

Self-presentation

Bangladesh: About BKF & BKS

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Self-presentation of the BKF & BKS taken from their website October 31, 2010.

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The Bangladesh Krishok Federation (BKF), a group devoted to landless peasants since 1976, and the Bangladesh Kishani Sabha (BKS), a female counterpart to the Krishok Federation since 1990, have been working together for the rights of the landless in Bangladesh through occupations, demonstrations, and legal aid service. In Bangladesh 70% of the population of 150 million are considered "landless". BKF has been working for nearly 33 years on securing right for peasants.

The major cornerstones of this struggle can be outlined as follows:

1977: The first survey of landless people by BKF, recognition of the khasland, the small unrecognized islands in the river delta, as viable option for the landless. 1980: Thousands of landless occupied the khas land however without government protection; they were evicted from the land.

1987: The landmark law "Land Administration Manual of 1987" recognizes the right of landless families to 2 acres each of this unoccupied khas land. However no government action is taken to implement distribution and the law is largely ignored.

1991: Large demonstrations and hunger strikes brought the Divisional Commissioner to make far reaching yet to date unfulfilled commitments to the landless.

1992: Thousands forcibly occupied 22,000 acres of khas land in four large islands. 8,000 families found a place to live and work the land however they faced legal battles with the local "petty landlords" who were previously illegally occupying the land and getting away with it by offering bribes.

Since 1992, these landless people have been fighting a series of false allegations and judicial harassment by petty landlords. BKF has been helping the peasants both in practical ways; to stay on the land and to fight the judicial system. The courts have largely agreed with the landless, on the basis of a law passed in 1987, however hundreds have already been heard and are continuing to be heard at all levels of the court system. The BKF, till now in partnership with the BKS, has helped to occupy 70,600 acres of khas land: public land, which should be legally granted to the landless, for roughly 100,000 men and women. In total, the organization enjoys a network of 1.5 million people.

In 1997, they worked with the government to reach a compromise over a new manual of land administration, which lowers the acreage per family to 1.5 acres so as to distribute the land to a greater number of people.

In 2000 both organizations officially started to focus on food sovereignty and climate change issue. On November 22, 2004, thousands of peasants occupied a new type of public land (Railway abandoned land) in northern Bangladesh. So far, their efforts have been successful.

One of the most serious challenges ahead for the two allied organizations is the rise up of Islamic fundamentalism that has reemerged in Bangladeshi politics to an alarming extent. They are focusing their grassroots network on empowering rural women.

BKF is associated with La Via Campesina, the international movement of peasants, small- and medium-sized producers, landless, rural women, indigenous people, rural youth and agricultural workers. La Via Campesina defends the values and the basic interests of its members. It is an autonomous, pluralist and multicultural movement, independent of any political, economic, or other type of affiliation. Its 148 members are from 69 countries from Asia, Africa, Europe, and the Americas.

BKF and BKS is associated with Asian Peasant Coalition (APC) too.

* <http://www.krishok.org/index.html>

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angladesh: BFK Landless Peasants Movement

Bangladesh Krishok Federation (BKF), the largest rural based peasant movement in the country, was established in 1976. Since its inception it has been actively involved in land occupation struggles in a very systematic way. From 1977 until 1991 BKF conducted various types of struggles and movements e.g. hunger strikes, sit-in strikes, public meeting, the encirclements of the local administrative offices, demonstrations, and road blocks. Through different agitation programs, the BKF has been able to compel local government officials, at different times to make commitments about the distribution of land amongst landless men and women. Despite these commitments no concrete action was taken. However, in 1987 the then autocratic government introduced a land law called the "Land Administration Manual" on behalf of the landless people. Because of this new land law, the movement gained momentum.

Since 1987 the BKF had the scope to demand the distribution of khas (fallow) land among bona fide landless men and women as stated in the land law. In spite of great deal of pressure from the movement, the government never paid heed to landless people's demands. Finally, in late 1991, thousands of landless men and women gave an ultimatum to the government demanding the immediate settlement of khas land for landless people. As the government refused to take any initiative, BKF persuaded landless people to occupy the khas land in early 1992. This time over 22,000 acres of land on 4 chars (small islands) in the southern coastal belt were occupied.

During the occupation movement, the BKF has encountered many impediments from the local big landowners and their Goondas (Miscreants), and a few local bureaucrats working in the Land Revenue Department. Local big landowners have made several attacks on the landless people's settlements on the chars. Every time, the landowners were defeated, but the landless people had to shed blood for their victories. Many landless people have had to sacrifice their lives, but their heroic

role and fearless contribution continues to be an inspiration to all those involved in the movement. In remaining in their settlements, the people have built their homes, cultivated their land, and grown different indigenous crops (e.g. rice, vegetables, and fruits). Since 1992, the land occupation movement has continued, and so far, under the leadership of the BKF, the landless people have been able to occupy 70,600 acres of khas land, across Bangladesh. Most of the occupations are concentrated in the south of the country and all of land has been distributed to more than 102,400 of the poorest men and women of living in the countryside. In the context of Bangladesh, this has been a large success in terms of the struggle for land rights. In the past, there were a few initiatives to occupy the land by different organizations, but they were not sustained.

* From http://www.bostonmobilization.org/worldbangladesh_BFK.php

Struggles

Landless human chain for permanent settlement

25 October 2010 BKF & BKS Barisal district committee jointly organized a human chain in front of Barisal town hall to demand distribution of khas (fallow) land among the 498 landless families immediately settlement permanently who are living in the Rasulpur Char (small island). Rasulpur char is close to Barisal city and 498 landless families' starts live on the char from 2000. They are living on the char till now with hard movements but still didn't get any papers from government.

Recently they filed a case in court against local government that they are not implementing government declaration and also not following instruction of land manual. Case is going on and movement too. This program was the part of that land occupation movements.

Bangladesh Krishok Federation(BKF) and Bangladesh Kishani Sabha(BKS) Kurigram district committee jointly organized a big mobilization in Bangladesh northern district Kurigram

20 October 2010 Bangladesh Krishok Federation(BKF) and Bangladesh Kishani Sabha(BKS) Kurigram district committee jointly organized a big mobilization. They encircled DC (District Commissioner) office and submit a memorandum to DC.

People uses Bus, truck and local three wheeler for transport and some people come by walk to attend the DC office encircle and memorandum submit program. Some thousand people joined the program and most of them were woman peasants as well as woman landless. District Commissioner was not present in the office but he talked with others of his officers. ADM (Assistant district magistrate) took memorandum on behalf of DC. ADM come in front of people and delivered a short speech said that they will try to solve the demands.

8 point demands of memorandum were:

1. All khas (fallow) land and water bodies have to distribute immediately among the genuine and local landless and fisher flock.
2. All khas land and water bodies have to recover form illegal occupier and restore public rights on them according to land and water bodies' law.
3. Rationing system start immediately among the landless and peasants with symbolic price (very low price).
4. Rehabilitate river erosion victim family immediately.
5. Government has to arrange works for all agricultural labor for whole year. If they fail they have to payee allowance for survive.
6. Price hike of all daily essential goods including rice, dal, edible and fuel oil have to reduce and bring down under the poor people purchasing capacity.
7. Remit all the agricultural lone including NGOs microcredit.
8. Take step to preserve the historical bridge of kurigram named Sonarhat bridge.

Program day was so hot and sunny and our collective procession was more than 3 kilometers, so all peoples was tired. But most of the peoples are pleased that they encircled DC office and responsible authority make hope on their demands. Some aged woman was short time hospitalized for hit stroke.

BKF & BKS jointly organized the program on 10-10-10

In the morning we organized campaign on climate change to celebrate the 10-10-10 global work party declared by 350.org on the river of Burigrnga in Dhaka. We campaign affect of climate change and future of the Bangladesh.

We are not member of 350 yet but we thought that we can be a part of the global work party. Our arrangement was so simple but we are a part of this day on climate change works.

Grassroots leaders meeting in Kurigram

BKF & BKS jointly organized a grassroots leaders meeting in Ghogadha under the northern district Kurigram at yesterday 22 September 2010. In this meeting they discusses about ongoing land occupation movements, strategy of movements, and their problems. In the meeting Kurigram district committee of BKF & BKS decided DC (district commissioner) office encirclement and submit memorandum on their demands in last week of October 2010.

Kurigram is the poorest district of Bangladesh (as a government report also). You know that we have strong base in Kurigram and all sub-district of the district we have strong movements. In the mid-October to mid-December is the Monga (shortage of food of the poor people like primary stage of

famine) time in kurigram that every people have to face. BKF and BKS Kurigram district committee want to a big mobilization in this starting time of Monga for their demands to DC. Because DC is the responsible person in the respective district for all the government responsibility even distribute fellow lands among the landless.

BKF & BKS jointly organized a meeting in Dhaka

3 September 2010 BKF & BKS jointly organized a meeting in Dhaka office for boosting our work in Dhaka city and also in countryside. This is Muslim fasting month Ramadan, so we also discuss about religious issue and what is our position and thinking on fundamentalism.

Peasant action against land grabbing Developer Company

23 July 2010 local committee of Rupganj sub-district organized a rally and procession against a developer company named "Dhaka Village". Rupgonj Sub-district is under Narayanganj district and close to Dhaka. The developer company bought some land and trying to fill up sands on the huge land of people by force. They also proposed to People to sale land to them, but people are not agreed at all. Because, land is their life, land is their like child. Local peasants also committed to save their fertile land from the land grabbers like so called Developer Company.

20 Ks Long-march for Cancellation of lease of "Sonarhater Chora"

At 18 July 2010 BKF & BKS Bhurungamari Sub-district committee organized the long-march and memorandum submission program. More than one thousand local landless and fisherflock attended in long-march from Boldia to Bhurungamari to submit a memorandum to local government authority in Sub-district level. It's 20 Kilometers long march for demanding to cancellation of lease of "Sonarhater Chora". Sonarhater Chora is a big water bodies in Bhurungamari sub-district under the northern Kurigram District. Sub-district commissioner received the memorandum and told that he will try to do his best for people. BKF&BKS also arranged rally in front of Sub-district commissioner office after long-march.

In the memorandum said that people gave fish, so they have right to preserved that fish and catch that fish after grown up from this common properties. 25 June 2010 Local fishorflocks, landless peasants occupied the Sonarhater Chora and gave small fish in the water bodies.

Occupation of water bodies in Bangladesh

Dear all friends and well-wishers of BKF and BKS,

Thanks a lot.

You would be happy with the news of new type of successful occupation in Bangladesh. This is new in this sense because it is the first time that BKF and BKS have its deliberate focus on the common water bodies that would contribute to the livelihood of the poor in the rural areas. Previously it concentrated mainly on abandoned agricultural lands. However, few years back it built a strong movement in the south for the cancellation of lease-out of a canal to the private hand and the common people reclaimed their right to use the canal through that movement. On 25 June 2010 the fishers, agricultural workers, landless and small peasant members of Bangladesh Krishok Federation and Bangladesh Kishani Sabha took over a big marshland (Called Sonarhatchhara) which is abundant in different types of sweet water fishes in the remote border areas of northern district of Bangladesh. This water bodies is actually common property where the commons should have normally access to. But unfortunately for years the local influentials have been enjoying it in close co-operation with certain corrupt local official bureaucrats. They are getting so-called and controversial lease for a particular time from the government bodies resulting in depriving the poor people of their rights. The period of lease has been over few month ago this year. They could not come to the final decision on it because of their mutual conflict of interest around the swamp. It has given a big chance for the commons who have the legitimacy to establish their right to marshland with an area of around 300 acres. Almost five thousand malnourished men and women gathered in a field in Sonarhat in Bhurungamari sub-district of Kurigram district, organized a brief rally and brought out a procession with militant slogans in regard with their right to water bodies and fishes. The central Presidents Badrul Alam and General Secretary Abdul Mannan Azad of Bangladesh Krishok Federation and the Central Member of Bangladesh Kishani Sabha Shipra Rani were invited to share with their own struggle. Badrul Alam as a chief guest of their rally inaugurated their occupation of the fish land releasing young fish worth Tk. 75,000/-. The legitimate occupants also put flag with big bamboos in the marshland in order to ensure their occupancy on it. BKF President said in his inaugural speech that it is an usher in marshland occupation movement and that it would be spread out across country in the interest of poor helpless community in the rural areas. He said adding that BKF and BKS would work for the fisher's community as they did for the landless. He called the deprived militant people to be united against privatization policy as regards common properties for their own interest. The members of BKF and BKS are seriously determined to protect their interest. They expressed their courage to save their marshlands and fishes they released.

With all respects,

Badrul Alam
President
Bangladesh Krishok Federation

Bongosonahat Sora (Occupied water bodies of Kurigram district, Bangladesh)

May Day 2010 celebrated

We celebrated May Day 2010 in Dhaka and some other district as usual. In Dhaka we organized a May Day procession on the street and discuss in a rally about the day and struggle of peoples as well as labours, peasants, workers movement in the country. Hundreds of activists was attended the

program.

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Landless rally in northern Bangladesh

On the 25th of January 2010 the BKF & BKS local committee organized a rally in Bhurungamari sub-district of northern Kurigram district. BKF president Badrul Alam was the chief guest of that landless rally. Landless peasants are trying to build up a strong movement to occupy a big water-body in Sonarhat area in that sub-district. In this sub-district BKF and BKS members occupied railway abandoned land at 16th of December 2004 and almost 3000 landless families are living there as a result of that occupation. They estimate that about 5000 families would benefit if they are able to occupy the water-body.

BKF organized a Human Chain in Patuakhali, Bangladesh

On January 22, 2010 local committee of BKF&BKS organized a human chain in Sador sub-district of Patuakhali district demanding distributing khas land among the landless. In the Mathi Bhangar Bazar some hundreds of landless man and woman peasants attended the human chain and demanded to distribute Khas Land among the landless immediately.

Rally and Procession on Climate Change and Khas Land in Barisal

On January 20th, 2010 Bangladesh Krishok Federation and Bangladesh Kishani Sabha jointly organized a rally and procession on the issue of Climate Change and Khas Land. The Barisal district committee of BKF and BKS organized the rally in Barisal divisional city and hundreds of landless peasants attended the rally and procession.

There were two slogans in the program: "System Change, not Climate Change" and "Khas Land to the landless". The President of BKF, Badrul Alam, and the President of BKS, Khurshida Akter, were the important speakers at this rally.

BKF & BKS Celebrated International Day of Peasant Struggle

Bangladesh Krishok Federation (BKF) and Bangladesh Kishani Sabha jointly organized a discussion meeting in Dhaka to celebrate 17 April International Day of Peasant Struggle. In the discussion meeting leaders of BKF and BKS commemorate the history of International Day of Peasant Struggle and history of several peasant struggle of Bangladesh. Leaders also discussed about strategy of

peasant and landless movement of Bangladesh to following peasant movement of Brazil in 17 April 1996. Leaders of BKF & BKS also criticized Bangladesh government due to their pro-world Bank and pro-TNCs agricultural plan and demand a genuine land reform as well as agrarian reform immediately in Bangladesh to save our agriculture.

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