

SAN FRANCISCO, Oct 5: One year after a devastating earthquake in Azad Kashmir and the NWFP killed 73,000 people and rendered 3.3 million people homeless, a Fritz Institute survey released on Thursday finds that 60 per cent of the survivors are still displaced.

Most of the affected population said that they still needed assistance in the areas of food, shelter and livelihoods almost one year after the earthquake.

“Our findings are alarming. Too many earthquake survivors are facing another winter without basic services and adequate shelter,” said Anisya Thomas, managing director of Fritz Institute, a California-based non-profit body that specializes in improving global disaster relief operations.

According to the report, “in a culture where independence is prized, self-sufficiency has dropped significantly. Poverty is increasing. Sixty-three per cent of survivors report a loss of income, with the people at the lowest income levels most affected. Before

the earthquake, only three per cent reported inadequate income for survival, today 31 per cent report not having enough income to survive. Nearly one-fifth (19 per cent) of the survivors said that their lives will never be normal again.

“One year after the earthquake, over 50 per cent of people surveyed reported that they still needed and had not received assistance with food, water, livelihood and clothing. The unmet needs for shelter, counseling and medical care were 38, 39 and 46 per cent, respectively.

The survey notes that survivors who had received help expressed satisfaction with the assistance provided. However, those dissatisfied with services expressed frustration with the process of aid provision. Aid recipients, for example, pointed to lack of transparency in aid distribution leading to perceptions of inequity.

According to it, those who received help overwhelmingly identified the government, including the military, as

the principal provider of aid, with over 75 per cent expressing satisfaction with government assistance.

Over time, the role of international NGOs has increased and they are now the main providers of food, medical care and toilet and sanitation services. Local NGOs had a relatively small presence according to the survey respondents.

The survey says that in the rehabilitation efforts, it appears that there was minimal consultation with the affected people. Most households reported that they had no input in the decision-making processes related to the restoration of livelihoods, shelter, counseling and psycho-social care and food assistance.

“Even a year after the earthquake, it is surprising that the overwhelming majority of aid recipients in our survey reported not being consulted,” said Dr Thomas.—AFP