

Moving from **Disasters** to **Development**

(A selection of articles on flood disaster)



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Preface

The recent flood has not only devastated larger part of the country but has also left deep scars on economy and social fabric of the Pakistani society. From climate change to the performance of administrative machinery, there are several aspects that need to be discussed and analyzed. Certainly this disaster is a great learning opportunity for citizens, policy makers and civil society of Pakistan.

Strengthening Participatory Organization (SPO), like other civil society organizations has made its moderate contribution to respond this emergency. SPO team has implemented several projects to provide emergency relief to the affectees in all provinces and AJK. Along with this humanitarian response SPO has also made valuable intellectual contribution. Members of the General Body/Board of Directors and the senior management of SPO have written articles in national newspapers and newsletters to highlight various aspects of the disaster.

I am glad to share that a selection of these articles has been compiled and printed through this publication. I hope this brief document would be a useful reference for civil society professionals and policy makers. SPO will greatly appreciate your valuable feedback and comments on this humble contribution.

Thank You

Dr. Tufial Muhammad Khan

Chairperson

Strengthening Participatory Organization (SPO)

Two Days in Northern Sindh

By Javed Jabbar

The enormity of the disaster which affects millions of people in all four provinces should be a test even for well-established governance and disaster management systems. For our level of preparedness, the official civil system can sometimes look like a disaster itself.

Yet one should guard against presumptive cynicism particularly at such a time. Responsibility to cope is a universal obligation transcending all divisions and categories. Each person with any potential to contribute, from afar or near has an urgent duty to render.

Spending two days _ Aug14 and 15 _ travelling from Karachi to Sukkur, Shikarpur, Khanpur and the edge of the advancing floodwaters informs, despairs – and inspires.

On the drive north of over 400 kilometres, “normal” Pakistan hums and throbs with its reassuring abnormality and refreshing vitality. Even the usual arid, brown stretch between Karachi and Hyderabad is carpeted green by recent rains.

Traffic, smoke and shops thrive. Yet occasional trucks over laden with refugees heading for Hyderabad and Karachi prepare for far worse to come.

The roadside camps of displaced people begin on the left bank of the Indus before the cross-over to Sukkur. Then they become frequent at all the other places visited.

Charpoys, bundles of clothes and trunks, little girls and boys, women and men, cows and buffaloes, sheep and goats. By the hundreds. And the thousands.

When rural poverty is forcibly removed from its accustomed invisibility and suddenly thrown, topsy turvy, on bridges, pavements, open urban spaces, then the real contrasts of our society are harshly revived. It takes a natural disaster to highlight the unnatural disaster of an entrenched, unjust economic and social system.

Refugees settle into three kind of camps: (i) spontaneous, self-made roadside camps; (ii) where existing structures such as schools, colleges and other buildings are converted into camps; and (iii) tented settlements specifically erected over the past seven days, most visibly by the Armed Forces.

The original disruption that brings people to these new dwellings is common to all three. However, the levels of services available in these categories can vary significantly.

Provision of food, water, shelter, electricity (a luxury !), sanitation, (where, how?) medicines/healthcare examination by doctors and paramedics.

The rural poor look shocked at their sudden, overnight deprivation from even the most fundamental requirements which they have fulfilled by themselves for centuries. The first category of camps is predictably the worst in all respects. The second category is obviously better than the first. The third is the best of all, if a superlative can be used in these conditions.

To some extent, praise and appreciation are more due than they are seen in news media. Coping with a scale and intensity never before experienced in our country’s history – the 1947-48 migration of about 10 million people brought only human beings, not floodwaters — both official systems and social support have responded readily.

Government authorities, beset with a widespread reputation for corruption and incompetence, have acted swiftly. Departments of irrigation, education, health, relief, others, are monitoring water levels, management of embankments, conversion of buildings and enclosures into relief camps, supply of food and water, arrangements for sanitation, posting of doctors in camps, coordination with visiting teams.

Efforts are being made to keep pace with excessive demand. Clearly far more efficiency and engagement are needed.

Despite a perception among some that the response both from within the country and from overseas to the tragedy is less than to the 2005 earthquake, there are many signs of indigenous systems, both official and non-official, contributing quickly to the needs of the refugees.

Several national-level, regional and local public interest organisations and citizens have already reached affected areas. This writer is fortunate to be associated with one such national-level forum. SPO (Strengthening Participatory Organisation), a rights-based grass-roots development organisation, established in 1994, presently works with about 2,000 communities in 77 districts in all four provinces and Azad Kashmir.

The SPO's partners are also present in northern Sindh. The body has also been selected by the UN to help conduct rapid, accurate need-assessment and deliver relief support.

The SPO's website at "www.spok.org" tries to provide an updated status of its work with local communities in the affected areas.

Activists trained by SPO such as those one met in Khanpur on Aug 15 and the dedicated SPO staff typify the value at such times of indigenous human resources and participation for collective benefit. In contrast to the historic exploitation by feudals who continue to wield power and frequently combat each other.

Before and after Khanpur, we passed deceptively serene, lush green fields of rice until the excess liquidity of the floods blotted out the verdant shade. Our passage to Karampur was submerged, compelling us to turn back.

WATER, WATER EVERYWHERE: Water had already assumed a bizarre persona. Elsewhere, rushing, gushing pell mell through barrage gates and overpowering barriers. Here, silent, shimmering, deviously still, furtive, slowly creeping forward.

Citizens of northern Sindh and from across the country have reached there with cash, commodities, clothes and other aid. Meals are being cooked on the spot in camps or nearby. Manual drilling is being done to reach sub-soil water and install hand pumps.

Overflowing toilets are being only occasionally cleaned. They represent a potent source for infection and disease which have begun to spread. Soak-pit latrines are being constructed or planned. Regular maintenance is a vital necessity.

Immediate prescriptive measures are already well-known. There is a paramount need for the National Disaster Management Authority and its Provincial wings/ Relief Commissioners to be given all the resources and equally, the powers required to enforce coordination and delivery of the diverse official and non-official efforts being mobilised.

At the other end of the spectrum, in the relief camps, particularly those in categories 1 and 2, there is an urgent need to form female and male camp management committees. Through them, hopefully, in place of the recurrent scenes of disorder, strife and confusion, such participative committees may enforce discipline and fairness in access for all persons to the supply of relief goods and services.

Coverage by the electronic news media is timely. Yet it tends to be often one-sided and imbalanced. There is a preference to focus on refugees who have not received any help so far.

There is inadequate reportage on numerous examples of courageous, generous effort, being made both by the government and citizens, however insufficient they are in overall terms.

Perhaps deservedly in such a situation, the Armed Forces outshine others with their disciplined, visible efforts. Virtually all other relief work is depicted in the media as being marked by absence of relief, suffering, strife or scrambling for scarce supplies.

This calamity has profound implications for virtually all aspects of our country. This includes the impact on those people and areas not directly affected at this time by the flood waters.

Environment, human health, agriculture, livestock, food, agro industries, education, energy, physical infrastructure, housing, transport, rehabilitation, reconstruction and the economy.

Despite the formidable challenge of this catastrophe, it is vital for every Pakistani to retain faith, above all, in our own national capacity to generate the spiritual, emotional and physical resources to face this crisis and, in time, to overcome it.

The writer is a member of SPO Board of Directors

Courtesy: Daily Dawn

Women Flood-Affectees: Issues and Challenges

By Tahira Abdullah

Today, barely two months later, how many people in Islamabad or the posh areas of Karachi, Lahore, Peshawar and Quetta, or the highest echelons of power, still remember what happened on 29th July 2010? Or is the pull of carrying on Life-As-Usual, i.e., lavish celebrations of births, birthdays, weddings, fashion shows, musical concerts, exhibitions, restaurant-hopping, shopping, and even business meetings, seminars and conferences in several-starred hotels, inter alia, too strong to spare any more thoughts for our forgotten flood-affected sisters and brothers and children still in acute distress and deprivation?

But the Indus disaster will not disappear in a hurry, even if we, like the proverbial ostrich, now avert our eyes, turn our thoughts away, and bury our heads in the sand.

In this part of the world, we are used to heavy seasonal monsoon rains with periodic flooding, alternating with periodic drought, punctuated by the occasional devastating earthquake such as EQ-2005, and mass migrations, with refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs). So in what way was the summer of 2010 different?

For Pakistan, the summer of 2010 changed everything. It will forever stand out in our memory as a nightmare experience of a slowly-unfolding and long-continuing flood of Biblical proportions, with over 21 million people, i.e., one-eighth of the population affected, along with over one-fifth of the land mass across all four provinces: Balochistan (where it started much earlier in mid-July), Khyber-Pukhtunkhwa (KP), Punjab, Sindh, Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) and AJK.

The worst to reach and handle, have been the inaccessible north-western mountain areas, especially Malakand (KP) and GB, where neither boats, helicopters nor trucks could reach, due to thousands of broken bridges, washed out roads and tracks, and disappeared mountain sides, due to severe landslides, complicated by sustained bad weather. We are back to the 10th Century, using mules and porters to climb dangerous terrain, laden with relief items and tents. Winter rains and snows started early September, and unless urgent drastic action is taken, around 6 million people face death by pneumonia, extreme cold or starvation - the most vulnerable being women, children and the elderly, as always.

Volunteer women relief workers find that no matter whom they have to deal with (Government, UN, NGOs, philanthropists, showbiz personalities, media), women's specific issues, needs, concerns are neither heard nor given priority, even after being raised and pointed out. This is particularly true of NDMA, the weekly UN general coordination meetings, sectoral and geographic clusters. They are marginalized in the Gender Task Force or the Protection Cluster.

Thus, women's issues are still falling through the cracks. It is STILL Business-As-Usual-By-Men-For-Men-Of-Men-Decisionmakers. Women are STILL the OBJECTS - the weaker, invisible, ignored and segregated sex, to be "included" in the numbers being crunched in terms of mouths to be fed, tents to be pitched, and non-food items to be provided. They are STILL considered "beneficiaries" vs. actors in continuing patriarchal and paternalistic modes of humanitarian assistance, deprived of the lens of human rights and human dignity.

Human dignity has not been in much evidence in relief work regarding men either. The sheer scale of the disaster and the huge affected population has overwhelmed the Government, to

the extent that distribution of early relief, especially cooked food, nearly always ran short, thus provoking anger, food riots, chaos, and law and order situations.

The most pressing issues were and still remain:

Data: for proper planning for Flood Response, Recovery, Reconstruction and Rehabilitation (FRRRR), we need accurate numbers of flood-affected men, women and children, disaggregated by sex, age, geographic location (by district), and occupation/livelihood.

Women-Headed Households (WHHs): the Government does not recognize WHHs, preferring to register such households under the name of the family patriarch or the nearest male sibling. This naturally deprives women of land and property rights, financial compensation, livelihoods, and other urgent support.

Equity and Equality in Compensation: the GoP has announced a first tranche of cash compensation of Rs.20,000, to be followed by Rs.80,000, for a total of Rs.100,000. Compared to Rs.225,000 given to each earthquake affected household, this is an inadequate sum, given the populist slogan of "Build Back Better" (BBB), and also in view of huge escalations in inflation and poverty, especially the feminization of poverty (a ratio of 3:1 in Pakistan) since 2005. But whatever the amount, WHHs need to be registered before they are eligible for it.

Identification: Women, especially those in the rural areas, traditionally do not have national identity cards (which also disenfranchises them in elections), meaning they do not have access to bank accounts, credit/debit/SMART/WATAN cards, or other forms of identification. For fair and equitable FRRRR, this is essential. It is recommended that mobile teams (including women staff) of NADRA urgently need to reach out to flood-affectedees in the rural areas, relief camps and host families, in order to provide ALL women and men with CNICs and registration.

Shelter and Infrastructure: in line with the Build Back Better (BBB) populist slogan, this time around the reconstruction needs to keep in mind the particular needs of privacy and access of 48% women and 10% disabled/special population, as well as environmental and climate change considerations. Women's concerns need to focus especially on latrines/toilets, kitchens, water sources, hygiene, sanitation and sewerage.

Health issues: (i) the GoP gave a figure of over 300,000 pregnant women who would deliver before the emergency ended, who were either in temporary tent shelters or still camped on roadsides and river banks. While I+N NGOs, the UN, private and volunteer health personnel did make some efforts at providing ante-natal, natal and post-natal care and RH/EmOC/Ob-Gyn services, these fell far short of the huge need and women did deliver out in the open without medical help; (ii) the floods brought special problems, e.g. injuries, snake bites, infected water-borne gastric diseases, malaria, etc. It was observed that mostly men and boys received treatment, especially as cultural constraints prevent women from seeing male doctors and paramedics; (iii) there was a totally inadequate number of women medical and paramedical health service providers; (iv) there was inadequate focus to ensure girls and women were included in vaccination drives; (v) loss of family and community, shelter, livelihoods, incomes, and the onset of disease, disability and displacement has caused women and men a widespread loss of coping mechanisms, self-respect, dignity and self-confidence, leading to anger, insecurity and trauma, needing both short- and long-term interventions. While a few NGOs and volunteers have provided psycho-social trauma

counselling services, they are required on a much larger scale than the current availability, and for a longer duration.

Violence against Women and Protection Issues: The GoP did not focus on this extremely important dimension of the disaster, but some NGOs and civil society volunteers are doing so. It was reported (but cannot be verified) that some criminal elements were kidnapping girls and women during the initial emergency rescue and relief phase, under the guise of priority evacuation, food and shelter provision. Trafficking, sexual abuse, forced prostitution, child labour, GBV, divorce, desertion, abandonment of women and senior citizens, sale or coercive "adoption" of women and children have been reported, but they have not received the attention they deserve and poverty-stricken flood-affected families are too scared to come forth with evidence and file reports with the police.

Education issues: (i) the flood-affected areas had high poverty and low literacy rates (especially girls) to start with. Now, the loss of schools, teachers and time means that extra efforts are needed to motivate parents to send all their girls and boys to the temporary camp schools; (ii) the public education system needs to rehabilitate the educational infrastructure and teachers on a priority basis; (iii) a new focus is required on teaching life-skills, coping mechanisms, self-awareness, self-confidence and how to face disasters.

Disaster preparedness skills training: this should include swimming and mountaineering lessons for everyone, including all girls and women, as well as basic survival skills in harsh terrain and harsh weather conditions. All humanitarian workers, groups and civil society volunteers need such training too.

Energy and Fuel: Women are responsible for gathering fuel wood for domestic energy and fodder for livestock. The pre-flood deforestation led to massive landslides, soil erosion and unprecedented flooding, uprooting huge numbers of trees, hence a massive national campaign of reforestation is required on an urgent basis, along with the provision of alternate and renewable energy sources and village electrification. Changed water courses, rivers, lakes, streams will cause further destruction unless urgently addressed.

Food Security, Employment and Livelihoods: (i) Pre-floods male migration for employment and high poverty levels meant that large numbers of women and WHHs worked in agriculture, forestry, livestock, dairy and food security - which are now severely damaged or destroyed; (ii) large numbers of livestock and poultry also perished in the floods, with a negative impact on women's income as well as nutrition levels; (iii) in the 81 districts, employment and livelihoods are lost or threatened, but while men used to and could still migrate again, what will rural agricultural women do? (iv) women need agricultural extension, training and inputs for Agriculture and Food Security, e.g. organic seeds and fertilizer; Livestock, Irrigation, Social Forestry and Horticulture; also marketing and quality certification; (v) likewise in urban districts, employment, livelihoods, vocational skills training and credit programmes must include women, especially home-based workers at the outset.

Human rights and human dignity; special measures for women: (i) reports are surfacing of forced return of IDPs - contrary to human rights Conventions and UNOCHA's Guiding Principles, which mandate informed, voluntary, consensual return; (ii) the GoP needs to ensure male-female joint title deeds in reinstating land records, assets ownership, property, grant of new land and cash compensation; (iii) free legal aid to women to process claims for compensation and inheritance of land and property; (iv) the GoP needs to focus on women and girls' special need for protection, security, safety, honour, dignity, respect and upholding

their human rights; (iv) sex-disaggregated data must be collected and used in policymaking, recovery and rehabilitation (e.g. how many girls' schools vis-à-vis boys' schools were destroyed? how many female vs. male teachers and health workers are dead or missing?); (v) civil society, NGOs and the media need to step up their advocacy, monitoring and watchdog roles in all phases of FRRRR.

In conclusion, women need to be seen as equal partners in every aspect of FRRRR and broader, longer term disaster management. They need to be treated not as passive "beneficiaries" and "recipients" of humanitarian assistance, but also as active participants and agents of structural change and societal transformation in post-floods rehabilitation, and to be seen not just as the "affectees" - i.e. objects of pity, sympathy and "protection" - or relegated, ghettoized and marginalized to the category of the "vulnerable population", which includes orphans, widows, trafficked, abandoned and disabled women and girls, considered deserving of social welfare and philanthropic charity.

We have reiterated our knowledge, information and recommendations on humanitarian and development needs since the EQ2005. All that is required now is the political will and commitment to implement them. Civil society and NNGOs are playing a watchdog role and will not let the Government abdicate its Constitutional responsibility to all its citizens, and especially its 48% women. Our innate humanity forces us to do no less.

The writer is a member of SPO General Body

Courtesy: Legislative Watch, Newsletter of Aurat Foundation

Role of Electronic Media during floods in Pakistan

By Syed Abid Rizvi

The high magnitude floods that affected millions of people in all the four provinces of the country, first struck north-western Pakistan on 29th July 2010, before moving down-stream and inundating one fifth of the country. And then heavy rains added to the miseries of the people. The scale of the disaster can be assessed by the response of UN Secretary General Mr. Ban Ki-Moon, who personally visited the flood affected areas. According to him:

" The flooding in Pakistan is the worst disaster I have ever seen. This has been a heart wrenching day for me. I will never forget the destruction and suffering I have witnessed today. In the past I have witnessed many natural disasters around the world, but nothing like this."

DAWN, August 16, 2010

Another UN official, UNICEF Director Mr. Daniel Toole, while talking about the scale of the calamity termed it:

" The biggest emergency on planet earth to this day."

JANG, August 18, 2010

And the UN Humanitarian Aid official estimated that:

"The effects of Pakistan's flood crisis were greater than the combined effects of the Indian Ocean Tsunami that killed a quarter of a million people in 13 Asian countries in 2004, the October 2005 earthquake in Pakistani Kashmir and NWFP, and the January 2010 earthquake in Haiti."

Article by Rahimullah Yousufzai, The NEWS, August 18, 2010

To this day, the same dire situation prevails, and it has become a herculean task to assess the devastation, as millions of people have been displaced and tens of thousands of houses have been demolished. Some 20 million people and 160,000 sq km of land have been affected. About 50% of the flood victims are children who, besides food and medical attention, are in urgent need of safety and security. In response, the entire nation has rolled up its sleeves for rescue and relief work. Every Pakistani has taken up some task to fight the deluge. The Federal and Provincial governments, the Army, The National Disaster Management Authority, the political parties, the NGOs and the civil society, all are busy trying to help the affected people, shift the stranded population to safer places, provide shelter and food, and save people, specially the children, from epidemics. The role of the Armed Forces has been exceptionally commendable.

In this situation, the media, too, is in the forefront of the relief efforts. In the absence of community radio in Pakistan, the state owned radio and television, along with private TV channels and commercial FM radio stations, are doing a tremendous task. Since the calamity came suddenly, and perhaps many of the organisations, except the Armed Forces, were not prepared to face such havoc, at times their efforts seem to be losing direction. The same is the case with the media. Programmes, messages and awareness campaigns for the flood affected population mostly go waste, lost in the air, as the targeted audience does not possess the receivers to see and listen to these programmes. Their entire belongings have been washed away by the cruel torrents of water.

Secondly, the media is mostly highlighting only one side of the devastation. It is focused on projecting the miseries of the flood affected people.

Mr. Javed Jabbar, well known writer, social worker and media expert, has rightly pointed out:

“Coverage by the electronic media is timely, yet tends to be often one-sided and imbalanced. There is a preference on refugees who have not received any help so far. There is inadequate reporting on numerous examples of courageous, generous efforts being made, both by Government and citizens, however insufficient they are in overall terms. Perhaps deservedly, in such a situation, the Armed Forces outshine others with their disciplined, visible efforts. Virtually all other relief work is depicted in the media as being marked by absence of relief, suffering, strife or scrambling, for scarce supplies.”

Article published in Daily DAWN, August 17,2010

Furthermore, all the FM Radios, except for the state owned channels, are primarily commercial units and as such they lack the basic knowledge of the poor and disadvantaged communities of different flood hit areas, such as their population, their basic needs, their geographical situation and, in most cases, their languages and culture. These communities, prior to the present crisis situation, have never been given any access to these FM radio channels. Therefore, the commercial FM stations need to make great efforts and preparations in order to establish their credibility among the concerned people.

Following the 2005 earthquake disaster in Azad Kashmir and NWFP (now named as Khyber Pakhtunkhwa), the Government of Pakistan had taken the initiative to allow the establishment of temporary FM radio stations in the affected areas. But such licenses were awarded only to already established campus radio stations operating in different parts of the country in the state owned universities, or to the owners of commercial FM units that were already on air. Although these temporary FM units were not community radios, yet they were able to render commendable services in those areas with the assistance of local communities. But during the current floods, no such step has been taken by the Government up to now. It is possible that when the water recedes and the long-term third phase of rehabilitation begins, the Government might repeat such an initiative, since this will be a very crucial stage for all stakeholders. Nevertheless, in the present painful and chaotic situation one can only appreciate the bridge of communication that the media has maintained.

The threat of further devastation by the surging water still remains a possibility until the end of the monsoon season. Afterwards, the gigantic task of a detailed assessment of damages and rehabilitation will commence; hence the challenge for the media is not yet over. The actual evaluation and critical appreciation of the role of the media will only become possible at the crucial stage when the flood waters recede. The present article is a quick glance at how media has contributed in the present situation.

The writer is a member of SPO Board of Directors

What Worsened the Flood Disaster?

By Naseer Memon

Malevolent rivers this year brought unprecedented disaster in all provinces of the country. From the rickety civil infrastructure to the shabby administrative web everything has been washed away by the horrendous disaster. The present flood has emerged as the most devastating manifestation of natural disasters on earth. According to Douben, Ratnayake, half of the 367,000 people who lost their lives to natural disasters between 1986 and 1995, were victims of storm surges, river floods or flash floods. From 1998 to 2002, the world witnessed 683 flood disasters with 97% of these visitations occurring in Asia. The trend clearly points towards doomsday projections for the years to come, and calls for a tectonic shift in current practices of disaster management in vogue in countries like Pakistan.

The Indus River that wrought the major havoc in parts of Punjab and Sindh provinces is still tormenting human settlements, and its fury is set to catapult more during the left over rains of the monsoon season. Both natural and human factors triggered this devastation. According to Professor Martin Gibling of Dulhousie University, the Indus was even mightier during a warm period some 6,000 years ago. Then, 4,000 years ago as the climate cooled, a large part of the Indus dried up and deserts replaced the waterways. The Processor points a finger towards the localized warming phenomenon as being the element responsible for the disaster. In his opinion, monsoon intensity is somewhat sensitive to the surface temperature of the Indian Ocean. During the time when the climate is cooler, less moisture is picked up from the ocean, the monsoon weakens and the Indus River flow is reduced. In this backdrop, climate change seems to be a major factor behind the pathologically insane monsoons this year.

The non-reliability of historic data regarding the threat posed by climate change often renders all estimates redundant. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa experienced a unique monsoon this time, which has hardly any precedent in the past. No analysis of historic data could have foreseen what was witnessed in the recent weeks. This episode is actually even more alarming when it is considered that anything unexpected hitherto may happen any moment anywhere, with greater severity than imagined. The higher degree of weather unpredictability because of climate change is a real challenge for the already fragile flood management systems in Pakistan. Extreme and unpredictable weather conditions are likely to make disasters a moving target, making it near impossible for flood managers to respond to such disasters with the given capacity.

Along with several factors responsible for making the disaster excruciatingly difficult, the absence of localized early warning systems, ineffective disaster management paraphernalia, virtually non-existent integrated flood management plans, and a system bereft of proactive planning to mitigate disaster impact need to be closely examined. The disaster has exposed the capacity gaps of the agencies responsible for disaster management, particularly at provincial and district tiers.

While all provinces have faced devastation, a report of the Federal Flood Commission issued on 20th August reckoned that Sindh was the worst hit, as 3.68 million of the 7.71 million flood affected people, and 211,375 from a total of 303,698 houses battered by the floods were located in Sindh. Similarly, Sindh's share of affected villages came to 4,359 out of a total of 11,027, and 1.55 million acres out of total of 4.70 million acres of cultivated land was inundated by the sheets of water. Sindh government's latest statements put the toll of affectees to over 7 million people. In all likelihood these digits will swell and would paint an

even more somber picture with every passing day. With a little less severity, disaster in Pakhtunkhwa and South Punjab has also left deep scars on communities.

There is no dichotomy of opinion that the scale of the disaster would have outdone the response in any case, yet the miseries could have been much less had certain best practices of disaster management been in place. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the Peshawar Met office could not transmit the timely warning of the predicted abnormal showers only because the fax machines in the DCO offices of Charsadda and Nowshera were not working properly. Likewise, the initial estimates of flood at Sukkur barrage were derided by the actual flows that made the Sindh government manic, ultimately leading to enigmatic decisions of breaching bunds, railway tracks and roads to ease pressure from the barrage structures and certain strategic locations. A shadowy decision making process has sparked another controversy that may eventually snowball to a full blown conflict.

A comprehensive GIS based flood management plan would have more precisely determined the potential sites for breaches to prevent major losses. However, the media reports suggest that the murky decisions were taken at the spur of the moment, presumably influenced more by politics than any informed process or institutional mechanism. The breaches in Tori and Ghouspur bands in Sindh actually triggered the worst disaster, enveloping vast areas in north Sindh and rendered several hundred thousand shelterless. As a result, the districts of Kashmore, Jacobabad, Shikarpur and Qambar-Shahdad Kot are witnessing their worst human crisis in known history. The worst part was inadequate evacuation notice and unavailability of transport, which made migration intractably difficult. More than seven million people have lost their abodes and source of livelihood, and have endured a traumatic experience, the spook of which will haunt them for rest of their lives.

Ignoring the very fact that a flow of 10 million cusecs would have spilled over any dam of the size of the proposed Kalabagh dam, a clamor was raised that it was merely the absence of large dams that has caused this disaster. No engineering or flood management science would substantiate this argument. Sukkur, Guddu and Kotri barrages braced a flow of one million cusecs for nearly ten days. Any such dam would not have had the capacity to absorb this massive flow. It would have rather made the very dam structure vulnerable to bursting at the seams and to potentially multiply this catastrophe manifold.

Coinciding with the floods in Pakistan, China also faced the wrath of floods and at one stage hundreds of soldiers were deployed to prevent a likely disaster; if the Wenquan reservoir had burst it could have inundated Golmud city and its more than 200,000 population under a four meters deep wave of water. In this very year the North-East of Brazil, known for droughts, witnessed a devastating flood killing 50 people and leaving 150,000 homeless. The devastation was mainly caused by the bursting of dams on two rivers. In March 2009, a dam that burst near Jakarta killed scores of people. In fact the damming of rivers has made drastic alterations in the natural flood plains of the Indus, and the consequent contracted trachea of the river Indus is also a major cause for the horrific intensity of the flood. A series of dams and barrages have led to excessive siltation in the riverbed, thus elevating the surge to dangerous levels. Entropic human settlement patterns has been another cause of large scale displacement. The mass exodus from the flood plains as a result of the floods highlighted the fact that unregulated human settlements were responsible for making the scenario further bleak.

Rampant damming and diversion during past decades has changed the flood regime entirely, and vast tracts previously part of the flood plain was exposed as dry land, which encouraged new settlements. Before the Tarbela dam was built, the Katcha area of Sindh received a flood of 300,000 cusecs almost every year, and a flood of 500,000 cusecs for 77% of the years

recorded. The Tarbela and other barrages completely altered the flood pattern, leaving large parts of the flood plain barren, and thus paved the way for dense human settlements in the strips flanking the river course. According to a report, some 50,000 acres of Katcha area is under settlements, with roads and government structures. The decades long ignored physical planning of rural areas and skewed development pattern forced the marginalized rural communities to seek recourse to ribbon development along the river banks. Dwellers of such areas were noticeably more resistant to evacuation, as their asset base was tied to the flood plains. Furthermore, unbridled deforestation partly due to lack of regular flood flows and partly due to avaricious elements in politics and bureaucracy also aggravated the flood impact. The absence of thick forest that could have absorbed considerable wave energy compounded ferocity of the flood.

There is a risk of impending social disaster if the rehabilitation and reconstruction phase is not designed and executed with transparency and with the participation of various segments of society, especially civil society organizations and the private sector. Avoiding such disasters in future needs long term integrated planning along with a committed and competent execution mechanism. Political will would be the cornerstone if it happens at all.

The writer is Chief Executive of Strengthening Participatory Organization (SPO)

Courtesy: The News

Three Days in Southern Sindh

By Javed Jabbar

3rd, 4th and 5th September 2010 spent driving 60 kms from Karachi to Thatta and 600 kms onwards to Nagarparkar via Kotri and Hyderabad provided sights that disturbed and uplifted, contrasts that were vivid and ironic.

Covered in a single journey in these times, districts Thatta and Tharparkar become strangely distant though geographically close. The one ravaged by water, the other blessed by water. The one dislocated and distressed, the other serene and sedate. With the tables completely turned. Traditionally, the Tharparkar arid region faces recurrent drought and is frequently declared a calamity-hit area. This year, the rains have come gently in the right quantity and at the right frequency for planting seeds and nurturing crops. In Thatta, the rains brought floods of water and floods of refugees. It is Thatta that is now hit calamity-hit.

Women radiate strength, resilience, skill and dignity. In disjointed circumstances, they continue with the basic tasks they have always fulfilled. Delivering babies, minding children, finding morsels or meals, guarding meagre belongings, tending to cattle and buffaloes. 3 volunteer teachers were conducting a classroom full of girls and boys with no books and pencils but fully engrossed.

At the Technical College nearby, amongst about 1500 refugees, 10-year old Zuleikha, accompanied by Tanya and Aroosa, declines to surrender to the despair around her : the single outdoor toilet for hundreds, the single daily meal of rice, the wait for the single water tanker. She wants to go to school, and she smiles with a charm that lightens the darkness at noon.

We hear of inter-clan, inter-tribe strife and tension barely being held in check because of the common lot all presently share. Will this cathartic event subsume primeval passions, or re-ignite them ?

Some men are also better than others. There were at least 5 young volunteers rotating duties at the same camp : no complaints and in good cheer. All of them M.As in Social Work, all of them otherwise unemployed. When neither political leaders nor bureaucrats are remembered fondly, there was praise from development professionals at the SPO office for work rendered by MNA Ayaz Shirazi in hazardous rescues and for DCO Manzoor Sheikh for co-ordination.

Under-acknowledged official civil efforts and adequately projected military efforts work in tandem.

The spontaneous compassion so promptly and generously expressed by the people of Pakistan and here in Thatta district, manifest by individual acts of giving or in the vigorous work of NGOs soothes frayed tempers and boosts confidence in our own people's capacity to tackle formidable challenges.

Between Tando Jam and Tando Allah Yar, the beautiful canopy of trees that served as a tunnel is now only a memory : tragically slaughtered in order to widen the road.

To enter Tharparkar at this time is to enter Paradise Park. A fulsome green now covers undulating sand dunes to make them lush and resplendent. Shrubs, bushes, trees, farm fields wear Nature's favourite shade. Newly formed lakes and ponds full of tranquil, peaceful water are most unlike the river water elsewhere spitting anger and fury. Here are swooping, trilling birds, a gliding peacock. Thari cows with regal horns, disdainful camels in large

herds, sheep as obedient as pliant voters. Then, sudden, striking glimpses of red, blue, orange and black forms slim and silent on the green backdrop : the tireless women of Thar toil in fields in their colourful, elegant clothes.

At village Churio, 45 sand-tracked kms from Nagarparkar, we are close enough to the Indian border to clearly see the structural detail of fences, watch-towers and office blocks built by our neighbour. Baanhn Beli's local members and staff proudly show off a new piped water supply system built with support from the Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund that benefits over 125 households and 1200 people to liberate women from the grinding daily labour of drawing and fetching water. Despite the poverty, there is a special sense of peace here. We discover why : they do not have access to TV. Radio keeps them in contact with our hyper- world.

Yet heaven on earth can be deceptive. Dereliction of duty, nepotism, professional and administrative apathy are alive and well in paradise. Be they apparent in the slovenly maintenance of a new rest house or in the Taluka hospital where 27 out of 31 sanctioned posts for doctors remain vacant for years on end. Some staff remain absent without punishment because of their connections. Malaria, gastro-enteritis and respiratory diseases register alarming increases. Despite the success of the Pakistan Primary Health Initiative elsewhere, the weak governance reflected in aspects of the relief effort also afflicts a region so far from the floods, and so near.

Spiritually nourished and revitalized by the green glory of Tharparkar, we return via Jamshoro to the addiction of Karachi . Here another reality delivers a parting blow in case we let only pleasant images pre-dominate. The Indus has spilt over its banks. Hundreds of persons are forced on to the edges of the super highway. Some people run after vehicles, transformed into beggars. Hunger's wand weaves cruel magic.

Southern Sindh, like the rest of Pakistan desperately needs resolve rather than recrimination, unstinted co-operation rather than contrived, unfair comparison and competition between civil and military efforts. Retaining a democratic path through all the twists and turns, the disappointments and the distress, is the only way forward from this tragedy to a better Pakistan.

The writer is a member of SPO Board of Directors

Courtesy: Daily Dawn

Gilani's Gratuitous Remarks

By Javed Jabbar

Prime Minister Yusuf Raza Gilani has charged that international NGOs consume about 80 per cent of their funds for flood-relief work in Pakistan on their administrative costs. In other words, only 20 per cent of the funds are spent on the relief and rehabilitation of the flood victims.

His comments in Multan on Sunday are a sweeping repudiation of all NGOs, international or national, and regardless of which particular category of work they carry out. The comments are inappropriate, ill-timed and untrue, even though they were probably not intended to convey an incorrect impression. He normally makes balanced, restrained comments and has a constructive, conciliatory approach. But what he said has disappointed and distressed many people, including this writer.

Perhaps the following elements will help in clarifying the matter and put things in their proper context.

The Prime Minister specifically referred to "international NGOs" which have recently arrived in Pakistan to work in the post-flood situation. But possibly his comment is also meant to refer to international NGOs whose work is long-established in Pakistan, for example, Oxfam, Save the Children, ActionAid, Plan International and Care. He said that a conditionality attached to the funds being given by overseas donors to the United Nations for flood relief is that the UN channel 80 per cent of the funds through international NGOs. The "80 per cent" in this context is, thus, an entirely different dimension from the reference to the "80 per cent being used up for their own administrative expenses," as the Prime Minister has stated.

A general benchmark around the world, including Pakistan, is that management and administrative costs should not exceed 30 per cent of the total cost. In many cases, the proportion is lower. During the current relief campaign, SPO (Strengthening Participatory Organisation) a national, volunteer-led, staff-managed NGO working in all four provinces, selected by the UN to conduct damage-assessment in particular districts, is charging only five per cent for management costs. It has contributed over Rs.2 million from its own limited funds for relief supplies. In others, it may be even higher. But only because the scope of a particular NGO's work is, for instance, to fly in, or to engage for a particular purpose; such as obtaining expertise on a given subject from select individuals.

Rarely, if ever, do you hear of 80 per cent of the funds--which are exclusively meant for relief work among the affected and the displaced--being used instead on management or salaries.

Of course, in emergency situations delivery of relief to persons and communities stranded or marooned in areas cut-off for various reasons, such as collapsed bridges and landslides, add to the operational costs of delivery of relief goods and services to the needy. This could increase the conventional 30 per cent allocated for management and operational costs. All funds provided to Pakistan or used in Pakistan by overseas organisations are subject to the prior knowledge, scrutiny and approval of the Government of Pakistan. If there are loopholes, the government has the right and the power to ensure that the information is shared with it in advance. It is only in the case of funds used by diplomatic missions in Pakistan that foreign countries have the right of confidentiality. Normally, even the right of confidentiality does not apply when it comes to relief work.

Once funds have been used by international NGOs already established in Pakistan, which are subject to Pakistani laws and rules for foreign organisations, their audit and approval by the competent authority is mandatory. In the event of a disproportionate share of funds meant for a specific purpose such as flood and relief work, is used elsewhere, the government has the right to question this and ask for justification or explanation. When an international NGO starts work for the first time in Pakistan, it is within the power of the government to ensure that the NGO's funds spent in the country are in reasonable proportion to needs and priorities. This can be done by direct liaison by the Economic Affairs Division or any other designated official body, with the forums concerned. This liaison is through the UN or the embassies of the countries in which the newly-arrived NGOs are registered.

An effective deterrent against lopsided use of relief funds from overseas is, or should be, scrutiny by the respective overseas governments giving the funds in the first place, their own oversight mechanisms, their own media and their own accountability processes, even where lopsided use may benefit contractors or consultants from those countries. But one needs to be certain about the number, names and scope of the newly-arrived international NGOs.

Therefore, there is little, if any, scope for funds in foreign currencies brought into Pakistan for flood relief work being used in an imbalanced manner. There is no denying, of course, that, as with government-disbursed funds, the chances of misuse, misappropriation always exist. The responsibility to ensure correct and honest use rests with each organisation concerned.

Given some of the misleading perceptions about "NGOs" the Prime Minister should have emphasized the distinctions between various categories of NGOs, because his remarks have been seen as being applicable to all, even though there are varieties of NGOs.

There are those NGOs that are predominantly led by salaried staff. Then there are a large number that are led by volunteers, either at a policy or governance level, or even on the level of hands-on field work--such as several of the kind with which this writer has been associated for the past 30 years. In such cases, volunteers take no funds from the NGOs. Instead, they donate their working time, holidays and professional skills, or their own office and private resources, to supplement the work of paid staff. In some cases, volunteer leaders pay for their own travel, including air trips, accommodation and food.

At the micro-community level and on larger scales, in service delivery of, say, education, health, capacity-building, water resources, small loans and advocacy, thousands of NGOs generate funds from local resources or from national and international donors, with funds being subject to audit and accountability. During emergencies, NGOs can be created to meet the sudden new needs. Most ensure a reasonable balance between operational costs and value delivered to the needy. In normal conditions, and especially in emergencies, volunteers and staff often work in extremely difficult, even dangerous, conditions. Inevitably, there are persons who create NGOs only to obtain personal financial benefits. Such elements expose themselves by their lack of authentic work. Their communities and the media should also expose them--on the basis of facts and evidence, not innuendo.

At a time such as this, when cohesion, unity and mutual trust and mutual respect are required for effectively coping with the calamity and its aftermath, it would be useful for the Prime Minister and the government to meet representatives of leading NGOs from all categories to enhance his knowledge about realities and facts, and to ensure productive collaboration.

The writer is a member of SPO Board of Directors

Courtesy; The News

Are In Fact 34,000 or Any Women Paramedics "Missing"?

By Tahira Abdullah

In Floods2010, a still-mysterious case is that of the thousands of "missing" paramedical women primary and reproductive health care workers (including LHWs, LHVs, FWWs, FWAs, midwives and nurses). A UN consultant reported back in early August that she had been informed by the relevant GoP Ministry that around thirty-four thousand women paramedics had gone "missing" [sic] in the flooded districts. But, despite frantic and sustained efforts of women's rights organizations and health-related I+N NGOs, to date neither has the GoP managed to rebut or rectify that figure if it was factually incorrect (e.g. through a roll-call of those workers who are present), nor has it provided an explanation for where the "missing" women might be, nor has an effort been made (and shared with the public) to trace them. A GoP spokesperson publicly responded to an INGO query thus: "No, not 34,000, ONLY [sic] 10,000 female health staff are still missing, probably Absent Without Leave (AWOL)." Worried relief workers wonder whether they are really AWOL, or have been swept away forever in the furious gushing waters; or injured, or kidnapped, or trafficked for forced prostitution, domestic labour, ransom or sexual abuse. No answers are forthcoming and no real data either.

The writer is a member of SPO General Body

Courtesy: Legislative Watch, Newsletter of Aurat Foundation

Unnatural Causes of Disaster

By Naseer Memon

There is a need to comprehend the role of institutions that exacerbated the impact of the recent floods. Many still see these floods as a prelude to the worst. Without indulging in speculations one can safely say we ought to be equipped to respond to the vagaries of nature.

In August, Pakistan received more than half of its monsoon downpour during one week, which would normally have taken three months, and the flooding this year went on for abnormally long durations.

In Sindh, three barrages had to face a furious flow of over 1.1 million cusecs for almost eleven days. This lunacy of flood is a clarion call from nature that we seriously need to realign our response mechanism in order to be commensurate with such somersaults of climate.

The recent experience of disaster response mocks at our administrative adequacy. The institutional tentacles of our disaster response system were practically paralysed by the enormity of the floods. The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) and its provincial and district extensions were sent into a tailspin by the disaster. PDMA and DDMA proved to be quite ineffective.

In disaster response, the lowest tier i.e. the DDMA, is of paramount importance by virtue of being the first and the last line of defense for communities. The DDMA, under Section 21 of the National Disaster Management Ordinance, are charged with devising disaster management plans for their districts; but hardly any were in place. Certain international donor organisations provided technical and logistical support for capacity-building of selected DDMA in the country, but provincial governments seldom considered institutionalisation of PDMA and DDMA as serious business.

Though DDMA are under the administrative control of provincial governments, yet there were instances when they were reprimanded by the NDMA if they approached any donors for any support. PDMA in Sindh is manned by less than a dozen staff members at Karachi without any outreach stations in the rest of Sindh.

Punjab, till recent days did not have any PDMA at all, and those established in the remaining provinces lacked agility because of the dearth of human, technical and financial wherewithal. Our shoddy disaster management machinery was soon on its knees as the disaster unraveled the patchwork of dykes built to hold the water back.

But, bemoaning aside, lurking catastrophes in the future demand serious investment in disaster prevention and response systems. DMA at all levels need much serious attention now to improve their systems, and infuse sufficient human, technical and financial resources.

Ideally, DDMA should also have extension at *tehsil* and union council level. However, this is not to suggest that more echelons of bureaucratic strata should be invented; rather, a more action-oriented, grassroots based, truly participatory organisational structure that can nimbly respond to calamities, must be put in place.

In its current structure, DCOs are the embodiment of DDMA, and most of them have little capacity for disaster response, which demands a well defined coordination mechanism of various entities at provincial and district levels.

Disaster/hazard mapping would be the bedrock of a workable disaster response system. Regrettably, this very fundamental has yet to see the light of day; in absence of which all the rest becomes a hotchpotch of reactions when a disaster occurs.

Creeping disasters like land degradation, top soil erosion, watershed mauling due to rampant deforestation, pollution of fast dwindling water resources, the weakening coastal eco-system and the cross-contaminating urban air are mistakenly considered subtle threats, as they don't send shockwaves of horror. But unless this country has an all-encompassing disaster map, planning and preparedness would remain a mirage.

Lack of appropriate early warning systems has been a major cause of otherwise preventable localised disasters. Timely warning is the linchpin of any disaster response mechanism as it can assuage the impact to a considerable degree. The Flood Map of Pakistan is devoid of any network of localised or integrated early warning web. With the exception of Nullah Leh in the twin cities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad, the system is nowhere heard of. An early warning system is particularly critical in spate flow areas of hill torrents, where high intensity flows can easily outpace evacuation efforts. During the recent floods, torrents from Koh-e-Suleman knocked communities without any warning in South Punjab. In 2007 when the Yeymin cyclone smacked Balochistan, cloudburst in its catchment areas caught western districts of Sindh unguarded because of the absence of an integrated early warning system in the Khirthar range.

In managed rivers, however, forecasting a flood becomes easier, although our prevalent system is too primitive by contemporary touchstones. Telemetry system could have offered some respite, but the same was not allowed to function by unscrupulous elements that thrive on data juggling. An aftermath of that was witnessed in defective preparedness in Sindh where initial flood estimates of 0.8 million cusecs proved a mere ruse, leaving the province misinformed.

An initial relief breach in Tori bund wreaked havoc in the province, and the upper half of Sindh from Kashmore to Dadu/Jamshoro had to pay the cost. The flood debacle in Sindh has unmasked the fragility of governance structures where individuals dominate the rules of business.

A trust deficit between the federation and the federating units has been a major source of relentless divisiveness on this issue. Only a few days after the floods had ruled the canals, riparian provinces were exchanging barbs on opening of the Chashma-Jehlum link canal.

According to a leading national daily, the FFC reports showed an increase of 331 percent in the number of flood affected people in Punjab by inflating the number from 1.9 million given in its 20th August report to 8.2 million on 1st September. The data managers at FFC overlooked the fact that the number of affected villages, households and acreage remained unvaried in both reports. Likewise, the report inexplicably reduced the number of cattle head killed in Sindh from 129,416 to 24,788.

This numerical nonsense race was stemmed only by the sheer lack of credibility expressed by the people in the attempt made by system prodding stakeholders to inflate the figures in order to grab a bigger share in the aid pie.

The experiences from this disaster can become a strength if we can harvest some learning for future years and fortify our institutional systems in a prudent manner.

The writer is Chief Executive of Strengthening Participatory Organization (SPO)

Courtesy: The News

Bumpy Road to Rehabilitation

By Naseer Memon

The epic floods of historical memory have now receded leaving a trail of devastation behind. Deep scars of this disaster will take years to heal. Although the relief phase is yet to end, the concomitant to the more arduous phases of early recovery and rehabilitation cannot afford any delay. The ordeal of life in camps will soon be over for the affected men, women and children, yet their suffering would only change its form as they return to their uprooted abodes.

Early recovery typically requires a rapid assessment that may help in initiating a transition from life saving to life sustaining activities in the affected areas. This phase entails issues like resettlement, livelihood restoration, rebuilding of basic infrastructure and planning for an effective rehabilitation phase. The major challenge in this phase would be the sheer physical magnitude of the disaster. The scale of the mammoth challenge can be gauged from the damage data. According to NDMA's update of 23rd December, over 1.9 houses are damaged in the country. Sindh province appears to be the worst hit, accounting for over 1.1 million damaged houses. Estimates of infrastructure, such as roads, bridges, government offices, culverts do not appear in this report. However various other reports provide information on these aspects. A report by UNESCO puts the number of damaged schools at 10,000; that corresponds to 1.5 to 2.5 million students affected. Punjab government's initial estimates reckon the damage costs to be Rs. 67 billion. The PDMA Sindh website shows staggering damage estimates of Rs. 446 billion. Sector-wise breakup shows housing and agriculture as the worst hit sectors in Sindh, with estimates of Rs. 134 and 122 billion respectively. The Secretary Industries Department of Sindh has confirmed that 67 industrial units in Sindh have been damaged. Similarly, the Sindh Agriculture Department estimates agriculture losses at Rs.102 billion. A report by UNOCHA issued on 10th August mentioned that 281 bridges and 283 roads were affected in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa. Balochistan fretfully decried the underestimation of its damages. In the long and short terms the volume of damages is mindboggling, and that explains the lurking ramifications of the bumpy road to rehabilitation. Putting it all together the Federal Cabinet was informed that the colossal losses are estimated to be US\$ 43 billion, nearly 25% of the nominal GDP of Pakistan.

Early recovery in the affected areas would demand greater focus on agriculture and its extended strands of livelihood. Since most of the affected areas, specially in Punjab and Sindh have their economy embedded in agriculture, immediate attention is required to secure winter sowing, mainly wheat that guarantees the staple diet for millions of households. Any laxity in this would precariously push the rural economy and livelihood to the brink of collapse that may eventually culminate in perilous social chaos. To avert this risk, government will have to work on a war footing, mainly for draining water from the submerged swathes of land, repairing irrigation channels and mobilizing the distribution of seeds, fertilizer and other inputs. Paucity of supplies would cause prices to skyrocket further, initially of inputs and subsequently of commodities. Efficient management of winter crop would partially assuage the miseries of affectees as the local economy would get a shot in the arm with a good harvest. This would bring some respite for the edgy government, and the rehabilitation phase, which is targeted to restore life to the pre-disaster stage, would also become less turbulent. This stage has to focus both on individuals who are affected and public services. Many disaster management experts consider rehabilitation as an opportunity for better rebuilding through improved planning, infusing socio-economic reforms, redefining

imperatives of rural economy and reconstructing disaster-resistant and environmentally sustainable infrastructure. Rebuilding major infrastructure and reshaping the socio-economic landscape require meticulous planning and turbo-charged institutional mechanisms to make this transition wrinkle-free. The Independent Evaluation Group of the World Bank has also indicated in its report that Pakistan has a unique opportunity to introduce land and irrigation reforms for long term political and economic gains. The report suggests that the disaster also presents an opportunity to redress, or to begin to redress, the long-standing land rights issue related to powerful landlords and indebted tenants in areas like Balochistan, Sindh and Southern Punjab.

Likewise, better land use planning can help rebuilding environmentally sustainable human settlements. Stemming from sheer lack of land use planning, villages and towns in Pakistan have become breeding grounds for social strains and environmental nightmares. The unbridled sprawl of villages and towns have completely disregarded the fundamentals of development. Over the years major infrastructure schemes were implemented in the flood prone areas. A vicious web of roads, private dykes, illegitimate irrigation channels and other imprudent structures was recklessly allowed to sneak into the flood plains. How this environmentally myopic development multiplied the damages need to be investigated. The rehabilitation phase is a heaven-sent opportunity to rectify these gaffes. Land reforms, especially the judicious allocation of *katcha* lands, and recovering illegally occupied tracts of riverine forest would be the best harvest of this worst ever disaster. The insurmountable challenge, however, would be convincing the ruling elite to let it happen unhindered. Since the fragile democratic dispensation stands on the crutches of unscrupulous landed aristocracy, such reforms look like a distant dream. Otherwise erasing social imbalances would provide bedrock foundation for democracy in Pakistan.

The major challenge in rehabilitation would be resource mobilization. Ever bulging security cost has hemorrhaged the cash-strapped government from its residual liquidity. According to newspaper reports, the federal budget has recently been defaced by major changes in defense and development allocation. The former has been allocated an additional Rs.110 billion and the latter drained by Rs.73 billion, leaving the development kitty in further depleted. The Council of Common Interests announced a compensation of Rs.100,000 for every affected family, but the provinces are too impoverished to afford this. The Advisor for Planning and Development in Sindh has already conceded that the slim purse of the province can't afford 190 billion rupees required for the purpose. The international aid response had been sluggish due to a medley of reasons. The UN has launched the "Pakistan Floods Emergency Response Plan" seeking US\$ 2 billion, which aims to provide humanitarian relief and early recovery assistance to up to 14 million people through 483 projects. The anemic treasury needs this aid injection to foot the rehabilitation bill that would run into several billion dollars.

There is a need of massive public sector investment to reinvigorate the caved-in economy in the affected areas. This investment, however, should not be restricted to dole-outs; it should rather follow the 'New Deal' paradigm of socio-economic recovery in the US after the Great Depression in the 1930s. President Roosevelt declared it a peacetime emergency and established Federal Emergency Relief Administration that pumped money in "work relief" operations. Huge projects of roads, bridges, schools and other public works were rolled out that generated jobs for 4 million citizens. Such a model would proffer multiple benefits of rebuilding public services, rejuvenating the tormented local markets and creating much needed employment for affected. Creating exclusive small and medium enterprise corridors in urban areas fueled through soft loans would also help people to recuperate from the crisis.

In the presence of heavy debt servicing and ballooning defense expenditures, little is left for public sector development, which complicates the dilemma of the civilian governments. Considering these harsh realities, the rehabilitation phase immediately requires an all encompassing master plan, before muddled development schemes are rolled out. The plan may comprise short term, medium term and long term targets coupled by a strategy to mobilize resources, and efficiently investing them to achieve strategic socio-economic gains.

The writer is Chief Executive of Strengthening Participatory Organization (SPO)

Courtesy: The News

Recreation of Risks in Gilgit-Baltistan

By Aziz Ali Dad

The landslide in the Attabad village of Hunza on January 4, 2010 resulted in the death of 19 people, destruction of properties and habitat of inhabitants. This tragic incident was an outcome of geo-morphological changes occurring naturally over a period of time. Attabad village was declared vulnerable in 2003, 2007 and 2009, but the government did not evacuate the residents. Consequently, the negligence resulted in the obliteration of the village from the face of earth. The Attabad disaster is only the tip of the iceberg. There are numerous locations in Gilgit-Baltistan which are exposed to natural disasters.

The Attabad tragedy has raised many questions regarding threats posed by natural hazards to the dwellers of the mountainous region of Gilgit-Baltistan. The foremost question that arises is: Why do local communities recreate risks? To understand this phenomenon it is important to understand the social factors that contribute to creation and recreation of risks in the particular geographical setting of Gilgit-Baltistan. Some of the factors include: contesting knowledge systems, settlement patterns and modernity and market forces, natural resource management, building codes and criteria, cultural ethos, poverty and marginalization, and increased vulnerabilities in the post-disaster period. Interface among these factors create and recreate hazards.

In their interaction with the local environment the people of Gilgit-Baltistan have been able to create a knowledge base that was embedded with the geography. It is this knowledge which enabled local communities to survive in the harshest climate and terrain of the world with very meager resources. This indigenous knowledge pervades every sphere of life in the traditional society. Bereft of exposure to knowledge from the outside world, the inhabitants had to rely on indigenous knowledge, gained through experience, and perfected through trial and error.

This scribe visited Ghich village in district Ghizer last year. This village faced death and destruction because of a flash flood that caught the villagers when they were asleep in the summer of 2006. During the discussion with the villagers, members from the older generation shared their knowledge about the ways to deal with an approaching flood, land sliding, formation of artificial lakes, and the relation of the location of settlements vis-à-vis avalanches.

Farzand Shah, a shepherd, was of the opinion that 'old people had traditional knowledge and techniques to deal with natural disasters and hazards. Unfortunately, there is no system in place to transfer that knowledge to the new generation.' The local community is more vulnerable because it lacks understanding of traditional technology and knowledge on the one hand, and modern technology is not in place on the other. The youth of the village community were in agreement with Farzand's opinion.

Another factor that contributes to the creation and recreation of risk is the complex interplay of traditional and modern settlement pattern. Traditionally, there was no system of exchange of land for money. New settlements were created by the King with two objectives in mind: First, to settle the growing population in new lands; Second, the new land generated more *maliya* (levy) for the King. The King used to distribute the best lands to people who were well connected with power. Hence, traditionally powerful segments of society own the land which is almost immune from natural disasters and hazards. On the other side, the weaker

and vulnerable groups settled in areas that are more exposed to natural hazards. When a poor person settles in such a place he becomes more vulnerable to disasters than the powerful man who is settled in the safer areas.

This traditional pattern of land distribution has consolidated the position of people vis-à-vis natural disasters. The fields, gardens, orchards and houses destroyed in the flood of the village Damas in Ghizer district belonged to common people; whereas, the land of the royalty is tucked away in a safe corner of the village. It can safely be assumed that a complex interplay of patterns of society and its power structure within a particular context placed some lands and people in a more insecure position compared to others. The changing patterns of settlement is one of the factors that contributes to creating and recreating risks.

With the opening of the Karakorum Highway and developments in communication the far-flung areas of Gilgit-Baltistan became connected with the outside world. At the social level the people of Gilgit-Baltistan have been exposed to exogenous values, market forces and lifestyles for the last twenty-five years. One of the concerns expressed about this process by the villagers is that local customs faded away, social relations are being disrupted, and everything indigenous is being replaced by something new. In other words, the society has undergone a 'future shock' at cultural and structural level. A villager Jani Baig encapsulates this situation in the following expressive words: *'In the days of yore we had to feed only our body. Now the desires and demands are too many for village resources to fulfill.'*

Structurally the traditional mode of governance was effective in maintaining a balance between individual needs and scarce resources by developing a social system and economy in which individual interests were inseparable from the whole – the community. In that system it was impossible to pursue something without the involvement of the larger community. Unfortunately, the abolition of the traditional structure of governance was not replaced by effective modern institutions. As a corollary, individual got a space to pursue his interest at the expense of the collective interest by capturing more space in economy, society, natural resources and other spheres of the larger community. Aggrandized by the market forces and free of traditional prohibitions the individual turned everything into material for the mill of market forces to grind.

In the absence of resources and capacities the local communities have no choice but to maximize the utilization of local resources by contravening traditional barriers that managed resources. In such a situation, the survival strategy is short-term benefits at the cost of deforestation, excessive grazing, choking of rivers and streams with construction, and disregard of the broader interests of the area and the community. These activities, directly and indirectly, contribute to creation and recreation of risks.

Most of the old settlements in Gilgit-Baltistan contain houses concentrated in *kot* (fort) settlements. This trend was necessitated by threats from nature as well as human beings. The settlements around a fort are always located in an area that is safe from rock falls, avalanches, floods and human invasion; while the fields and gardens are situated in the lower plains of the mountains. This pattern is visible across Gilgit-Baltistan, for example, around Baltit, Altit, Shigar and Kharpucho forts.

With the passage of time people started to spread from the nucleus settlements around the fort to open areas. In addition, the increase in population also compels them to defy the barrier between human settlements and nature, such as river beds, stream and flood paths, open spaces facing snow clad mountains and the bottom of mountains. The local livelihood strategy forces people to earmark the best and most fertile land for agriculture purposes. Houses get the land that is not feasible for cultivation or is less productive. So it can be

assumed that housing does not occupy priority in the indigenous strategy of livelihood. That is the reason that people built houses in risky areas, but by doing so they rebuilt risks for themselves.

Cultural ethos also plays a crucial role in the rebuilding of risks. Most of the people deem natural disasters to be a punishment from God for our sins, wrongdoings, moral corruption and dishonesty. But death and loss by natural disaster does not hold the same meaning. Rather, the meaning changes with the change in space, building and status. Nevertheless, locally people see natural disasters as a bolt from blue for their wrongdoings!

Because of the socio-cultural and religious ethos people consider the post disaster period as a good opportunity for moral reconstruction. The practical measures needed to tackle disasters do not merit as much consideration. Therefore, the people often spend the post disaster period in a state of shock, which triggers soul searching, since they attribute multi-causal phenomena to moral degradation in society. Therefore, society starts with a clean slate for moral rebuilding to avert future disasters. But reconstruction of character does not coincide with practical measures to tackle natural disasters. Focusing entirely on moral reconstruction means that there is a tendency to ignore practical steps. As a result, the objective condition of people vis-à-vis nature becomes more vulnerable, though subjectively people may think that their attitudes have become better. The neglect of practical efforts and the sole focus on subjective rebuilding is one of the factors that contributes significantly to the rebuilding of risks.

The cumulative result of the interface between multiple factors manifests itself in the shape of disasters. To tackle natural disasters it is important to take into consideration these multiplicity of social, economic, political and cultural factors. Relying solely on technical and mechanical dimensions at the cost of the social dimension will render practical measures futile. Incorporation of multiple social dimensions in a disaster risk reduction strategy will not only make it holistic, but also prove conducive in making it successful. Natural disasters are inextricably linked with society. If we try to treat its consequences in isolation then we are recreating another disaster at policy level, whose effect may trickle down in the shape of natural catastrophes.

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