

Thanks for the support received from ESSF in 2021 - Crofter Foundation and Pakistan Kissan Rabita Committee Activity Report

Saturday 7 May 2022, by [Crofter Foundation](#), [PKRC](#), [TARIQ Farooq](#), [ZIA Saima](#) (Date first published: 7 May 2022).

This is to thank the European Solidarity Without Borders and the individual donors for their consistent support for the activities of Pakistan Kissan Rabita Committee and Crofter Foundation during the whole year 2021. Both PKRC/Crofter carried out activities and campaigns on the theme of land rights, food sovereignty, climate justice, for debt cancellation, against growing inequality, for free vaccine for all, against growing price hike, the harsh conditionalities of IMF and World Bank and against fossil fuel usages for energy production.

Contents

- [Who are we?](#)
- [Activities](#)

Unlike the year 2020 [Covid-19 peak year], during the 2021, we were able to do some physical activities, like demonstrations, seminars, consultations and holding of people's assemblies. These activities were mainly sponsored by Asian Peoples Movement On Debt and Development, South Asian Alliance for Poverty Eradication and European Solidarity Without Borders (ESSF).

Who are we?

PKRC is a network of 29 peasants' organizations established since 2003. PKRC is the only peasant organization in Pakistan that is affiliated with La Via Campesina since 2017. In addition to that, PKRC is also affiliated with Asia Europe Peoples Forum, Asian Peoples Movement on Debt and Development (APMDD), Tax and Fiscal Justice Asia (TFJA), Fight Inequality Alliance, South Asia Alliance for Poverty Eradication (SAAPE), Global Network for Right to Food & Nutrition and Joint Action Committee for People's Rights (JAC) Pakistan and ESSF. In the course of almost two decades, PKRC has organized major peasant conferences, mass meetings, seminars, workshops, study circles and other public activities mainly to promote land rights, food sovereignty and climate change issues in Pakistan. PKRC is a social movement of the peasantry, and not a registered organization as NGO in Pakistan.

Crofter Foundation, a sister organization of PKRC, is a non-profit, rights-based civil society organization registered in 2017 under societies Act 1860 with its office in Lahore, Pakistan.

Crofter Foundation is a stem came from the countrywide process of Pakistan Kissan Rabita Committee (Peasants Coordination Committee) for the eco-socio-political rights of small-scale peasants, landless farmers, farm laborers, tenants and all other communities and individuals living

in rural areas and indirectly associated with agriculture sector and linked professions.

Activities

Action For Climate Justice Now

On 15 Jan 2021, Pakistan Kissan Rabita Committee organized a demonstration to press for the implementation of policies for climate justice. The call "Action For Climate Justice Now" for demonstrations in Asian countries was given by Asian People's Movement for Debt and Development (APMDD).

Speakers told the demonstrators that the year 2020 will go down in history as one of the most horrific years for humanity. And even as we all struggled to survive and overcome COVID-19 and its impacts - we had to also simultaneously battle other crises - of deepening economic injustice and inequality, of the rise in violence and authoritarianism, and of an escalating climate emergency. We are now at the threshold of the most critical decade for climate action. This decade is our last chance to prevent a runaway climate catastrophe and stabilize global temperature rise to the safest level still possible - below 1.5 degrees Celsius.

Pakistan emits only a tiny portion of the global greenhouse gases, but it is also predicted to be among the hardest hit by extreme weather events, including droughts and floods, in the wake of climate change. And on top of all that, there is very little awareness about climate change in Pakistani society.

Declining Cotton Crop Visit

A delegation of 5 activists of Crofter/PKRC visited several districts of Punjab during the month of January 2021 to study the declining cotton crop in Pakistan. Pakistan is the fifth-largest producer of cotton in the world. It also has the third-largest cotton spinning capacity in Asia (after China and India), with thousands of ginning and spinning units producing textile products from cotton. Still the cotton crop is declining in Pakistan every year. Keeping in view all these facts Labour Education Foundation and Crofter Foundation conducted six focus discussion groups with farmers and cotton-picking women labor force in three major cotton producing cities of Punjab. Cotton producers especially small-scale producers are facing some challenges and difficulties regarding cultivation of cotton like Climate change, Non-availability of climate resistant seed, High input costs and low market prices, No easy access to quality of seed, fertilizers and pesticide, extension and Government's subsidies are not reaching out to small-scale farmers, Shortage of water...

There is also a shortage of Agriculture Labor Force and Self-employed or Family labour force.

There was a major issue with agriculture especially the cotton picker women labour force. Overall, the agricultural labour force is informal. Although in Punjab there is an act that protects the rights of long term/tenant labour force, not a single tenant is registered according to law therefore the landowner can expel them any time without providing any compensation. This sector is running on verbal and traditional laws. Another labour law applies to agriculture workers. All the workers are not aware of any social protection schemes of the government and occupational safety and health.

Land Rights and Food Sovereignty Consultation

A two-day consultation on land rights and food sovereignty was organised at a local Lahore Hotel on 3/4 March 2021 in association with Asia Europe Peoples Forum. The event was organised by

Pakistan Kissan Rabita Committee as a national process to advocate Asia Europe People's Forum 13. It was attended by farmers' organizations from all over the country. The two-day consultation gave a chance to over 50 peasant leaders to share their experiences of their campaign for land rights and food sovereignty. The consultation was also addressed the issue of Natural Sustainable Crop System and urged the farmers to do away from the pesticide, fertilizers and seed corporations and go back to nature. The consultation was addressed by the UN International Fund for Agriculture Pakistan representative.

Free VACCINE FOR ALL" CAMPAIGN IN PAKISTAN

In March 2021, PKRC/Crofter organised the first On Line Public meeting to demand Free Vaccine for all. Activists from different walks of life participated in this public meeting and vowed to start a campaign for free vaccine for all in Pakistan. Initiated by PKRC, civil society organizations, human rights campaigners and political workers across all spectrums of political divide announced the campaign of vaccine justice for Pakistan through various actions. The campaign was a joint effort of all the people's led movements and alliances in Pakistan including Farmers, peasants, students and trade union organizations. The campaign called for the government of Pakistan to provide safe and free vaccines to the citizens. Among other things the campaign organizers decided to build pressure on the government to give up its profit-driven policies and assume the responsibility of inoculating the citizens through the safe and free provision of vaccines.

At the beginning of 2021, the country has reported more than 567,261 coronavirus cases, and over 12,488 deaths, while over 20 million people have lost their jobs unemployed since the start of the pandemic. In such a situation commercializing human suffering by allowing private companies to siphon off profits from the vaccine is an inhuman policy. The campaign also believes that the government of Pakistan's decision to allow private companies to import Corona virus vaccines and exempting the vaccines from price caps is a divisive move that will result in vast inequalities in access as well as vaccine apartheid.

Fact-Finding Mission: Following Up on the FACTI Report (Pakistan)

Crofter Foundation did a follow-up report on the FACTI report Pakistan during the months of March-June 2021. In December 2019, the UN General Assembly adopted the formation of a High-Level Panel of policymakers, academia, and civil society leaders for the "promotion of international cooperation to combat illicit financial flows and strengthen good practices on assets return to foster sustainable development." Launched in March 2020, the High-Level Panel on International Financial Accountability, Transparency and Integrity or FACTI engaged in a series of reviews, events, and consultations with civil society prior to the release of the official report.

As peoples in Asia continue to grapple with multiple crises of health, livelihood, and environmental degradation, the COVID-19 pandemic sharply accentuated the systemic incapacity of governments to mobilize public funds for essential services. For decades, haphazard agreements, incentives, and policy reforms in the name of tax and investment competition enabled the flourishing of illicit financial flows (IFFs) from developing countries to the corporations and governments in Global North.

Published in February 2021, the Facti Panel Report rightly recognizes that regulations facilitating IFFs fundamentally run counter to socially inclusive spending for development.

Multi-cropping to benefit small farmers in district Toba Tek Singh

Practices involving multi cropping and other innovative ideas would help small farmers in Toba Tek

Singh to raise their income. Training sessions at the district would be organised by Pakistan Kissan Rabita Committee.

This was the conclusion of one-day meeting of PKRC at a local farm in Toba Tek Singh on 1st of August. Several representatives of farmers' organisations of the district participated. Several ideas were presented by the participants to enhance the income of those who are owner of 1-3 acre of agricultural land. Discussion moved around providing facilities for Multi-cropping with vegetables and exotic fruits, live stock for peasant women and setting up of a small industrial orange processing unit. Speakers told the gathering that to enhance the income of small farmers, innovative ideas have to be practiced. Multi cropping has proved to raise a guaranteed income for the small farmers. PKRC would help small farmers with zero percent loan to buy exotic fruit plants for multi-cropping. Planting avocado, lady finger lime, Mexican guava, red lime, passion fruit, and other exotic fruits developed by a local nursery farm has been recommended by Agriculture University of Faisalabad for the small farmers as a way to come out of poverty.

A Campaign against Gas and Oil usage for Electricity Production

In 2021, PKRC in association with APMDD decided to launch a federal level campaign against usage of oil and gas for electricity production. In their initial statement, it was agreed to calls upon Pakistan to rapidly scale up the use of renewable energy resources while phasing out oil and gas and electricity production and a complete ban on usage of coal for energy production. The environmental and economic costs of dirty energy production are catastrophic for a country like Pakistan that is already reeling from the effects of climate change as well as a deteriorating economy. The campaign leaflet said that we know very well that Pakistan has several sources of potential renewable energy that can be tapped and managed by local communities for their own use. These are wind, solar, small-scale hydro, tidal and wave power and geothermal energy potential. These resources have significant potential to provide solutions to the long-lasting energy crisis in Pakistan without the involvement of foreign companies. Given the growing concerns of climate change and its catastrophic impacts, Pakistan needs to immediately shift its focus towards renewable energy sources. We demand that the Pakistani government must ensure climate justice.

Press Conference on Global Debt cancellation

Lahore 10th June 2021

A press conference by PKRC attracted good numbers of journalists to hear our arguments on debt cancellation. We demanded that the debt of countries facing the financial crunch must be at least postponed for four years so that the money saved from debt servicing could be used on public health programs such as the building of hospitals and procurement of vaccines. The Covid-19 pandemic has hit the world economy especially the developing countries in the global south. The threat to global development is also severe: between 130 million and 500 million people worldwide may fall back into extreme poverty this year, defined as living on less than \$1.90 per day. As a result, numerous experts predict that progress toward the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals is not only slowing, but may be moving in reverse. Even in the most optimistic scenarios, COVID-19 will likely result in "lost decades of development."

The PKRC leaders said that the looming debt crisis in the face of a pandemic is a threat to common people in developing countries. Nearly half of emerging markets and developing economies (EMDEs) were already at high risk of debt crisis before COVID-19 was declared a global pandemic by the World Health Organization in March 2020. Since then, the debt situation has only worsened. The IMF projects that average 2021 debt ratios will rise by 7-10 percent of GDP in these countries. Reports from Pakistan are also worrying. The latest reports suggest that the country plans to borrow

\$16 billion fresh debt. This is the largest debt that will ever be borrowed in a fiscal year by Pakistan and the consequences of such a step will have to be borne by common people in the shape of rising utility prices such as oil and gas. In the last three years, the Imran Khan led government in Pakistan has borrowed \$49 billion debt from financial creditors. According to Imran Khan's own government, it has spent \$20 billion in debt servicing in the last three years.

There is still no recognition of illegitimate debts although this has been recognized by the UN and even by the World Bank at one point. The call for the immediate and unconditional cancellation of all illegitimate debts is strongly founded on ethical and justice imperatives.

A People' Assembly for Tax Justice

30th Oct 2021

A People's assembly for tax justice held in Bahawalpur, Pakistan. Participants from Punjab, Khyber Pakhtun Khwah and Sindh joined the assembly. Organised by PKRC/Crofter, representatives of civil society, women's organizations, youth and farmers' organizations and fisherfolk's organizations expressed their deep concerns about the present tax system in Pakistan. Speaking on the occasion, the speakers pointed out that it is admitted fact that the richest 10% of Pakistanis have accumulated colossal assets in the last 3 decades without paying due income tax. Exemptions of billions of rupees have been given to the rich and mighty through executive orders (SROs), whereby incidence of indirect taxes on the poor have increased—they have been forced to pay 17% sales tax on many items of daily use.

The rich in Pakistan are either outside the tax net or do not pay personal taxes in accordance with their actual ability to pay. As a result, the poor are overburdened with indirect taxes. Participants further discussed that according to Oxfam's reports withholding income tax and 17% sales tax on most of the items consumed by them and excessive withholding at source even where income is below the threshold limit of Rs 400,000, the tax ceiling. Those who control 90% of resources contribute less than 2% in total tax revenue. Pro rich Exemptions/SRO cause 600 billion rupees in revenue losses every year; A very narrow tax base of Rs. 2300 billion and; a greater chunk of 68% coming from indirect taxes remains to be the major contributors for socio-economic inequality and rising poverty in Pakistan. Bonafide 52 million income earners are out of the tax net which warrants immediately broadening the tax base. General sales tax indiscriminately being applied to all sections of society; whereas the fabric of the society contains more than 43 Million living under the poverty line and another 45 Million living at threshold level.

Poor social indicators: 25 Million children out of school; 4 \$ spending on health per person against UN recommended 45 \$; 35 million people are undernourished; More than half of the Pakistani population don't have access to toilets; About 11% don't have access to improved drinking water sources. The power to change is in people's hand, the government need to be pushed into action by the citizens who elect them, to rather stop serving mostly the rich elites; the prevailing regressive taxation needs transformation into a progressive tax system.

Furthermore, the current tax system in Pakistan is seen by many as unfair and inequitable. Two thirds of tax revenue is mobilized through indirect taxes, which are regressive in nature and unfairly burden those least able to pay them. There are some basic elements necessary for a fair and just tax regime, which, if implemented, would strengthen the domestic revenue base, increase equity and improve overall development outcomes, as the public sector will have more resources at its disposal to spend on human and social well-being.

At the end of the assembly, all the attendees demanded that it is very important to strengthen civil

society through training, research, public and policy advocacy, civic education and international alliance building to advocate for tax reforms that ensures progressive and equitable taxation.

Climate Justice March

One of the major achievements of PKRC/Crofter was to organize a mass Climate Justice March Lahore on 8th November. Hundreds of activists participated. Most of the electronic and print media gave front page coverage to the event.

The march started from Shimla Pahari and ended at Aiwan-e-Iqbal Lahore. The speakers at the March said that COP26 in Glasgow this year has failed to address the challenges. The goal of \$100 bn annually for meeting climate challenges has not been met while Prime Minister Imran Khan, with all his pretense of concern for climate, did not attend the COP26 meeting. The speakers said despite 19 countries pledging to stop fossil fuel-based projects, the bigger fossil fuel corporations are still engaged in leasing, mining and execution of coal and fossil fuel-based projects around the world. The agreements of these projects must be cancelled as soon as possible. Similarly, Pakistan also announced phase-out coal-based energy last year, but the projects in support of China are still going on, they said.

The speakers demanded halting coal and fossil-based energy solutions, citing that fossil-based energy is detrimental to the environment as well as expensive. Gas and oil-based energy must be phased out with renewable energy systems. The speakers added that because of govt's negligence in tackling environmental challenges, Pakistan's second-biggest city Lahore has been declared the most polluted city on earth. This makes the ruling PTI government's claims of a billion-tree Tsunami hollow.

The speakers alleged that pollution and climate change is a big challenge for Pakistan but the govt is only paying lip-service to these issues. It is important to immediately stop mega projects such as Ravi River Urban Development project to tackle the problem of pollution and climate change. Projects like these will add to pollution in Lahore, they added.

"Climate Justice issue can't be left to the political parties. It is important that climate movement is spreading every nook and corner of the country," they said.

In-Equality Resistance Alliance Pakistan formed

A Fight Inequality Gathering in Lahore called by Crofter Foundation and Pakistan Kissan Rabita Committee established "Inequalities Resistance Alliance" to fight against the increasing gap between the rich and the poor in the country. The Alliance would be part of Fight InEquality Alliance in Asia and the region.

The Alliance was established after the conclusion of the two-day Inequality Gathering in Lahore, on 14-15 December 2021 held at a local hotel. Over 50 social and political activists participated from all walks of life participated representing all provinces and areas of Pakistan. The participants agreed that the Alliance will hold demonstrations, actions and undertake other steps for building pressure on the government and society to change its policies and attitudes responsible for widening the inequality gap, reveals the charter distributed at the moot. They also agreed to organise actions in 20 cities of Pakistan during the Devon World Economic Forum to be held on 17-23 January 2022.

The alliance gathering called for rejecting market fundamentalism and building economic alternatives that put people and planet first, building just economies that do not discriminate against and exploit women, stopping climate catastrophe by protecting affected communities and ending the

undue influence of the fossil fuel industry. It also seeks to make workers rights the cornerstone of economic models and end corporate greed, making wealthy corporations and individuals pay their fair share of tax, rejecting privatisation of essential services, building strong responsible states and ensure social protection for all as well as putting land back into the hands of women and smallholder farmers and ending the dominance of agribusiness.

They agreed on a People's Charter for all political and social organizations and proposed the creation of a Broad base United Front, which was approved by the conference participants.

52 representatives from 25 organizations formed this alliance. A 44 members General Assembly and 22 members Steering Committee of In-Equality Resistance Alliance Pakistan was elected at the gathering.

Report by:

Saima Zia (Crofter Foundation), Farooq Tariq (PKRC)

07/05/2022
