



Neglected Mental Health Crisis after Floods in Pakistan

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I am writing to highlight the neglected mental health crises backing Pakistan's climate-driven floods. Pakistan stands among the world's topmost most climate-threatened nations that is it ranked 9 globally for natural disaster [1]. The disastrous 2022 monsoon floods forced out over 33 million people [2], and catastrophically affected provinces like Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP). While Humanitarian efforts have emphasized on food, water and disease control the psychological toll on survivors has been unrecognized. Negative stereotypes and few mental health resources in rural areas intensify suffering.

Studies report disturbingly high rates of mental health disorders after major floods. Approximately 36% of the people who experience PTSD develop depression in 20% and anxiety in 28% of flood victims globally [1]. A survey conducted in Pakistan 5 months post floods in 2010 revealed that 59% survivors had severe PTSD and 54% had depression [1]. The victims of the floods in 2022 are facing similar hardships as they face parallel setbacks of homes, livelihood, and community networks. The effect of untreated trauma is long-term impairment and suicide, which highlights the importance of public health intervention.

However, mental healthcare in Pakistan is urban-based and the rural populations are simply neglected [3]. Experts has noticed that mental health aids are needed in these regions [2]. This disparity has confirmed that flood survivors in KP and further tend to get little counseling and rehabilitation, which will aggravate the long-term effects.

The integration of mental health in a disaster response is an urgent need of the day. We request the policymakers and relief agencies to invest and support psychosocial teams and train first responders in psychological support. Above all, screening for PTSD, depression and anxiety in flood camps. The gaps in the KPs countryside could be occupied by community outreach and tele psychiatry. In summary, it is a community health issue to combat a secondary health crisis by responding to the mental health consequences of post-floods. Pakistan needs to listen to WHO guidelines with aim of integrating mental health services into disaster planning and minimizing future burden.

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