PRESS RELEASE

KARACHI, Dec. 12: Representatives of civil society and human rights organisations on Monday demanded the government to expedite rehabilitation work of flood-affected areas in Sindh and devise a transparent mechanism for the distribution of funds and overall relief and rehabilitation process.

Addressing a joint press conference at Karachi Press Club the civil society activists from Mirpurkhas division deplored that a large portion of the flood-affected population especially from minority communities have still not received any support from the government.

The entire rehabilitation process should be free from political interference, favouritism and discrimination. For this purpose, district and taluka-level committees should be formulated, they suggested. The members of these committees can be, Assistant Commissioner, Mukhtiarkar, CSO representatives, Community representatives and Social activists.

Keeping experience and the impending climate change in mind, climate-resilient structures/houses should be built like Bangladesh's flood resilience infrastructure.

Women-led households, orphans, differently-abled persons, transgenders, and marginalized members of religious minorities should be prioritized in relief and rehabilitation efforts.

Women and children at the flood relief camps are at higher risk of physical and sexual assault, they pointed out. The Sindh government should devise a Women's Protection Policy which will not only work in current disasters but also in future catastrophes.

They said the government lacks authentic data about vulnerable people in Sindh. People who are at higher risk are Haris (agriculture workers), and scheduled castes such as Kholi Bheel and Bagaris. They often work at the farms of other landowners. Government should devise a mechanism to register all vulnerable communities in Sindh.

Cleanliness should be improved at the relief camps and disinfection should be carried out on regular basis. Already we have noticed that waterborne diseases, malaria and dengue have wreaked havoc.

The most affected are sharecroppers or Haris who have lost everything they are the poorest of all and they mostly belong to the most vulnerable communities. No such relief is announced for such affectees who are landless like kolhi, bheel, bagri and other scheduled castes. Government should announce a special package for these communities on an immediate basis.

They demanded that the small farmers should be provided with seeds and the distribution should take place through a third party so that transparency is maintained.

An online tracking system should be introduced for the rehabilitation process of the affectees via a third party so that nepotism, corruption, and discrimination are minimized.

The speakers said vulnerable communities work on the farms of landlords and receive their chunk when the corps is ready and sold. The government must ensure that peasants (sharecroppers) also receive their part of the compensation.

A very good number of affectees are mostly from vulnerable communities who work on the farms of land owners and live in cottages/chaprey. During the rains, they lost their all belongings. But the “chaprey” is not included in the form. Government must also ensure that those people who live in “chaprey” are compensated and rehabilitated.

The civil society activists demanded the government clear the natural waterways of illegal encroachments which are flooding villages. Old embankments should be repaired and new ones should be built around flood-prone villages and towns to avoid future flooding.

An investigation should be carried out against the allegations of breaking the dyke walls during the floods which inundated many villages.

Audit of the funds of the UCs, Town Committees, Municipal Committees, Municipal Corporation and District Council as shown expenses in flood emergency response

Following activists from Mirpurkhas attended the press conference:

Muhammad Bakhsh Kapri, Chander Kumar, Shehzado Malik, Ali Hassan and Muhammad Rafique Leghari

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