSkZU&feature=player_embedded)
3. Pakistan did not initially receive as much international support as Haiti after the 2010 earthquake. Discuss reasons why you think this was the case. Activity: design and launch a fundraising campaign of your own for the people affected by the flooding in Pakistan. Use the planning tree found at [http://globalclassroom.unicef.ca/pdf/RIGHT\\_ENGLISH\\_4\[1\].pdf](http://globalclassroom.unicef.ca/pdf/RIGHT_ENGLISH_4[1].pdf)

### WHAT CAN YOU DO IN YOUR SCHOOL?

When humanitarian emergencies happen in other countries, what can we do in our own country, city or community that can help the people who have been affected by the disaster? Talk with your classmates to see if you can come up with a creative way to fundraise for money to assist the people of Pakistan. For example, you could have a movie night, organize a school dance or invite a speaker to visit your school. Here's an idea of what donated funds can do:

- **\$100** can provide a basic family water kit for 10 households, with detergent, soap, wash basin, towels, bucket and water purification tablets.
- **\$500** can provide 16 emergency first aid kits, helping to provide crucial medicine and equipment for communities devastated by disaster.
- **\$1,000** can provide one water pump and 22 water sanitation kits to help provide access to clean, safe water to a community in need.

Check out: <http://www.unicef.ca/portal/SmartDefault.aspx?at=2603> for more details.

