

Garment Workers

Report on Relief Operation for Victims of Rana Plaza Incidents in Bangladesh

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This report denotes the responsibility of a peasants' organization of Bangladesh on the precarious situation of the garment sector and financial activities it operated around them.

Rana Plaza building collapse that took place on 23 April resulting in 1,129 death tolls and 3,500 severe wounded now became a low profile issue in the country. Those who were so sympathetic at the beginning now mostly turned towards other issues. It does not mean the sufferings of the victims do not exist anymore. Rather the situation is worst than before. The survivors are no more taken care of by any sympathetic groups apart from the trade union ones which are circumstantially connected with them. However, the trade unions are not much resourceful to stand by them financially insofar as they can do organizationally. They can show the solidarity with their organizational strength which they have been doing all along.

Almost every day the garment workers are on the street demanding trial of the perpetrators, the owner of the Rana Plaza and the owners of the garment factories inside the Rana Plaza building were arrested few days after the collapse incident took place in Savar at the resistance of the people. However, the people are in doubt about the trial process undertaken by the government itself. Even the people questioned the law in relation to the incident because under which law they were brought to book is not in keeping with the crimes they perpetuated. The concrete and strong law needs to be introduced in this regard with a view to stopping the repetition of such incidents.

Immediately after the Rana Plaza collapse Bangladesh Krishok Federation (BKF) which is the member of La Via Campesina, was extremely shocked and concerned with the degree of devastation. Normally BKF works for the rural peasants, landless, agricultural workers since 1976. However, since 1993 it also works in limited periphery for the informal sector labors which covers garment sector too. As there is a lot of garment workers organization already active in this sector BKF deals this sector within a limit. But BKF was seriously moved on seeing the tragedy of Savar Rana Plaza collapse. This is mainly because of the fact that most of the victims in the incidents were hailing from the villages and they have their rural background. If there have been employments in the countryside they would not have come to the cities anyway, never faced such an atrocious consequences and been killed in so cruel form. We seriously thought that we should not avoid our responsibility in such a horrible condition of the working people.

In the past there were lot of incidents like Spectra Garment incidents, Tazreen Fashion limited but we did not intervene much. This time we ideally and deliberately decided to stand by the garment workers considering the circumstance as the difficult one in memory. Historically we gave our moral support and solidarity to the movement they build up based on their various just demands including that of increase in salary for long.

Having been impelled by our conscientiousness we took the initiative to support the victims as much as possible. We formed a team to observe the circumstances and find the strategy how to support them. We tried to mobilize the funding For this in various ways. A brief appeal which we sent to your international friendly organizations to draw their attention and to have the sincere support. ESSF based in France extended its support to enable us to stand by the Rana Plaza victims. It mobilized individuals and collective support to strengthen our efforts. We are so grateful to them for joining their forces in critical moment for the very import labor sector of Bangladesh.

We received the support by two transfers dated 16 and 20 May 2103 consecutively amounting TK.(341,504+146,011)= TK.487,515/-, in Euro 5,000.

Our Needs Assessment Team opined after their observation that the victims received support in different ways, mostly in kind. They actually now need monetary support to solve their day to day problem. Finally we decided to give support to them with cash. Based on the assessment made by the team consisting of 3 members of Bangladesh Krishok Federation we selected 100 worst victims reaming under treatment in different hospitals namely Dhaka Medical College, Appelo Hospital and Enam Medical Hospital. The team emphasized the victims coming from the villages where BKF has its organizational activities.

In selection process we also took the help of two urban based organizations. One is Swadheen (Independent) Bangla Garments' Worker Federation and another Ekottro which is a young activists' group.

We gave Tk.4,880 to selected victims each. So 100 worst victims received Tk.4,880X100 = Tk.488,000/-

Those who received the relief support from BKF are happy and expressed their gratitude to the sympathizers abroad to take care of them in such a crucial period.

Still the victims are suffering a lot. They are heading towards an uncertain future. They do not know how to continue with their lives in such mutilated body structure. No body will be eager to provide with jobs to them. The employers will always find healthy and fittest persons for any kind of employment. There are some victims who are completely unable to work. What happens to their lives!

Those who are still missing become big agonies to their families. Every day they are visiting Rana Plaza and looking for their dear ones. The family of those who were killed are facing hardship in their daily lives as they do not have any one to earn for them.

We do not like to see the repetition of such incidents. We demand better work condition, safety at work, building and fire safety code and reasonable pay for the garment workers. We are always in solidarity with garment workers.

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