

Update: IWM-CRG Project

1. 5th Annual Research and Orientation Workshop

CRG organised a Task Force for administering the workshop efficiently in the work-from-home format. There was a module reorientation for the workshop in light of the pandemic. The new themes are: a) **Global protection of refugees and migrants with emphasis on protection in the time of a pandemic**. Module coordinator: Nasreen Chowdhory; b) **Migrants and the epidemic: Gender, race, and other vulnerabilities**. Module coordinator: Samata Biswas; c) **Neoliberalism, migrant labour, and the burden of the epidemic**. Module coordinator: Arup Kumar Sen; d) **Statelessness with emphasis on de facto statelessness and the rightlessness of sections of population**. Module coordinator: K.M. Parivelan; e) **Legal regimes of protection and the time of the pandemic**. Module coordinator Oishik Sircar; and f) **Ethics of care, public health, and migrants and refugees**. Module coordinator: Paula Banerjee.

25 participants have been selected from within India, keeping the constraints on travel in mind. International participants have been welcomed to attend the virtual sessions, and have been guaranteed an advantage in selections for next year's workshop, should they apply. The workshop and conference schedules are being confirmed, with specific conference panels kept exclusively virtual. Video lectures by the coordinators are being uploaded on CRG's secure portal for the workshop, along with module notes and reading lists meant for the workshop participants. All of which, along with research abstracts and details of participants and resource persons can be accessed on <http://www.mcrgh.ac.in/wc.asp> (username: faculty; password: facwc2020).

To ensure the best possible safety standards for holding the workshop and conference during a global pandemic, CRG has chosen to host all its participants and events from November 17-21, 2020 at ITC Sonar, Kolkata. The workshop and conference dates had to be pushed up on the calendar (from the erstwhile plan of November 21 to 25) to match the availability of the venue. Strict social distancing, regular sanitization and other protocols will be observed to maximize safety of all. Airport pick-ups and drops will be provided, and their entire stay will be taken care of by CRG.

The workshop will take place on schedule and other related activities will be performed on schedule. In December 2020 – February 2021 we shall complete the follow up tasks and report will be prepared in February-March 2021.

2. Annual Research Agenda

Contracted Researchers

The six contracted researchers under the IWM project are Francis Adaikalam; Jyothi Krishnan, Anjuman Ara Begum, Sohini Sengupta, Nasreen Chowdhory, Shamna Thacham Poyil, who are external researchers; and Kusumika Ghosh and Piya Srinivasan, who are CRG researchers. The external researchers were asked to submit a 4000-word draft and a note on how they were working around restrictions on field visits due to the lockdown by August 31. The researchers asked for an extension for their drafts. As per their contract, the first full drafts of their papers (8000-10000 words) are to be submitted by October 15.

CRG published two research documents on COVID-19 and Migrant Workers under the guidance of Prof. Ranabir Samaddar - *Borders of an Epidemic: COVID-19 and Migrant Workers* (http://www.mcrg.ac.in/RLS_Migration_2020/COVID-19.pdf) and *Burdens of an Epidemic: A Policy Perspective on Covid-19 and Migrant Workers* (http://www.mcrg.ac.in/RLS_Migration_2020/Burdens_of_an_Epidemic.pdf). These essays are being compiled into a reader edited by Ritajyoti Bandyopadhyay. Negotiations are underway to finalize a contract with an academic publisher for the book's publication.

The research will be completed on schedule and the publications will be in process by March 2021.

3. Visiting Fellowships

Four **Visiting Fellows** from Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Afghanistan have been chosen to work with CRG. They are Neetu Pokharel ('Statelessness and the Plight of Women in Nepal'), Mujib Ahmad Azizi ('War, Conflict, Climate Change and Internal Displacement in Afghanistan'), Niloy Ranjan Biswas ('The Remaking of Rohingyas in the Host Communities of Cox's Bazar: The Intersectionality of Identity, Politics and Culture'), and Nadarajah Sooriyarah ('Migrants in India's Health Infrastructure: Ethnography on India's Frontline Workers').

The original schedule was designed to have them visit in March 2020, but had to be reworked due to COVID-19. Depending on the pandemic situation in early November-December, a decision will be taken to invite them to CRG to present their work in January-February 2021.

4. **Public Lectures:** CRG's scheduled public lectures have had to be postponed due to COVID-19. To accommodate changes in the mode of delivering lectures from physical to virtual, CRG instituted a Webinar Committee to specifically organise all public lectures and events to be held during the lockdown. So far, it has held 5 webinars, which can be found on http://www.mcrg.ac.in/CRG_Audio_Video_Resources.asp:

The Dalit: In Search of a Homeland Supported by the Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung, Institute of Human Sciences, Vienna, and several other Universities and Institutions in India. Date: September 18, 2020

Covid 19 in South Asia: Regional Perspectives on Vulnerabilities and Dispossessions Supported by the Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung, Institute of Human Sciences, Vienna, and several other Universities and Institutions in India. Date: August 24, 2020

Covid 19 and Migrant Labour: Laws, Policies, Practices Supported by the Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung, Institute of Human Sciences, Vienna, and several other Universities and Institutions in India. Date: July 30, 2020

COVID 19: Redrawn Borders, Redefined Lives Supported by the Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung, Institute of Human Sciences, Vienna, and several other Universities and Institutions in India. Date: July 08, 2020

COVID 19: Public Health Crisis and Borders of an Epidemic Sudden Visibility of Migrant Workers Supported by the Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung, Institute of Human Sciences, Vienna, and several other Universities and Institutions in India. Date: June 12, 2020

Public lectures in form of a series of webinars have been held on schedule. They have been productive and helpful in continuing work through the lockdown period and the pandemic.

5. Preparatory and Follow-up Programmes: The following changes have been made due to COVID-19 induced restrictions:

i) Shifted part of the funding to publications.

ii) CRG had planned a one-day workshop on issues around the National Register of Citizens (NRC) in the Darjeeling Hills in North Bengal. However, COVID-19 induced restrictions required the workshop to be postponed till the situation improves.

CRG will hold this workshop along with a research visit to the hill areas in January 2021. Other follow-up programmes outside Kolkata in form of collaborative dialogues will be held in Jan-Feb 2021.

6. An Advisory Committee Meeting for planning the CRG's work plan for the year was held on 24th and 25th January, 2020, at Hotel Sojourn, Kolkata.

Another planning/ advisory meeting will be held in January-February 2021.

7. Participation in Workshops and Conferences: Due to COVID-19, scheduled international and domestic workshops and conferences have had to be cancelled.

A workshop will be held in Darjeeling on issues of citizenship and migration, along with a field visit in January-February 2020.

Some pending visits will also be undertaken hopefully in March 2021.

8. Refugee Watch and Refugee Watch Online

The most recent issue of **Refugee Watch** was published in January 2020. The next two issues are in the pipeline. Due to the pandemic, the issue that was to come out in end June has been delayed. It will now be published in early October and the next issue will be out in December. The editor, Prof. Paula Banerjee, is planning one of the issues in collaboration with SANDD, with collaborators from other South Asian countries.

Refugee Watch Online received its second group of interns and continues to produce short commentaries, reviews, reports and opinion pieces. Among the most recent are *A comparative perspective on the impact of Covid-19 on refugees, migrants and stateless people in India; notes on floods and erosion in Assam, Covid-19 and the migrant child; migration, racism and the Coronavirus pandemic*; and reports on workshops and webinars conducted. Find them here: <https://refugeewatchonline.wordpress.com/>

The budgeted outlay has been reduced and part of the money goes to the media programme, which is going on satisfactorily and has expanded in scope.

9. Teachers' Workshop: With the lockdown, CRG was compelled to shift the workshop to the virtual mode. A series of lectures/panel discussions and meetings with College and University teachers has been planned. A consultative committee was set up with professors like Amit Prakash, Nasreen Chowdhury and Kalpana Kannabiran. So far, the following three teachers' workshops have been conducted:

- A workshop on 'Migration: Dimensions & Perspectives' with Dr. Shyamalendu Mazumdar and Dr. Samata Biswas, moderated by Dr. Arup Sen, was organized by CRG in collaboration with Netaji Satabarshiki Mahavidyalaya (affiliated to West Bengal State University) in North 24-Parganas, on June 15, 2020.
- CRG collaborated with University of Delhi to conduct a two-day national webinar on September 15-16, 2020 on 'Migration and the Pandemic Problematique'. The speakers were Dr Rajiv Aggarwal, Prof. Samir Kumar Das and Dr. Nasreen Chowdhury.
- A two-day international teachers' workshop on 'Pandemic, Migration and Politics of Life' was conducted on September 24-25, 2020 in collaboration with

Vidyasagar University, West Bengal. Details can be found on the below link: http://www.mcrg.ac.in/IWM_Migration/IWM_Migration_Events.asp

The teachers workshop will be held on the foundations laid by these initiatives. The workshop will be held in the third week of January 2021. These discussions mentioned above have brought out issues of research methods, syllabi, and curricula, also specially targeted programmes for disciplines other than social sciences like literature, film studies, etc. The report will come out in February 2021.

10. Audio-visual Material for Education: CRG will produce a short film, a continuation of *Calcutta: a Migrant City* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fpREEq7Ar-Y>), filmed in 2019. The shooting was halted in March 2020 due to the pandemic induced lockdown. This has been resumed.

The first version will be shown in the winter workshop in November. By February 2021 the final version will be released.

11. Website and Digital Resources: CRG's subscriptions to JStor, Project Muse and *Economic and Political Weekly* have been renewed. CRG will subscribe to similar academic platforms as and when suitable. A new section on COVID-19 is under construction on <http://www.mcrg.ac.in/>.

On 19 March, CRG started compiling a living archive using material from the media and other sources on Migrant workers in the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown. (http://www.mcrg.ac.in/COVID_19_Migrant_Workers.html) The newly added section on the website contains information, news reports, photos and videos covering the migrant workers' crisis during the lockdown and is being regularly uploaded and updated.

The work is going according to plan.

12. Translation

The research documents 'Borders of an Epidemic' and 'Burdens of an Epidemic' are being translated into Bengali by CRG's research associate, Rajat Roy. The estimated timeline for completion of the translation work is October 15. A Hindi translation of the same is being undertaken by Ashok Jha, a Delhi-based translator and co-editor of the journal published by Council of Social Development. The Hindi translation of both books is estimated to be completed by early November.

The above publications should come out by March 2021.

13. Media Segment

After COVID-19, a media committee was constituted, along with four external advisers, to administer three components of the media segment: disbursing **short-term media grants**, organizing a **media workshop** on the representation of migrants in the media during the lockdown, and contracting a media person to curate a **media reader** on migrant workers.

CRG chose four journalists — Siddharth Yadav (Madhya Pradesh), Geetika Mishra (Maharashtra), Amit Sengupta (Delhi), Swati Bhattacharjee and Abhijnan Sarkar (Kolkata) — as **media fellows**. Siddharth Yadav dropped out of the program and Debashish Aich (Malda), the first waitlisted candidate, took his place. They submitted brief reports on their projects for inclusion in the media reader on September 15. The deadline for submitting their full reports has been extended to October 15 due to difficulty in accessing their interviewees after the lockdown. Their full work will be published in a CRG publication.

The application deadline is September 30 and a two-day schedule has been drawn up covering the themes of borders, gender and other faultlines, lack of data, the role of social media and visual media, among others. We are in the process of inviting resource persons for the workshop.

The **media reader** of (70-75000 words) is being compiled and edited by eminent journalist Bharat Bhushan. The deadline for completion is September 30 and the reader will be launched at the workshop.

The book *Situating Social Media: Gender, Caste, Protest, Solidarity* by Samata Biswas and Atig Ghosh (published by Women Unlimited and available for purchase on <https://www.amazon.in/Situating-Social-Media- Protest-Solidarity/dp/9385606271>) will also be released at the media workshop.

The **media workshop** was originally scheduled for the second week of October but the dates have been rescheduled to **4-5 December, 2020**, to enable physical participation. The report and the first draft of the media reader will come out by February 2021.

14. Library and Archive Building: A new Library officer, Nandini Dasgupta, has been hired for the CRG library. The library reopened after due sanitation of premises. Ms. Dasgupta also assists the website committee and monitors relevant web-based activities. She has curated a comprehensive index for the CRG's living archive on COVID-19. It can be accessed here: http://www.mcrg.ac.in/CRG_COVID-19/Living_Archive_COVID.asp.

The work is progressing as planned.

A specific winter workshop archive has been created where all reading materials from the previous winter workshops can be accessed. Any registered library user at CRG can choose to explore it by going to the 'advanced search' option and clicking on 'winter workshop' from the catalogue that drops down. This has been curated specifically keeping the workshop participants in mind.