

## Pakistan Floods – And what we can learn from it

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In late July 2010, heavy rains started causing record flooding in Pakistan. PALS went to assist in rescue efforts in the rural areas of the country. Pakistan was not equipped to manage floods of this magnitude and 20 million people were affected as a result. PALS is now training people to manage disasters better and has engaged the local communities in its efforts of training the rural villages in managing themselves in times of disaster. This way, everyone knows who to turn to.

#### Aims

Our objective is to provide rescue, first aid, CPR and disaster management training to the rural masses, so that they can manage themselves better in times of crisis. Our training program sets out to achieve a better educated and prepared public, so as to minimize loss of life and asset.

We are targeting the rural communities in Pakistan, who are the most impoverished and who lose the most. The typical profile is male and female between the ages of 15–40. The ethnic background of our current focus group is Sindhi, Punjabi and Baluchi and our work is located in villages across Sindh, Punjab and Baluchistan – making it a national level project.

#### Methods

We provide a three day training workshop, which includes verbal instructions, demos and hands-on exercises – followed with video clips and finally a verbal/MCQ test. We implement these training sessions through our trained lifeguards.

#### Results

We have monitored outcomes by test results:

- The fact that so many people appear in classes and pass the test means that the sessions are a success
- We feel that people are now more aware of what can happen and how to prevent what can be prevented
- We feel our small training sessions have achieved what we set out to do
- There has been a call for supplying equipment, insurance, medical facilities, etc., which we cannot provide at present due to limited resources

#### Discussion

Depending on receiving financing for the training program, we would like to expand the training areas to include more villages and towns covering a wider geographic footprint. The training can be replicated in many more areas across Pakistan. That is the need. We learnt that simple training can go a long way to better prepare the masses deal with managing themselves and others in times of disaster. Challenges have been funding, logistics management and equipment. We would like to leave equipment with the participants after the training sessions for them to train and use when the time warrants. Our advice for anyone venturing in this direction would be to get: (1) requisite training, (2) funding, (3) government support (if possible), and (4) refreshers.

#### Conclusion

People are ignorant to the dangers and solutions that are out there.

#### Acknowledgements

We worked alongside the Pakistan Armed Forces and International NGOs and would like to acknowledge their work in the affected areas. Our work, however, was carried out by the PALS initiative alone.

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