

Slum dwellers seek flood-resistant homes

- Staff Reporter

In situ houses, disaster relief and livelihood were among the concerns raised by slum dwellers, who were attending the ‘Voice of Slums in post-flood Chennai: Future Concerns’ seminar at Loyola College on Monday. Over a 100 slum dwellers, who were affected by floods from across the city, took part in the event led by experts from the field.

“Why is it that it is always us slum dwellers who are relocating during the time of crisis,” questioned Shyamala from Chetpet. “We lost everything during the floods, and we are yet to recover from it. Moving to colonies like Perumbakkam only makes it worse. We need a fair solution,” she said.

Making no sense

Sasi Kumar, a resident of Koyambedu, pointed out that during the December flood they were relocated to another far-off location which was just as flooded. “It had made no sense to relocate to Kannagi Nagar and Perumbakkam which had water till the first floor. Money and relocation is not the ultimate solution. The State needs to build disaster resistant houses, for all,” said Sasi.

A senior official from the Tamil Nadu Slum Clearance Board, who attended the seminar, heard the problems of the community and assured assistance. “We have provided a monthly subsistence allowance of Rs. 2,500 to the resettled families, for one year. We have held medical camps and skill training for all. While we have begun providing in situ housing, we shall be extending it for others as well,” he said.

Urging slum dwellers to know their rights, Vanessa Peter, policy researcher said: “Slum Act is your weapon. It is important that you know your rights and stand up for it.” She also pointed out that there was a need for reservation in land allotment for slum dwellers.

“Just like education, there needs to be reservation in land as well. When you move to a place, it is your duty to find out if the land you’re living in is certified among other details. In case you are asked to uproot, file a case,” she said.

Adding to this Deva Prakash, program manager, CARE INDIA, said: “Instead of offering relief to the affected in kind the authorities must deposit cash in their respective accounts. During such times, the women and children are the worst affected and the authorities need to provide suitable housing for them.”

During a seminar, they voiced their concerns and sought a solution to relocation

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