

Distributing Khasland Among the Landless

by A B M Osman Gani

POPLE in the Third World are confronting acute problem of food, cloth, shelter and rehabilitation. The number of shelterless and unemployed are on the increase.

Accordingly, at a recent international seminar, experts/veterans have viewed that if there is no immediate solution to the acute problem of unemployment and poverty, no buildings and houses will be able to exist in these countries. The rage of the hungry people may cause all organisations, including governments, to crumble.

It is therefore essential that all, including the government, come forward in rehabilitating about seven crore landless people. However, changing the fate of the landless will call for scientific methods to be adopted.

Conscious people and experts in the country and abroad are busy researching the ways of rehabilitation of these people.

The Social Institute, an NGO believes that it can make significant contribution in rehabilitation and socio-economic development of the fast growing number of landless. The very word 'Khas' is derived from Persian language. In general the khasland is the land which belongs to the government.

Under the existing land reform drive, the lands of following categories should be included in the fold of land settlement:

- a) Lands under 2nd part of register 8 (land worth of giving settlement).
- b) Lands under 3rd para of register 8 (evacuated and purchased land).
- c) Lands under 1st para of register 8 (public utility), changed by nature.
- d) Cultivable lands under 4th part of register 8 (river eroded).
- e) Lands under Govt/Semi Govt organisations, excess receipt of cultivable lying land or land under cultivation worth of re-taking over.
- f) Lands without owner or claimant.
- g) Lands under PO 98/72 (Bangladesh land holding limitation order).
- h) Lands surfaced from the sea or river (clause 86 and 87 of tenant right act).
- i) Land resumed by the Govt (clause 92 of tenant right and abolition of zamindari act).
- j) Any land acquired by dint of law by the Govt.

But identification and distribution of khasland is not an easy job. Since the British rule a few nominal laws have been enacted for identifying the khasland and protecting the interest of the landless. By the Cadestran Survey of (CS) 1910 and the East Bengal land acquisition and tenancy act, enemy property act, evaquee property act of 1958 and the Government estate manual laws, no shelterless and the landless class did get the benefit of these laws. Rather only the jotedars and moneyed people derived benefits out of it. The increase in the number of landless people started from that time, because of the aforesaid laws were not implemented in the interest of the masses.

In independent Bangladesh the land holding limitation order 1972, acquisition and requisition of immovable property ordinance of 1982, land reform act of 1984 have

been enacted in favour of the landless. But in reality with exceptional cases of the landless, vast khasland has been grabbed by the local land grabbing well-to-do people with the help of corrupt revenue officials. There is a significant amount of khasland in Bangladesh, where considerable number of landless may be settled/rehabilitated.

Khaslands are in different volumes and sizes across the country. It is a bitter fact that the government does not have right information about those char lands. There is no proper arrangement of survey of these lands. According to the Land Ministry, it maintains the accounts of the populated char lands only. The char lands not inhabited by people are not considered by the government as khasland. According to the local revenue officials, the khasland is only that land the government has allocated for settlement.

Generally, the total area of char lands is much more than officially declared. In Luxmipur area the char has been shown 9.19 sq miles, but in fact the area is more than two times of the declared area. Some local corrupt revenue officials keep the actual statistics suppressed to attain graft. This way the actual area of khasland including the vast char zones is unknown to the concerned department and the countrymen in general.

One such island is Chargazaria of Ramgoti upazila under greater Noakhali district. Every year thousands of people of Ramgoti and Bhola become landless due to river erosion. During the last 20 years many people of this zone have suffered tremendously because of floods and tornadoes etc. with a target of about 20 thousand homeless people of this area, the Social Institute started its activity in 1977. When these helpless people who took shelter on the embankment were tortured by the local feudals and the WAPDA officials, the Social Institute made them united.

The united measure taken against illegal and inhuman acts upon these helpless people inspired them in their initial march to Chargazaria. Also they were inspired by the Social Institute to realise the necessity of unity for saving themselves from the grasp of local evil power. The Social Institute formed the cooperatives. With a view to organising these landless people, the Social Institute maintained effective public relations and conducted constant training programme. In directing the united work programme, providing coverage to the court cases, management, training, no financial aid or assistance has been received from the government or any foreign donor, nor the Social Institute asked for such help. After the success of the movement of the landless i.e. on getting their permanent settlement of land in 1990, the Social Institute accepted the financial aid of donors.

From 1990 the owners of the khasland received the aid for agriculture, education, health and development of other humanitarian aspects from foreign donors. They also raised fund through their own contribution. Accordingly dependence upon others has been minimised. Initially 1.25 acres of land was distributed to each family. Later, it was in-

creased to 1.50 acres. From 1978 to 1989 they took lease of land on a one year basis. During these ten years, they were subjected to steam-rolling of all sorts of cruelty of the local musclemen and corrupt officials. False cases were filed against them. At last they got rehabilitated in khasland of Chargazaria. Starting with rehabilitation of 51 landless

tion in the struggle for establishment of their rights, economic right included. Since 1978 the landless themselves have face a few dozens of false criminal cases.

Strategy

The organisers of the landless should remember the geographical, social, economic and other conditions of the lo-

The Social Institute thinks the thana committee is the important agency in respect of distributing khasland. The present law and the local authority are influenced by the jotedars through various sorts of pressure techniques. According to the existing law, if khasland is properly identified, reclaimed and distributed, there can not be any

go a long way in their allround development. Besides, it will have positive impact on advancement of national socio-economy. Realising this factor the Social Institute gave priority to educate the members of this society irrespective of children, adults, male and female. Particular stress has been given to women and children education. In spite of having financial constraint the Social Institute has already been running ten non-formal education centres in its target areas - Chargazaria and Ramgoti which proved to be insufficient to cater to the requirement.

It is our firm belief that the sensitive issue of landless rehabilitation can be solved if the voluntary organisations work with mutual understanding and sincere cooperation. For attaining this end, there is a need for close communication and desired harmony among them who have been working for rehabilitation of the landless. The present partially inactive cell under the land ministry consisting of the NGOs need to be active and speedy. The inclusion of large and Dhaka-based organisations and their participation in making decisions is not enough. The NGOs dealing with khasland in the mufassal areas may be included in the land reform cell. The NGOs which will help rehabilitate the landless in the government khasland, should be provided with broad-based training.

In spite of considering the present land law favourable to the landless, some aspects of this law are required to be clearly explained, modified and corrected. This can be done through mutual discussion between the government and the volunteer organisations. Maximum amount of khasland is available in newly accreted chars. It is necessary to give one year lease of khasland, immediately after new chars are surfaced to them who are eligible of getting permanent settlement, so that the jotedars and musclemen do not dare step in the new chars.

Large amount of khasland may be recovered if the lands illegally allotted before and after promulgation of land reform act 1984 on one's own name and in the names of his/her favourite ones are cancelled. Due to their selfless works with the landless people, the NGO representatives other than the officers, are capable and competent enough in certifying the real landless.

That is why inclusion of them in the land distribution committee will be more meaningful and effective. In the drive for rehabilitating the landless on the khasland donor agencies can contribute more actively and meaningfully in the related technical, economic and social fields.



A seminar arranged by the Social Institute

families at Chargazaria island in 78, the number reached to 2000 at the end of 1989.

The objectives of the Social Institute wants to achieve are:

Unity

The first and foremost objective is to get the landless of respective areas united for rehabilitating themselves. For the sake of their own existence there is no alternative, other than launching of lawful struggle against the mighty jotedars and their helpers. Only unity can enable them to reach the cherished goal.

Training

To hold and retain this united strength consciousness, knowledge, and fellow feelings are needed. Training and only training can turn a poor illiterate person to become conscious and also inspire him to become a powerful person. The training is absolutely necessary for them in respect of legal, professional, strategic aspects. The landless people will not get themselves involved in illegal and anti-state activities and thereby get their life unbearable if they are conscious about some essential basic broad legal aspects. Also they will then not fall prey to the cheats and feudals.

Self-reliance

Keeping self-reliance as a target, the landless, people should have positive participa-

calities of Bangladesh. Taking into consideration the local conditions correctly, the landless themselves should determine the strategy of their struggle. In the light of experiences it is observed the goal and objectives of the movement of the landless people of Bhola and Chargazaria is the same, but there is a gulf of difference between the strategic techniques at Bhola and Chargazaria, though both enjoy patronage of the same organisation - the Social Institute. To trust any decision on the landless will be very harmful.

Not in political interest

It is to be admitted that a good number of political parties in the countries are rendering human development services. Still rationality dictates that no landless should be utilized as a pawn in the political game. If they are used by a political party, other parties will become inimical to the landless and thus their movement will have a great set back.

Looking for progressive friends

There should be search for cooperative friends, acceptable to people of all shades irrespective of party, principle, layer etc. By adopting this method, it will be easier for them to reach their desired goal.

problem in getting the khasland.

Economic cooperation

The landless people cannot be regarded as rehabilitated, only after having got allotment of khasland. To cultivate that land requires fund and equipment. Other basic requirements like education, medicine, and shelter are also needed.

The concept of the Social Institute is a permanent rehabilitation of the landless in the khasland making them owner of the land and also turning them economically self-sufficient.

Research

Correct and appropriate conception can only come out of cool, calm and constant research. The Social Institute thinks that such research can generate more effective and much beneficial welfare. With its ideas, concept and practical experience the Social Institute can help in solving similar problems elsewhere.

Education

The fact cannot be denied that major portion of the welfare effort made in favour of the landless will go waste, if they remain illiterate. With education they can be proved to be appropriate utilizers of those welfare steps, which will

Pakistani Youth Show the Way in Self-help

By Cassandra Balchin

A growing number of young Pakistanis are not sitting around waiting for solutions to their problems. With exuberance, energy and enthusiasm, these young people have decided to help themselves.

Through non-governmental organisations (NGOs), the youth have discovered they can deal with some problems themselves with little or no help from elders.

Self-preservation seems to require that young people rely on their own initiative. The 15-35 age group accounts for 29 per cent of Pakistan's population. It is the most economically active and second largest demographic group in the country but very little attention is paid to their problems, especially unemployment and illiteracy.

But Bhimber Trar village's active youth committee, for example, takes the cause of self-help very seriously. And it

The very few who manage to finish high school find that there is a severe shortage of college placement. Most high school graduates have to continue their studies outside formal educational institutions with private tutors!

Most of the youth committees are affiliated with Paasban, the social development wing of the Family Planning Association of Pakistan (FPAP). Paasban's Youth Programme is the country's oldest and, apparently because of its being non-governmental, has successfully avoided politically-induced policy changes which have led to the demise of government-sponsored youth activities.

Coordinating with some 117 youth NGOs across the country, Paasban has the largest network of young community leaders and claims to have some 50,000 volunteers.

The organisation does not offer youth groups any financial assistance but helps them through networking, orientation activities, workshops and summer camps. It trains young people in skills as diverse as the drafting of project proposals, rehabilitation of drug users, and income-generating schemes.

Paasban is the only NGO operating on a country-wide level which is helping develop community leaders so that outside support becomes no longer necessary," says Yasmin Shahid, the government's senior director for women and youth affairs.

The goal is to give youth volunteers technical and management skills they can use to help other youngsters. FPAP, according to the 1990 Paasban annual report, also sees in these young volunteers future family planning advocates as the association "recognises the necessity of the development of a second line of leadership for the family planning movement from the grassroots level upwards."

Youth groups have also demonstrated the ability to respond to needs specific to certain communities. The Mardan Youth Welfare Association, for one, spends considerable time settling disputes between rival factions, usually among young people, in the Northwest Frontier Proving.

The disputes have the potential to erupt into very bloody confrontations as some of the weapons from the Afghan war have found their way to neighbouring Pakistan.

In the Murree hill region, Raja Mohammed Arif, 22, was so concerned about deforestation that, until recently unable to read, he has since written two pamphlets on the environment. The pamphlets fill the urgent need for environment education materials in the Urdu language.

Although the youth committees have chalked up some very impressive successes, there are problems and issues which still have to be resolved or have cropped up.

The youngsters have to cope, for instance, with the generation gap as they work with their elders. Young people have found their work hampered by conservatives and traditionalists.

The education programme of the Association of United Youth of Nawakhill, for instance, had some opposition from the local mullahs, or Muslim religious leaders. "But, we say to them, find - children were enrolled in primary school than were at the beginning of the decade.

Africa was particularly hard hit, with education spending dropping by almost 30 per cent in the first half of the Eighties and first-year enrolment in primary school decreasing from 84 per cent in 1980 to 70 per cent in 1990.

Bangladesh is a country Unicef cites as one which has begun to shift its priorities. At independence in 1971, only 10 per cent of its health expenditures went to rural clinics. That figure has been raised to 60 per cent - more in line with 84 per cent of the population which live in rural areas. In the early Eighties, Bangladesh also more than doubled its expenditure on primary education.

Echoing promises made at the 1990 summit, Unicef calls on other countries to emulate that example. Its report says the welfare and education of children should be a top priority for governments, even in times of war and economic hardship.

Unicef is also encouraged by the "corridors of tranquility" maintained for the passage of health supplies during recent conflicts in El Salvador, Sudan, and Ethiopia.

No Excuse...

MORE AND MORE PEOPLE, ESPECIALLY FROM DEVELOPING COUNTRIES, ARE GOING TO OTHER LANDS TO FLEE POVERTY, POLITICAL OPPRESSION, OR AN ENVIRONMENT THAT CAN NO LONGER GIVE THEM SUSTENANCE.

THE STRONGEST PRESSURES TO MIGRATE ARE SAID TO ARISE IN COUNTRIES WITH RAPID POPULATION GROWTH AND A SLOW PACE OF DEVELOPMENT.

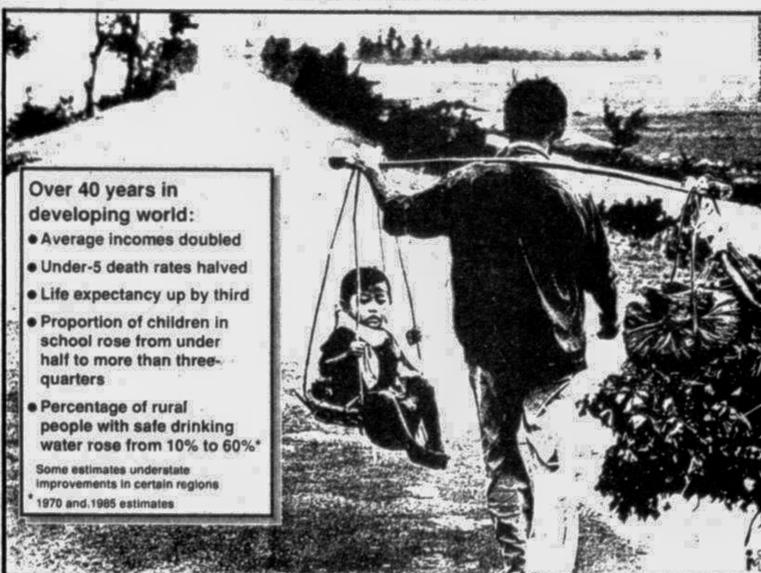
BUT AN EASIER LIFE DOESN'T ALWAYS AWAIT THESE MIGRANTS, AS SHOWN BY THE RECENT EXPERIENCE OF THOUSANDS OF ASIANS TRAPPED IN THE GULF WAR.

JOBS FOR MIGRANT WORKERS ARE ALSO HARD-TO-COME-BY EVEN IN INDUSTRIALIZED COUNTRIES.

Depthnews

Brighter Side of Life of a Child Today

by Gillian Forrester



- Over 40 years in developing world:**
- Average incomes doubled
 - Under-5 death rates halved
 - Life expectancy up by third
 - Proportion of children in school rose from under half to more than three-quarters
 - Percentage of rural people with safe drinking water rose from 10% to 60%
- Some estimates underestimate improvements in certain regions
* 1970 and 1985 estimates

WHEN a Westerner thinks of the developing world, the first image that comes to mind is the malnourished child. Pleas from aid agencies for donations appear in magazines, newspapers, inside city buses and on television throughout the industrialised world.

"She's suffering from one of the deadliest diseases known to man: Poverty," reads one advertisement. The large eyes of a young girl with dark skin stare out from the page. "One in four Third World children die before their fifth birthday," says the small print.

In their drive for donations from private citizens, aid agencies continually emphasise the negative without fostering a better understanding of the causes of poverty, according to Peter Adamson, editor of the 1992 State of the World's Children report published by the UN Children's Fund (Unicef).

Advertisements usually do not mention that infant mortality rates, life expectancy, and access to safe water and primary education have all substantially improved over the last few decades.

If people are to believe there is hope, he argues, they must receive news of progress as well as analysis of the underlying causes of poverty and malnutrition.

Adamson told Unicef national committees about a questionnaire he often gives teenage students in Britain and several other countries.

To the question "What percentage of the world's children are starving?" he usually gets an answer of between 50 and 70 per cent. The real answer, he says, is one to two per cent.

Similarly, students generally believe that 75 per cent of families cannot meet even their most basic needs. The real answer is 25 per cent.

It is widely believed that only 10 to 20 per cent of children start school; the actual figure is roughly 90 per cent. Students also tend to think the global population growth rate is increasing, when in fact it is

decreasing.

Another common misconception is that the developing world would collapse without aid money from the West.

Adamson argues that the encouragement of such distorted images directly undermines efforts to improve poverty and its causes - something crucial to positive change.

Something Westerners need, to know is that even though they believe that aid money goes directly to help needy children, that priority is not reflected in the budgets of most official aid programmes or national governments in the

Third World, says Unicef's report.

In fact, only 10-15 per cent of aid from the industrialised world goes to meet basic needs, according to the 1992 Unicef report.

Aid amounts to only a small portion of the revenues of most developing countries, but a similar neglect for basic needs emerges in the overall spending priorities of Third World governments.

The report estimates, for example, that 80 per cent of the \$12 billion allocated each year to water supply systems is spent on putting taps in the homes of the relatively well-off.

The cost per beneficiary is roughly \$600 - far more than the estimated \$30 to \$50 per person it would cost to provide public wells and standpipes to the poor majority.

Similarly, Unicef says, it is common for 75 per cent of a public health budget to seven the richest 25 per cent of the population. In at least one case, 30 per cent of the national health budget was used to send a privileged few for treatment abroad.

Education money is also spent inequitably. In India, for example, the cost of sending one student to university is

equivalent to the amount needed to provide primary education to up to 70 children. Yet half India's children never finish primary school and India produces more graduates than it can productively employ.

A higher proportion of children now attend school than did 40 years ago, but the Eighties have witnessed setbacks in this trend and were "a disastrous decade" in education, according to the report.

Of more than 100 developing countries surveyed, two-thirds reported a decline in expenditures per pupil. In half, a smaller percentage of children were enrolled in primary school than were at the beginning of the decade.

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