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Alert note

Pakistan - Drought in Tharparkar and Umerkot, Sindh, November 2026

Completed by: CWSA
Date completed: 16 November 2026
Forum: ACT Forum Pakistan

Type of emergency: Drought / slow-onset food security and livelihood emergency
Date of emergency (if rapid onset): Humanitarian impacts became evident by mid-October 2026

1. The nature of the emergency

Pakistan's Sindh province is experiencing worsening drought conditions following inadequate and uneven rainfall during the 2026 monsoon season (July to September). According to data released by the Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD), Sindh recorded a **50.8% rainfall deficit**, receiving only 71.1 mm against the long-term seasonal average of 144.3 mm. This was the largest rainfall shortfall among Pakistan's provinces during the 2026 monsoon season[1].

The rainfall shortfall has raised serious concerns in the arid and semi-arid districts of **Tharparkar and Umerkot**, where communities depend heavily on rain-fed agriculture, livestock and limited water resources for their livelihoods. Inadequate and poorly distributed rainfall during critical agricultural periods has adversely affected crop production, natural vegetation and fodder availability, placing increasing pressure on household incomes, food security and access to drinking water.

In **Umerkot district**, the Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) Sindh identifies drought as a significant hazard across the district, particularly for communities dependent on rain-fed farming and livestock[2].

On **6 November 2026**, the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) published a hazard projection titled *Drought Conditions across Pakistan (Sindh High Alert)*, formally highlighting the drought threat in Sindh[3].

On **7 November 2026**, following a high-level meeting chaired by Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah, the Government of Sindh decided to declare **Tharparkar a calamity-hit district**. During the meeting, officials reported that **85–90% of cultivated crops across Tharparkar's seven talukas** had been destroyed or rendered unproductive, with only 10–15% surviving. September rainfall in the district ranged between 1 mm and 36 mm, causing crops and natural grasses to dry before reaching maturity[4].

Subsequently, on 12 November 2026, the Government of Sindh, through Notification No. RF-237/2026 issued under Section 3 of the Sindh National Calamities (Prevention and Relief) Act, 1958, formally declared the entire Tharparkar district, excluding nine canal-irrigated dehs of Kaloi Taluka, and 25 specified desert dehs of Umerkot Taluka as calamity-affected areas due to drought for 2026–27. The notification acknowledges widespread failure of rain-fed crops, acute shortages of natural grazing grass and livestock fodder, and adverse effects on the socioeconomic conditions and livelihoods of affected communities[5].

Although drought is a slow-onset emergency, its humanitarian consequences are already evident. Reduced agricultural production, declining household incomes, growing food insecurity and increasing pressure on drinking-water and livestock resources are placing vulnerable households at further risk. Timely

[1] https://www.thenews.pk/print/1440366-monsoon-rainfall-remains-below-normal-in-2026
[2] https://pdma.gos.pk/Documents/District_Management_Plans/DMP%20Umerkot.pdf
[3] https://www.ndma.gov.pk//storage/projection-impact-langs/November2026/6af4465336745.pdf
[4] https://www.dawn.com/news/2042924/sindh-cm-declares-tharparkar-drought-hit-orders-relief-measures

humanitarian assistance is needed to address immediate needs and prevent further deterioration in the food security and livelihoods of affected communities in Tharparkar and Umerkot.

2. The impact and scale of the emergency *(please include your source of information with links if possible)*

The ongoing drought is provisionally considered a **medium-scale emergency**, with serious humanitarian consequences for vulnerable communities in Tharparkar and Umerkot districts of Sindh. The widespread dependence on rain-fed agriculture and livestock, combined with existing food insecurity and limited household coping capacities, increases the severity of the emergency, particularly for economically disadvantaged rural households.

The affected geographical areas include rural and desert communities across **Tharparkar and Umerkot**, characterized by dispersed settlements, limited reliable drinking-water sources and dependence on seasonal agricultural and livestock-based livelihoods. According to the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) 2023 Census, Tharparkar has a population of **1,778,407** and Umerkot **1,159,831**, representing a combined population of approximately **2.94 million people**[6]. These figures provide geographical context rather than an estimate of people directly affected by the drought.

Existing food insecurity significantly increases the vulnerability of affected communities. According to the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) analysis for April–September 2026, approximately **427,320 people in Tharparkar (25%) and 185,210 people in Umerkot (20%)** were projected to face Crisis-level or worse acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 or above). Together, this represents approximately **612,530 people** facing high levels of acute food insecurity across the two districts. Both districts were also classified in IPC Acute Malnutrition Phase 4 (Critical), indicating high levels of acute malnutrition before the current drought[7]. These projections reflect pre-existing food insecurity and should not be interpreted as the number directly affected by the current drought.

A joint drought assessment conducted by Nari Development Organisation (NDO), Community Development Foundation (CDF), Sami Foundation and Laar Humanitarian and Development Programme (LHDP) between 21 and 26 October 2026 surveyed 399 households across 60 drought-affected villages in five Union Councils of Tharparkar and Umerkot. The assessed villages have an estimated population of 45,870 people (approximately 5,650 households). These figures represent the population of the assessed locations, while the total number of people directly affected by the ongoing drought across both districts has not yet been established[8].

The assessment provides evidence of the severe impact on household food security and purchasing power. Among surveyed households, 98.5% reported reduced income compared with October 2025, while 98% of households engaged in cultivation reported lower crop yields. Approximately 78.7% experienced difficulty obtaining sufficient food, and 36.1% reported that a household member had gone an entire day and night without eating due to insufficient food or money. Furthermore, 76.9% had purchased food on credit, 63.4% had borrowed money specifically to purchase food, and 31.3% reported selling livestock earlier than

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Sindh Govt Notification.pdf

[5]

[6] https://www.pbs.gov.pk/wp-content/uploads/census_tables/tables/table_1_sindh_province.pdf

[7] https://www.ipcinfo.org/fileadmin/user_upload/ipcinfo/docs/IPC_Pakistan_Acute_Food_Insecurity_Dec2025_Sept2026_Report.pdf

Drought_Situation_Report_Tharparkar_I

[8]

planned to meet essential needs.

In Tharparkar, extensive agricultural losses have reduced household food production, agricultural earnings and fodder availability, threatening livestock health and productivity. The assessment found that 91% of surveyed households in Tharparkar had paid for drinking water during the preceding month, compared with 40% in Umerkot, with median monthly expenditure among water-purchasing households reaching PKR 15,000 and PKR 9,000, respectively. Water is scarce as well as costly: 65% of surveyed households reported that a water source had dried up. Among the 381 livestock-owning households, 70% reported that fodder was unaffordable and 68% lacked water for their animals, placing the assets households rely on for food and income at risk (See the joint drought assessment cited in Reference 8).In Umerkot, an October 2026 drought risk analysis identified **very high drought risk (20/25)**, highlighting the vulnerability of agricultural livelihoods, water availability and household economic security[9]. These conditions particularly affect households with limited savings, few alternative income sources and restricted access to essential services.

The most vulnerable groups include **smallholder farmers, landless agricultural labourers, livestock-dependent households, women-headed households, children, older people, persons with disabilities and marginalized communities**, including religious minorities. Women and girls may face increased burdens associated with accessing water and managing household needs, while children, pregnant and lactating women and older people face heightened risks associated with inadequate food consumption and reduced access to essential services. Verified drought-affected population figures disaggregated by sex, age and disability are not yet available.

In the short term, declining household purchasing power and food availability are placing increasing pressure on families to reduce food consumption, increase borrowing and sell livestock or other productive assets to meet essential needs. Prolonged drought conditions could lead to sustained food insecurity, indebtedness, distress migration and reduced agricultural recovery capacity. The October assessment further indicates that conditions may deteriorate from December 2026 onwards, as household food stocks, available credit and remaining livelihood assets become increasingly depleted. FEWS NET projects Stressed (IPC Phase 2) and Crisis (IPC Phase 3) outcomes across Sindh through January 2027, with Crisis outcomes becoming increasingly widespread from October as household food access declines, and reports Crisis outcomes already ongoing in Tharparkar[10]. For the most vulnerable households, the combined loss of income, food production and productive assets threatens their ability to meet basic needs and recover without external assistance.

The existing levels of food insecurity, together with the deterioration of agricultural and livestock-dependent livelihoods, indicate an urgent need for **targeted humanitarian assistance** to prevent further depletion of household assets and protect the well-being of vulnerable communities.

3. Local and national capacity

Drought-affected households in Tharparkar and Umerkot are relying on various coping mechanisms, including informal borrowing, support from relatives and community networks, reduced household expenditure, and temporary or seasonal migration in search of employment, water and grazing opportunities for livestock. The October 2026 joint drought assessment confirms reliance on negative coping mechanisms, including purchasing food on credit, borrowing money and early livestock sale. While these strategies help families manage immediate difficulties, they offer limited protection against prolonged drought conditions and may further deplete already constrained household resources.

At the local level, district administrations, District Disaster Management Authorities (DDMAs), relevant government departments and community-based organizations constitute the existing structures available

[9] https://www.cdf.org.pk/publication/drought-risk-analysis-report-jacobabad-kamber-shahdadkot-umerkot

[10] https://fews.net/asia/pakistan/food-security-outlook/june-2026

for emergency response. The **PDMA Sindh Provincial Drought Contingency Plan 2025** identifies responsibilities for district authorities and sectoral departments, including coordination of needs assessments, drinking-water provision, health services, livestock protection and relief assistance[11].Local government departments responsible for public health engineering, agriculture, livestock and social welfare provide sector-specific institutional capacity, while community networks and local humanitarian organizations can support the identification of vulnerable households and coordination of assistance. However, verified information on the extent of district-level resource mobilization, relief assistance delivered and geographical coverage in the affected areas remains limited.

At the provincial level, the Government of Sindh has announced drought-related response measures, particularly in Tharparkar. Following its decision on 7 November 2026 to declare the district calamity-hit, the provincial government directed measures to address drinking-water shortages, restore non-functional reverse osmosis (RO) plants and support livestock-dependent communities[12]. Preparations for special financial assistance to affected families through the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) have also been reported[13]. Subsequently, on 12 November 2026, the Government of Sindh formally notified the entire Tharparkar district, excluding nine canal-irrigated dehs of Kaloi Taluka, and 25 specified desert dehs of Umerkot Taluka as calamity-affected areas for 2026–27 under Notification No. RF-237/2026.While the formal calamity notification establishes official recognition of the emergency and provides a basis for government relief measures, the extent of assistance delivered to affected households has not yet been verified.

At the national level, Pakistan has an established disaster management framework led by the **National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA)**, alongside provincial and district disaster management authorities. The **National Disaster Response Plan 2026**[14] provides the national framework for coordinated emergency response, while PDMA Sindh's **Provincial Drought Contingency Plan 2025** outlines drought-specific preparedness, coordination and response responsibilities. Both plans provide for resource mobilization and coordination among government institutions and humanitarian partners. However, information confirming the extent to which the national response plan has been activated or implemented specifically for the current drought in Tharparkar and Umerkot is not available.

National and international humanitarian organizations form part of Pakistan's wider emergency response capacity. The **Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS)**, with support from the **International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)**, has reported monitoring the drought situation in Tharparkar and coordinating with relevant authorities regarding assessments and potential assistance[15].The provincial drought contingency plan also provides for collaboration with national and international NGOs, UN agencies and other humanitarian partners in assessments, resource mobilization and relief operations. Pakistan has established humanitarian coordination arrangements involving government institutions, UN agencies and sectoral working groups. However, verified information on the activation of a dedicated drought-specific UN cluster or coordination mechanism, as well as the current operational response of individual UN agencies and other humanitarian organizations in the affected districts, is not available.

While government initiatives, local institutions and established humanitarian coordination arrangements provide an important foundation for responding to the drought, detailed information on the resources mobilized, assistance delivered and geographical coverage remains limited, particularly in Umerkot. Continued coordination with district authorities and humanitarian actors will be important to identify response gaps and avoid duplication of assistance.

[11] https://pdma.gos.pk/Documents/Drought_Contingency_Plans/Provincial%20Drought%20Contingency%20Plan%202025%20-%20PDMA%20Sindh.pdf
[12] http://dawn.com/news/2042924/sindh-cm-declares-tharparkar-drought-hit-orders-relief-measures
[13] https://www.nation.com.pk/10-Nov-2026/sindh-govt-assured-bisp-support-drought-hit-tharparkar-families
[14] https://www.refworld.org/policy/strategy/natauth/2026/151588
[15] https://humara.org/report/05646833-99a0-47a1-aef1-c1f900e063a3

4. Key needs and gaps

The most urgent needs in drought-affected rural communities of Tharparkar and Umerkot include food, safe drinking water, healthcare and essential household necessities, in line with Sphere minimum standards. Smallholder farmers, landless labourers, livestock-dependent families, women-headed households and other vulnerable groups face particular difficulties meeting these needs due to reduced purchasing power. The October assessment indicated that essential commodities were generally available in main markets, although some remote village shops experienced shortages and local credit arrangements were under increasing pressure. Timely multipurpose cash assistance (MPCA) is a relevant response where markets remain functional and accessible, enabling households to prioritize their essential expenditure.

Geographically, priority gaps are anticipated in remote and underserved settlements with limited access to essential services and existing assistance. Distance to markets, transportation costs and limited purchasing options may pose additional challenges in some locations and will require verification to establish cash feasibility. The Government of Sindh has announced drinking-water, livestock-related and financial assistance measures, particularly in Tharparkar. However, 77.4% of households surveyed in the October assessment reported receiving no assistance in the preceding three months. While this does not establish the full coverage of ongoing assistance, it indicates significant gaps in the assessed locations (See Reference 8).

Key information gaps concern household-level vulnerability, market accessibility and the coverage of existing assistance. The findings of the October 2026 joint drought assessment provide an evidence base for identifying priority needs and vulnerable communities in the assessed locations. These findings, together with coordination with district authorities and humanitarian actors and verification of market conditions and existing assistance coverage, will inform household selection, response planning and measures to minimize duplication during implementation.

Please indicate whether you are considering:

	Indicate your intention with an **X** below
Rapid Response Fund *(intended for small and medium scale emergencies)*	**X**
Appeal *(intended for large scale emergencies)*	

If you indicate an intention to launch an appeal, the secretariat will activate an Emergency Steering Committee meeting within two working days on receipt of this alert.

5. Forum Capacity and members intention to respond

ACT Member	Geographical focus	Sectors of expertise and experience
Community World Service Asia (CWSA)	Sindh, Pakistan: Officially notified drought-affected areas of Tharparkar and Umerkot districts with a focus on drought-affected and vulnerable rural communities	Emergency Response, including Multipurpose Cash Assistance (MPCA)

6. Potential responses

Community World Service Asia (CWSA) has extensive experience responding to humanitarian emergencies

across Pakistan, including earthquakes, floods, droughts, displacement crises and heatwaves. Its expertise includes emergency cash assistance, food security, livelihoods, health, WASH, and quality and accountability. As reflected in the ACT Forum Emergency Preparedness and Response Plan (EPRP), CWSA has previous experience in drought response, including cash-based food assistance and livelihood support. CWSA also has established emergency response procedures, trained personnel, logistical arrangements and access to prequalified financial service providers to facilitate timely assistance.

CWSA maintains an operational presence in Sindh, including an established field office in Umerkot, where it is implementing humanitarian health interventions and coordinating with local communities, district authorities and relevant stakeholders. In line with its organizational Contingency Plan, CWSA has the capacity to implement emergency interventions directly, drawing on its existing operational systems and local relationships to facilitate response activities in Tharparkar and Umerkot.

Based on the findings of the October 2026 joint drought assessment, which identified widespread loss of household income, reduced food access and increasing reliance on negative coping mechanisms, CWSA proposes a three-month emergency response providing one-time, unconditional multipurpose cash assistance (MPCA) to the most vulnerable drought-affected households in both districts. The assistance will help families meet essential needs, including food, drinking water, livestock fodder and other household expenses, while reducing reliance on harmful coping mechanisms. The feasibility of cash-based assistance is supported by the assessment finding that 91% of surveyed households in Tharparkar already purchase drinking water through existing vendors.The assessment also found that 69.2% of surveyed households preferred unconditional cash assistance, supporting the relevance of the proposed modality. The assistance will enable families to meet immediate needs, including food, drinking water, healthcare and other essential household expenditure, while reducing reliance on harmful coping mechanisms.

The intervention will prioritize smallholder farmers, landless agricultural labourers, livestock-dependent families, women-headed households, persons with disabilities and households with high dependency ratios. Priority locations will be selected from the officially notified drought-affected areas, informed by the October assessment and verified community-level needs. Target communities and project participants will be identified through field-level assessments, vulnerability-based selection and verification, in coordination with relevant district authorities. Existing assessment findings will inform targeting, while household-level verification will establish eligibility and minimize duplication with other assistance. The project will assess market functionality, accessibility, and cash delivery arrangements to ensure the proposed assistance is suitable. Community engagement, complaints and feedback mechanisms, and post-distribution monitoring will be integrated throughout implementation to ensure transparency, accountability and effective delivery.

The projected response plan spans three months and requires approximately USD 150,000 through the ACT Alliance Rapid Response Fund (RRF). The requested funding will support cash transfers to affected households and the associated costs of beneficiary registration, verification, cash delivery, community engagement, monitoring and operational implementation.