

Pakistani flood situation

Situation and challenges

The government of Pakistan is once again under turbulence, after the biggest supporter of the Coalition, MQM left the government. The coalition is without a parliamentary majority and discussions are underway to keep the government afloat. This will certainly jeopardize the government's efforts to come down upon the Talibans and the radical movements.

It is in this political upheaval the government had made announcements on the flood Relief activities.

On January 3, 2011, the Pakistani Government, through the rehabilitation spokesperson announced that all INGO working for the 2010 flood rehabilitation must terminate the emergency and relief phase. It was not clearly indicated whether they could move to the next phase. The INGO have not yet made any open observation, but the UN spokesperson announced regrets that the much needed relief phase has to be stopped and emphasized the need to continue.

As on today, the government has not made its rehabilitation plan for the flood victims while many of them are still in the camps. In this situation the end of the relief activities need to be relevantly looked into and a thorough analysis of the situation needs to be done. But it is a fact that this is an impossible task at this moment of political vulnerability for the government.

At this stage, many points are still open and must be discussed. The humanitarian situation is yet to be fully solved and the situation is still highly vulnerable especially for the most vulnerable groups (women, elderly, children and pregnant mothers).

1. Winter has set in and the important humanitarian preoccupation is how will the people survive the winter ? in a context where agricultural activities are still not yet possible and agricultural lands are yet to be identified , how can one expect these agricultural worker to earn a living ?
2. What are the alternatives plans for their economical recovery and who is reflecting on it and what are the means available (both financial and technical)?
3. As on today there is little information available on the analysis of the economical situation of the people, their needs and aspirations, their health conditions etc. There is an urgent need to take up a need analysis before stopping the relief phase.
4. There is a need to analyze the status of the beneficiaries region wise in order to establish priority areas of intervention. But the question is who can do this ? How can the NGO contribute to fulfill this task.
5. In the same way there is a need to assess the livestock which could be the sole means of livelihood for some of the victims of this floods and introduce animal husbandry management (fodder, vaccination, medication etc.) in order to maintain the economic asset fo the victims.
6. It is also urgent to take up lobby activities with the influential's chowdries and landlords to explore the possibilities of building semi permanent shelters with a permission to use the land for a certain period of time. This is a highly sensitive issue and the negotiations need to be done in close conjunction with the government. In any

case the government for itself has not come out with any relevant proposition to give away crown land to the most vulnerable.

7. As on today return to normalcy is not so easy for the most vulnerable and high risk groups. The government and the NGO must together device a plan to facilitate recovery both economical and social; and this must be undertaken without stopping the relief activities.
8. There is no clear plan for the rehabilitation of the education infrastructure and this does not allow the scolarisation of the children. This needs to be addressed at the earliest.
9. In the present situation the minorities have been subject to hardships and have received very little aid. Their life conditions are much at risk and there is an urgent need to address the humanitarian aid as a priority.
10. It is also very urgent to formulate alternative possibilities for the victims to eke out a living through some adequate and appropriate IGP.

All these points plead in favor of a coordinated effort for elaborating a national rehabilitation plan with a clear intervention strategy and also by clearly defining the roles and responsibilities of the civil society organizations, the government and the army. A special attention must be given to the limits of collaboration with the army in order to respect the humanitarian principles and rules.

The assassination of Salman Taseer, the governor of Punjab is a clear indication that the adverse radical forces are still very active and trying to destabilize the state. In this context if the humanitarian response is not handled appropriately and if stopped prematurely, then it will create a lot of frustration and anger among the victims, thus preparing the ground for the radical forces to take over them and lure them, especially the youths in to the adverse radical paths.

The preparation of a six month action plan for the Relief activities is an imperative that must be undertaken at the earliest and the NGO must be given ample trust to elaborate such plans.

It is also important for the international community to keep up its promises and bring help to these victims. As on today only 55% of the pledged amount would have been received. At the same time the major donors are also cutting their international aid as a consequence do the international economic crisis. Japan has already announced a 7% cut in its international aid. This will need a lobby on the part of the NGO and INGO.

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