



## FORUM: UNICEF

**QUESTION OF:** Providing humanitarian aid to children and families affected by floods in South Asia

### INTRODUCTION

Communities across Asia are facing severe consequences from climate-related disasters, particularly flooding. A key contributing factor to the recent surge in flood crises is the ongoing impact of climate change, which has intensified due to extreme weather events across Africa and Asia in 2024. Countries such as Chad, Niger, Nigeria, and South Sudan have endured some of the worst impacts, with widespread destruction of homes, loss of livelihoods, and increasing food insecurity. Millions of people are still being continuously displaced by recurrent floods, leading to severe economic disruptions, an urgent need for humanitarian aid, and long-term challenges in restoring stability and infrastructure. (Gupta)

Impacts of climate change have a disproportionately severe effect on children, as their vulnerability is multifaceted and influenced by various factors. Their sensitivity is heavily influenced by the physical, social, and emotional changes that take place over the course of childhood. These changes are exacerbated by children's increased sensitivity to negative or high-impact events during development, their limited actions, and their inability to make their voices heard.



In the case of South Africa, the impacts of climate change on children need to be considered in relation to wider development pressures affecting the country. Challenges such as international economic shocks and stresses, high levels of poverty and inequality, population changes, management of scarce natural resources and rapid urbanisation each interact with climate change. *“The results of those interactions will affect how far the effects of climate change are transmitted to children and households at the local level. With this in mind, an effective response to changing climate and development pressures requires efforts from all stakeholders as well as good coordination across multiple levels of governance, from household and community, through municipal and provincial, to national and international levels.”* (Exploring the Impact of Climate Change on Children in South Africa Exploring the Impact of Climate Change on Children in South Africa)

In response, humanitarian organizations such as **UNICEF, the Red Cross, and local NGOs** have mobilized relief efforts by distributing food, medical aid, and clean water to affected communities. However, challenges remain in effectively reaching all those in need, as funding shortages, logistical barriers, and inadequate infrastructure continue to hinder aid distribution. While immediate relief efforts are critical, addressing the long-term consequences of flooding requires sustainable solutions. Investments in flood-resistant infrastructure, improved urban planning, climate adaptation measures, and community-based disaster preparedness programs are essential to reducing vulnerability and strengthening resilience against future climate-induced disasters. This report’s aim is to address the



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issue of providing humanitarian aid to children and families affected by floods in South Africa by examining the magnitude of the crisis and the long-term strategies to fortify resilience against future catastrophes.

## DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

The term **aid** can be defined as any help or assistance, support. It can also be referred to as a person or thing that aids or furnishes assistance. The question of this committee providing humanitarian aid to those families and children who have suffered from the floods in Asia, it is important to understand the need of aiding for the benefits of the ones in need

The term **floods** can be specified as an overflow of water onto land that is normally dry. These floods happening in South Asia's regions such as India and Nepal were run by these floods which wreaked havoc in the cities, displacing thousands of families, and severely damaging infrastructure, including roads, bridges, and electricity networks. The relentless floodwaters not only disrupted daily life but also posed significant health risks by contaminating water supplies and increasing the spread of waterborne diseases such as cholera and dysentery.

**Flood Relief Efforts** refers to the coordinated actions taken by governments, humanitarian organizations, and local communities to assist people affected by floods. These efforts aim to minimize the immediate impact of flooding and support long-term recovery.

**International Displacement**, referred to as **IDPs**, people that are internally displaced have been forced to flee their homes by conflict, violence, persecution or disasters, however, they remain within the borders of their own country.

**Resilience** refers to the ability of individuals, communities, and systems to anticipate, prepare for, respond to, and recover from disasters such as floods. It involves strengthening infrastructure, social systems, and emergency response mechanisms to minimize damage and speed up recovery.

**Disaster Preparedness** is the process of planning and implementing measures to reduce risks and ensure a swift, effective response when disasters occur. It focuses on early warning systems, emergency planning, and resource allocation to protect lives and livelihoods.

**WASH (Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene)** is addressed as safe drinking-water, sanitation and hygiene are crucial to human health and well-being. Safe WASH is not only a prerequisite to health, but contributes to livelihoods, school attendance and dignity and helps to create resilient communities living in healthy environments.

**Child Protection in Emergencies (CPIE)** refers to the efforts made to ensure the safety, well-being, and rights of children affected by disasters such as floods. During emergencies, children face increased risks of violence, exploitation, neglect, and separation from their families. Protecting them is a key priority for humanitarian organizations like UNICEF, Save the Children, and the Red Cross.

**Emergency Health Response** refers to the rapid medical and public health interventions implemented during and after disasters like floods to prevent illness, treat injuries, and protect vulnerable



populations. Floods can lead to waterborne diseases, malnutrition, and injuries, making an efficient health response critical to saving lives and preventing long-term health crises.

South Africa has been increasingly affected by severe flooding events, leading to significant humanitarian challenges, particularly for vulnerable populations such as children and families. The causes of these floods are multifaceted, driven by both natural and human-induced factors. Climate change has intensified extreme weather patterns, making heavy rainfall events more frequent and severe. Studies indicate that climate change has doubled the likelihood of extreme rainfall, such as that experienced during the 2022 KwaZulu-Natal floods. Poor infrastructure and inadequate urban planning further exacerbate flood risks, with poorly maintained drainage systems and expanding informal settlements in flood-prone areas worsening the impact of heavy rains.

Additionally, environmental degradation, including deforestation and land mismanagement, reduces the land's natural ability to absorb water, leading to increased surface runoff and heightened flood susceptibility. The impact of flooding on children and families is profound and far-reaching. Severe floods displace thousands, leaving many without shelter or basic necessities. For instance, in the Eastern Cape Province, more than 1,500 families were left homeless after heavy rains destroyed homes and belongings. The destruction of water and sanitation systems further exposes communities to waterborne diseases such as cholera and typhoid, with children being particularly vulnerable due to their developing immune systems. Education is also significantly disrupted, as damage to schools and displacement of families often force children to drop out, either due to lack of access to schools or the need to support their families in the aftermath of disasters. Beyond the physical consequences, floods have severe psychological impacts on children, increasing the risk of anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder due to the trauma of displacement and loss. Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive approach that strengthens infrastructure, improves urban planning, restores natural ecosystems, and provides targeted support to the most vulnerable populations. Addressing this requires strong disaster preparedness, climate adaptation, and international cooperation to support vulnerable communities, especially children and families.

## CURRENT SITUATION

Severe flooding across West and Central Africa has hit an estimated 4 million people so far this year, many of them children. "Severe weather events are increasingly affecting this region, making the environment more difficult for children already facing challenges to realize their basic rights to survival, safety and education," said UNICEF Regional Director for West and Central Africa Gilles Fagninou. At least 500,000 people have been displaced and more than 300,000 homes destroyed and dozens of schools and health centers have been damaged across the many affected countries, UNICEF reported. Last year's flooding was also





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severe, but by comparison had affected 692,000 people in the region by this point in the year. “Even worse river flooding is forecast for later in the year, potentially adding to the misery for children and families in the region,” Faginou said.

In **Chad**, one of the worst-hit countries, torrential rains have caused flooding throughout the country since late July, with nearly 1.5 million people affected already, 145 deaths and the destruction of 70,000 houses, according to the government. The flooding has also destroyed bridges and roads. Wadi river valleys are full and difficult to cross, adding to the complexity of delivering aid into Sudan’s Darfur region.

UNICEF, through its more than 80 offices and sub-offices across the region, has been responding to help children and families in the areas that have been hardest hit. With ongoing cholera epidemics in the region, the risks of increased waterborne diseases affecting children is high. UNICEF reacted within the first 48 hours of the flooding in Chad to build latrines for 2,200 people and rehabilitate water points for 3,000 people. Essential household supplies were distributed to around 1,000 people, as well as therapeutic food for children under 5. WASH assistance continues at two displacement camp sites in N'Djaména: 14 water taps were installed to ensure that 3,500 people have a minimum of 15 liters of safe drinking water per person per day. UNICEF is supporting the registration of the affected people at relocation sites in collaboration with other UN agencies to ensure they are reached with assistance.

UNICEF is also working with local partners to distribute supplies including tents, plastic mats, blankets, clothing and shoes. Thousands of people have been reached through nearly two dozen awareness-raising sessions on handwashing and household water treatment and the importance of using latrines. UNICEF and partners have also set up three child-friendly spaces where children can receive psychosocial support and adults are provided with information about children's rights, flood-related child protection risks, and the importance of children's participation in recreational and play activities to establish normalcy in times of crisis.

## **Mali**

In Mali, the 2024 flood season started early, with significant flooding in July, mainly affecting the Segou region. Thousands of people have been displaced. Families who are forced to leave their homes are taking refuge in temporary shelters in schools and makeshift camps. By late August, with an estimated 72,000 children affected by severe flooding across all 19 regions of the country, the government declared a State of National Disaster. UNICEF is assisting affected families by delivering emergency supplies including malaria and cholera prevention kits; building emergency latrines while increasing community messaging around hygiene and sanitation; deploying mobile health clinics; and setting up child-friendly spaces. While accelerating support to areas already affected by flooding,



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UNICEF is also strengthening preventive and contingency measures in areas that have so far been spared. Emergency supplies have been pre-positioned across the country, but more support is needed to avoid shortages. UNICEF also helped mobilize 11,000 young people to perform sanitation improvements and flood mitigation activities in 83 villages and neighborhoods — activities such as improving urban drainage of gutters and sewers and paving streets — benefitting 440,000 people.

## Nigeria

An estimated 900,000 people have been affected by flooding in Maiduguri, Borno State, northeast Nigeria. Many children have become separated from their families, with many losing loved ones. UNICEF is providing psychosocial support to these children to help them to cope with the trauma. UNICEF is also distributing pre-positioned health and WASH (water, sanitation and hygiene) supplies to flood-hit areas while making sure children have access to vital health services — including



immunizations — at clinics inside the displacement camps. Already 4,000 cholera prevention kits have been delivered to families in the camps and communities across Maiduguri, providing basic hygiene supplies for 240,000 people — helping to protect against the waterborne disease that can so easily spread during flood emergencies. With access to food and healthy diets constrained

due to the floods, more children are at risk of severe acute malnutrition, so UNICEF has set up support centers across all displacement camps to provide supplements that help boost nutrition and prevent malnutrition and Ready-to-Use Therapeutic Food (RUTF) for children who are already suffering from acute malnutrition and require treatment. Another part of UNICEF's response is to work with local authorities to identify and register 5,000 households eligible for emergency cash assistance. (“UNICEF Supports Families Hit by Severe Flooding in West and Central Africa”)

## MAJOR PARTIES INVOLVED

**Unicef** :UNICEF, in collaboration with humanitarian partners, has delivered urgent relief supplies to flood-affected areas. These supplies include safe drinking water, hygiene materials, nutritional supplements, and medical kits. Additionally, UNICEF has provided mental health support and educational materials to help children regain a sense of normalcy and continue their education in safe environments. Also in order to address the dire humanitarian needs in countries such as Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, and Sri Lanka, UNICEF has launched an appeal seeking US\$34.2 million. This funding aims to support 3.5 million people by enhancing localized strategies for disaster risk reduction and management

**WF**: In response to the 2020 Karachi floods in Pakistan, WFP supplied 95 metric tonnes of food aid to 1,780 affected households, ensuring immediate relief to those in need. In 2023 WFP provided multipurpose cash assistance to over 180,000 vulnerable individuals in seven districts of Sindh



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province, Pakistan. This approach empowered families to purchase essential items according to their specific needs, promoting dignity and flexibility in aid delivery.

**WHO:** WHO emphasizes the importance of safe water, sanitation, and hygiene practices in flooded areas. The organization provides guidance on water purification, waste management, and hygiene promotion, aiming to reduce the incidence of diseases in flood-affected communities

**NGOs:** NGOs like Oxfam have provided immediate assistance to those displaced. This includes distributing essential items such as food, clean water, and hygiene kits, as well as setting up temporary shelters to house those who have lost their homes

## **IFRC**

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) is actively [supporting flood-stricken communities](#) in Chad, Niger, Nigeria and South Sudan. Red Cross teams are distributing essential aid, including shelter, food and sanitation facilities, to those affected by the floods. The organization has also launched a relief fund to help flood victims, providing essential supplies and tackling disease risks in overcrowded camps. Efforts include distributing mosquito nets and hygiene kits to prevent malaria and cholera outbreaks. This protects vulnerable communities from additional health threats caused by the floods.

## **UNICEF's WASH Programs**

UNICEF is ramping up its Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) programs across Africa, [delivering crucial support](#) to flood-affected communities. In Chad, UNICEF responded swiftly within the first 48 hours of the floods by constructing latrines for 2,200 people and restoring water points for 3,000 individuals. Additionally, the team distributed essential household items to 1,000 people. It also offered therapeutic food to children younger than 5 years old to address immediate nutrition needs.

In Nigeria, UNICEF is partnering with local authorities to register 5,000 households for emergency cash distributions to support those in urgent need. Teams are distributing water purification tablets, setting up portable toilets and running hygiene campaigns to keep families safe from waterborne diseases.

## **The World Food Programme**

After floods submerged 50% of Maiduguri, Nigeria, the World Food Programme (WFP) swiftly set up food kitchens in four camps. These kitchens provide flood-affected families with nutritious meals, including rice and beans, as they seek refuge from their homes. WFP is also [delivering emergency food and cash](#) support to Chad and Niger. This critical aid helps families meet their urgent food and nutrition needs while they work to rebuild their lives.



## SOLUTION ALTERNATIVES

To effectively mitigate the impact of recurrent flooding in South Africa and provide humanitarian aid to affected children and families, a multi-faceted approach is required. The following solution alternatives focus on both immediate relief efforts and long-term resilience strategies.

### **1. Strengthening Climate Resilience and Early Warning Systems**

One of the most effective ways to reduce the impact of flooding is to invest in climate resilience and improve early warning systems. Establishing advanced weather monitoring systems and flood forecasting technologies can provide timely alerts to communities at risk. Governments and humanitarian organizations should collaborate on creating community-based early warning systems to ensure rapid evacuation and preparedness measures before disasters strike.

### **2. Infrastructure Development and Sustainable Urban Planning**

Improving infrastructure resilience is critical to mitigating the effects of flooding. Investments in flood-resistant housing, improved drainage systems, and sustainable urban planning can significantly reduce vulnerabilities in high-risk areas. Relocating informal settlements from flood-prone regions and implementing stricter building regulations can help protect low-income communities that are disproportionately affected by flooding. Additionally, restoring wetlands and increasing green spaces in urban areas can enhance water absorption and reduce flood severity.

### **3. Enhancing Humanitarian Aid and Disaster Response**

To address immediate humanitarian needs, South Africa must improve the efficiency and accessibility of aid distribution. Strengthening partnerships between the government, international organizations, and local NGOs can ensure that food, clean water, medical aid, and temporary shelter reach displaced populations more effectively. Mobile health clinics and rapid-response teams should be deployed to flood-affected regions to prevent disease outbreaks and provide urgent medical care, particularly to children and vulnerable individuals.

### **4. Addressing Waterborne Diseases and Public Health Risks**

Flooding often leads to severe health crises, with outbreaks of waterborne diseases such as cholera and typhoid disproportionately affecting children. Governments and relief organizations should prioritize water purification programs, distribute sanitation kits, and implement disease surveillance measures in flood-affected regions. Long-term solutions include improving wastewater management systems, increasing access to clean drinking water, and developing community health education programs to promote hygiene and disease prevention.



## **5. Safeguarding Education and Child Protection**

Floods frequently disrupt education, forcing children out of school due to displacement or damaged infrastructure. Establishing temporary learning centers in emergency shelters and integrating disaster preparedness into school curriculums can help maintain education continuity. Governments and NGOs should also focus on child protection programs, providing psychological support and safe spaces for children who experience trauma due to natural disasters.

## **6. Long-Term Climate Adaptation and Policy Reform**

Sustainable long-term strategies require strong climate adaptation policies and government reforms. Authorities must integrate flood risk management into national development plans and allocate resources toward climate-resilient agriculture, reforestation programs, and environmental conservation. Strengthening cross-sector collaboration between policymakers, scientists, and humanitarian organizations will ensure that climate adaptation efforts align with South Africa's broader development goals.

## **7. Community-Based Disaster Preparedness and Capacity Building**

Empowering local communities to respond effectively to floods can significantly reduce fatalities and economic losses. Governments should invest in community-led disaster preparedness programs that educate residents on flood response strategies, emergency evacuation plans, and first aid training. Encouraging local participation in climate adaptation projects, such as afforestation and sustainable farming techniques, can enhance long-term resilience.





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