



Stories of Impact

“Global Mission, Local Action: Presentation Responses to Unprecedented Flooding”

On November 8th, 2022, UNICEF published findings which revealed that 27.7 million children around the world have been affected by flooding this year alone, the highest number in the past 30 years. Published during COP27, this article highlights “that a large majority of the children affected are among the most vulnerable and that rolling disasters are straining the ability of governments and the international community to respond, given the enormous scale of need.”¹



Members of the International Presentation Association have been responding to these tragedies in their local contexts, demonstrating their commitments to people made poor and care of the Earth. IPA Justice Contacts in Australia and Pakistan share their insights on how Presentation People have been responding to catastrophic flooding in their regions, how these efforts support the [IPA global commitments](#), and how Presentation People might engage in their own contexts, furthering a global drive towards the fulfillment of the Sustainable Development Goals.

From Australia, Justice Contact **Clare Axman** shared the efforts of the Presentation People to respond to the urgent needs exacerbated by flooding in Lismore, Northern Rivers, and beyond. Thousands of people throughout the region have lost homes and belongings, thrusting countless individuals and families into homelessness, poverty, and threat from emerging diseases. Even when immediate needs are met, untold trauma ripples throughout the community, calling for rich spiritual care as well as humanitarian aid.

¹ [Over 27 million children at risk from devastating record-setting floods | | 1UN News](#)

The IPA gives its appreciation Justice Contacts Clare Axman and Shumaila Gill PBVM for submitting this Story of Impact.

“...we need to address the impact of the trauma as a result of the flooding. Many of our students are still struggling to focus as they are still processing the trauma they experienced.”
Clare Axman

Presentation People in Australia have responded to this crisis in a number of ways. Immediately after the most severe flooding in the summer of 2022, Presentation People put a call out for financial donations to be able to assist those directly impacted by the flooding. Providing safe accommodation and addressing food scarcity were among the priority responses, as well as an effort to support students in their return to schools. Presentation

People provided school uniforms, shoes, computers, backpacks, school lunches, breakfasts, excursions and many other items that would allow students to come back to school and continue their education while they were displaced due to the floods.

Presentation People, through this congregation, were able to utilize a unique approach to aid which bypassed much of the red tape of humanitarian work: direct financial giving. Members of the community were given funds in the form of cash and encouraged to give these funds away to those they saw struggling from the effects of the floods. In some cases, these funds were used to support flooding victims in supermarkets who could not afford the full cost of their grocery needs. In other cases, food, supplies, and resources were given to households in need. While the recipients never asked for this support, the strong network of connected individuals in the community was utilized to identify those most affected and to address their specific needs.

From Pakistan, Justice Contact **Shumaila Gill PBVM** shares some of the herculean efforts of Presentation People in Pakistan to respond to the devastation of flooding throughout the country. At its most severe, flooding in Pakistan left 1/3 of the country under water. The 500% increase in rainfall this year has left over 1000 people dead, as countless more are experiencing homelessness, poverty, disease, and displacement.²

Just as in Australia, safe shelter and food scarcity remain two of the most urgent priorities for flooding victims in Pakistan. The foundations of many houses are made of local materials such as bricks or mud, which are easily eroded and washed away by significant rainfall and flooding. The makeshift shelters that replace more permanent houses are a poor substitute, and expose inhabitants to harsh weather. Exposure to the



² [Pakistan floods: What you need to know | CNN](#)



elements and emerging diseases have significantly affected local populations, particularly the indigenous and tribal peoples who occupy these lands and afford fewer benefits and protections from the local and national governments. This is why the Presentation People have prioritized the need to provide shelter for the unhoused, with an emphasis on supporting indigenous and tribal peoples.

They have also ensured that a doctor is available once a week, to address the needs of those who fall ill as a result of the contaminated flood waters.

Presentation People in Pakistan have also recognized the profound impact of flooding on access to education for young people. Facilities and resources have been ruined. New accommodations and replacements for waterlogged books are paramount. Local Presentation Sisters and friends of Ven. Nano Nagle have taken critical steps to provide and replace these lost resources. Convent space has been shared and educational materials have been distributed through the diligent work of Presentation Sisters.

Presentation People around the world do not work in isolated silos. While the work of each congregation or unit is deeply rooted in the local context, their efforts support and inform a wider global presence. The International Presentation Association encourages us to explore these stories of local impact, derive from them best practices or innovative approaches, and to apply the wisdom we gain to our own local settings. These responses to severe flooding in both Pakistan and Australia can greatly inform us about our own priorities and commitments.

In these two distinct contexts, there are numerous similarities. Flooding universally disrupts access to housing, food, and education, and Presentation People in Australia and Pakistan both recognized the urgency of these immediate needs. Flooding, as well as other environmental disasters, disproportionately affects the lives and well-being of indigenous and tribal peoples, thus Presentation People in both contexts have prioritized the support for these communities. Both of these examples also cherish unique approaches to this aid. In Pakistan, attention to the health needs of local peoples affected by emerging diseases demonstrates an acute awareness of the specific harms caused by flooding. And in Australia, the direct financial giving of the congregation is only made possible through the tight-knit network of neighbors who highlight critical and specific needs of community members.