

PRESS RELEASE

Environmentalists call for inclusion of vulnerable communities in the policymaking

KARACHI, Oct 15: Environmental experts including media persons and civil society activists have underlined the need for the inclusion of vulnerable communities in the policymaking and development projects about environmental protection and climate change as they are affected the most due to those policies and projects.

The environmental experts Muhammad Toheed (urban planner), Afia Salam (environmental journalist) and Basil Andrews (Karachi Urban Lab) were speaking at an online webinar "Climate Change: The Disconnect Between Communities and Policies" organized by The Knowledge Forum, a Karachi based think tank Friday afternoon. Over 50 participants from across the country attended the webinar.

Senior urban planner and architect Muhammad Toheed pointed out that Pakistan's climate report has indicated that floods will increase in Pakistan in the coming years. According to him participation at the grassroots level like common people and civil society including NGOs in the policymaking is often absent.

He said in Karachi 52 per cent of people are living in informal settlements, which the policy-making authorities and bureaucrats consider as illegal so they don't include such settlements in their development schemes, thus people living in those settlements suffer a lot.

Recently, he said, in Karachi urban flooding was a problem, but the federal government entrusted the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) and Frontier Works Organisation (FWO) to carry out projects like cleaning of rain flood drains. But the interventions of these federal organisation has created problems for the community as thousands of people have been displaced as their homes were destroyed.

Senior environmental journalist Ms. Afia Salam said due to climate change the rain pattern has increased in Pakistan. Also, sea intrusion in the coastal areas of the Indus Delta area has destroyed millions of acres of agricultural lands. It has affected peoples' lives and their livelihood. She said big dams and barrages were constructed to irrigate agricultural lands.

She said Media's role in Pakistan on climate change issues is unfortunately only event-based except few in-depth writings by those environmental journalists who do investigative stories and go to the communities.

Basil Andrew pointed out that the media needs to do climatic change reporting concerning what is happening at the ground level and we need to know our local climate change issues.

He pointed out that during the last lockdown in June this year, most people were confined at homes where they were facing heat waves along with load shedding. Some people started investing in buying UPS and batteries.

He said still over 6,000 climate migrants are living along the Super Highway in Karachi, who migrated after the 2010 floods.

In her presentation, Ms. Zeenia Shaukat from the The Knowledge Forum said Pakistan is the 8th most effective country in terms of the climate change in the world.

According to the World Resource institute report, factors contributing to climate change include fossil fuels (one-third), transportation (15 percent), industry (5-6 percent),

The TKF shall continue to organize webinars for the creation of an informed perspective on communities and space for highlighting their voice.

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