

Preparatory Note on Fieldwork by CRG Researchers

1. Field visits have to be organized on the basis of the research questions pertaining to the field of study. Accordingly CRG has decided that the field work segment of the project would be around three broad questions on the Northeast –

- (a) On the basis of a preliminary mapping of insurgencies in the Northeast, which suggest at least two distinct phases of conflicts there, a relevant question would be: to what extent have governmental measures been successful in containing violence, insurgency, and pacification towards conflict management and resolution, thereby bringing an end to one particular phase of insurgency?
- (b) What have been the measures in the Northeast towards ensuring women's participation in governance as a step towards peace building, broadening the social base of the stakeholders of peace, and strengthening the peace constituencies in the societies? Can we undertake a review of the question in the light of the Security Council Resolutions 1325 and 1820?
- (c) Finally, given that Northeast is a scenario of borders and border conflicts, refugee flows and forced migration of internally displaced population groups (IDPs), what is the situation of statelessness in the region, and to what extent governance measures have been able to solve the problem of statelessness in the Northeast and address issues of justice for the victims? Likewise how crucial is the issue of displacement demanding governance measures towards peace building in the Northeast?

2. CRG plans to conduct field work in select areas of the Northeast (some of the areas of focus will be in Mizoram, Tripura, etc.). CRG will also in this connection follow up on its earlier work there. We shall begin with one or two pilot visits which will give us an idea of how far we can widen its scope. The field work plan thus remains flexible, so that we can adjust it according to the response and the lessons of the first visit. It is important to retain this flexibility because CRG will be dealing with an entire region.

3. Besides, CRG has drawn up plan for Bihar study. It will coordinate with JNU on this. CRG has already conducted a preliminary visit in central and northern Bihar – primarily in the flood prone districts of Northern Bihar. The plan is to address two research questions there: (a) Given that the area is a (man-made) disaster zone, giving rise to widespread popular discontent about flood management by the government, what is the nature of governance measures towards disaster mitigation and social stability? (b) Can we map the evolution of government strategies in Bihar relating to caste-conflict management and stabilizing “social peace”? This will require field work in central and north Bihar. For the flood devastated area, CRG proposes to take up

three districts, namely, Saharsa, Supaul and Madhepura. These districts fall in the Kosi belt and were severely affected by the floods in 2008. The field work will revolve around the question of labour migration, floods, rehabilitation, conflict, governmental response and land relations. Gram panchayats will be covered, such as Naharwar and Mahishi in Saharsa district, Mehasimar and Kishanpur (South) in Supaul and Patori in Madhepura. The work will involve extensive discussions with villagers, interviews with local leaders, and government officials. The main caste group to be interviewed will be the Mahadalit communities. The formation of mahadalits as an officially recognized separate caste group and the politics behind it need to be seriously examined. At a primary level this new category of mahadalits has not brought any significant change in their lives. It has to be seen as to what kind of social engineering the government hopes to achieve by creating this category, and in this context what is the specific nature of population management policy of the government there. Pattern of voting by these communities can be one of the variables that have to be studied.

4. The method to be adopted will be a combination of (a) collection of primary material, make field notes, and gather archival material; (b) collection of local literature (important, as this will be local language based material), and relevant local and national government reports, and white papers, (c) meeting with relevant informants and other persons; (d) and gathering information through quantitative and qualitative information including focused group meeting reports and individual narratives. It cannot be told beforehand where what will be most appropriate in respect to method. It may vary according to the specific area. The emphasis will be to find out the genealogy of the present mode of governing.

5. Through August-December 2011 fieldwork will continue. As has been said, one intense field visit has already taken place in June 2011. Members of CRG will conduct the field visits which will be helped and participated by members of the research network of CRG in said areas. As earlier with other research programmes of CRG, on this occasion also the field work will be in dialogic mode and in the spirit of a collective exercise.

6. The fieldwork will be led by Sabyasachi Basu Ray Chaudhury (sabyasachi@mcrg.ac.in), Paula Banerjee (paula@mcrg.ac.in), Samir K. Das (samir@mcrg.ac.in) and Ranabir Samaddar (ranabir@mcrg.ac.in). It will be done with the assistance and involvement of various peace activists, human rights workers, mothers' organizations, victims' forums, peasants' organizations, and scholar members of CRG. Since these months will be spent in simultaneous programmes of field visit with at times no access to electronic communication, Ranabir Samaddar may be contacted at all times for any inquiry.