

Seminar Proceedings

Monsoon Rains, Potential Threats And Preventive Measures

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. Introduction

Heavy snowfall, a record in the last 40 years, hit the Swat district in winter of 2005. Record temperatures followed this in June 2005 that resulted in highest flows of Swat River in the past decades. The flood, a record over the past fifty years, damaged several houses and agricultural properties, and displaced families. The Swat Youth Front responded and implemented a relief program with assistance of Oxfam G.B. The observations made during the snowfall relief program during winters, the Swat Youth Front predict heavy floods during the coming monsoon season. Therefore, the organization proposed a this seminar with assistance of Oxfam G.B. with the following objectives:

- Share information about the floods and assess the threats to villages on both sides of the Swat River during monsoon season of 2005;
- Disseminate information through Community Based Organizations and activists about the threat; and
- Recommend actions for prevention of heavy losses from flood to human life, properties and livelihood options.

The Swat Youth Front and Oxfam G.B. organized the workshop on July 07 2005 in Swat Serena Hotel. People from all walks of life representing CBOs, NGOs, and Government Departments participated in the Seminar. The DCO Swat Mr. Shah Hussain Afridi was the Chief Guest of the occasion.

The formal proceedings of the workshop started with recitation from the Holy Quran by Mr. Shahzada.

2. Welcome Address by Mr. Badar Zaman, President Pakistan Youth Front, Swat.

Mr. Badar Zaman welcomed the participants on behalf of the Swat Youth Front. Introducing the Swat Youth Front to the participants, he told that it was started by young people for solving problems of the area at local level. The Swat Youth Front has been running 63 non-formal schools in Swat, out of which 45 are functional now. It has established 3 PPC girls Colleges for girls in Gwalarai, Charbagh and Haji Baba. It has established a School of Arts for the women and has translated a book on disable village children with the assistance of World Bank and Hesperian Foundation USA. The Swat Youth Front is also running a center for Child Mother Health Care Center (MCH). The Swat Youth Front is flourishing and is committed to serve the community. We hope that your support and cooperation will be available to us in the future. Thank you all for coming here.

3. Introduction to Oxfam G.B. By Mr. Barkat Ali Khan, Representative of Oxfam G.B.

Mr. Barkat Ali Khan, representative of Oxfam G.B. in Swat welcomed the participants on behalf of his organization. He also briefly introduced the Oxfam G.B. to the participants. Narrating its history, Mr. Barkat Ali told that World War II, Professors of the Oxford University formed an organization called “Oxford Committee for Relief and Famine”. In those days telegraphic messages were the popular and quick communication mean. Cost of these messages depended on number of words. Therefore to reduce the cost of telegraphic message, the organization started using a shorter name “Oxfam G.B.”.

Presently Oxfam G.B. works in eighty countries in the world, mostly for humanitarian sides. Its major purpose is to provide relief to people in trouble particularly due to natural calamities like floods, earthquakes, etc. The organization also provides relief work to people in conflict. The Oxfam G.B. works in partnership with other organizations, mostly civil society organizations. The Oxfam G.B. has three working areas of 1). Humanitarian Assistance, 2). Sustainable Livelihood, and 3). Education. In some areas the organization only runs campaigns. The Oxfam G.B. works in Sindh and Balochistan to provide humanitarian assistance in the drought hit areas, while in NWFP it run campaign. The Oxfam G.B. work in Swat started as a response to the heavy snowfall of the last winter. This campaign composed of providing food, non-food items, and in some areas cash handouts to the local communities in Swat, Shangla and Kohistan districts. The

organization established partnership with Swat Youth Front in Swat, Shangla Development Society in Shangla, and Sungi in Kohistan.

4. Response of Swat Youth Front (SYF) to the Floods in Swat by Mr. Muhammad Roshan

The unprecedented snowfall of the last winter left snow covered mountains. Melting of the snow resulted in high flow in the River Swat and its tributaries. The flood inflicted damages on the people living on both banks of the river. The Swat Youth Front responded to the situation and sent messages around the world and invited relief organizations. Many organizations responded to the call of SYF and either worked on their own like World Food Program or worked in partnership with local organizations. The organizations like CRS worked in four union councils of Kalam, Utror, Aka Maroof Bami Khel and Taligram, and distributed 2000 food bags. Oxfam G.B. worked in partnership with SYF and distributed 2096 food items and 700 non-food items.

In light of the relief experience, and discussions with people during that, the SYF feared heavier floods in the coming summers and monsoon. The SYF prepared an action plan in light of it and shared it with Oxfam G.B. Consequently the partnership initiated efforts to conduct this study, which is a rapid assessment of the flood, threats from it and threats of flood over the coming monsoon. The study resulted in evaluating damages from the current summer floods due to melting of the snow on mountains and categorized the villages on both banks of the river to most vulnerable, more vulnerable and less vulnerable categories. The study results show that the floods displaced a total of 65 households in the most vulnerable villages and damaged agricultural lands and properties in the three categories. The study found out that there is greater threat of heavy damages from the floods in the coming monsoon season, if no preventive measures are adopted in the short run. To fill the gaps and collect information that are missed during the rapid study, Mr. Roshan invited the participants to open discussion and suggestions. (see-I for detailed presentation).

Discussion

- Mr. Shah Zaman Khan of Manyar suggested channel the river Swat with bulldozers right from Khwaza Khela to Hisar Totakan. This will deepen one watercourse that will accommodate excess water flow and will reduce damages from it to properties and human life on one hand and to agricultural lands and livelihood sources on the other. He elaborated his point and told that if done, this will generate livelihood opportunities for the local community, and will support tourism in the valley.

- Member of the Chalyar Organization. The flood has washed out our 8 buildings since 1973. A 1400 kanals of land is under water right now. No body asked about our situation, and yesterday we were busy to erect a sand block. It was known that the heavy snow will melt and will result in the flood, but no body cared. Flood hits Asala village and houses are under threat. The irrigation department told us about a tender for construction of spurs, but that never happened. The government assistance will come, when everything will be washed. He showed a cartoon Mr. Jamal Din cartoonist from the Daily Ausaf in support of his statement. Kindly hear to our request that the River doesn't have an MoU with us and will not wait for the construction of spurs. There is an immediate need for action and a need for planning in the long run.
- Rtd. Col. Abdul Ghaffar, representative of Red Crescent Society-Swat and member of the Organization from Bar Durush Khela told that river Swat changes its course every 30th/40th year. Putting sand bags during flooding is not a solution to prevent damages from it. There is need for concrete planning, and long-term programs to avoid risks from floods and damages to the local community. As suggested earlier, channelization of the river with dozers, and constructing spurs on both sides may solve the problem. He requested the DCO Swat to take steps for developing a detailed plan in this regard.
- Khurshid Ali of Bara Bandai shared his information in the hamlets of Bara Bandai. He told that during the YSF survey of 52 villages, they have picked only Mam Derai, but the flood has damaged 3 houses and 186 kanals of land of Jala Wanan Village. The flood has flown a lift worth Rs.70000 in Ghorijoo. In Deli, it has damaged around 200 kanals of land.
- Shahzada Sahib of Chalyar shared a detailed survey of the river conducted by Shaukat and Associates. He pointed out that the flood control spurs are constructed with a wrong angle that results in more damage that could be without structures. There is need to change design of the structures according to findings of the study. He presented the drawings of the study with the participants.
- Shaukat Sharar stressed on need for development process based on planning. He urged that we should make it a part of the political debate and agenda in the next local government elections. Although this is part of the devolved system and should take it, but due lack of understanding we have unable to achieve it within this system so far.
- Badar Zaman of Swat Youth Front highlighted two aspects, one need for networking of the civil society organization and the other for rehabilitation of people affected by the floods. He told that this seminar is an informal effort to create a network of concerned citizens and recommended that we should make efforts to support families who are solely dependent on their agricultural lands. In the this regard, the Swat Youth Front will make efforts to assist those families in reclamation of their lands and providing them with seed, and seedlings for rehabilitation.
- Sher Afzal Khan presented a historical perspective of managing resources in Swat State, when there were very limited revenue opportunities for the state. That system

could still be followed in some modified form. The Swat Youth Front and others could form a cell, and the local people may pay a part of their “Usher and Zakat” to them, which may be used in relief and rehabilitation works. This way the people will depend on their own resources rather than waiting for assistance from outside.

5. Key Not Address by Mr. Shah Hussain Afridi, District Coordination Officer, Swat.

The DCO Swat addressed the participants of the seminar and thanked the Swat Youth Front and Oxfam G.B. for organizing the seminar. He narrated that Swat went through a very tough time during last winter from heavy snowfall. He thanked and appreciated the young people of Swat, who provided assistance during the relief work in snowbound areas. He appreciated the Center for Women Development at Charbagh run by SYF. These people deserve appreciation. On February 12, when I received news about killing of people by a glacier in Mankial and Kalam, I passed on SOS message to Islamabad and to relief organizations. This included the provincial government, federal government, national and international NGOs. We also prepared a Preventive Contingent Plan in March. But as rightly said “it is money that activates”. We had estimate of 41 million rupees to prevent damages from flood through control structures and safety nets. But have to get a penny yet. He debriefed the participants on the activities of the district government within limited resources for information dissemination to the people, and prevention of damages. He expressed that here in Swat the damages of 23 houses and washing out of four to five thousand kanals of lands is very low when compared to damages in Peshawar, Nowshera and Charsadda. The accumulated damage figures are very high from all the flood hit areas and therefore are beyond the capacity of the provincial government even. The federal government has provided a relief fund to the provincial government, out of which 500000 rupees have been allotted to me for relief works. This is in pipeline and when received will be spent accordingly.

Stressing on potentials in Swat, he gave example of Mankial Valley, which is one of the beautiful pieces on earth. These areas could easily be developed for eco-tourism and can generate huge economic activity in the area. However, this all needs a proper forum that can lead such initiatives and can put forward well-planned programs. The DCO Swat suggested acquiring state of the art technology for the purpose and developing a semi government forum or organization to effectively plan programs accordingly.

6. Prospects and Potentials by Shaukat Ali Sharar

Mr. Shaukat Ali highlighted the situation of Swat in perspective of historical processes and offered his deliberations on available potentials, options, and potentials. However, there is no action-taking place in the right direction. There are factors behind it. One such factor pointed out by the DCO Swat. He narrated his helplessness in doing any good job under the prevailing lack of confidence of contractors in government. When a society reaches this level of degradation and erosion, then either it will vanish or it will rejuvenate by exploring new ways and means. If they realize that the way they follow will take them to complete destruction, and a new way may make their way go, they will may opt for the later. Where there is ease, facilitation, support structure, and sound base for planned lifestyle.

This land has supported many nations in different times. Their remains are still there, reminding us of their well-planned town planning, land use zoning and safety nets centuries before us. These nations lived with style, and their followers still love the land of their forefathers. It reminds me of a Japanese, whom I met in Hunza. He asked me to show him boundary of Swat on a map. When I asked about the purpose, he told he will put off his shows from where the Swat starts. This shows his love for this land. I laughed at him and told him that we have not cared for that land and is not in a presentable shape.

The Swat, its land and people lived with an indigenous system of land uses and zoning. There were lands in and around the river for grazing livestock called “warshoo” and “tang”. We had well defined village boundaries, and indigenous irrigation system. But why we have lost it with such a speed? Either we have been flooded with information that we cannot digest, or we have lost respect for our indigenous practices, or we have no information about the practices of our previous generation of whom some are still living among us as our elders. This evolutionary processes will be there between nature and human. But how we can benefit from our creativity to bring about improvement in our lifestyle, in our surrounding, in our environment etc.?

The government system failed and therefore they brought a new system of local government. You might have observed huge road construction, just to spend money that is allotted in the month of June. The officers, contractors and staff have a mutual understanding on how to take their pies out of the funds allotted in June? And huge amount of money cannot withstand this troika. Because there is no cure for greed. There is need for another type of system, where participation of people is ensured and where actions take place on the basis of mutual confidence. How this will happen and what possibilities exist here?

The scientific knowledge has reached a level, where one can spot a thing like a chair through a satellite. If such a knowledge is used, then we would have been able today to see the river right from here that where it is going, what damages it may inflict and what actions may prevent what? But within the existing system of “Patwar” it is extremely difficult to find out one’s land. On one hand the science has explored such possibilities like 1x1 m resolution satellite imageries, and on the other we are still subject of the Patwar system from Ashoka times. We have narrow and dark streets, which is not only against the norms but also against our religion that says to squeeze a mosque for widening of a way. Science and Quran both agree on life in water. And where we stand on this? Our waters have polluted to a level that it is a major risk to our survival. The medicine business is in bloom just because of polluted water around us. As a society we are sick and therefore the business of doctors is in prosperity. Taking example of Nepal, one can hardly find a medicine store, but here every 4th store is of medicine. If we compare, our land is more beautiful than Nepal, but what is wrong? We don’t have love for our land, and we don’t respect in what we believe, like “Cleanliness is half of the faith”. Our mountains, as tall as those of Nepal and climatically as rich as those of Nepal, but not as green as those of Nepal. What is wrong with us is that we don’t have respect for nature friendly values, taught to us by our religion, and taught to us by our norms.

About ten years ago, lack of confidence in the system resulted in mass agitation in the area. One thing was very clear and that those people showed their concern for the system. Resultantly MRDP was brought here with two objectives of reducing poverty and improving the system. But I regret to say that it worked for none of these but for how to spend money and play with money around. What prospects exists with projects like the MRDP to reduce poverty and improve system? We have the River, normally flowing with around 30,000 cusecs of water. It is estimated that it has a potential to produce 28000 mega watts of electricity, the double of the needs of the whole Pakistan. What will change with it? Fisheries, and tourism patterns may be improved with electricity production on this scale.

People living in the mountains, cut the slopes to make terraces for agriculture. They sow those in a hope of timely rains. If rains come, well and good, if not the bear the cost of seeds. There are many countries in the world that have flowers and flower products as major source of earning. Because of tax free zone, we have many cosmetic factories here, which import flower products “arq” from France and Holland. There is possibility to grow flowers on the lands, where agricultural productivity is usually uncertain and dependent on climatic factors.

We have “communal lands” in the vicinity of forests and protected forests. But one can hardly differentiate between a village land, communal land and protected forest. We have constructed houses regardless of what type of land comes under it. This has not only created pressure on our resources but problems for our government and management organizations also. There is a need for clear demarcation, but who cares.

What all this leads to us, are possibilities and potentials. How we will reach to these possibilities and potentials? I may suggest a process of documentation of the existing

situation with historical perspective and planning that incorporates concerns of a common man and improved benefits for every one. At government level a planning process doesn't exist. All exist is for allocation of funds, but not improvement in the processes and prosperity of the people. The allocation of funds is also dependent on political pressures. Greater pie goes to those, who have greater political weighting. And our mismanagement could be judged from the pipes that have been laid over the past few years. These may be sufficient for double of the current population. But hardly one can find water in those pipes. Then what for these have been laid? The only answer is money? Thinking over the needs, we can conclude that we need participatory planning. In the developing world planners present their plans to people in a public hearing to get their comments and suggestions. This way they include a broader segment of the society in their plans on one hand and on the other people get a sense of ownership of the development process. We still have conventional behaviors that we need to change to give room to the participatory planning processes. For this we need situation analysis and for that a GIS system is urgently needed here. So, if we are sincere with the cause of bringing improvement to our system and with effective relief and assistance operations in the natural calamities like we have today, we must make efforts to initiate GIS based planning processes. We would be happy to assist anybody interested in materializing any such idea and would appreciate an opportunity to discuss, materialize and launch participatory planning in Swat. Our support will be available for the cause. I suggest that the initiative taken by the Oxfam G.B. and Swat Youth Front may be carried forward for the broader understanding of Participatory planning in the region.

7. Floods, Causes and its Impacts; by Ahmad Khan, Range Officer (Wildlife)

Mr. Ahmad Khan presented an overview of floods and damages from floods to human beings. He termed "Snownami" of the past winter as one of the causes of floods that include natural and human causes. Then he presented a brief overview of how to be safe from damages and what could be preventive measures. He stressed for analysis of the situation with need for participatory actions (see-II for details of the presentation).

8. Preparations of Health Department for Flood Relief Operations; by Dr. Akhtar Saeed.

In view of the expected floods and rains in district Swat, the Health Department Swat has undertaken the following measures, so far:

- A committee has been formed for the expected epidemics and emergencies, which is headed by Dr. Akhtar Saeed as focal person with few other members including doctors and paramedics;
- An emergency cell has been established in office of the EDO (Health) office that functions 24 hours and can be contacted on telephone number 0936-9240139. This cell is in touch with the Emergency cell established by the DCO office.
- All the medical and para medical staff has been informed through letters to be alert to the current situation;
- Ambulances for transportation of patients are on high alert;
- We have limited quantities of emergency drugs and have demanded Rs.100,000/- from the DCO Swat under directions of the Chief Secretary NWFP.
- But we still need financial resources for essential drugs like IV drips, IV flagyl infusion, antibiotics, cannulas, ATS, anti snake venoms, and vaccines for cholera and typhoid.
- Health Education session regarding hand washing, sanitation, boiled drinking water and vaccination are being arranged. This is important and we need hold more sessions.
- The health department has plans for the following, provided sufficient amount of funding is available.
 - Hold demonstration sessions on health education
 - Public awareness campaign through mass media
 - Vaccinations against cholera and typhoid
 - Take samples from water supplies for testing of infectious agents
- The people are advised to take the following as safety nets:
 - Use boiled and safe drinking water
 - Avoid using rotten fruit and vegetables
 - Use chlorine tablets for disinfection of drinking water
 - Safely dispose excreta and improve sanitary conditions
 - Take measures to control mosquitoes and eliminate their breeding to prevent malaria and reduces its threats

9. Conclusions and Recommendations of the Seminar

The participants discussed the current situation in detail and analyzed the on-going process and its root causes. They concluded the following:

Root Causes

- Lack of proper land use planning and zoning
- Lack of responsive behavior in government structure and local communities to use resources sustainable and efficiently
- Lack of understanding and under pinning of the human causes of natural calamities like the recent flooding, where deforestation of slopes and encroachment into forests for settlements and farming is one of the major causes
- Lack of integrated planning and effective implementation mechanisms

In light of the root causes, the participants suggested short term as well as long term measures to avoid huge losses from floods and other natural calamities, particularly when there is risk of high floods in the monsoon season, which is ahead of us.

Short Term Measures

- Gather information from various stakeholders regarding their functions and plans for flood relief and rehabilitation of affected communities in Swat;
- Initiate a planning and land use zoning dialogue with key stakeholders;
- Acquire a satellite imagery and develop GIS map of River Swat in high floods;
- Government should immediately correspond where feasible to protection work to minimize losses from flooding;
- Erect flood control measures, where possible;
- Provide assistance to affected families in settlement;
- Provide financial support to families in rehabilitation; and
- Provide financial assistance to families whose agricultural lands are damaged.

Long Term Measures

- Initiate a planning and documentation process of the flooding of River Swat. An organization such as SYF /Oxfam G.B. should facilitate it with technical inputs from the government line departments and information and participation of the local communities living on both sides of the River Swat. All these planning processes should be related to Global emerging scenario in compatibility with local context to transform the present problem like situation into tapping the potentialities of the region;
- Facilitate forming a joint forum, semi governmental or private in nature, to initiate dialogue among various stakeholders on planned development of the Swat, explore

and promote tourism opportunities here, and discuss possibilities of socio-economic uplift for the otherwise ignored area of Swat;

- Develop a support mechanism for implementation of land use planning and zoning and to amend the present legislation accordingly.

ANNEXURES