

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS DISCUSS FLOODS 2022 IN PAKISTAN, WAY OUT WAY FORWARD



Responsibility

Obligations of State, HRDs, UN and other Stake Holders



The Sindh Human Rights Defenders Network (SHRDN) organized a consultative event to discuss the vulnerabilities of the victims of unprecedented climate conditions in Pakistan and the obligations of State, HRDs, UN and other stake holders at a local hotel in Hyderabad, Sindh. The event was attended by the legal practitioners, journalists, HRDs, WHRDs including Firdous Sangi, Rubina Chandio, Imdad Chandio, Marvi Awan, Pushpa Kumari, Adv. Sooba Bhatti, Mr. Boota Masih, Mukhtiar Abbasi, Shoukat Memon, Faheem Babar, Zulfiqar Halepoto, Zulfiqar Qadri, Anu Solangi, Darakhshan Suleh, Qadir Girahno and other senior and young hrds. The chairperson of Sindh Commission on the Status of Women, NHRI, Ms Nuzhat Shirin presided the event. The dialogue was facilitated by advocate and coordinator of the HRD Network Ali A Palh who shared the purpose of holding the event and devastation made by the floods 2022 in Pakistan particularly in

15th September, 2022, Hotel
Indus, Hyderabad, Sindh.

Sindh province.

Heavy rains & Flood 2022 has caused huge loss to Pakistani nation. Almost 33 million people are displaced, 1500 died, 12,800 were injured, including 333 women and 615 children killed and 3,452 women and 4,006 children injured. One third of the country is under water. The area affected by the floods represents about 35 per cent of total planted to cereal, sugarcane, and cotton during the kharif and will also affect sowing of crops in Rabi crop.



The Floods 2022 have triggered one of the worst global climate fuelled humanitarian crises. Pakistan has seen severe heat waves droughts and melting of glaciers recently which are warning not only for Pakistan but whole World.

According to the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), **between 14 June and 28 September more than 1,600 people were killed and over 12,800 people were injured** as a result of the heavy rains and floods, including 333 women and 615 children killed and 3,452 women and 4,006 children injured

Pakistan is located at a place on the globe which bears the brunt of two major weather systems. One can cause high temperatures and drought, like the heat wave in March, and the other brings monsoon rains. The majority of Pakistan's population live along the Indus river, which swells and can flood during monsoon rains. Global warming is making air and sea temperatures rise, leading to more evaporation. Warmer air can hold more moisture, making monsoon rainfall more intense. Scientists predict that the average rainfall in the Indian summer monsoon season will increase due to climate change. Pakistan's southernmost provinces, Sindh and Balochistan, felt the worst of it. They each experienced their wettest August on record, with seven to eight times their normal rainfall.

The intense rains swelled the Indus River and triggered widespread flash floods, submerging large swaths of the country under water. Estimates suggest that at least 33 million people have been affected by the floods and 1,500 people have died. On 25 August, the government of Pakistan declared a national emergency, calling 66 districts - mainly in Balochistan and Sindh - “calamity hit”. On 30 August, UN secretary general Antonio Guterres launched a \$160m appeal to support Pakistan, urging the world to help victims of the country’s “monsoon on steroids”. The flood is estimated to have caused more than \$30bn in damages. Around 1.7m houses and 18,000 schools were destroyed, while more than 1,460 health facilities were impacted. Meanwhile, almost 800,000 livestock were killed and 2m hectares of crops and orchards were affected - with around \$2.3bn of food crops destroyed.ⁱ

33 million people have been affected by the floods so far and 7.5 million displaced

Vulnerabilities:

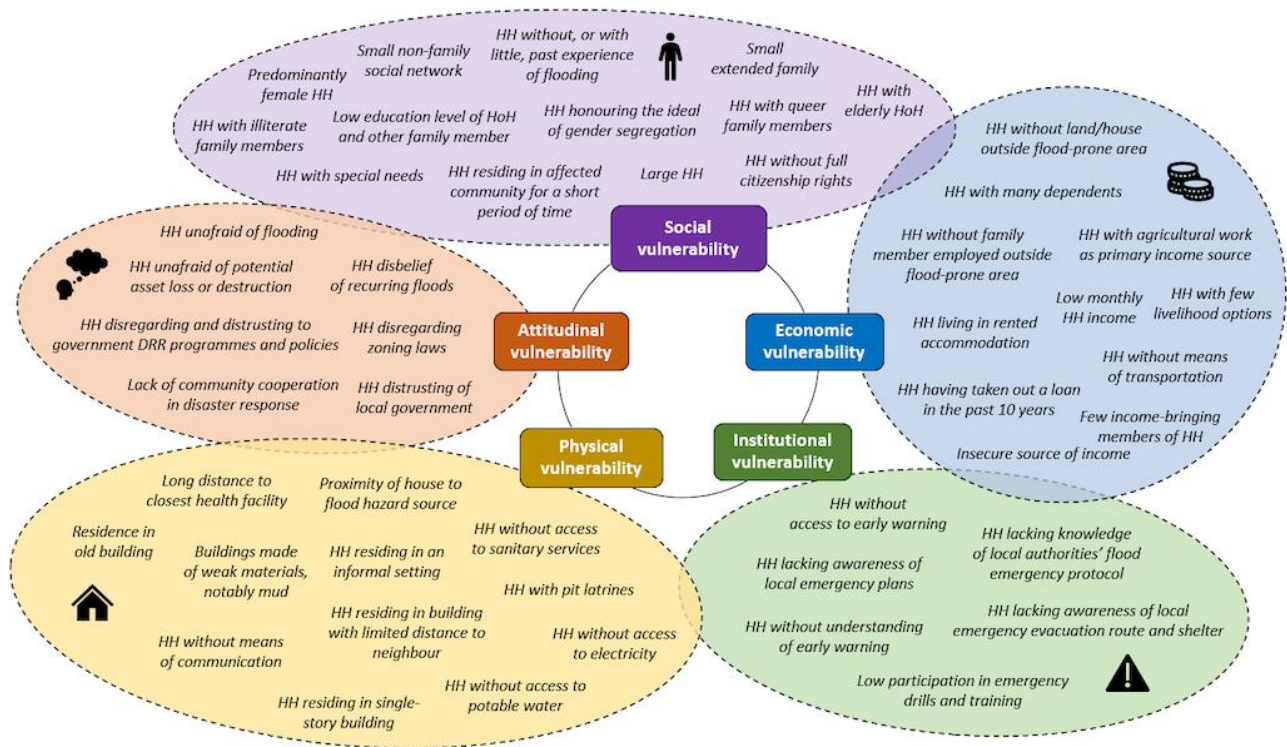
While talking Ali Palh said that heavy monsoon rains triggering the floods across Pakistan are undoubtedly the result of climate change as the planet heats up and weather extremes are exacerbated, but this is no fault of Pakistan, which has emitted only 0.4% of global carbon emissions since 1959. When compared with other extremely high emitters like the US, who tallies a carbon emission rate of 21.5% globally, and by China with 16.4%. Environmental degradation and climate change are among the most pressing women rights problems of our time. The unprecedented has exposed the women into more vulnerable situation. This is why I have chosen to make environment and women rights a distinctive priority for my mandate as Chairperson SCSW, says Nuzhar Shirin while giving her views on the gender vulnerabilities in a flood affected areas.



Women and girls experience the greatest impacts of climate change, which amplifies existing gender inequalities and poses unique threats to their livelihoods, health, and safety, she added. There are a range of factors - including income, occupation and education - that can affect a person's vulnerability to the impacts of climate change. In Pakistan, women especially women from minority groups are particularly disadvantaged by these factors due to entrenched social norms and socio-economic structures.



As a result, women are often more vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, says Pushpa Kumari, Member Sindh Human Rights Commission. Studies have also shown that gender-based violence, including physical, psychological, and reproductive violence against women, becomes more prevalent after natural disasters, with complex and far-reaching consequences on health and well-being. In Sindh, women and young girls including children are living on the highways in very unhygienic conditions with no access to the washroom.



Human Rights Defenders and Climate Change:

The environmental human rights defenders who are most exposed to abuse and reprisals include women, farmers and indigenous peoples who fight against deforestation, extractives, or loss of cultural heritage or identity. One of them was Perveen Rahman, she was working at the forefront against the land grabbing of basin and the cutting of mangroves and unfortunately was killed in Karachi in 2013. States have an obligation to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of environmental human rights defenders and the communities they represent.

Faheem Babar, a hyderabad based journalist says that the local media needs to get active for the ground reporting and to show the climate catastrophe and identify the gaps in relief operations. Mr Faheem expressed his concern over increasing corruption, weak governance, and lack of capacity of institutions including the National Provincial Disaster Management Authorities which are unable to deal with issues like rescue in floods, provision of shelter, food, medicine to displaced population.

Mukhtiar Abbasi, Rubina Chandio, Ali Palh and other hrds were of the opinion that the police and revenue authorities are targeting defenders and threatening them of dire consequences because of their role in highlighting corruption misappropriation in relief work. It was collective voice of the human rights defenders that false cases are being registered against human rights defenders for their criticism on unfair distribution of aid, inaction of authorities in areas Johi, Khairpur Nathan Shah in North and Jhudo and other areas in Lar area.



پکڑے گئے

Allegation of selling two truck of relief stuff

Case registration is good sign. Je should be convicted & dismissed



Advocate M Parkash who is also representative of minority commission highlighted the discrimination against religious minorities in rescue and relief operation by the actors including NGOs. Bheel, menghwar, other minorities are seriously hit by rain and floods. State officials particularly revenue department is not paying due attention to the problems faced by them. Aid is being sent to people who are less affected and are people of influential politicians.

Many Journalists are booked under anti-narcotics cases because of their voice against corruption of revenue and other officials in relief. Deliberate cuts and breaches in canals, rivers, tributaries to save crops of influential political people and to drown helpless poor people reported by journalists and activists on social media have triggered threats and action against them. Nadia Larak from SAWFCO, a renowned whrd, drew attention of the forum towards the condition of flood affected population who are without food, shelter and medicine begging on roads of different cities. Besides, poor people have passed through psychological trauma in floods so they should be provided psychosocial treatment. Also toilets are important because IDP women and children go to open spaces to defecate which exposed them to sexual harassment.



Media reports Marriage inside IDP camps. Paralegals voices against Child Marriages

Children and women are being sexually harassed and abused in camps by perpetrators in the name of ration and food. Marvi Aiwan, whrd and women protection cell in-charge raised issue of women, their sanitation, personnel health problems and maternity issues in camps where medical facilities for women and children are not sufficient and protection needs of vulnerable groups is higher than usual due to mix population in camps.



Marvi Awan had been visiting camps regularly she has seen that there are diseases outbreaks including Malaria, Dengue and Fungal skin infections. Women are malnourished and facing hygiene issues in the camps. Large number of pregnant women is being seen in camps.

All defenders particularly WHRD were of the view that number of pregnant women who are displaced and their deliveries are expected soon not exactly known but it seems in hundreds of thousands.

Darakhshan Suleh, WHRD & member SCSW, we should empower women in society. Once women are empowered, they will be able to protect children and their families. Our trainings should include disaster response skills too.

Ms Naumana Arain, an activist and knowledgeable in health, stress on the protection of health during floods and said since floods can potentially increase the transmission of

water- and vector-borne diseases, such as typhoid fever, cholera, malaria, and yellow fever, among others, it is important to know your risk and protect your water sources.

She read the following list of steps for health protection from WHO during floods:

1. Chlorinating or boiling all water for drinking and food preparation

Ensuring uninterrupted provision of safe drinking water is the most important preventive measure to be implemented following flooding, in order to reduce the risk of outbreaks of water-borne diseases.

2. Promoting good hygienic practices and safe food preparation techniques

Do not use flood water to wash dishes, brush teeth or wash and prepare food. Always wash your hands with soap and water if you have been in contact with floodwater.

3. Avoiding walking or driving through flooded areas and standing water.

Even the smallest amount of water can bring about significant dangers. You do not know if electrical lines have fallen in the water or hazardous chemicals exist. Cars and people can easily be swept away during a flood.

4. Throwing away any food that has come in contact with floodwater.

If your food has touched any floodwater, it is not safe to eat and increases your risk of water-borne diseases.

5. Safely cleaning your home if it has come in contact with floodwater.

Throw out any items that cannot be washed and cleaned with bleach, such as pillows and mattresses. Clean all walls, floors and other surfaces with soap and water, as well as bleach.

6. Protect against mosquitos

If your home is in an area with stagnant or standing water, use mosquito repellent, following the instructions on the label, and apply it to clothes or skin. Also wear trousers and long-sleeved shirts, and cover beds with mosquito nets when sleeping.

Sabeen Qureshi, lecturer Architect Department, and women hrd said Pakistan should also build disaster resilient buildings, structures which can withstand storms, floods. We must think we develop disaster resilient community which respond to disasters occur almost every year.

Firdous Sangi, whrd who is working in Dadu Sehwan and other districts seriously affected by the flood where Johi, KN Shah are even disconnected from the rest of cities shared that a month has been passed but the response from NDMA, PDMA is very slow and nominal. Women Children transgender old people are without food shelter medicine. Those who are settled on banks are not being taken care by the concern state authorities.

A paralegal of RightsNow Foundation, Shahnawaz Dars reported from the field that in many areas where civil administration was unable to reach, Pakistan military reached to the affected population in areas surrounded by the water.



Reported by a Defender from field: People in need were without tents. Pakistan military was seen helping flood affected people in Sindh.

Advocate Qadir Girahno from High Court Bar Association Hyderabad said only religious organizations or other philanthropists are providing food to IDPs, most of the state funds reached to deputy commissioners are not reaching to IDPs.

He said he has visited six to eight districts affected by the floods including Dadu, Mirpurkhas, Sanghar, Tando Allahyar, etc, not seen UN or other NGOs. He further added that it is being heard that they are busy in assessment and waiting for their head offices for signals.



Reported: flood affected girl raped in IDP camp. She was offered food and ration.

One of the important issue raised by the representatives of NGOs that the strict requirement of *the Economic Affair Division (EAD)* for NGOs has been relaxed for two years but still deputy commissioners and Assistant Commissioner are not aware of that and they are seeking NOCs from the NGOs which is hindering their relief work and even getting relief projects.

Imdad Chandio from Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) raised the issue of weak governance, discrimination and protection of children in camps. Despite warnings of rains and floods, NDMA and PDMA did not act and respond to the situation which has caused loss of human lives and devastation of livestock and crops.

Dr Ismail Kunbhar, Expert in Agriculture and Crop and Professor at Agriculture University Jamshoro said dewatering is main issue, if water is not drained timely, sowing of October sugarcane and wheat will be affected which will pose threat of food insecurity to the country and Sindh province in the future.

Mr Kunbhar drew forums attention towards the trap of bonded labour millions of peasants who will be in serious debt after huge loss of their crops this year. Hundreds of thousand peasants who were already in the trap of servitude will further be in tight grip of slavery.

Many of incidents of torture on peasants are being reported from different areas where landlords tortured peasants for not complying with their terms or wills. Thousands of labourers in Brick kilns are in miserable conditions whose freedom of movement is restricted.

Zulfiqar Halepoto, an author, political Scientist and activist said rain cannot be blamed for weak governance, corruption. Countries which were prone to natural disaster like Bangladesh have learnt how to cope up with these catastrophes. Mr. Halepoto said Pakistan and Sindh are facing floods almost every year. Pakistani state and international Community should train nation and rulers how to prevent or mitigate humanitarian emergencies and how to survive it happens.



Reported by a defender from the field: A child Irfan's ear was chopped by Azeem Khoso Landlord

Saima Gul, women rights activist, said the flood 2022 are not seen in Pakistan recent history. We are in need of extraordinary support from international community. 15 per cent of its rice and 40 per cent of cotton is destroyed. This raises two things: fear of hunger and also poverty.

Sadar uldin, a paralegal of RightsNow Foundation raised issue of early child marriages in the camps which should be stopped and reported. It is a dangerous trend because female children are being given in return of money due to hunger and poverty. He highlighted incidents being reported from different IDP camps in different districts of Sindh province are serious threat to Children particularly minor females who have not come out of trauma of displacement is facing child marriages.



From Field: People are settled on the banks in North Sindh & on right side Mirpukhras Bridges

Cotton, Vegetables, Sugarcane, Banana, Union, Mango Orchards are seriously affected. This will cause heavy debts for peasants and further increase in bonded labour particularly in Sindh province where peasants are already in debts due to inflation, unfair prices of crops and mal nutrition. More than 16000 livestock has perished. Around 4 million people are affected displaced and 3.9 million acres crops are damaged. It will also increase poverty in Sindh province which is already poverty hit.

Zulfiqar Qadri a renowned HRD, philanthropist, who is belongs to Fuqrae Sath Hyderabad is involved in food distribution and relief activities shared we should not blame nature for this catastrophe because we do not have systems respond to calamities, we do not have institution, infrastructure to deal with even rain and floods which usually hit countries. We have not learnt from past particularly 2010, 2011 floods, 2005 earthquake which cost many lives in Pakistan.

Advocate Sooba Bhatti said that discrimination against minorities was seen during the distribution of relief goods. Minorities are being ignored. Minorities should be protected during these disasters. He said wherever hindu muslim both are hit by floods. Aid distributors are giving importance to muslims first which is discrimination not allowed by the Constitution of Pakistan. Even where mosques and temples are under water in areas, mosques are dewatered but temples are ignored as not important.

Advocate Ali Palh while facilitation raised the issue of enforced disappearances of citizens during rain flood and displacement is causing serious pain for families it should not happen during the floods but it should never happen at any time. All disappeared should be released, returned, or state should ensure the disappeared are found and produce before the courts if required in any charge under any law. Those individuals or families who claim to be refugees, or stateless should be protected as per International Refugee Convention and other conventions protects stateless.

Nuzhat Shireen, Sindh Commission on Status of Women (SCSW) presided the dialogue and said this disaster is test of our nerves, passions, unity and wisdom. We all as civil society unite and support the vulnerable community in camps, or those still caught in flooded areas. She shared about her visit to North Sindh and miserable situation of IDPs particularly women and children who are in need of food, shelter, medicine.

Ms Nuzhat called upon international humanitarian actors UN agencies and NGOs for more funds and more relief packages in Sindh. She also emphasized the need of protection of women, children and other vulnerable groups in and outside IDP camps.

She said, the commission is ready to extend its cooperation to civil society in its human rights, development and peace work in the province.



Civil Society Activist Ramzan Lund who was raising voice for dewatering, and resisting to illegal and inappropriate breaches by the irrigation. Pic by Advocate Ram Kolhi SHRDN

Obligations on the state

We must change the way we tackle the climate crisis. Our current approach is too slow and risks a catastrophic failure to meet climate targets. State must ensure the delivery of safe drinking water; lifesaving medical supplies; therapeutic food supplies; and hygiene kits to children and families. We are also establishing temporary learning centres and supporting the protection and psychosocial wellbeing of children affected by these devastating floods. Pakistan is getting a large number of aid from international donor, the National Disaster Management Authority is responsible for logistics of the relief boxes, the authority must ensure the unbiasedness in the delivery system. The government should make a policy for their rehabilitation at the earliest, says one of the participants. Government can play a big role by enacting policies that encourage a speedy transition to clean energy such as wind and solar. The world has made a lot of progress in this

direction in recent years, but we still have a very long way to go. Governments - state, local, and federal - have a lot of tools at their disposal to accelerate this. Petrol and diesel vehicles, planes and ships use fossil fuels. Reducing car use, switching to electric vehicles and minimising plane travel will not only help stop climate change, it will reduce air pollution too.

The Pakistani government must strengthen the disaster management authorities and make better communication practices during a natural disaster. Governments must protect ecosystems key to the fight against climate change: rivers, wetlands, oceans, forests and mangroves absorb large quantities of carbon, slowing warming. Mangroves also serve as a barrier against tropical storms, and wetlands absorb excess water from floods, both extreme weather events exacerbated by climate change.

Pakistan's biggest obstacle to addressing this crisis—and other crises, too—may not be a lack of international support but its political polarization. Throughout the floods, domestic politics have proceeded as usual, with the government and Khan waging bitter fights even with one-third of the country underwater.



Pakistan has been plagued by economic crises, political unrest, and now catastrophic and deadly flooding. We must urge the political parties in coalition government and the opposition parties to suspend their political rallies and blame game, the focus of the government should be the relief operation and the rehabilitation instead of consuming their energies to make counter political narratives against each other, says Advocate Villayat Shah

Human Rights Defenders were very cynic and critical of role of corporate sector, multinational and national companies including Thar Coal project. The recent

unprecedented rain and devastation by floods 2022 has raised serious question on these companies which are making huge benefits but not investing on human and local areas. The Thar coal power project, other large small companies, oil and gas companies extracting oil of billions of dollars from the local areas like Badin, Sangahr Tando Allahyar, Sehwan but seem absent in rescues and relief process. They are not complying with their Corporate Social Responsibilities (CSR) and also not respecting their obligations under UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. Pakistani government should hold them accountable for their inaction, noncompliance and direct them to share their profits with the affected population and communities including farmers, peasants and indigenous people.

Textiles, Sugar Mills, other industries should do compliance of UN Guiding Principles on human rights and business in the interest of rights of labourers.

- As recommended by participants, more research and mapping is necessary on the disproportionate impact of environmental degradation and climate change on minorities and vulnerable groups. The aim here is to try to prevent climate change from reinforcing inequalities. The SHRDN is keen to bring all the climate activists on a roundtable with government officials to make a roadmap policy to tackle the climate change catastrophe.
- Focuses not only on improving understanding, but helps to inform solutions for problems at local, regional, national, and global levels;
- Integrates diverse kinds of knowledge and explicitly engages the social, ecological, physical, health, and engineering sciences;
- Emphasizes coupled human-environment systems rather than individual human or environmental systems in isolation;
- Adopt climate-smart approaches for managing land and water resources.
- Coal power plants must be closed and dirty fuel which is harmful for environment should be stopped resolved by the HRDs.

- Pakistan should develop efficient responsive disaster management programme and people on post in NDMA and PDMA should be appointed on merit.
- Human Rights Defenders should be included in policy making, decision making and other strategies for protection of human rights.
- Sindh Child Protection Department, Women Development Department, Sindh and National Commission on Status of Women (SCSW), National Commission of Human Rights should immediately act in current flood situation particularly human rights, women and child protection issues in IDP camps and outside where displacement still continue due to breaches in rivers. These NHRIs should also monitor the rescue, relief process and ensure vulnerable communities and sections receive due share in relief and stay protected from exploitation and harassment.



Reported from Field - Mosquitos attacks on IDPs and Livestock

- District, provincial and national authorities have ignored transgender, refugees, stateless, religious minorities in rescue relief must treat all equally without any discrimination.
- United Nation must stand with Pakistan in this time of need. Its agencies (UNICEF, UNWOMEN, UNHCR, FAO, WFP, UNOCHA, and IOM) should respond to worse situation in remote, excluded areas of Sindh and Pakistan and utilise the strengths of civil society and human rights defenders networks works in these areas.
- Pakistan is victim of emissions of industries by rich countries so it should be supported and more work should be done on climate justice in Pakistan.

- Environmental defenders, journalists, social activists arrested from Johi, Khairpur Nathan Shah, Badin, Jhudo during floods for their voice against bad governance corruption should be released and fake cases lodged against them should be quashed.
- All loans of farmers with interests should be waived and new loans should be issued for Rabi season and seed, fertilizer should be given on subsidized rates or in some areas even free of cost.
- Vigilance Committees on prevention and elimination of bonded labour should be activated and Sindh Revenue department should make committees in districts for demarcation of lands once dewatering of the lands of those areas is done. Implementation of Bonded Labour Act 2015 in the Sindh Province and legislation for unregistered brick kilns.
- Supreme Courts' decision in CPD_____/2011 on removing encroachment on waterways should be removed. All courts decisions on flood relief in CPD_____/2022, ____/2022 should be implemented and all official involved in corruption in relief items should be suspended and action should be taken against them after holding inquiries by honest officials or JITs.
- Those officials who were found involved in misappropriation of relief funds, theft of goods, corruption should be penalized.
- Injured and families of dead should get officially announced compensation, loss of livestock fishing should also be compensated by the NDMA.
- Donors and major humanitarian actors need to assist the development of the capacity of the local population, local organizations and local government officials on disaster preparedness and disaster risk reduction, as well as cluster coordination, information management systems, effective resource management, compliance with humanitarian standards, and result-oriented reporting to improve their eligibility for direct funding from donors.
- There is a need for agencies to share information with each other on not just current programming but also future plans and exit strategies.

- Stop throwing sewerage water directly into the river or waterways, Pakistan Government never allow anyone to build any house, factory, building structure in the waterway.
- Primary responsibility to protect citizens lies with the state and its institutions so it should be committed to equal protection of every citizen without any discrimination on the basis of creed, color, gender, political affiliation or any other ground.
- Every structure built by the state or approved should be assessed from environmental perspective.
- Pakistan Environmental Protection Act 1997, Sindh Environmental Protection Act 1997 should be implemented in its true spirit. Federal and Provincial Governments ensure Pakistan and Sindh Environmental Protection Agency (PEPA) and (SEPA) are functioning properly and protecting national community interest.
- All projects including LBOD, RBOD, and others should be re-assessed and redesigned to the needs of disaster responsive strategy.
- Sindh Government should reform its irrigation department and appoint all officers from Secretary to Daroga on merit to deal with future irrigation needs and prevent disaster. Remove all corrupt, inefficient and lethargic officers whose negligent and corruption caused floods and breaches.
- International Humanitarian Agencies, Network, Coalition, International Council for Voluntary Agencies (ICVA), APRRN, other agencies should step in and help Pakistan get out of these crises created by rain and floods.
- Network and Sub networks should be human rights defenders should be strengthened and their capacity should be built to respond disasters and threats.
- UNHCR and other UN agencies should liaison with civil society & activists to respond disasters and its consequences.

ⁱ <https://www.carbonbrief.org/climate-change-likely-increased-extreme-rainfall-that-led-to-pakistan-flooding/>

