



**AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL FOR  
INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

# **MEDIA ALERT**

16 September 2010

## **BRIEFING ON PAKISTAN FLOODS**

To coincide with the Foreign Minister's visit to Pakistan and the following meeting of donor nations on Sunday, The Australian Council for International Development (ACFID) has prepared a background briefing pack for the Australian media.

The pack contains information such as a report on the challenges for reconstruction and recovery, and important facts and figures about the current context of the crises including water and sanitation, shelter, access and security.

The briefing is attached to this media alert.

**For further information contact:**

**Joy Kyriacou + 61 0412 084 782**



***AUSTRALIAN NGO BRIEFING:  
CHALLENGES TO THE RECOVERY AND RECONSTRUCTION FOR THE PAKISTAN FLOODS  
in relation to  
THE ATTENDANCE OF THE HON. KEVIN RUDD, AUSTRALIAN FOREIGN AFFAIRS MINISTER  
AT THE DONOR MEETING ON PAKISTAN FLOODS – 17 SEPTEMBER, NEW YORK***

It is hard to imagine a disaster spectacular enough to have an impact on the entire population of Australia at once. It is even harder to imagine how we would recover.

Yet this is the scale of the disaster affecting the people of Pakistan today.

More than 21 million people have been affected by the catastrophic flooding that began nearly two months ago, with people still being evacuated as a result of fresh deluges and millions of families struggling to recover with their homes and livelihoods destroyed.

More than 1,700 people have died, 4 million are homeless and an estimated 6 million people require immediate assistance to meet their basic food needs. Last week, the Pakistani Government conceded that over 1 million of its flood-affected people had received no assistance at all.

As international media attention fades and donations dwindle, disease, famine and the coming winter threaten to heighten the humanitarian crisis.

The Pakistani Government is estimating an overall flood recovery price-tag of \$43 billion. So far, the international community has pledged just over \$1 billion or around 2 per cent of what is required.

Australian agencies are working with their partners in all affected areas to provide life saving aid and rehabilitation, as well as recovery and reconstruction. This has included distributing food and clothing, providing temporary shelters, clean water and sanitation and longer-term investment in improving education, health and livelihoods.

Australian NGOs are working with the Australian Government to support a whole-of-Australia approach to the humanitarian crisis and ensure coordination of resources and efforts.

ACFID commends the Australian Government for its commitment to the response as the fifth largest donor, and the operational efforts to support the government of Pakistan. We welcome the comments noted by [Kevin Rudd, Minister for Foreign Affairs](#) on 15 September that the international community needs to do more to support assistance to the crisis and his deep humanitarian concern for the real danger of a massive outbreak of waterborne diseases and a potentially unspeakable humanitarian disaster. ACFID welcomes the Hon. Kevin Rudd's decision to travel to flood-affected Pakistan on his way to the UN Millennium Development Goals Summit in New York.

While in New York, Mr Rudd will also attend a high level meeting with other governments supporting the government of Pakistan. ACFID recommends the Australian Government:

- strongly advocate for the international community to reinvigorate efforts to assist Pakistan to respond to the crisis
- provide fast intervention for food and cash to address the critical food insecurity issues that will be prevalent in the next 6-12 months
- commits to a long-term assistance strategy working with the government of Pakistan to ensure recovery and stabilisation

- continues to engage in a ‘whole-of-community’ approach to assistance and work with Australian NGOs to implement assistance and longer term strategic advice for response. This could also include joint field monitoring and accountability reports
- supports the proposal by UN to freeze Pakistan debt repayments for two years.

### **Scale of Disaster**

The sheer scale of the disaster in Pakistan is posing significant challenges for responding agencies, including difficulty:

- accessing those in need due to damage to infrastructure and the isolation of flood affected populations
- providing enough capacity to adequately support the number of people affected
- securing sufficient financing of key sectors (e.g. nutrition and water), due to the limited success of public appeals in Australia and elsewhere and because donor government interests have not matched needs, making it harder for agencies to cover gaps.

### **Recovery**

The early recovery phase has begun yet most agencies remain focused on immediate relief, given there are still many people waiting for food, water and shelter, and it is expected to be a further 10 days before the rivers stop flooding new areas. It is likely that a significant proportion of the affected population will be dependent on food aid for years, even once farming has resumed.

*Food insecurity:* The Pakistani floods will result in a serious food insecurity problem. Food stores have been lost, harvests have also been lost, hundreds of thousands of head of livestock have been lost and the time-frame for planting is in September-October. Most people will not be able to plant again until May 2011. In some areas it will be much longer, due to the salination of ground water. Given that 80% of communities rely on agriculture, fast intervention to provide food and cash is critical. Roads and bridges are expected to take 2-5 years to rebuild, hampering access to markets to buy and sell produce.

*Shelter:* An estimated 4 million people have lost their homes, with over 700,000 displaced people living in 1,800 temporary settlements, and with some expected to be unable to return to their homes for months. Hundreds of thousands of people displaced by the floods are currently living in school buildings. Schools are expected to re-open at the end of September, which may result in the forced relocation of these people. A substantial effort will thus be required to ensure sufficient supplies of shelter.

*Maternal health:* There is a lack of assistance for maternal health. The nutritional needs of lactating mothers and newborns in particular are not being met. The health and nutritional needs of mothers and children under five must be prioritised. New mothers are not receiving supplementary food/high energy biscuits and are really struggling to cope. It is estimated generally that 3% of women are pregnant at any one time.

### **Access & Security**

Agencies have been able to access all affected areas, either directly or through partner organisations. There have been no major security incidents and threat assessments are being updated continually. However, concerns around access and security are:

- restricted movement in some areas (Peshwar)
- violent demonstrations and attacks on relief distribution as a result of ongoing frustration within the affected population
- ongoing threat of targeted attacks on humanitarian organisations, particularly those with an explicit political or religious mandate.