What has been the humanitarian impact of the monsoon floods in Pakistan?

Pakistan has faced the worst floods in decades with 1,600 deaths, approximately 20 million people directly or indirectly affected by the floods and with an estimated eight million people across the country in immediate need of humanitarian assistance.

These numbers could increase in the coming days as the monsoon rains continue to feed into the Indus River basin. This is situated in the country's northern Khyber Pakhtunkwa Province and then flows out into the Arabian Sea in the south of Pakistan from Sindh Province. All areas on either side of the river have been impacted.

Across the country, estimates suggest that of the 50 million acres of cultivatable land, around 17 million acres is under water. Infrastructure has been heavily damaged; roads, bridges, schools, health centres, hospitals and mosques. People's lives and livelihoods have been devastated.

Additionally, the floods come hot on the heels of an existing crisis due to conflict between the military and insurgents in some parts of the country. Almost two million people were still displaced due to the conflict when the floods struck in late July and a further two million had already returned back to their homes and were trying to rebuild their lives.

What is the European Commission doing to help the flood victims in Pakistan?

The European Commission Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection department (ECHO) adopted three humanitarian aid financing decisions for the vulnerable people in Pakistan in the last ten days worth €70 million. In addition, European Union Member States are also providing bilateral humanitarian aid and offering in-kind civil protection assistance to Pakistan. The European Commission has relief experts on the ground monitoring and evaluating the situation.

ECHO is coordinating its assistance with the United Nations and is in contact with other donors and organisations. Europe will continue to support the population in need. The European Commission works through partner relief organisations and was already working in the northern conflict affected areas of Pakistan.

What are the priorities for humanitarian assistance now?

What the flood victims need immediately is shelter; as thousands of homes have been damaged or destroyed. The provision of clean drinking water and sanitation facilities are also crucial since all water sources in affected areas have been contaminated by the monsoon flood water. Access to health services is important because flood related diseases like watery diarrhoea, skin infections and respiratory tract infections are on the rise. Food assistance is also necessary since household crops and food stocks have been lost.
What are the biggest challenges in dealing with this disaster?

Continued heavy rains hamper any efforts to restore road links and infrastructure as well as hindering access to flood affected communities. Flood waters pose a severe health risk for an already vulnerable population due to water-borne diseases; clearing debris, providing clean drinking water and controlling the spread of disease are urgently needed now. Large tracts of agricultural land have been submerged and the loss of food security and livelihoods will be a huge challenge in the coming months.

Pakistan is a country with a complex social and political arena; it may be challenging to independently deliver humanitarian assistance to the people most in need irrespective of their political or religious affiliation, gender or age.

The European Commission channels its humanitarian funds solely through UN agencies, international NGOs and the Red Cross / Red Crescent movement. The European Commission closely monitors the delivery of the aid and has ECHO experts permanently based in humanitarian crisis zones throughout the world.