KARACHI

The more I think about the condition of millions now left to fend for themselves and the helpless millions are not their responsibility any way. The fact is that if you follow the usual path of charity, there is only so much anybody could do and eventually everyone has to take on the responsibility.

On my visits to Sindh in the aftermath of several disasters, what has always bothered me is that while there may be lush green orchards all around, the villages themselves presented a scene of total desolation. At the most there might be a few trees but otherwise the village land presents an island of barrenness in the midst of a sea of fertility and greenery.

Another fact however, is that all state organs seem to be absent from the depths of rural Sindh. In such a case, and it is not something that has not been clear for some time, that state institutions are not really engaged in welfare of the poor, which makes it imperative for us to take responsibility of the vulnerable condition of the abandoned communities that we need to work on methodologies to see how we could help them to stand on their own feet.

As I look at the map of Sindh and also the map of the flood plains, it is clear that flooding has happened in the most fertile central belt from North to South of Sindh. With these inundations, as to be expected the land has become extremely fertile. Since I am working in this region, I feel duty bound to see how I could help bring in the necessary stimuli to prevent hunger in these areas. In such a case, and it is not something that has not been clear for some time, that state institutions are not really engaged in welfare of the poor, which makes it imperative for us to take responsibility of the vulnerable condition of the abandoned communities that we need to work on methodologies to see how we could help them to stand on their own feet.

Although certain food items (i.e., fish farming, beekeeping, ponds and streams are available), chicken farming in as many households as possible, goat rearing in selected villages along with raised vegetable gardens have been established as part of the zero village eco system, however, we need also to look at long term food availability.

This week I have requested Naheem Shah and his team to launch a pilot for using the produce that is available in abundance close to the Pono village. For this purpose, the starting point as usual must be a platform. However, this will be a special solar drying platform at least 2’ high and finished with best lime plaster. For solar drying air movement is essential and the trays will keep the items above the platform with a gap for air circulation.

Use of Waste Material

a. The demonstration/pilot can begin in the kitchen area dedicated for visitors in Pono village. Arrange for crushing of sugarcane within the village for each house to make jaggery candy. Begin with making jaggery biscuits with peanuts, pack a couple in small paper bags and place them in the clay pitchers made by Lachman village. The storage pitcher could be kept on the platform or in any storage space.

b. Begin production of banana chips. These should be cut thin and then dried in bamboo trays. These should be covered with mosquito fabric netting to keep dogs and other pets away. Once dried these should also be packed in small paper bags and store them in clay pitchers.

c. Other farm produce should also be considered for solar drying. As soon as banana trees are available, dehydration process and storage should be taken up.

e. In case the experiment of growing small fish in the freshly dug mini wells is successful, fish drying should also be started.

Since crushing season is in progress and is likely to last for a couple of months, it is essential to take advantage of the waste bagasse being generated. I have requested the following:

Arrangement should be made in the Pono village for making a bamboo enclosure where bagasse should be procured and dumped for future use. One person should be made responsible who can charge money for supply of bagasse.

The Mother Earth village is behind in its earnings. Immediate production of briquettes using bagasse and cow dung must be starded which should be marketed everywhere so that no other fuel except briquettes is used.

Bagasse should be regularly used as fertilizer for community forests. Now that eco toilets are being used, we should check how much compost is being generated. Marketing for organic compost should be sought in order that everybody begins to earn from their waste.

I think it is also because everybody feels that they have done their bit for charity and the beneficiaries do not feel that they are not their responsibility any way. The fact is that if you follow the usual path of charity, there is only so much anybody could do and eventually everyone has to take on the responsibility.