



THE CITIZENS FOUNDATION

Education in times of Climate Catastrophe

**A Study on the Impact of Sindh's
Flood in TCF Schools**

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The Citizens Foundation**



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by

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1. Executive Summary

Objectives

Natural disasters are occurring with alarming frequency in Pakistan. At the same time, not many lessons have been learned from past experiences, and there is a lack of adequate policy actions, especially actions that consider the nexus between climate change, displacement, and education. We have reached a now-or-never moment for the country. Considering the catastrophic 2022 floods in Sindh, this study aims to give voice to the communities that were impacted to understand the challenges they faced and the impact on children's education. The report also highlights how support from the education non-profit 'The Citizens Foundation (TCF)' was received by the communities and the benefits of unconditional cash transfers. In the end, the report offers policy recommendations underlining the importance of short-term and long-term actions designed to support communities in disaster contexts; it also emphasises the need for better disaster preparedness and a plan ensuring continuity of education even when life is disrupted.

Scope and method of the review.

The qualitative methodology employed for this study is a Rapid Ethnographic Assessment (REA) using the following methods: focus groups, semi-structured interviews, and walking interviews in selected communities. The review was conducted in a collaborative manner, including opportunities for TCF employees to be trained on REAs. The core team planned and carried out data collection, data analysis, and reporting. Fieldwork was carried out in February 2024 in Dadu, Mirpur Khas, Badin, and Qambar Shahdadkot. Research sites comprised schools that were all either constructed through USAID funding, or Sindh Education Foundation (SEF) schools adopted by TCF. All schools are operated by TCF. The sample included the following schools: GGES Ghulam Hussain Gadhi Secondary Morning, GGHS Kamal Khan Lund Secondary Morning, Zainab Bai, Ladha Bai & Ghulam Hussain Patel Campus Primary Morning, Kazi Academy Campus Primary Morning, Dreamfly Campus Primary Morning, UEP Tarique Khamisani Campus Primary Morning, GGHS Gaji Khuhawar Secondary Morning, and GBHS Ghazi Jalbani Secondary Morning. Participants in the study were Cluster Managers (6), Headteachers (4), Teachers (60), Parents (66 Male plus 55 Female), Students (Male 22 plus 32 Female), Community Leaders (8), and Community members (100-150).

Main findings

- Nearly 7,000 schools were shut down, some of which were used as shelters for

displaced people in Pakistan during the floods; TCF schools were no exception. Schools were closed depending on their geographic positioning, with closures lasting from 2 weeks (1 school in Badin), 1 month (1 school in Mirpur Khas), 2-2.5 months (1 school each in Mirpur Khas, Qambar Shahdadkot and Badin), 3 months (1 school in Dadu), 4 months (1 school in Qambar Shahdadkot) to 6 months (1 school in Dadu).

- For all the schools, however, it took a minimum of 1 month and a maximum of 6 months to restore the buildings and have them functioning regularly once again (through support from the TCF administration, regular staff, and non-faculty staff). Prior to the floods, students had already incurred learning loss due to the COVID-19 pandemic when schools were closed for an extensive period. This learning loss was compounded by the floods soon after. Therefore, the overall learning loss of flood-affected children occurred for almost an entire academic year, according to participants.
- In this moment of crisis, and in the absence of a coordinated emergency response by the state, TCF mobilised its teams to provide adequate emergency relief to those affected. Our respondents consistently applauded TCF's unconditional cash transfers. It was vital for them that the organisation did not direct or impose restrictions on how this money could be utilised; people reported using these funds to address their most pressing needs.
- At the same time, state and non-state relief actions were not always equitable and fair in relation to the needs of women: some did not receive any relief money, and most of them did not have access to sanitary infrastructure and necessary health care.
- School staff, students, and community members made efforts to continue some form of learning despite their debilitating circumstances (e.g., through makeshift/temporary learning spaces and active measures to safeguard students' course materials). However, education was not always a priority.
- The lack of disaster preparedness made it challenging to implement coordinated learning and teaching actions in makeshift camps, and the planned remedial action for returning students helped cover some extent of the learning loss. However, the remediation program was not tailored to the needs of the time or the degree of flood-inflicted learning loss, which hampered its effectiveness.

Conclusions and Policy Recommendations

- There is a need for coordinated disaster response, with systems for information dissemination, capacity-building for disaster preparedness at the community level, as well as an improvement in infrastructure (flood-resistant housing and safe pathways for children to reach school).
- Relief needs to be provided directly to affected people: the aid effort during the floods was uneven, with some affected areas receiving less support due to logistical challenges while other, less heavily impacted places were more easily reached. Intermediaries were also not favoured by the communities.
- Unconditional support works better: TCF's unconditional cash transfers were highly praised by the affected communities, allowing them the flexibility to address their most pressing needs.

- Policy formulation should give more consideration to the gendered aspects of disaster, particularly the heightened vulnerability of women during times of crisis.
- Disaster preparedness should provide action-oriented recommendations on how to deal with disruptions to children’s education journeys: during a disaster, after returning to school, and the long-lasting effects.
- Schools can play a pivotal role in disaster preparedness, serving as educational centres and hubs for relief distribution, leveraging their infrastructure, local knowledge, and community-based networks.
- Trauma Management is key. The lingering trauma from the floods remains largely unaddressed, affecting the well-being of both children and adults in the community. There is a critical need for continued support in processing trauma and rebuilding lives in preparation for future disasters.

2. Purpose and Methods

Purpose

According to German Watch’s Global Climate Risk Index 2021-22, Pakistan is ranked as the 8th most-affected country from 2000 – 2019. Natural disasters are happening with alarming frequency in the country (i.e., the 2005 earthquake and 2010 floods), but not many lessons have been learned from these and we have reached a now-or-never moment for the country. Considering the latest catastrophic floods in 2022, this study aims to seek answers to the following research questions:

1. What challenges did communities and schools face due to the Sindh floods?
2. What happened to children’s education and how was their educational journey impacted?
3. How did affected communities receive support and how did TCF contribute?
4. What are the lessons learned and policy recommendations?

Methods

The methodology employed for this study is a Rapid Ethnographic Assessment (REA). REA is a qualitative research method that focuses on collecting and analysing locally relevant data and is used to quickly assess a variety of complex social and structural issues to improve programs and policies impacting marginalised and vulnerable populations. REA is a methodology that works particularly well for problems that risk slipping "out of sight, out of mind," such as the 2022 Sindh floods.

Qualitative data collection methods form the foundation of REAs, and several core methods are often used in combination. For this study, the following tools have been used: interviews with key informants, focus groups, and community walks. Like most qualitative research, REAs use non-probability sampling because the focus is on understanding local perspectives and the local context rather than making statistical inferences or generalisations from the sample under examination to the wider population of interest. The non-probability sampling methods used for this study include purposive and snowball sampling. Opportunistic or purposive sampling entails identifying and selecting individuals, communities, or organisations that are especially knowledgeable about or experienced in a phenomenon of interest. Purposive samples are comprised of participants who are not only knowledgeable and experienced but also available, willing, and able to communicate. Fieldwork was carried out in February 2024 in the districts of Dadu, Mirpur Khas, Badin, and Qambar Shahdadkot.

The purpose of this study was to bring to light the voices of individuals belonging to flood-affected communities so that narratives of how the disaster was individually experienced could be emphasised. Hence, each stakeholder's experiences, opinions and viewpoints are the focal point of this research.

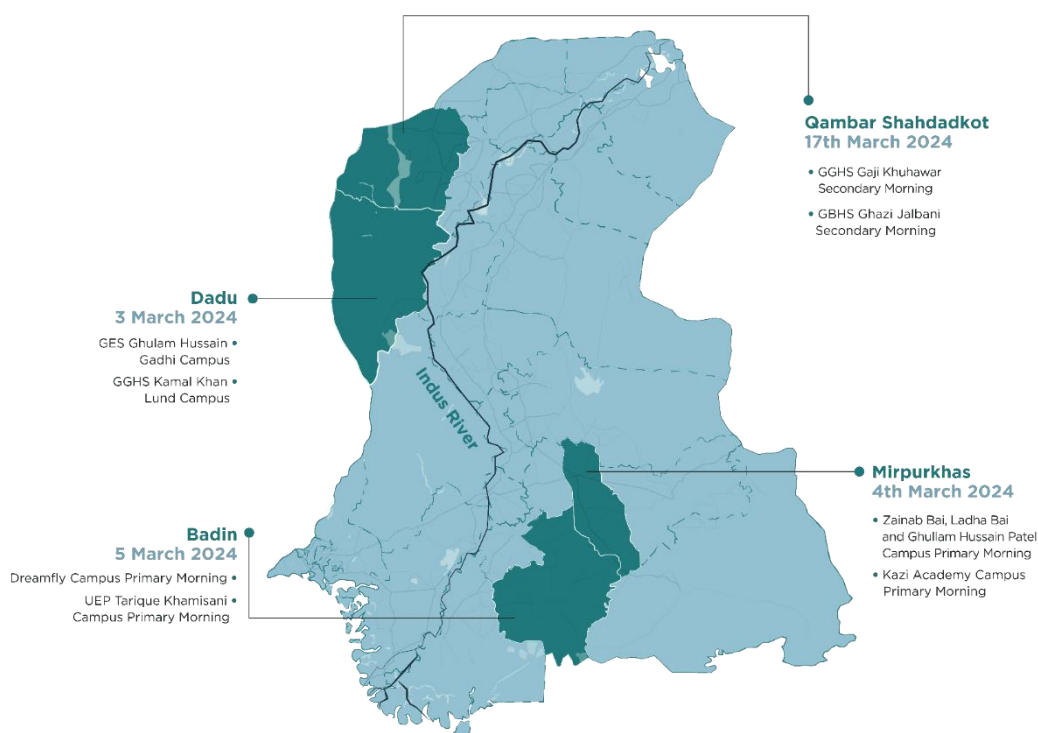


Figure 2.1 Sindh map representing the locations visited across the province and their proximity to the river

Details on the type of participants in this study are provided in the table below.

Participants	Activity	Sample (300+)	Approximate Time Spent
Cluster Managers (CM) of TCF schools	In-person and Online Semi-structured interviews	6	50-60 minutes
Headteachers of TCF schools	Semi-structured interviews	4	45 minutes
Teachers of TCF schools	Focus Group discussion	60	35-45 minutes
Male Parents (of TCF students)	Focus Group discussion	66	30-45 minutes
Female Parents (of TCF students)	Focus Group discussion	55	45-60 minutes
Community Leaders	Semi-structured interviews	8	45-60 minutes
Community Members (male and female)	Focus Group discussion	100 – 150	30-45 minutes
Male Students of TCF schools	Focus Group discussion	22	30-45 minutes

Female Students of TCF schools	Focus Group discussion	32	30-45 minutes
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The research was conducted in a collaborative manner, including opportunities to train and share knowledge about REAs with TCF employees. The team therefore comprised six individuals who took part in the data collection, data analysis and reporting process, plus additional people who provided support at various stages of the project. Lastly, it is important to underline that the research took into account ethical considerations stemming from the vulnerability of the study participants with formal ethical clearance obtained from UCL, London, UK. At the same time, the team faced several issues: a) it was not easy to communicate the aim of the interviews/focus group discussions/study to the participants. This communication was planned in multiple steps (both at the recruiting stage and before each interview/focus group), but perhaps more time and support by a local intermediary could have been beneficial; b) participants in the study had their own motives to participate; this was particularly true in case of people who have not received enough support as a result of relief actions. It was not always easy for the team to manage the participants' expectations in terms of additional support. c) for future research, it would be essential to consider in more depth how to support team members' mental health when conducting REAs in communities impacted by disaster.

3. TCF and its Aims

The Citizens Foundation (TCF) was established as a not-for-profit organisation in 1995 by a group of friends aiming to inspire positive social change through education. Through its vision “to remove barriers of class and privilege to make citizens of Pakistan agents of positive change,” it aims to educate, enable and empower under-resourced communities across Pakistan. TCF also works to assist its graduates in accessing higher education opportunities, invests in initiatives to provide adult literacy, clean drinking water and vocational training to community members, and partners with the government to improve outcomes in the public education sector.

As of 2024, TCF operates a network of 2033 schools across Pakistan, close to 50% of which are based in the province of Sindh. These rural and semi-urban schools in Sindh are spread out across multiple districts in the province, from the Thar desert in the south to the Jacobabad district in the north. Approximately 148,000 young students are currently enrolled in Sindh schools, and close to 44% are girls.

4. Context: The 2022 Sindh Floods

From June to September 2022, two years after the onset of the pandemic, Pakistan experienced one of the most catastrophic natural disasters in its history. Unprecedented monsoon rains and melting northern glaciers triggered widespread flooding, leading to significant humanitarian, economic, and environmental fallout. An estimated 33 million people, half of them children, were affected (UNICEF, 2023, World Bank, 2023), with over 1,700 deaths and an estimated 8 million people displaced (Save the Children International, 2023).

In the southeastern province of Sindh, where over a third of the population lives below the poverty line (World Bank, 2022), the impact was particularly severe, affecting 70% of the population. The floods displaced millions, destroyed homes, and disrupted livelihoods, with more than 1,000 people killed and 8,400 injured (PDMA, 2023).

The economic repercussions of the floods were severe, particularly in Sindh's agriculture-dependent economy. Agricultural lands were severely impacted, with over 4 million hectares of crops submerged (World Bank, 2023) and over 400,000 livestock lost (PDMA, 2023). Fields that had once been fertile and productive were now barren, resulting in significant economic losses and food insecurity.

The region, already grappling with inadequate access to essential public services, faced exacerbated disparities (UNICEF, 2023). Reports from Doctors Without Borders highlighted soaring malnutrition rates in the aftermath of the flooding, as well as increased cases of waterborne diseases and inadequate access to clean drinking water and sanitation. Infrastructure, including roads, bridges, and public buildings, suffered extensive damage, further complicating relief efforts, hampering mobility, communications and access to essential services, and adding to the economic strain on the province.

The destruction of nearly 16,000 schools (Save the Children International, 2022) disrupted education for countless children in the province. Significant psychological trauma was also reported among children who feared the recurrence of such events (Save the Children International, 2023).

TCF relief efforts:

The 2022 floods impacted scores of TCF students and staff members, causing them to lose their homes and livelihoods during this crisis. An estimated 100 TCF schools were affected by the flooding, disrupting education for 18,000 students. TCF was compelled to take action due to the gravity of the event and the severe impact on the communities where its schools are located. Therefore, it responded swiftly with a donor-funded relief appeal and subsequently provided over 5 million meals, cash assistance to 25,000 families, and construction work to rehabilitate damaged schools. Some TCF school buildings, particularly in Qambar Shahdadt and Mirpur Khas served as temporary shelters for displaced families seeking refuge.

Following the reopening of schools, TCF implemented proactive measures to prevent student dropouts by conducting extensive community outreach visits. Recognising the significant learning gaps caused by the disruption, it also introduced its pre-existing remediation programs to address the educational challenges faced by students affected by the floods (The Citizens Foundation, 2024).

5. Findings: Experiences of Disaster

“When the floods hit, we were very *darbadar*¹. We went to Thar. Then we sat out on the roads with our little kids. We were very worried, and very *darbadar*.”
- *Mothers | Mirpur Khas*

This section recounts participants’ experiences during the floods. It includes harrowing details of their living conditions, the losses they suffered, how the floods impacted their lives and well-being, and how the flooding continued to impact them at the time of our fieldwork. Nearly two years after the floods, in some areas such as Dadu, people still live in tents, exposed to all the elements. They shared that they are undergoing immense financial strain, and their sources of income are dwindling. As one participant put it:

“There is not much difference in our lives from before, except now, our main source of income (land) is also gone. The water (for irrigation) is now saline (*khara paani*) so we cannot cultivate the lands anymore. Our men are out of work.” - *Mother | Dadu*



The floods have left a lasting impact on all those who experienced them.

¹ Urdu word that indicates a feeling of displacement, mentally or emotionally, which can sometimes be accompanied by physical displacement.

5.1 Head Teachers and Teachers

The floods were disastrous for many people, including those who lost their homes and belongings. Due to the intensity of the flooding, many people also found it difficult to return to their homes. One teacher in Qarnah reported that his school had collapsed. In Qarnah, there was no other choice but to move to other areas or move to other schools.

Despite their own hardships, many teachers continued to suffer. One teacher in Badin reported that his school was damaged. The head teacher in Badin shared that:

“Two of our students lost their lives due to the floods.”

School buildings were damaged in Badin, head teachers reported. The school space was submerged in water. A teacher in Badin reported.



Teachers reported that their schools were damaged or destroyed. Many teachers had to leave their homes and belongings behind because of the flooding. Some teachers (within the community) reported that they had lost their homes and belongings. Some teachers reported that their families were left with no other choice but to move to other areas or move to other schools.

Teachers reported that their schools were damaged. The head teacher in Badin reported that his school was damaged. The head teacher in Badin shared that:

ends and peers felt

, Mirpur Khas, and Badin, head teachers reported. The school space was submerged in water. A teacher in Badin reported.

“One of the boundary walls of the school fell because of the water pressure. The school ground was flooded with water and much of the ground floor was also submerged.” - *Teacher | Badin*

5.2 Water marks on the wall in a school in Dadu from when the floods hit. The marks show the depth of the water that had entered the school.

A head teacher from Dadu also shared her feeling of helplessness in trying to save the school's supplies. Teachers shared that their families would not let them visit the school because of the flood water outside the school. In Dadu, school walls still bore marks of flooding. It was reported that up to 10 feet of water had remained stagnant in the school at the time. Teachers felt that the water level was so high that it would "swallow them whole." In Mirpur Khas, the routes leading to the school had completely collapsed and pools of stagnant water made it impossible for school staff to reach the building. Along with the administration staff, teachers also took part in cleaning the school premises and making it functional for students once schools reopened.



5.3. A school in Mirpur Khas submerged in water during the floods.

Teachers, as members of their respective communities, also shared the struggles of their community members. Lack of access to food and other necessities, lack of medical care, and poor living conditions were all struggles faced by the entire community. In Mirpur Khas they shared that many community members living nearby had no choice but to move elsewhere, since their houses had been completely destroyed. TCF's non-faculty staff also suffered immense losses. In Qambar Shahdadkot, a head teacher mentioned that the house of one of their staff members had collapsed due to the floods, instantly killing all their livestock.

5.2 Students

Students also experienced enormous suffering during the floods. They lamented that the floods brought with them destruction and displacement. Homes were destroyed in the rains. They shared that the intensity of the storms severely damaged their rooftops or walls, leaving them shelter-less. Some students, along with their families, were forced to migrate to safer grounds. Students in Dadu, for example, moved to nearby towns of Johi and Chandan. Some students left their homes and lived in tents out on the roads.

The living conditions in the tents were extremely difficult. It was hard for them to cook, or

even sleep. Students remembered the many problems that arose in the tents and the challenges they faced living with so many other families. One student recounted:

“We faced a lot of difficulties living in the tents. There was nowhere to live. There were too many families. We couldn’t cook the ration we received as we couldn’t light fires because of the water.” - Female student | Badin

Students were aware of everything that they and their families had lost. Not only did they experience displacement that lasted two to six months and the destruction of their homes, but they also lost their crops, livestock and learning resources.

“We used to go to school to get an education. Now we don’t even have our books and stationery with us. Our school bags and books have been swept away in the water.” - Male students | Dadu

5.3 Parents

Along with their children, parents also experienced displacement. One mother in Mirpur Khas shared that they moved to Umerkot once the floods hit. Others recounted that they came out on the roads and lived in encampments. In Dadu, a mother stated that they lived in tents for 3 months. One mother captured the lack of choices they had by sharing that:

“We could save either our homes or our children.” - Mother | Dadu

Many families survived extremely difficult living conditions in the encampments. Mothers lamented that they did not have access to sanitation facilities and were worried about leaving the area and even using the bathroom. People were distressed because they did not have access to basic necessities such as food and water. One mother shared:

“We were worried about food; we had no water to drink. There were mosquitos everywhere. We had no bathrooms to go to. We worried about what would happen to our homes.” - Mother | Mirpur Khas

During this period, diseases also spread throughout the community. Adults and children alike suffered from malaria and various skin conditions.

“There was a lot of water, yes, but there was a lot of illness that came with it too. Some people had malaria, some had skin diseases. Some people are still suffering from malaria.” - Mothers | Dadu

Parents were also worried for their children. They recounted how much their children suffered because there was nothing to eat or drink. Their children continued to become sick with fevers, vomiting, and stomach aches. Their anguish was increased tenfold because of the financial strain that followed the floods. Their livestock died. Unemployment also increased because of



Adding to their immense suffering, living conditions during the floods were abysmal. The water destroyed peoples' homes, forcing them to leave their villages and migrate to other places. In Qambar Shahdadkot, community members reported that 300 to 400 houses were destroyed:

“You can see the conditions of this village yourself. We live in mud houses. When the floods hit, there was 22 feet of water here, so we had to migrate to another village. It was difficult to get food and clean drinking water. Many people could not even afford these things.” - *Male community members | Dadu*

5.4. Kacchi mitti ka ghar (Mud house) in Badin.

Their difficulties did not end there. The pools of water that had gathered in the villages brought with them diseases, snakes, and insects. Community members shared that there were many instances of malaria. Medical care was also inaccessible, resulting in widespread suffering.

“There was no medical care available at that time. Fever, vomiting, gastro issues, and malaria was widespread.” - *Community leader | Mirpur Khas*

Community members shared that children were extremely scared and vulnerable. Due to the prevalence of disease, children developed disabilities and abnormalities. Children became fearful of the water and asked to be taken to another city.

“Children felt very scared, they would say that floodwater would bring with it snakes and other creatures and insisted that we take them to another city. We tried our best to counsel them. We would tell them that this is clean drinking water that is coming our way.” - *Community leader | Qambar Shahdadkot*

Community members shared their own exhaustion and frustration as well. In Badin, one person shared that they would not leave their home if the floods hit again because of the humiliation and frustration they experienced. One person in Mirpur Khas shared that the floods continue to add to their distress and frustration:

5.5. A father shows his cracked and bristled hands, damaged by the floods



“I get angry out of hunger, out of frustration that there are no jobs. My children are starving. It's better to die than to live like this. We go out looking for work and find nothing to do. We return to our children complaining that there is nothing to eat, their clothes are torn.” - *Male community member | Mirpur Khas*

6. Findings: Relief Activities

6.1 Context: The Absence of the State

“Our misery was a spectacle to them [referring to the influential people and politicians]. They had no empathy for us as we were drowning, or for our hungry children. The MNA MPA did not come either. When it's time [elections] they come to us behaving like public servants, like our sons. But when we are in need, no one is there to protect us.” - *Male community member | Mirpur Khas*

People's afflictions were evident and unimaginable; they were living in makeshift tents, struggling to find even one meal a day, some toiling in the fields, others unable to find work, children no longer attending schools because parents could not afford books and uniforms, people still reeling from the effects of floods and still unable to capture the attention and interest of the ruling elite. As they shared their harrowing experiences of wading through water, giving birth on inundated highways, hunger, mental distress and anguish, what was obvious was that the state had not provided an adequate emergency response. Respondents across all the flood-affected locations we visited were deeply disturbed and visibly enraged by the absence of the state during and after the floods – they would denounce the disregard for human suffering and the indifference they had to endure at the hands of the state and its local representatives. The state's antagonising absence was most pronounced in places where other NGOs and local patrons had not been able to provide substantial relief. A mother in Kamal Khan Lund, Dadu, protested:

“They [the government] didn't help. They didn't come to meet us. They didn't even give us boats so we can take out our things. They haven't rebuilt anything. Not even one street.” *Mother | Dadu*

There were not only expressions of widespread resentment against the state and local political elite for not showing up and helping people, but also accusations of the state engineering the disaster. People believed that the flood water that engulfed them was strategically diverted from the lands owned by ministers to their villages. The community leader in Kamal Khan Lund, Dadu questioned:

“A person can only face these challenges [floods, climate change] if they have the means and resources to save themselves. We have been drowned on purpose. How do we face that challenge?” - *Community leader | Dadu*

Not only was the absence of the state in mitigating the disaster and its role in potentially exacerbating the impact of destruction a cause of distress, but people also expressed reservations about the measures the state was currently taking to respond to floods in the future. The community leader in Ghulam Hussain Gadhi, Dadu, shared his misgivings about the ongoing World Bank-funded development projects on Manchar Lake. He said:

“Manchar Lake's capacity to store water has been increased. Now if it rains like it did, Johi and Dadu will drown. When Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah was making these infrastructural decisions, the community went to him and warned against the risks, but he did not pay them any heed.” - *Community leader | Dadu*

The state's broken promises, absence, and refusal to take on the concerns of the most affected and vulnerable groups have created an obvious trust deficit between it and the people. As so often when disasters strike Pakistan, it is in this landscape that non-state actors and other NGOs have consistently tried to play a state-like role by responding to the needs of those who feel abandoned by the state.



6.1. Ghulam Hussain Gadhi, Dadu, Sindh: People still living in makeshift tents.

6.2 TCF Relief Activities

In the immediate aftermath of the floods, TCF opened its schools for vulnerable people to shelter. The duration of stay varied from place to place, but in some local areas people took refuge in the school for up to a month. A community leader in Mirpur Khas recalled:

“In the early morning hours, I called my assistant (who was stationed in the village) and all he could say was, ‘it’s raining incessantly; people are sitting on the road.’ I immediately asked the admin officer at the TCF school to open the school for people to take shelter in.... During a crisis like this, the most immediate need is for a roof over your head, and food.” - *Community leader | Mirpurkhas*



6.2. A TCF School in Mirpur Khas stands amongst ruined homes and dilapidated structures

While TCF managed to leverage its physical space to aid affected communities, it was also reportedly the first responder for people in need. A community leader in Qambar Shahdadkot recollected:

“No NGOs and government officials were coming, despite us repeatedly reaching out to them. The first to reach us was TCF.” - Community leader | Qambar Shahdadkot

However, ration packages could only provide short-term relief, and even then, their efficacy was contingent upon the conditions for preparing food. During our conversations, community leaders and members reflected on people not having the means to cook the raw, dry food items included in aid packages; some mentioned travelling to nearby cities to procure wood for lighting fires, and sometimes the weather would render the wood damp and unusable.

“There was nothing to eat and no wood to start a fire, so food became scarce. After that, access to drinking water became a challenge as water sources got contaminated due to rainwater. It was difficult to get water from faraway places.” - Male community member | Mirpur Khas

In the absence of concerted, sustained efforts to provide adequate emergency relief to people, what was uniformly applauded by our respondents were TCF’s unconditional cash transfers. As the organisation did not direct or impose restrictions on the utilisation of this money, people used it to address their most pressing needs. People reported buying rations to survive, bricks to rebuild homes, livestock to earn money, or using the money to set up small

businesses, repay loans and obtain treatment for the sick. The community leader in Qambar Shahdadkot noted:

“TCF was very helpful. People used the cash transfer [of PKR. 50,000] to start small businesses, like putting up a food cart or selling fruit. Some purchased cycles and started selling junk in the city, one person opened a small *paan* shop.”
- *Community leader | Qambar Shahdadkot*



6.3. Community members indicating towards partially built/repared homes and buildings

Despite the usefulness of unconditional cash transfers, the money was considered insufficient to respond to the scale of destruction. A common refrain across interview responses was what female students in Badin said: “We tried to rebuild our homes from the money TCF gave us. But how much can you do with 50,000 rupees?” Usually, cash transfers are part of what one would term medium to long-term relief measures, aimed at enabling people to recover some stability and establish normalcy after their devastating experiences of displacement and dispossession. However, the cash transfers seemed inadequate for ensuring people’s transition from a state of vulnerability to one of safety. Across different locations, field teams consistently reported seeing people living out of tents that were erected post-flooding and struggling to manage two square meals a day for their families. Respondents persistently reported continued food insecurity, economic stagnancy, abysmal living conditions after the floods, and a lack of sustained efforts to enable affected communities to rebuild their lives.

In Qambar Shahdadkot, the field researchers were confronted by groups of agitated women who refused to leave the school premises without talking to someone from the field team, as they had not received help. A male parent in Qambar Shahdadkot, Ghazi Jalbani, pointed out:

“No one from the government or any NGOs came here. No one helped us; instead, they laughed at us. When we moved, we had our relatives and friends. Only TCF gave us (Rs.)50,000/, which we used to build homes. However, only a few of us received the 50,000. They just got bricks, and the bricks are still there. TCF provided ration bags twice, but the same in this case, only a few of us received them. In this village, there are 300-400 houses.” - *Father / Qambar*

Shahdadkot

There were obvious challenges of sufficiency and equitable distribution of the aid TCF managed to provide, as pointed out by respondents. However, in the absence of the state and any long-term rehabilitation activity, people continued to pin their hopes on TCF. A male community member in Dadu asserted:

“We want TCF to help us now [to move ahead with our lives].” - *Male community member | Dadu*

6.3 Role of Elite Patrons and Other NGOs in Providing Relief

“Nobody was left behind. Everybody received help from Sahab. He thought of everyone. He gave us jobs and food.” - *Mother | Mirpur Khas*

Across all the flood-affected communities that the research team visited, Kazi Academy in Mirpur Khas stood out as the most rehabilitated community post-flood. People said they owed this to the landowner on whose land the entire village population worked as tenants. In this time of distress, the landowner turned into an ally and rallied support for the people to enable them to weather the floods and rebuild their lives. Food and shelter were arranged in the immediate aftermath of flooding, and soon after their return to the village two months later, the landowner arranged for the water to be drained, and embankments built all around the village. During our interview with him, he discussed relying on his personal funds and using his social capital, along with help from TCF, to ensure that people were able to not only rebuild their lives but also prepare to brave any such occurrence in the future.

“After two months, people started coming back. We made embankments all around the village. We rented excavators. The machine worked for 700 hours. It cost about PKR. 4,000 per hour.” - *Community Leader | Mirpur Khas*

He also informed us that Reckitt has been working through Red Crescent to rebuild homes, and they managed to complete nearly 400 houses in January 2024. (*See Figure 6.4*)

“We owe all this [the school, the embankments] to Sahab and his generosity. He has done everything. When we were drowning, he gave us the means of survival, helped us in every way. Our MNA MPA don’t do anything. The MPA did not even visit us.” - *Male community members | Mirpur Khas*

It was apparent that the interest and will of the local elite is paramount in driving laborious initiatives such as rebuilding lives and planning for the future, and something the state can

leverage in responding to disasters by enabling trusted individuals to act in the interests of locals.



6.4. Kazi Academy, Mirpur Khas: one-room structure constructed by Reckitt, and covered in protective mud-plaster by the locals.

Similarly, the World Food Program's relief activities in Ghazi Jalbani, Qambar Shahdadkot, highlighted the effectiveness of concerted efforts guided by the vision of sustainable relief. The community leader stated:

“We want to salute WFP Human Appeal for all they have done. They were giving out rations worth PKR. 20,000-30,000 to each household, without any discrimination, every month. They have also done some development work. They collected PKR.1500 from people in lieu of rations, then used that money to raise the road level, repair the lanes here, and install solar lights in nearby villages.” - Community leader | Qambar Shahdadkot



6.5. Ghazi Jalbani, Qambar Shahdadkot: One of the many hand-painted banners signalling a WFP warehouse in the village

However, not all relief activities were well-received by the communities. To aid their recovery, many had to seek access to micro-loans and were then forced to deal with exorbitant interest rates.

“When we returned to our village after the floods, I took a loan from an NGO to build my house, as all of us, along with my cattle, were sitting in the open in the cold. I took this loan from a charity trust and on PKR 100,000, they charged an interest of PKR. 16,000 - 20,000.” - *Male community member | Dadu*

Similarly, the community leader in Mirpur Khas bemoaned:

“For 3 days we were hungry, our homes fell down. Organisations would come, take pictures and leave, and would give us nothing. No one helped us besides TCF. The houses the government provided after surveying are also not complete; half structures are standing. PKR. 295,000 was given by the World Bank. They gave the money to those whose houses had collapsed completely. If someone only had a roof they didn’t give the money to them. When we asked about compensating all of us for losing livestock and our other losses, they said another team will come and look after that [which had not happened at the time of this interview in March 2024]” - *Community leader | Mirpurkhas*

Female students in Kamal Khan Lund, Dadu, also raised the issue of inequitable distribution of aid on the part of the various organisations they had to contend with.

“[When aid was distributed] people would only write down names of people

they knew or liked. They need to write down the names of the poor people as well. Some of the poorest people did not get anything because the people [those in charge] only wrote down names of the people they liked.” - *Female students*
| *Dadu*

6.4 Women’s Experiences

The female experience of displacement and dispossession is seldom documented and rarely finds a place in the design of emergency response and relief. Affected women across all locations consistently reported not having access to sanitation and hygiene, during and after floods. It was also apparent that the lack of privacy and seclusion resulted in respondents feeling like they have been stripped of their dignity.

This challenge of not having access to sanitation and hygiene facilities is dated, even the one-room houses that the response donors do not feature a clean, safe space for women to relieve themselves. *Community members in Badin recalled:*

“We were forced to relieve ourselves in the open. There was no privacy. [We] would see a group of women and relieve ourselves during the floods. There are still no latrines. Even before the floods, there were no latrine rooms in the community. We do not have the money to build them.” *Female community member*

Similarly, *mothers in Kamran Lund, Dadu, recollected:*

“We did not have access to washrooms. For women, there was nowhere to change clothes.” *Mothers, Badin*

For some, although organizations tried to address the challenges women faced, a lack of contextualisation defeated their efforts. Figure 6.6 shows a washroom unit put up by Water Aid Foundation. The community members repeatedly told the field team how women are unable to use this because of the sheer, almost transparent tarpaulin that is used to cover the structure.



6.6. Kamal Khan Lund, Dadu: Washroom unit set up by WaterAid Foundation.

Pregnant women were even more vulnerable and at risk. Women in labour were forced to give birth on inundated roads, with no access to first aid, often resulting in infant mortality. Teachers in Dadu reported:

**“Boatmen demanded PKR. 5000 from women who were expecting [and needed hospital assistance/somewhere safe to deliver their babies]. These people did not even have PKR. 50 in their pockets, much less PKR. 5000. Due to these incidents, many women miscarried. The transport was not free of charge.” -
*Teachers | Dadu***



6.7. A mother covers her baby under layers of blankets to protect them from widespread diseases such as malaria

There were also the widows who had been excluded from receiving aid because the process did not account for households without a male head. Relief organisations would usually ask for identification documents of the men of the house before dispensing aid. Researchers were often met with dejected widows who would share their grievances and harrowing experiences of marginality. Mothers in Mirpur Khas noted the same thing: “There were old women who were widows who received nothing.”

7. Findings: Impact on Education and Learning

This section considers the multiple ways in which the 2022 floods influenced learning and school-based education. A World Bank report (Barón et al., 2022) noted that, during the 2022 floods, nearly 7000 schools were shut down and used as shelters for displaced people in Pakistan. TCF schools were no exception. Across the flood-affected regions, people from communities near the schools took refuge there. This section covers two important aspects: 1) what happened to education during the floods, the dedicated efforts made by school staff, students, and community members to continue some form of learning despite their debilitating circumstances (e.g. through makeshift/temporary learning spaces and active measures taken to safeguard students' course materials); and 2) the situation of schools and education in post-disaster settings and how the head teachers and teachers adjusted the school's curriculum and functioning after the floods. During our interviews, it emerged very clearly that students were highly aware and conscious of their learning loss. All the participants were reflecting on the fact that children had initially lost half a year due to the coronavirus pandemic, and then the rest of the year due to the floods and its repercussions.

7.1 Head Teachers and Teachers

The range of time each school was closed was linked to its respective geographic positioning. It was reported that the two schools in Dadu [GGES Ghulam Hussain Gadhi Secondary Morning and GGHS Kamal Khan Lund Secondary Morning] were closed for around 6 months and 3 months respectively. The two schools in Mirpur Khas [Zainab Bai, Ladha Bai & Ghullam Hussain Patel Campus Primary Morning and Kazi Academy Campus Primary Morning] were closed for 1 month and 2.5 months. The two schools in the Badin district [Dreamfly Campus Primary Morning and UEP Tarique Khamisani Campus Primary Morning] faced a closure of 2 weeks and 2 months respectively, while the two schools in the Qambar Shahdadkot district [GGHS Gaji Khuhawar Secondary Morning and GBHS Ghazi Jalbani Secondary Morning] remained closed for 2 months and 4 months. The extent of closure also reflects the severity of the flood impact. Qambar Shahdadkot and Dadu were among the most impacted districts in Sindh, followed by Badin and Mirpur Khas.

During this period of unpredictability and stagnancy, various groups carried out initiatives to continue providing education. The headteacher from a Mirpur Khas school reported that makeshift classrooms were set up in the school donor's guesthouse with lessons conducted each day every week, and five teachers would teach around 30 children. Furthermore, Temporary Learning Centers (TLCs) were also established by the government inside the tents provided by donors or NGOs in Dadu and Mirpur Khas. Additionally, in Dadu, one CM shared that there were 3 senior students (from Grades 8, 9 and 10) who would teach the younger children around them, on their own initiative without any compensation, instruction or encouragement from any of their teachers. The non-faculty staff also played an essential role in safeguarding school materials. The ex-CM of Qambar Shahdadkot elaborated that it was thanks to the non-faculty staff's efforts to move all schoolbooks to another floor, that children

were able to come back to school, after having lost so much and still have books to study from. However, it is important to note that schools in all areas required a minimum of 1-2 months (Dadu, Mirpur Khas, Badin) and a maximum of 6 months (Qambar Shahdaskot) to not simply clean, but also restore and revive regular functioning (through support from the TCF administration, teaching staff, and non-faculty staff). The underlying reasons for this included stagnant floodwater that required persistent cleaning and varying return rates of students, i.e., attendance fluctuations. According to the CM, in a Dadu school (GGES Ghulam Hussain Gadhi Campus), 16% of all enrolled students had immediately dropped out after the floods, and to this day, two years later, 30% of previously enrolled students have not returned to school as their families have not migrated back due to substantial property damage. This statistic is even higher in Qambar Shahdaskot, as reported by one of the cluster managers who was working with TCF in 2022:

“It took 5-6 months for attendance to be normalised. We had to contact parents and physically visit them and talk to village heads and landlords to let the children come back to school. After this, only 40-50% of the students returned to school.” - Cluster manager | Qambar Shahdaskot

Furthermore, other obstacles in restoring school functioning and education included the presence of unwelcome fauna – snakes, scorpions, and other insects – as a common occurrence in nearly every school, post-flooding.

“Every day, snakes or scorpions would emerge. One day while I was teaching, I turned around to see a snake lying beside a girl’s desk. But I did not let the children sense that I was afraid. I went outside the classroom and sought help. I was not the only teacher who experienced that. Class disruptions became quite frequent because of such incidents in the classrooms for a few weeks.” - Teacher | Dadu

With regards to learning loss, teachers in Dadu and Mirpur Khas often used the word “blank” to describe the state of the children’s academic memory – most students had forgotten everything they had learned and lost all their books and stationery items. In Badin, students were facing great difficulties in performing simple tasks, including reading and writing. In Qambar Shahdaskot’s Gaji Khuhawar school, the teachers reported that “initially, students were not attentive in the classroom and hardly participated in any of the discussions, after returning to school”.

Attempts were made to minimise learning gaps in Dadu through TCF’s structured remediation program (for English, Math and Science), which was implemented for 3 weeks.

The program included pre-existing remediation booklets on foundational literacy and numeracy, which were used to help children revise and relearn core concepts through enjoyable activities and group work. Furthermore, the presence of TCF’s *Agahi* (adult literacy) centre was very beneficial for female students in Dadu, as girls who were not allowed to return to school (due to greater commute difficulties post-flooding) could rejoin this initiative taught

by local female teachers in nearby areas.

All head teachers in flood-affected schools were instructed by the TCF head office to shorten the syllabus, relieve students of academic burden, and not conduct examinations. On the other hand, teachers willingly dedicated extra time to struggling students (including break times and after school) to provide them with additional academic support. They would also include interactive games and engaging activities in their teaching and provide students with a safe space to express their thoughts and feelings through TCF's *Aghaz* initiative (conducted at the beginning of the school day). Although the loss of learning time is irrefutable, it was initiatives and adjustments such as these that helped bridge the post-floods education gap to some extent, albeit arbitrarily and temporarily. Furthermore, it should be noted that all systemic measures mentioned above were already pre-existing before the floods – they were reinforced once more after the children returned to school. Thus, there was a lack of a planned and actionable remediation that was particularly tailored to the specific needs of the students and the extent of their learning loss post-disaster.

7.2 Students

When asked how students continued learning during the flood, a female student from Dadu answered that she had fallen sick numerous times due to malaria, whereas a male student from Badin had developed a skin infection from working in fields with contaminated floodwater – and in both cases, neither was able to study. Hence, many students were physically and psychologically impacted by the flood and were unable to pursue their education immediately. However, during the devastation of the floods, many children went out of their way to continue some sort of learning despite their hardships, if their psychological and physical health allowed them. In Badin, a female student reported that she sewed back together her torn, wet books so she could continue to study for her final exams. Older students would teach younger students or their younger siblings, and those who could access and attend Temporary Learning Centers (TLCs) would do so. Some students from Badin would also save up their money from fieldwork to purchase phone credit so they may contact their teachers regarding school affairs. Elaborating further, other female students added the following statements regarding their enthusiasm to continue learning:

"My father got sick after the floods. My mother said I needed to learn how to ride a motorcycle to take my younger siblings to school, so my grandfather taught me how to ride a motorcycle." - Female student | Badin

"We didn't have credit in our phone, so we would work in the fields, pool our money together and get phone credit and speak to our teacher about schoolwork." - Female student | Badin

Figure 7.1 Students stand against a school wall damaged by the flood waters

"We would talk to our teacher on the phone and ask her what schoolwork we should do (while in tents). Then we would get together and try to do our homework." - *Female student | Badin*

Intrinsic motivation in terms of (looking forward to) returning to school was a common finding in many schools. Once these children returned, male students from Dadu reported that they were eager to visit the school library, read story books, go to the Science lab, and attend Computer Studies classes, but they were met with mostly destroyed and unusable school resources. Moreover, most were aware of their own learning loss and expressed it as they reflected on the fact that they had initially lost half a year due to the coronavirus pandemic, and then the rest of the year due to the floods. Nonetheless, their joy on returning to school is evident from the following quote:

"We came back to school, and we asked our friends, 'How are you? Where were you displaced? What happened to you? How were things?' We loved being back at school."
- *Male student | Qambar*



Shahdadkot

Unfortunately, they encountered what they termed "*balaun*" (monsters) – extremely frequent snake and scorpion appearances (as reported by numerous teachers, and one student reported having seen three snakes at school). One student from the Ghulam Hussain Gadhi school in Dadu reported that they did not receive course books for 8th grade, and that he believed the school had only been repaired because elections were around the corner. Upon returning, the schools were not in usable condition – there was "*mitti*" (dirt) and mud everywhere, and all the classroom furniture was stored upstairs. A male student from Badin reported that he would have difficulty sleeping outside on the road, in tents, because of the loud sound of the vehicles passing nearby – and this ultimately affected his performance at school, following the flooding. Similarly, another student reported that the state of being displaced and homeless made it extremely challenging to review lectures, do homework, prepare for examinations and score

well; students struggled immensely with these tasks.

7.3 Parents

Parents corroborated the reports made by their school-going children. In areas such as Dadu and Qambar Shahdadkot, the extent of damage was so severe that it was simply not possible for children to continue their studies during and immediately after the floods. A father from Mirpur Khas stated that his children had no clothes to wear because they were all torn – his family worked tirelessly in the fields for 3-4 months after the flood to earn enough money to afford new clothes. Due to this, parents expressed being very concerned and worried about their children’s education. Although there were temporary learning centres (TLCs) established, the issue of teacher absenteeism was prevalent in Mirpur Khas. According to a male parent, teachers would only come in sometimes to teach and visit the students. Nevertheless, parents encouraged their children to continue studying whenever it was possible and narrated how they would support their children’s learning:

“Some of the more educated people helped our children study during the floods. For example, my older daughters graduated from TCF and tutored the younger children during the floods. We tried to maintain their education in any way we could.” – Mothers | Badin

Sending children to school became a safety concern due to the risk of drowning in high water along the way. Fathers accompanied their children to ensure their safety.

“Some kids come from very far and there isn’t any transport” - Father | Badin

“After 14 or 15 months, the problems we are facing include roads, households, and electricity. We can't reach school because of the condition of the paths. If someone falls ill, we cannot go to the hospital either. Additionally, there were a lot of diseases, such as malaria. We think that our houses are weak; they will fall down if it rains again” - Male student | Badin

“When we returned home, our kids would ask us, when will you build our house again? When will we have shelter? They are still scared of illness. They have become mentally ill.” - Father | Dadu

7.4 Communities

A male community member in Mirpur Khas reported that, after the children had lost such a significant chunk of their academic year due to the floods, they fell behind other students in their classes. Consequently, the children were taken out of school to work with their parents instead, doing work such as raising and tending to cattle or working in fields. Many students had returned to Qambar Shahdadkot after migrating farther away during the floods, for safety;

when these young people came back to school, they were “working very hard to catch up”, as another male member from Qambar Shahdadkot notes. The community leader from the same area expresses in the following quote that education continued during the floods through older schoolchildren teaching younger children:

“Older boys would tutor younger children in the community until the school became functional. They would utilise open spaces and even my ‘autaaq’ (guesthouse).” - Community leader | Qambar Shahdadkot

Similarly, according to the community leader in Mirpur Khas, older siblings would teach younger siblings within the temporary confines of their homes. In Dadu, the community leader pointed out that there was a government school and a temporary learning centre (TLC) near the community’s shelter camp, where the children would go. Children would visit these places of learning for up to 4 months. However, it should be noted that these alternatives to formal school learning were set up after a substantial amount of time had already passed, so there was unquestionably a learning loss.

8. Conclusions: Participants' Voices About How to Respond to Future Crises

The floods of 2022 were unprecedented in scale and devastation. A year and a half since the flooding, these communities are still in the throes of recovery as they grapple with a stalled rehabilitation process. Their living conditions, marked by decimated infrastructure, precarious housing, and widespread unemployment, paint a stark picture of abandonment and vulnerability. This section presents reflections voiced by the respondents – their insights, expectations, concerns, fears, and hopes. The section addresses: 1) the importance of building disaster preparedness; 2) the importance of considering land and infrastructural needs; 3) ways to arrange relief-aid distribution in a more equitable way; 4) ways to ensure that education can be provided in times of disaster; 5) the key role schools play in the face of disaster.

8.1 Need for Disaster Preparedness

Many community members felt unprepared. What at first appeared to be only rain intensified into a disaster without warning. Without information, households (and schools) had to decide on their own whether and where to evacuate.

“We were not informed that this disaster was coming. We are villagers. We thought it was just normal rain and would improve in a few days. But it kept raining, and suddenly, it took the shape of a flood. We left our houses at 7 pm that night.” - Male Parent | Mirpurkhas

As one teacher from Dadu expressed, if the government issues an evacuation notice, it should also provide essential facilities such as temporary shelters, food, and medical aid to combat diseases such as malaria and dengue. This sentiment outlines the community's needs, highlighting the importance of a comprehensive disaster response. The respondents explained this point as follows:

“We had to help ourselves. The government did not do anything. We used our soil (to build embankments around our house), and the men in our house made them.” - Teacher | Dadu

“If there is a flood situation again, it is the government's obligation to keep us informed in time and provide us with our fundamental needs. They should send rescue teams to get us out.” - Father | Dadu

This sense of 'lacking essential information' was also expressed by head teachers and teachers who stated that they did not know at what point to evacuate or where to; they had to make

decisions all on their own about what to do with the school furniture and supplies. There had been no prior disaster education for teachers or students, nor what actions one should take during a disaster. The absence of the state and the sense of mistrust and abandonment these communities feel are unpacked earlier in this report; in terms of accountability, however, these communities are clear: they expect the state to be there for them and prepared to help them navigate crises of this kind by issuing timely alerts, planning for evacuations, providing shelter, and helping these communities address both their short-term needs and long-term rehabilitation. This requires a coordinated disaster response and effective systems for information dissemination, capacity building for disaster preparedness at the community level, and an improvement in infrastructure to ensure possible escape routes for low-elevation communities. Many felt that drastic change was needed, otherwise:

“If the flood comes again, we do not have any preparation, and we will face these situations again.” - Father | Dadu.

8.2 More Attention to Infrastructural Needs

Of the needs highlighted by communities, infrastructure and housing appeared to be the most urgent and important. In this regard, the Sindh Flood Emergency Housing Reconstruction Project is a step in the right direction. However, people who are unable to privately raise enough funds to supplement government subsidies allocated for building flood-resistant housing may be precluded from taking part. One father laments:

“As poor people (even in life outside of disasters), pain and challenges are a constant. We experience rains/floods frequently, and our hope is that we can have more sustainable houses that can withstand climate disasters and that we can store rations for a rainy day.” - Father | Mirpurkhas

Respondents feel resigned to a reality in which they will always be stuck in the poverty trap and will always be vulnerable. They view sustainable housing as a precondition for navigating out of this poverty trap. At the same time, however, their wages are too low to significantly contribute to improving their lives.

“We still have houses with thatched roofs. We don't know what will happen with the next waves of high winds or rain.” - Father | Mirpurkhas

One father described a Catch-22 situation. They do not have the funds to construct *pakkay* (cemented) houses that can withstand the impact of future disasters. If they invest in improving housing structures to achieve a slightly less vulnerable but still *kacha* (*not cemented*) state, they risk losing this additional investment the next time a disaster hits. As he articulated, they feel resigned to living in their vulnerable housing.

Migration is not an option, however. These communities have a deep connection to their land and do not want to experience being uprooted and displaced again. Responding to a question

about what to do during a disaster, one male community member said:

“...We don’t have the money to migrate to another place. We have no choice but to stay here. If it floods again, we will seek shelter on the road and then come back.” - Male community member | Qambar Shahdadkot

A female community member echoes this sentiment:

“If it rains again, we will stay here. This is our home, where else will we go? Our livelihood is tied to this land, we are farmers.” - Female community member | Badin

The issue of poor infrastructure extends beyond the housing situation. Teachers reported that their journey to school took much longer after the flood because of the devastated infrastructure. There have been no efforts to fix or rehabilitate these roads except for private initiatives, such as those in Umerkot. Given the precarity of the existing infrastructure, with their homes dissolving around them, those affected by the flooding fear that they will not even have an escape route to flee their communities. Amidst all this, it was their faith that sustained these communities.

“God will help us. We don’t have the means of responding to crisis and rebuilding our lives.” - Male community member | Dadu

“Allah aasrey, we are relying on Allah. Whatever will happen, will happen.” - Female community member | Dadu

8.3 Relief Distribution Improvements

As conveyed in an earlier section, the respondents felt that support was insufficient vis-à-vis their needs, not extended rapidly enough, and not sufficiently sustained over time. One additional issue that exacerbated this feeling is related to the semantics of how a household was defined in the relief distribution process. Many participants were excluded from access to relief because another family member had already been included. While families often live jointly, in the respondents’ view joint families are composed of multiple households and it would be better to treat each male household ‘head’ with a wife and children as constituting a household for the purposes of aid distribution:

“Every married man with a family should be considered a household. When providing relief, the organisation should think about privacy, separate rooms for separate units, and communal spaces. Support for people with disabilities is also needed.” - Father | Qambar Shahdadkot

Alternatively, this means that widows and women who are single could be excluded from relief

efforts again, as they had already experienced in the 2022 floods. Another respondent spoke about how allocating support in this way (treating joint households as a single unit) can create fissures between families.

“If we are four brothers in a family, each of us has his own family. If I get PKR. 50,000, will I support my family or give it to my brother? He also has needs. He should also get support. Nevertheless, Allah makes things better (*Allah Malik hai*).” - Father | Dadu

The sufficiency of relief and support was also called into question in relation to the government housing reconstruction scheme, under which the community was surveyed to enable beneficiary-led construction of multi-hazard resistant housing units. While this is a great step forward and reflects an urgent need, the communities feel that the PKR. 300,000 committed through the scheme has been insufficient, and the total cost of erecting such a multi-hazard resistant unit is more than double the grant provided by the government. The communities defined a structure that can withstand future hazards as requiring bricks, *sarya* (steel rods), and cement with an elevated foundation. In their estimation, a small *pakka* (cemented) structure that can withstand disasters can cost around PKR. 700,000 – 800,000. In the aftermath of the floods, they saw that the local landlord’s house survived with only some damage because it was *pakka*, while their houses were wiped away.

In addition to sufficiency, the communities also had a clear point of view regarding the conditions associated with funds. Under the aforementioned scheme, access to subsequent instalments of funds is conditional on phase-based construction with evidence that each earlier phase of building has already been completed.

“They [the government] give this amount in instalments, and every instalment has its condition. They gave PKR. 75,000 to build the foundation but it was only half the amount of the actual expense. They strictly said to spend the rest of the amount on your own and build. We are anxious. How can we manage? Iron rods are expensive, bricks are expensive, gravel is expensive, and we also need to be able to afford labour. Some people have built, some haven’t.” - Fathers | Mirpur Khas

Reflecting on their experience with TCF, the respondents felt that unconditional cash transfers afford them greater autonomy to match funds to their most urgent needs, unlike the restricted funds they received from the government:

“Now, if we want to spend this money [PKR. 300,000] on our kids’ other facilities and needs, like solar batteries and fans, they have an objection. It would be more helpful if they gave us PKR. 300,000 in one go, instead of small instalments.” - Fathers | Dadu

Personal documents such as the National Identification Card (NIC) also figured into the

conversation regarding the distribution of relief. Here, the respondents felt that those who were less literate, less well-informed or more vulnerable were excluded from relief opportunities because they either did not have an NIC, or their ID cards had expired.

**“NGOs ask for a NIC and if someone does not have a NIC they don’t write their name in the list. Many people had expired NICs and did not receive support.” -
*Male student | Dadu***

While NADRA’s outreach and mechanisms for inclusion have been extensive, the community members’ responses indicated that these processes may exclude individuals at the intersection of age, gender, disability, illiteracy, and other vulnerabilities. Female-led households, for instance, identified not having the NIC of a male member (as required by those providing relief) as one of the reasons why they were unable to access relief, while illiteracy and not being able to determine if one’s NIC had expired was one of the reasons cited by men who were unable to access relief. The lesson learned here is recognising that technical assistance to ascertain and validate identification needs to be coordinated alongside relief responses. As one child astutely observed, if it is possible to vote with an expired NIC during elections then it should be possible to use one to access relief.

Artificial distinctions between cities and villages also risk disadvantaging individuals whose needs are equally acute. As Gaji Khuhawar, Qambar Shahdadkot illustrates, the experiences of disaster for those in the city and in the nearby *goth* were very similar, and the individuals in the city felt they were disadvantaged because of the assumption that more relief needed to be routed to rural areas.

Another message consistently voiced across communities and geographies is that relief should be given directly to the beneficiary, without an intermediary. One such intermediary was informally called a *comrade*. The respondents defined these figures as individuals from the community who tend to be more educated, more socioeconomically privileged, and more politically active or, in many cases, hold positions as government officials. It is often the *wadera* (local landlord) or other community leaders who take on the role of the intermediary. Relief organisations worked with such individuals in some communities to spread information and conduct outreach and data collection as part of relief work.

While TCF had rigorous processes in place to make distribution as equitable as possible, some respondents felt that working through intermediaries meant that the intermediary’s closest relatives or acquaintances were privileged in terms of accessing relief.

The children cited one example where a local comrade was supported by an organisation to drill a well and install taps, and the comrade built one near their house, built five rooms onto their houses, and chose to build the road leading up to their own house. The floods destroyed the only shared water depot for the rest of the community. The children took us to the roof of their school to show us the inequitable distribution: the comrade’s house was located at a considerable distance from the community, and the water RO plant appeared to have been installed right next to it and therefore, at a distance from the villages.

“We are facing problems with drinking water as well as water for other uses. The

comrades were provided hand-pumps, but they installed them in their own houses. They distributed them to their relatives there. There are two comrades who have everything. One built five rooms in his house, along with good washrooms. Al-Khair gave a mosque, which they built in their own area. Another organisation gave a filter plant that they also installed in their area.” - *Male student | Dadu*

The lesson aptly conveyed by one father is that relief organisations need to reach those affected by disasters directly and give them opportunities to articulate their own specific needs.

“We are asking NGOs and governments to come to us for research and surveys. We need their help. They can come to our house. We want our voices to reach them. We welcome them to come and see our situation so they can understand what we need.” - *Fathers | Dadu*

The TCF school also stood out as an institution that had developed prior trust with the residents of flood-affected areas and a direct relationship not mediated by a third party. This meant that the relief intended for those affected by flooding was able to reach them directly and was not co-opted.

“This school (TCF) supported us and provided aid. This school gave us money as well as rations. This school helped us independently; they did not provide us help through *waderas* or *raees*.” - *Fathers | Mirpur Khas*

However, direct outreach was also a challenge, as explained by one particular community in Dadu. Our focus group with male parents included participants from two sets of *goths* (small villages) that had undergone significantly different experiences during the floods. One *goth* was still connected to accessible road infrastructure and was located nearer to the school site. However, there was a lot of water between the *goths*, and those in the farther *goths* had gathered on an embankment for survival. This meant that even relief dispensed through the school privileged those who were closer vis-à-vis those who were harder to reach.

“There was no road, and the amount of water was so much here that they [relief organisations] did not want to come.” - *Male student | Dadu*



8.1. TCF school and surrounding roads submerged in water

Reaching respondents directly is not solely a matter of navigating past intermediaries; rather, relief organisations must think about how they can extend outreach to those who are the hardest to reach, least likely to receive aid, and most likely to be disconnected from opportunities for accessing relief themselves:

“We just want to tell every NGO and Government that whenever any difficult time comes, don’t go to (*waderas*) landlords and comrades. Pay a visit to poor people directly. They should go to every village and help the most deserving people. They don’t go to those who have the most difficulties (hardest to reach). They go to those people who don’t have difficulties.” - *Fathers | Dadu*

8.4 Need for an Education-Provision Plan During Disasters

The brick school buildings were also affected by the floods, with stagnant water sitting in the classrooms for weeks. As detailed above, schools were closed for varying periods of time depending on the severity of the floods in each area. The community felt that both having cement buildings as well as buying mobile phones would help the children continue their education if schools had to close.

“NGOs or the government can build cement rooms in our community, where

students can sit and study together in the absence of school.” - *Fathers | Mirpurkhas*

“They [the government and other relief organisations] should give us a mobile so we can continue our studies from home.” - *Male student | Dadu*

Making sure that there is an alternative plan in place for education during and after the disaster is key to providing continuity and avoiding learning loss.

It was clear that education was important, and many parents could not wait for the schools to reopen because they view education as the best way to offer their children a different life.

“[Even during the floods] we were convinced that we would send our children to school again. Education is necessary for a child. We never doubted that we would send our children to school again.” - *Fathers | Dadu*

“We are poor. We want our kids to get ahead in life and get a good education. TCF school is a very good support for our kids. They study here, and they understand everything. They can read Urdu and English newspapers. The education at this school is great. Our children are fond of coming here.” - *Father | Badin*

Students felt the same way:

“We all work in the fields as labourers, harvesting crops. We used to work before the flood as well. Our parents want us to receive an education because they have faced difficult circumstances. They don’t want us to experience the same situation in the future.” - *Male students | Badin*

“We never imagined that we would have to leave school. We aspire to receive education from our school because it is through education that we gain knowledge and skills from our teachers, enabling us to contribute positively to our country. Whether it’s becoming a doctor, scientist, or entering the field of agriculture, education opens numerous opportunities. I believe there are around 407 professions in the world, and every student will choose a profession based on their interests and abilities. Through our chosen professions, we aim to lead our nation, uphold our beliefs, and serve our country.” - *Male student | Badin*

Community members were also wary of sending their children, particularly girls, to farther schools – owing to affordability issues and security concerns. Parents often asked for the local schools to be extended to teach to grade 12 as well.

“We hope that TCF will extend its support for higher education up to the 12th

grade, as it would greatly benefit poor families like ours who cannot afford to send their children elsewhere for education. Currently, we bear no expenses for education.” - *Father | Badin*

“Our girls are safe here, and we don’t have any complaints about it. The children asked us every day when we would return home and to school. This school goes up to middle school, and we plan to transfer our girls to a secondary school so they can complete their matriculation. We want to educate them further, but if we feel we can’t afford the expenses and ensure the safety of our girls, this school will be their last education. We feel our children are safe here, and we want to request an extension of this campus so our children can continue their education easily. Since the school is only for girls, we are relaxed about their safety. And we’ll not allow our children in other schools/colleges not in our *auqaat* (ability to afford). If this is not in our fate and not in our *auqaat*, we can’t. We dream and everyone has wishes for my children to become responsible people in the community. Due to limited resources, we struggle to educate our children for college and university, whereas people with land and money can afford to educate theirs, and they are giving education to their children.” - *Father | Qambar Shahdadkot*

Parents emphasised the importance of education for their children’s future, but this value also reflected their own experience of how they were treated when it came to disaster relief.

“We can see a difference between the illiterate and the literate. They wear clean clothes and have money. We work as labourers – when it rains, we lose our work. We stay hungry whether it rains or not. All of this does not affect the literate.” - *Male student | Dadu*

The above sections show how parents and students view the critical role of education and schools, both in terms of helping them prepare for disasters and enabling them to access a better life so that they might be less prone to disasters in the future. These were positive messages overall, but there were also some reflections on the disaster that led to less optimistic conclusions.

Many dreams and aspirations were dashed by the floods and poverty has compounded the despair:

“We have thought of many things for our kids, such as them getting a degree and becoming doctors. It’s a parent's wish that their kids achieve success in life and reach their destination. Relatives have spent their lives with difficulties; who would think that our kids would also face these challenges? We would try to ensure that they move forward in life according to their strengths. We would help them pursue their goals. A poor person cannot do anything, as everything requires money. We cannot bear the expenses of education.” - *Father | Badin*

Unfortunately, these dreams will be hard to achieve if new policies on disaster management are not implemented keeping in mind the lessons learned from the Sindh floods.

8.5 Schools Play a Key Role During Disaster

The above point leads to a critical lesson learned: that communities need training in disaster preparedness and schools can play a pivotal role in helping local communities prepare for the next flood. The communities were resolute that they would try to be better prepared should they experience a disaster like this again.

“Education is important so we can find solutions for the catastrophes that have struck us, like the floods. We want to be able to help people who are harmed by the floods. We want to study to improve our future circumstances.” - Female student | Badin

“We want to improve our circumstances ourselves. We want to have the capacity to fix the system for ourselves. For example, we want to be able to raise our houses, so the water doesn’t enter our homes.” - Female student | Badin

However, children will not know what to do during the next disaster unless they are trained to deal with it². It is essential that the children (and their teachers) be given disaster management training at school. This was reflected in the responses from teachers and head teachers:

“They and their family members should be aware of what actions to take and how to keep themselves safe, should another flood happen.” - Cluster Manager | Badin

While there are responses to disasters led by households and communities at a family and communal level, the school can play an integral part in assisting communities in disaster preparedness as long as the teachers and school staff also receive relevant training. Communities also understand that they need to come together and be better prepared:

“We realised the significance of mutual assistance and cooperation. By working together and fostering positive thinking towards one another, we can overcome

² Disaster training is part of various curricula around the world in disaster-prone countries such as Japan, and students as well as their families are well-equipped in how to respond to disasters such as earthquakes and floods.

¹¹ The program targets the reconstruction of 350,000 units with 1.4 million beneficiaries, indicating an underlying assumption that each structure would benefit a small household of 4 people on average (World Bank, 2022) World Bank (2022). *Factsheet: Sindh Flood Emergency Housing Reconstruction Project*. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/factsheet/2022/12/19/factsheet-sindh-flood-emergency-housing-reconstruction-project>

challenges and thrive as a community.” - *Male student* | *Badin*

9. Lessons Learned and Policy Recommendations

Lessons Learned

A. Insufficient Community Preparedness:

Communities were not prepared regarding what actions they should take before, during, as well as after the flood. Head teachers and principals took instantaneous decisions about the preservation of school furniture and learning resources, as well as the safeguarding of the premises. There was a lack of a disaster plan from the state, which could have helped school management and the staff to take prompt action. Hence, the floods highlighted a gap in public training for disaster response and climate-related emergencies.

B. Lack of Long-Term Rehabilitation:

Although tents were provided to those affected by the severe floods, the living conditions inside the tents were far from comfortable due to the lack of privacy. Even after 2 years, people in the most affected areas were still living in tents and had to continue using makeshift washrooms. Support from the state did not include the rebuilding of houses or how to manage the trauma of those who had undergone major losses of life, homes, livelihood and cattle. This included not only adults but also children who had lost access to their schools. Relief efforts should encompass both infrastructure resilience and trauma-support to help communities recover more sustainably.

C. Preference for Unconditional Cash Transfers:

TCF's support to the affected communities through unconditional cash transfers was a great success – the liberty of being able to use the money for the most pressing needs was welcomed. This included setting up food stalls to earn some form of income, paying off loans, treating their loved ones through medical care, or rebuilding collapsed parts of their houses. The unconditional nature of these transfers especially worked because other transfers provided by the state were specifically targeted for the sole purpose of rebuilding houses, and were given in instalments (i.e., a second portion of the transfer would only be sent after proof of rebuilding some part of the houses was sent). This was difficult for families who had other urgent needs, such as obtaining medicine for their ill children. Due to this, half-built structures are a common sight in flood-affected areas, as additional instalments did not arrive for most people. Thus, unconditional cash transfers allowed communities to address their needs flexibly and effectively during relief efforts.

D. Bias in Relief Distribution

Since rations and relief efforts were distributed to the heads of families (who were mostly fathers), households run by women were excluded from relief efforts. This included single mothers, widows, and divorced women who were unable to receive aid. Furthermore, much of

the aid provided by the state was concentrated around where infrastructure was relatively stable, i.e., where there were constructed roads or pathways for vehicles to pass by. Hence, areas which were relatively more difficult to access were also excluded from most of the state's relief efforts. TCF's relief efforts included communities that were difficult to access, as many of these localities exist near the school within the affected area. Therefore, biases in relief efforts underscore a need for equitable practices in aid distribution.

E. Education Continuity in Disasters

When schools were closed and inaccessible due to the floods, learning loss was inevitable. However, when combined with wider family trauma and loss of life witnessed by students, this learning loss was compounded, and its effects were exponential. Many of the students were resilient in the face of their losses, but many others would find it extremely difficult to recover from losing their homes and family members. A disaster education plan – from not only a provincial, but also a national level – is crucial to maintain continuity as well as provide support for students' mental health needs.

F. Delays in School Rehabilitation

From the perspectives of the communities, school rehabilitation for some areas took longer than others (due to the inaccessibility of the school and the extremity of the water level). The longer schools were closed, the greater the learning loss incurred. When schools opened once again, many parents were hesitant to allow their children to return to school – either due to the lack of safe roads or pathways for their children to walk to school, or because they wished for their child to work and earn a living with them. The time taken to rebuild schools and repair access routes post-disaster also leads to learning loss and can impact students' ability to return.

Policy Recommendations

1. Foster Collaboration with Local Stakeholders

In the event of the floods, there was a lack of coordinated response, especially with regard to areas that were geographically much more difficult to reach. Relief needs to be provided directly to affected people: the aid effort during the floods was uneven, with some affected areas receiving less support due to logistical challenges while other, less heavily impacted places were more easily reached. Intermediaries were also not favoured by the communities. To resolve this, the empowerment of people and leveraging of local knowledge is crucial. Voices of individuals from within the affected communities must be given precedence and they should be empowered to make decisions regarding relief efforts.

- Work with stakeholders, community leaders, local governments, schoolteachers and staff to ensure policies reflect on-ground realities
- Build a coordinated, detailed, step-by-step response consortium for aid distribution (rations and unconditional cash transfers)
- Incorporate indigenous wisdom of local people related to infrastructure (e.g. they are aware of pathways where water can be rerouted and how landlords save their own land by diverting the flow of water)
- Create participative disaster response designs by including local stakeholders' contribution and knowledge regarding disaster-resistant housing and its maintenance

2. Education Planning and Community Preparedness

Schools can play a pivotal role in disaster preparedness, serving both as educational centres and hubs for relief distribution, leveraging their infrastructure, local knowledge, and the network they have among the communities. Disaster preparedness should provide action-oriented recommendations on how to deal with children's education journeys throughout the different stages: before the disaster, during the disaster and after returning to school, but also the long-lasting effects.

- Introduce a system in place for information dissemination
- Inclusion of climate change and disaster preparedness in school curricula
- Training of school staff regarding immediate measures to take in the event of disasters
- Training should be extended to the larger community, so that parents and community leaders can also participate in these capacity-building sessions
- Temporary learning spaces within tents and makeshift classrooms within guesthouses were measures that were effective for education during the flood; these initiatives can be institutionalised and widespread
- Provide SIM cards and phone credit to children so they may continue contacting their teachers to inquire about schoolwork
- After returning to school, students would need revision of core concepts, and a robust remediation program which caters to key subjects could be extremely useful in managing students' learning loss
- An improvement in the infrastructure and drainage around flood-affected areas could help homes and pathways not only survive but also continue to be usable in the event of another flood

3. Unconditional Cash Transfers and Prioritising Lessons Learned

By prioritising the key lessons outlined above, it is evident that the most successful feature of relief was the unconditional cash transfer. TCF's unconditional cash transfers were highly praised by the affected communities, allowing them the flexibility to address their most pressing needs, whether it be medical treatment, loan repayment, or house rebuilding.

Furthermore, gendered aspects of disaster must be considered for equal relief distribution, and the short-term nature of ration distributions only lasts families around 1 month.

- Consistently incorporate unconditional cash transfers into aid distribution policies
- Women-led households should also be central to aid distribution, so they are not overlooked by only considering male heads of households
- Policy formulation should give more consideration to women's greater level of vulnerability during times of crisis as compared to men in the same communities
- Makeshift washrooms and temporary living spaces should include the comfort and privacy needs of women
- Distribution of rations should be long-term and distributed in multiple phases so affected families stay continually supported

4. Trauma Management for Affectees

Once children return to school, their well-being should be prioritised and addressed first and foremost. Due to the intensity of their loss and the experiences of displacement, the development of trauma is inevitable. Trauma Management is key: the lingering trauma from the floods remains largely unaddressed, affecting the well-being of both children and adults in the community. There is a critical need for continued support in processing trauma and rebuilding lives in preparation for future disasters. Although trauma exists in varying degrees and many children are resilient, others may need substantial support and long-term recovery to heal and function well at school.

- Introduce and implement trauma awareness training and awareness sessions so school staff (the head teacher and teachers) as well as parents are aware of how disasters can affect the development of their children
- School staff should be trained on how to support severely traumatised families and students
- Teachers should be trained on how to recognise signs and symptoms of trauma, especially among students who are not outspoken about their grief and loss
- Address lingering trauma, reminders of their loss, and fears that are still present at the communal level as well as individual level, e.g. encountering snakes or the fear of floods happening again
- Develop a system for long-term disaster recovery, rehabilitation from loss of livelihood, and psychological health support.

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