

## PAKISTAN FLOODS

### LESSONS LEARNED FROM OTHER FLOODING DISASTERS

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**As people in Pakistan struggle to recover from the catastrophic flooding in many parts of that country, and Irish aid agencies are assisting the most vulnerable people, Dóchas encourages members of the public to learn more about the principles of effective humanitarian aid: by logging onto [www.HowYouCanHelp.ie](http://www.HowYouCanHelp.ie).**

As is the case with most disasters, the impact of these floods is not determined by the extent of the floodwater alone: the most vulnerable people, those who are poor and marginalised, suffer the most. International relief should therefore target these people most clearly. Over the years, Irish aid agencies have learned valuable lessons in responding to emergencies arising from floods. Some of these lessons include:

- **Reaching those most in need:** In flood situations, it is often difficult to ensure that vulnerable people can access assistance. Aid agencies must dedicate resources aimed at overcoming these obstacles, and not simply concentrate on those people that are easiest to reach.
- **Helping people to cope:** Vulnerable people develop their own means and strategies to cope with flooding. Programmes that directly support communities and their local organisations in their own efforts work best, both in the short and the long term.
- **Needs assessment:** Conditions on the ground, not donor priorities, should determine aid programmes. All aid must help people most in need, and it must be the right kind, based on accurate information received from the disaster area. Aid must be provided in consultation with the local authorities and communities.
- **Tailoring aid:** Affected communities are not a homogeneous group – people have different livelihoods, options and priorities. Aid must be based on an explicit identification of such needs and capabilities.
- **Going beyond the obvious:** Needs assessments and relief programmes should go beyond current needs, and assess structural causes of vulnerability. While in the first instance relief is about saving lives, aid should be delivered and designed to contribute to a long-term improvement of people's lives, and the prevention of future catastrophes.
- **Flood Risk Reduction:** Flood management must cover entire catchment areas, and should include genuine participation of the area's population. Flood protection should go beyond "technical fixes" and include socio-economic considerations.
- **Early warning:** Poor people need early warning most, but many of them do not understand weather forecasting or the language of early warning. Special attention must be paid to ensure early warning mechanisms are appropriate for those groups most at risk.

#### Recommended further reading:

- **Emergencies: NGOs Helping People back from the Brink -** [http://www.dochas.ie/Shared/Files/2/Emergencies\\_Helping\\_People\\_Back\\_from\\_the\\_Brink.pdf](http://www.dochas.ie/Shared/Files/2/Emergencies_Helping_People_Back_from_the_Brink.pdf)
- **How You Can Help – Guide:** <http://www.howyoucanhelp.ie/documents/theguide.pdf>
- **Resources about Humanitarian Aid:** <http://www.dochas.ie/Pages/Resources/Viewer.aspx?id=155>