



ARNEC
Asia-Pacific Regional Network
for Early Childhood



Protect the young children in Pakistan from the impact of massive flooding

A joint statement from ARNEC and partners in Pakistan¹

15 September 2022



¹ ARNEC and partners stand ready to provide technical support to other planners and implementers of the response in Pakistan. The views expressed in this Statement are those of ARNEC and its Pakistan partners at-large and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of each individual member of the network. For more information, please contact secretariat@arnec.net.

Pakistan flooded, young children affected

The Asia-Pacific Regional Network for Early Childhood (ARNEC), in solidarity with partners in Pakistan, namely, the Children's Global Network Pakistan, Human Development Foundation, Idara-e-Taleem-o-Aagahi (ITA), Pakistan Alliance for Early Childhood, and the Rupani Foundation, expresses deep concern over the devastating impact of the flooding and unfolding humanitarian crisis in Pakistan, particularly on young children who are among the most adversely affected.

Around 33 million people in Pakistan, including 16 million children and 650,000 pregnant women, have been impacted by devastating floods (NDMA, 2022). As of 9 September, the massive floods have claimed the lives of 1396 people, of whom 499 are children (NDMA, 2022). Flash floods induced by relentless rains have damaged infrastructure including thousands of kilometres of roads, over 1.74 million houses, and nearly 23,000 schools and preschools (NDMA, 2022). After two years of the pandemic, young children's overall wellbeing is again at risk.

Millions of families and children have been displaced. Access to food and safe water remains a concern and livelihoods have been affected. Scarce or poor water quality brought on by the floods will increase the risk of children contracting water borne diseases (e.g., cholera and typhoid) or infection by water borne insects (e.g., malaria and dengue) which are more dangerous for young children under five years old. Waterborne infections can cause diarrhoea, one of the biggest killers of young children globally (WHO, 2017).

The impact is unimaginable, and yet further rainfall is predicted.

Pakistan has been thrown into the frontline of the human-induced climate crisis, yet it accounts for less than 1% of the world's planet-warming gases. It is the eight most vulnerable nation to the climate crisis and one of the countries where children are the most at risk from the impacts of climate change (UNICEF, 2021).

We must put the protection, health, learning, well-being and developmental needs of Pakistan's young children at the heart of our response and ensure long term action is taken to include young children in global climate change action.

Priority needs for emergency response and humanitarian action

Displaced families have an immediate need for basic necessities including a safe place to live, adequate food, warm clothing, and clean water. The most vulnerable young children need particular attention, such as children with disabilities and refugees, many of them fled from neighbouring Afghanistan last year. Holistic and uninterrupted early childhood development services are **crucial** to mitigate the current and long-term impact of the adversities facing so many of the children and families in Pakistan.

For young children, we reiterate the importance of nurturing care services, particularly good health, adequate nutrition, opportunities for learning, safety and security, and responsive care, integral to all forms of emergency response, development assistance, and humanitarian action. United Nations has announced a \$160 million emergency plan hoping to reach 5.2 million of the most vulnerable people in the country. This alongside other funding needs to prioritise the needs of young children and families include:

- Access to safe drinking water

- Life-saving medical supplies, medicines, and vaccines
- Supplies and hygiene kits for children and families to prevent disease outbreaks and treat malnutrition
- Safe spaces for babies and young children to play and learn. This should prioritise temporary learning centres (TLCs) and alternate learning modalities in flood affected districts including emergency education kits. To save young children from losing more early learning opportunities, we need to ensure continued access to safe and protected learning environment during their displacement as well as when they return to their homes.
- Training provision for frontline workers to provide nurturing environments for children, parents, and caregivers
- Psychosocial Support (PSS) for flood-affected children and caregivers, including training of teachers on PSS provision covering emotional/social support, play, building children's social networks, and identifying children in distress for referral to initial counselling. We support the [Pakistan Education Sector Working groups appeal for US\\$10.2 million](#) for the education response which includes supporting young children.

The flooding-induced humanitarian crisis in Pakistan all the more stress the importance for prioritising young children in disaster management and resilience action, and investing in early childhood development as part of national climate resilience policy, plans, and programs. Adequate investment requires ECD systems to be disaster-proof and to ensure that ECD services continue uninterrupted despite disaster events, such as the scale of the flooding in Pakistan.

Many of ARNEC partners are mobilising for emergency and humanitarian response on the ground in Pakistan and have established online sites where donors can directly support the children and families affected by the massive flooding in the country.

These include [ITA's Pakistan Flood Emergency Relief](#). We are most grateful for its leadership and commitment to uphold the well-being of young children and families under one of the most severe flooding in the country in recent history.

Please do help the young children and families in Pakistan. We reach out to partners in the Asia-Pacific region on behalf of partners in the country who are most near to young children and families in need.

A call to action at the global level

The flooding in Pakistan is not an isolated case. It affirms histories of disasters and humanitarian crises brought about by climate change in the country as well as in other parts of the Asia-Pacific region. It also affirms how young children have borne the effects of climate change and how the climate change crisis is becoming a child rights crisis.

On behalf of young children around the world, in the lead up to the next five-year cycle of the Paris Agreement and the UN Climate Change Conference 20221 (COP27), ARNEC in solidarity with our Pakistan partners, calls on the world leaders and delegates at COP27, governments, donors, multilaterals, the private sector, civil society, and other partners and stakeholders to place young children at the heart of the climate change discussions by:

- Facilitating stronger coalitions with climate organizations and ECD sector to communicate ECD as a key element in Climate Change Resilience and Adaptation Plans;
- Ensuring National Climate Plans provide the needed financing for high quality, equitable, and sustainable ECD programs; and
- Supporting early childhood systems and services to become climate-sensitive, better integrated, and better financed to realise quality, inclusive and equitable ECD outcomes.

The time is now. The international community must act to minimise the enduring impact that this climate-induced disaster will have on the lives of young children and their families in Pakistan. ECD is a vital opportunity for building a sustainable future fit for young children from Pakistan and around the world, and this is a pivotal moment to ensure young children are at the centre of climate change -action and support resilient futures.

Our actions today shape our children’s future.

We would like to thank ITA for sharing the photos in page 1. For more information on the flood relief response, visit <https://www.itacec.org/donations>.

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