



WEBINAR REPORT

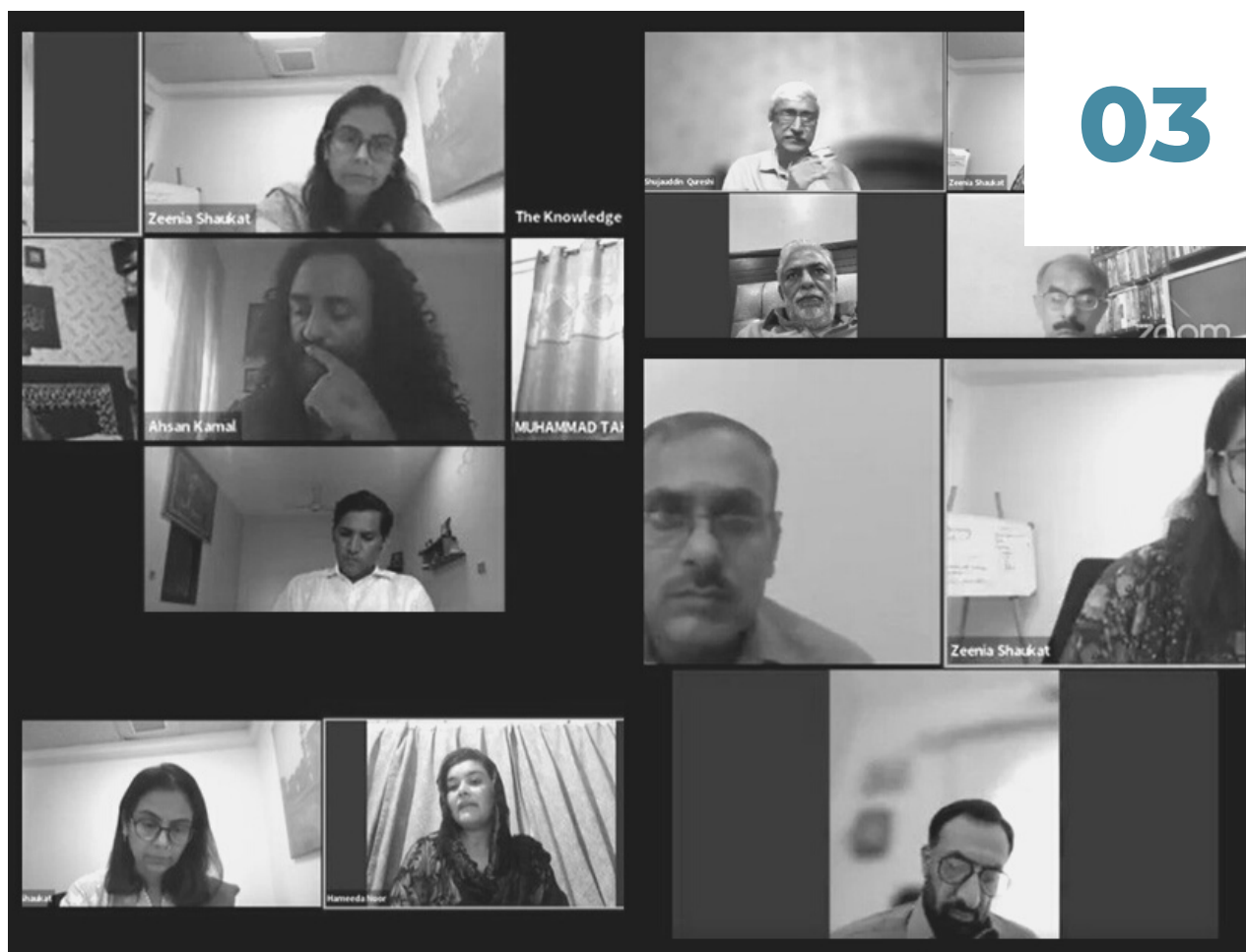
ASSESSING PROVINCIAL PICTURE
OF FLOODING IN PAKISTAN

THE KNOWLEDGE FORUM

ABOUT US



The Knowledge Forum is an independent organisation that seeks to produce knowledge - based resources to assist in interventions and advocacy for communities ' rights . The initiative is rooted in the ideology that knowledge strengthens and guides the direction of actions aimed at advancing rights and social justice processes . TKF's knowledge generation is driven by the community agenda , prioritising the inclusion of their voice and participation . Through high quality research and discourse curation , TKF aims to assist in the creation of a more informed perspective on complex themes that have a bearing on communities ' access to rights and participation in political , democratic and development processes . TKF has been founded by a group of human rights practitioners , development professionals , activists and legal experts .



BRIEF OVERVIEW

The monsoon-induced flash flood caused massive devastation across Pakistan in 2022. More than 33 million people were impacted by the catastrophic floods which were triggered by heavy torrential rains across several parts of the country, as per government estimates. The death toll stands at 1,700 as a result of this natural disaster, while it also claimed the lives of one million livestock across districts. Similarly, thousands of people were injured. Over 3,100 km of roads and several bridges were damaged.

In the wake of the damage caused to one-third part of the country due to factors involving climate change, The Knowledge Forum (TKF) organised a series of dialogue sessions to assess the provincial picture of the ongoing flood situation in Pakistan.

As part of the session, four webinars were held, each focused on the situation of a province. The webinars were attended by members of civil society, development experts and professionals, journalists, representatives of the Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA), provincial lawmakers and policymakers from each province.



SITUATION IN SINDH

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The first of the four-webinar series by TKF was focused on the flood situation in Sindh. It was held on August 29, 2022. Moderated by Shujauddin Qureshi and Zeenia Shaukat of TKF, the webinar's panellists included development expert Dr Sono Khangharani, Chairperson of Pakistan Dalit Solidarity Network Radha Bheel, leader of the Hari Welfare Association Akram Khaskheli, Community Development Foundation (CDF)'s Jan Odhano, and senior journalist from Hyderabad Ishaq Mangrio.

Overview of the situation

Sindh has been heavily affected by the flood. Twenty-three districts of the province have been declared as calamity-hit. Highlighting the province's four most-impacted districts — Qambar Shahdadkot, Kashmore, Jacobabad, and Shikarpur, Jan Odhano of CDF described the situation of rainfall as intense. He emphasised the damage it has caused to the primary sources of livelihood of the local community's rice crop and livestock.

Akram Khaskheli of the Hari Welfare association shared insight on the situation of Nawabshah and Sanghar districts and called the heavy rainfall a "big tragedy" specifically for the labourers and farmers. Chairperson of Pakistan Dalit Solidarity Network, Radha Bheel highlighted the plight of the minority communities and Muslims dependent on agriculture, which has been destroyed. Dr Sono Khangharani described the intensity and impact of the floods as "strong and widespread", hinting toward the adverse effects it could have on the country's economy.



SITUATION IN SINDH

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Causes

The primary cause of extreme flooding is said to be more-than-expected rainfall. However, not every district has been affected in the same manner. Odhano explained the causes of floods in the four districts of North Sindh — Qambar Shahdadkot, Kashmore, Jacobabad, and Shikarpur — and categorised the two ways in which they have been hit by floods. He said that they were first affected by the damage due to continuous rains, while the water flowing from Balochistan also caused immense destruction.

Odhano further explained that the water flowing as flash floods from hill torrents of Suleman hills gets divided into two parts. As the Kachhi Canal's construction is still incomplete, the water flows to districts including Rajanpur, Dera Ismail Khan, Jacobabad and Kashmore. The water drained from these districts ultimately reached Qambar Shahdotkot.

In Nawabshah and Naushahro Feroze, the intense rainfall — recorded to be more than 500mm — is said to be the primary cause of deadly floods. HWA'S Khaskheli describes the improper construction of LBDO, which carries saline water to be the second big cause, as the water collected in the drain flows through the breaches present in them and ultimately causes damage.

Radha, too, blamed the breaches in LBDO and other canal systems to be the main cause of floods in the Mirpur Khas district.

As explained by Dr Sono, the duration and continuity of rainfall have resulted in massive destruction more than the intensity of rainfall in the Tharparkar, Umerkot, Badin, Thatta, and Sanghar districts, among others.



SITUATION IN SINDH

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Loss and damage

The 2022 floods have paralysed the province of Sindh for many weeks. It has affected all aspects of the lives of its local community. Along with the loss of their loved ones, the flood victims are also mourning the loss of their livestock, their only sources of livelihood and their houses.

Agriculture, which is the means of livelihood for 70% of its rural population, has been greatly damaged. The rice crop in Qambar Shahdadkot, and cotton and sugarcane crops in Nowshehro Ferpuz, Sanghar, Mirpurkhas, Hyderabad and Matiari districts have been immensely damaged. The houses have been destroyed beyond repair. There are no data quoting the exact loss of livestock available.

Issues of Women and Vulnerable Communities

In times of disasters, the already vulnerable communities including women, children, and minorities suffer the most. During the 2022 floods, Sindh's women, children and elderly spent their days and nights in the direst conditions.

Akram Khaskheli said, "the elderly people, pregnant women and children are in horrible conditions. There is a lack of appropriate washroom facility, multiple families are staying in one room."

Radha raised the concern about women's safety and the potential threats that women were having to face. "Women and young girls are at the risk of being abused and raped," she said.

Uzma Noorani of HRCP suggested involving women, too, in the planning of funds' distribution. Member of the civil society Sheema Kirmani pitched in to say that the funds collected for women should be directly handed over to them.



SITUATION IN SINDH

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Situation of Relief & Rehabilitation Work

On the situation of relief in the flood-hit districts of Sindh, all panellists expressed disappointment. Khaskheli termed the government's relief operations as “non-existent” and further described the situation of relief camps as awful with no basic facilities such as tents and plastics that they could use as shelters. He pointed out how relief items were instead being given to political leaders of the district by the assistant and deputy commissioners.

Radha also agreed with the inadequate role of government and mentioned that people are only providing relief on a self-help basis. She further claimed that despite prior alerts, the government didn't take any measures to rescue people. Radha also discussed the lack of medical care and facilities being provided after the floods.

“The government has not provided any medicines. People are arranging medications on a self-help basis and are vaccinating the animals as well,” she said. The minority rights activist also highlighted the lack of clean drinking water, an outbreak of mosquitoes and diseases arising as a result. She even questioned the government's mechanism for providing the Benazir Income Support Programme's Rs25,000 to affected families, which she believes has caused more chaos.

Khangharani expressed concerns over the politicisation of the disaster. He thought it is because of political influence that National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) and Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) seem to be disabled.

“The biggest factor in this disaster is mismanagement. This is the only disaster of its scale in which there's no proper control of anything. People are diverting the water flow and storing water as per their will,” he said. Khangrani went on to discuss how the forced evacuation of INGOs a few years back has adversely impacted relief operations.

“The government has no resources of its own. It may play a role in the rehabilitation phase, but if the United Nations and its partner organisations including INGOs are not mobilised, then it will be difficult to carry out these relief operations.”

SITUATION IN SOUTHERN PUNJAB

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The second webinar of the series was focused on the flood situation in Southern Punjab and was held on September 6, 2022. The dialogue session was moderated by Zeenia Shaukat and Shujauddin Qureshi of TKF and included two panellists — Policy Research Institute's Asad Buzdar and Siraiki Loksank's Fazl-e-Rab. The webinar was attended by Chairperson NHN Punjab and EHD Foundation Munazza Hashmi, Santiyani Women Rural Development Organisation's Narjis Ashfaq, Quaid e Azam University's Lecturer Ahsan Kamal, Saleem Durrani of HRCP, Rafiq Talpur of Villagers Development Organisation, amongst others who also shared notable input in the event.

Overview of the situation

In South Punjab, Damaan is the worst affected area by floods. It is also known as Rohi and Thal. Damaan lies on a belt and its East lies the Indus River. Two districts of Damaan – Rajanpur and Dera Ghazi Khan – have been strongly hit by the floods. As shared by Narjis, district Rajanpur had drowned entirely. Loss of lives, shelter, destruction of agriculture and rise of diseases was recorded in the province.





SITUATION IN SOUTHERN PUNJAB

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Causes

Heavy rainfall and melting of glaciers are usual in the KP province. But this time around, the flash flooding resulted in more than the expected damage. Large-scale devastation was also recorded due to the destruction of infrastructures built on water bodies. Naeema Kishwar called the floods a result of climate change. “The situation we are facing is due to climate change and it’s not the first time,” she said.

Loss and Damage

As shared by Mohammad Ammad, conducting simulation exercises regarding monsoon rains in advance prevented the province from witnessing major destruction. However, he maintained that damage was inevitable with such intense floods. He shared statistics of damage recorded in KP which included 176 human casualties, 217 injured, 10,000 livestock impacted, around 31,000 houses destroyed and 75,000 on the brink of collapse. Naseem presented slightly different statistics. According to him, 289 deaths were reported, 87,772 partially- and fully-damaged houses with 1,458 primary and secondary schools were damaged, 217 health facilities were affected, and a great number of water schemes including 106 tube wells and 79 water reservoirs were destroyed as well. Apart from the visible damage, the outbreak of water and air-borne diseases, psychological disorders and suspension of educational activities was also recorded in the province.



SITUATION IN SOUTHERN PUNJAB

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Issues of Women and Vulnerable Communities

Khursheed Bano, the Executive Director of Hawa Lor Organisation commented on the effects the recent floods have had on women living in the affected areas. She also highlighted that the primary issues faced by women revolved around the unavailability of washrooms, lack of personal hygiene kits for menstruating women, and absence of facilities for pregnant women. Shabina of Aurat Foundation raised the aspect of safety issues faced by affected women, especially in the districts of Tank, Dera Ismail Khan. “These are faraway areas where very few people visit. Since the boundary walls of their houses are broken, there are no lights or rooms available. This has made it extremely difficult for women to spend their nights because they are not safe at all. They stay awake round the clock and are vulnerable to harassment.”

Fauzia of Shirkat Gah pitched in to emphasise the issue of flood-borne diseases, which have vastly affected women and children. While Imran Takkar reiterated that women, the elderly, children and disabled people are most vulnerable in times of calamities. He highlighted the rise of post-traumatic stress disorders among children who have witnessed such a magnanimous calamity and saw their houses being destroyed. Takkar called for immediate action to help such children.

Another issue regarding women which was raised by a couple of speakers was the unavailability of gender-segregated data, which creates problems for women in the recovery and rehabilitation phase.



SITUATION IN SOUTHERN PUNJAB

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Situation of Relief & Rehabilitation Work

Commenting on the situation of the relief and rehabilitation process in the affected districts of KP, all panellists expressed satisfaction to a great extent. Ammad admitted that the first relief response recorded was led by the local community and appreciated the efforts of people who supported each other. The second response, he said, was from the philanthropic community. He also applauded the quick response by the district administration which, Ammad believes, saved many lives. He also shared that the initial appeal for funds made by the federal government excluded KP and Punjab, but efforts were made to revise the appeal and include the two provinces as well.

Naseem also lauded the timely response toward agriculture, education, livestock, and health which helped in early recovery of the projected cost of damage. He claimed that the province has already entered the recovery phase. While praising the relief efforts, Naseem also highlighted how restricting local NGOs from conducting relief operations was a wrong step taken by the government. "Only those local NGOs were given an exemption by the Economic Affairs Division which either had valid MoUs or had acknowledgement letters of EAD before August 5. All local NGOs couldn't benefit equally from this," he said.

He added that no check and balance regarding the collection and distribution of charity was imposed on other charity collectors such as businessmen, politicians, and individuals from religious organisations. "All the regulations from the Deputy Commissioner were only for local social welfare organisations," he said, while also questioning the role of District Disaster Management Units (DDMUs) for not being prepared in advance. Naseem criticised them for not following a gender-inclusive approach during data collection.



SITUATION IN SOUTHERN PUNJAB

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Khursheed Bano also agreed that the relief and rehabilitation work was gender-blind and neglected the necessities of women. She complained about the male community not allowing them to distribute hygiene kits to women. Bano highlighted the relief work done by her organisation. “With the help of our partner organisations, we built washrooms in Charsaddah and Nowshehra,” she informed participants of the discussion. Expressing disappointment over the restrictions she had to face, Bano said: “In the first week, we helped affectees on our own with the help of our organisations, but then we all received a letter which ordered us to first take a permission letter from the deputy commissioner, which created a barrier in our relief work.” She added that there were no restrictions on the relief work being done on the streets, but organisations that requested charities and donations were bound to report everything.

Munazza Hashmi of NHN Punjab raised a valid point of female family heads not benefitting in the rehabilitation phase. “In the process of rehabilitation, women—who are family heads, but their properties are not transferred in their names—won’t be able to benefit from relevant schemes. It is a major issue that we are about to face in the coming days because these things have already begun here and I have witnessed a couple of such cases as a lawyer,” she said, highlighting the importance of gender-segregated data in terms of legal processes.

Naeema Kishwar responded to the criticism of inadequate government efforts and claimed that the government provided the Benazir Income Support Programme amount to the affected families on an urgent basis as part of early recovery following the floods. However, she admitted that the intensity of the calamity was way beyond expectation which caused a delay in relief and rehabilitation operations.

“I feel that this disaster has pushed all the provinces 30 years back and it would take us a long time to complete rehabilitation and relocate the displaced people,” she said. Takkar, meanwhile, invited everyone’s attention towards the emerging threat of terrorism which is causing hurdles in relief activities.

SITUATION IN BALOCHISTAN

The fourth webinar of the series highlighted the post-flood situation in Balochistan which took place on October 28, 2022. To provide an insight into the disaster, moderator and director of TKF Zeenia Shaukat introduced participants of the discussion which included Member of the Balochistan Assembly Shakila Naz, Director Planning of the Provincial Disaster Management Authority Balochistan Amanullah Rind, Hameeda Noor and Sikandar Bizenjo of SHADE Organisation Balochistan and Youth Action Committee, respectively.

Overview of the situation

In South Punjab, Balochistan is one of the worst-hit provinces during the 2022 floods. As the province got struck by floods, it remained disconnected from the rest of the country for a very long time with mobile networks dysfunctional in most of its areas. The province has been severely hit by catastrophic floods. According to initial records, at least 360,000 people have been affected in the province, with the death toll reaching 238. The issue of the province's vulnerability is evident from the fact that 1 in 9 children admitted to health facilities in flood-hit areas of Sindh and Balochistan suffered from severe acute malnutrition, resulting in their weakened immune systems. Discussing the severity of the situation in the province, Amanullah Rind of PDMA Balochistan claimed that around 32 among the 34 districts in Balochistan have been affected by the 2022 floods with some being adversely impacted, particularly the eastern parts which include Sohbatpur, Naseerabad, Jafferabad, Jhal Magsi and Lehri—a division in Sibi. Along with human casualties, huge losses of livestock, poultry, agriculture, infrastructure, and shelters have been recorded. Damaan is the worst affected area by floods. It is also known as Rohi and Thal. Damaan lies on a belt and its East lies the Indus River. Two districts of Damaan – Rajanpur and Dera Ghazi Khan – have been strongly hit by the floods. As shared by Narjis, district Rajanpur had drowned entirely. Loss of lives, shelter, destruction of agriculture and rise of diseases was recorded in the province.

SITUATION IN BALOCHISTAN

Causes

Balochistan is typically a dry region yet it experienced extreme rainfall during the monsoon season. Rind claims that only around 12 or 13 districts in the province usually experience monsoon rains; however, this time around 32 districts were under monsoon spells. The unusual rainfall, which continued throughout June and July, led to floods. Hameeda Noor of the SHADE Organisation held the influential people of the areas responsible for worsening the situation. “Areas like Jafferabad, Naseerabad, Jhal Magsi etc. are green belt areas, which means these are closer to canals. On the order of waderas, barriers are created to stop the water from flowing into other canals. During the monsoon season, the canal gets overfilled and eventually, it leads to floods. While some cracks occur naturally, others are created on purpose. I don’t call it floods but the flow of corruption,” she said, adding the situation worsens because of corrupt people.

Loss and Damage

The province was left disabled after being hit by massive floods. Apart from the vast land affected by the floods, the province also experienced communication breakdown, especially in Lasbela, Kech, Panjgur, Gwadar, Awaran, Ziarat, Mastung and adjoining areas. Rind presented PDMA’s assessment of the damage in which 336 human casualties and 129,500 temporary displacements were recorded. Apart from this, 1.2 million acres of crops were damaged. A total of 125,000 Baloch people needed rescue.

Hameeda raised concerns about inaccessibility to many areas due to blocked or broken roads and bridges. “Lack of access has resulted in many difficulties such as an increase in health issues among women and children, especially malnutrition. Malaria is also widespread,” she shared.



SITUATION IN BALOCHISTAN

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Situation of Relief & Rehabilitation Work

On the state of relief and rehabilitation operations in the affected districts of Balochistan, Rind provided detailed estimates. He stressed that the PDMA fulfilled its initial responsibility of informing the District Disaster Management Forums (DDMFs) of a potential threat in advance, which provided instant response throughout the rains. Giving further details of the relief and rescue response, he said: “PDMA along with district administration, Pakistan Army and other stakeholders conducted the rescue operation. We have also started a parallel relief program. We connected with NDMA, and other organisations of the UN as well and around 268,000 household beneficiaries have so far benefited from it. Some of our programs have been completed and others are ongoing. PDMA has distributed 43,693 tents and provided food vouchers and other basic resources to 59,572 individuals. NDMA assisted by giving 7,048 tents and some food vouchers. A revised flood plan was made by UN agencies and fundraising was conducted, while those programs are still being implemented.”

Speaking about the rehabilitation phase, Rind termed it a long process but also shared relevant plans. “We are trying to mobilise our stakeholders, federal and Balochistan’s provincial government, different organisations such as the World Bank and UN agencies. The adversity and number of affectees are much more than we had expected, yet we are hopeful for early recovery. As part of our early recovery plan, since Rabi season has begun, we have directed organisations and INGOs to provide seeds and fertilisers to people, so that they can benefit from the season. With assistance from the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) we have conducted a baseline assessment for further mobilisation of resources,” he added.

SITUATION IN BALOCHISTAN

While Rind assured the session about PDMA's successful efforts, other panellists expressed dissatisfaction. Shakeela shared her concern over the lack of required equipment for unblocking roads and draining water. She termed the relief operation a "big failure".

"I haven't seen government departments such as the NDMA or PDMA work more than 40% on the ground. As a parliamentarian, I did as much as possible from my end but I had no such support from the government," she claimed.

Hameeda also agreed about the inadequate efforts of the government.

Sharing her experience of visiting the affected areas, she said: "In some areas, there's still water and the roads are also broken, which has blocked access to these areas as well. It was claimed that thousands of tents have been distributed, but I saw the people sitting outside without any shelters during my field visits. The rescue operation was also being done by the locals themselves. There was also a lot of discrimination. I had informed UN's organisations to arrange vaccines in advance, as malaria would eventually spread but none of those arrangements was done."

She further shared her frustration over the government's discrimination toward local organisations that were not being allowed to conduct relief operations. "The volunteers are doing their best to provide relief to the affectees; however, it is not enough. The government has the proper resources and machinery to provide relief and it is its responsibility. Instead of cooperating with the volunteers, the government is instead creating hurdles for them and filing FIRs against them."



RECOMMENDATIONS

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A number of noteworthy recommendations were put forward by the panellists and guests of the four-part webinar series on floods, which are as follows:

- Start preparing early for potential future calamities which could get even worse, as floods will remain a recurring issue in Pakistan due to climate change.
- Long-term planning such as building low-cost but stable and flood-proof houses is required to deal with floods and lessen the damage.
- The potential threat to food security should be raised on international platforms and all stakeholders should work collaboratively to amplify the matter globally.
- More volunteers need to be engaged.
- The issues of women, transpersons and vulnerable communities should be addressed specifically and separately, rather than including them in general issues.
- Climate-resilient infrastructure should be built for which an appeal for global aid should be launched.
- A request for debt payment to be deferred for a few years should be made by the state to utilise that amount for rehabilitation purposes.



RECOMMENDATIONS

- Civil society should make efforts to deal with the aftermath of floods such as issues of mass unemployment, the rise of new diseases, landless peasants etc.
- Crisis emerging due to man-made reasons should be considered during policy-making of disaster management.
- A policy regarding the rescue of animals in times of disaster should be a part of disaster management.
- The potential threat of early marriages should be noticed and dealt with accordingly.
- Canal system should also be updated with the natural system being restored.
- Left Bank Outfall Drain (LBOD) and Right Bank Outfall Drain (RBOD) should be cleaned annually.
- In future, the mechanism of collecting data should be made public to ensure transparency and accuracy of the facts and figures.
- A long-term strategy should be formulated to strengthen the vulnerable living conditions of people of the affected areas.



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