Improved disaster reporting critical to flood mitigation

A well-prepared community could bring a new synergy in flood management activities. The time has also come now to change the perspective of disaster coverage; besides reporting on disasters, there is need of reporting on the lines of disaster risk reduction (DRR) so the vulnerability and risk factor could be reduced.

This piece was advice was given by Dr. Tariq Mehmood, principal of the School of Civil and Environmental Engineering (SCEE), National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST), while speaking at the inaugural session of a two-day international workshop on ‘Capacity-building of community elders and media towards flood vigilance and disaster reporting.’ Organized by UNESCO in partnership with NUST, the workshop aimed to strengthen the potential role of community elders and reporting on floods by the media.

The recent flood in Pakistan further increases the workshop’s significance, building on UNESCO’s efforts to strengthen flood forecasting, early warning system and information dissemination through media to the local communities for reducing the human and socio-economic impacts of flooding. In collaboration with NUST, the workshop will help streamline the standard operating procedures for the media on disaster reporting.

Dr. Tariq acknowledged the support made available by UNESCO, HEC, the Ministry of Science and Technology (MoST) and partner organizations in organizing the workshop. The workshop is providing an in-depth understanding of floods to transform the perspective of disaster and disaster risk reduction reporting and coverage through timely warning dissemination to an informed community through local media to minimize vulnerability and risk factors.

Speaking on behalf of UNESCO, Zafar Hayat Malik explained that UNESCO’s flood warning and management capacity project helped in achieving better capacity to mitigate floods in the country and stressed the role of media in reaching local communities with timely warnings and alerts to minimize the human and property losses due to natural disasters, particularly floods. “Let’s make the people of Pakistan safe from natural disasters and improve the social, economic, and ecological benefits of floods to foster safer human settlements near flood plains,” he added. National and international experts from Indonesia, Pakistan Meteorological Department, Federal Flood Commission, Flood Forecasting Division, National Disaster Management Authority and universities, attending the workshop, would be sharing their expertise and experiences to help strengthen flood early warning systems and disaster management capacity of key government institutions and other relevant stakeholders.
During the two-day workshop, training on the use of hand crank radios will be imparted to the participants. UNESCO will be handing over 1,565 radio sets to NDMA for distribution in the local communities residing in the flood plains for receiving flood warnings and information during the monsoon season.