

**Advisory Meeting  
12 March 2025  
Calcutta Research Group and Institute for Human Sciences (IWM), Vienna  
Venue: Monotel, Kolkata**

**A REPORT**

**Session 1: Introductory Session**

The Director of Calcutta Research Group (CRG), Shyamalendu Majumdar opened the floor for discussion with the welcome address. Ranabir Samaddar (Professor Emeritus and CIFAR Fellow) reflected on the five-year long collaboration and its major focus areas that successfully completed a number of events, innovative and scholarly in many ways. CRG researchers and senior members were requested to share their experiences of research and work during the years of the collaboration with the Institute for Human Sciences (IWM), Vienna, on the research programmes, together with the possible avenues that may be explored in taking ahead the longer research endeavours and publication possibilities further on. CRG has over the years adopted new research themes and included innovative focus areas and the health crises that problematises resource access and beyond.

**Reflections on CRG-IWM Collaboration [2020–2025]**

Rituparna Datta and Shatabdi Das presented a detailed report on the segments and activities that were part of the research programme phases, the outcomes and planned deliverables, underscoring that the broad guiding lights of the goals with focus areas were slightly different from 2020, 2021-2023 and then again in 2024. This session discussed the workshops and conferences, publications, media house and journalists' associations and the collaborations over a period of five years. Details of the broad research themes and sub-themes as well as contributions by staff, honorary and contracted researchers were elaborated. CRG occasional paper series published in collaboration with the Institute for Human Sciences (IWM) as *Policies and Practices* issues, volumes of the journal *Refugee Watch* and *RefugeeWatchOnline* blog articles were expounded along with research article contributions by CRG researchers for publication in *IWMpost*. The presentation also threw light on several special article series commissioned in collaboration with *360info*, with research articles written by CRG researchers, fellows, associates, invited scholars, members. Books and edited volumes (both published and forthcoming) were discussed. *Krishna Memorial Lectures*, *CRG Chair Lecture Series*, dialogues, photo essays, staff researchers' workshop, planning and evaluation meetings and details of CRG library resources were enumerated.



*Session 1: Introductory Session*

## Session 2: Discussion on the Collaboration [2020–2025]

This session was chaired by Bharat Bhushan and the among the discussants, Manish K. Jha made the initial observations. It was underlined that despite the confines of grants from the partner and collaborating institute, CRG has always had its own share in decisions and moulding the direction of the work-in-progress following the outlines that CRG has been engaged in. The focus of the phases of research programmes in the various years brought to light the prominence of specific studies. IWM collaboration in 2021-2023 emphasised on the nuances of ‘government of people’ and who is redefined as ‘government of the people’. Public health and shock migration were looked into through micro and macro lenses, newer insights on solidarity came in, in addition to the extensive engagement with the ways in which solidarity can be understood and the fragilities being experienced. Care, ethics, migration questions were issues that were re-explored and newer dimensions with the pandemic and led the path to gaining clarity and a more comprehensive outlook on the perpetual crisis that migrants have been living with for long. And therefore, population groups, work and livelihood, biopolitics from below in the backdrop of access to food, security, and public health infrastructure may be delved deeper into. Understanding of digitisation and the use of AI as well as its implications and newer ways of digitisation and the ways of handling artificial intelligence, requires further enquiry through media and youth engagement in understanding the layers of digitisation and the implications on vulnerable sections of migrant population.

Possibility of widening of the network since 2021 (inspite of the harsh outcomes of pandemic that year), and in the shadow of pandemic in 2022, can be taken-up. The scope of doing work outside Kolkata may be looked into, though the logistical issues remain. Physically if and whenever possible bringing in more people and relations with other institutes, groups, organisations, universities beyond Kolkata, by organising events outside can be considered. Leverage youth attention with films, and other components of media can be looked into. Countering the dominant narrative of migrants as a problem, and comprehending, through brainstorming sessions and components of media training targeted at youth population, were enlisted in the suggestion. Shifting the focus on large-scale development projects like Dharavi redevelopment, the tweaking of rules and regulations in terms of ecology, development in urban areas and cities, may be presented in a different light that includes constraints of small and large-scale projects through media readers for popular discourse and larger coverage during dissemination.

Expanding on the Teachers’ Workshops, the scope and outcomes by passing on the space for teachers to extend their learning to migrant groups, so that they are more empowered and aware of the options and possibilities in expanding their options of education. Samata Biswas added here, that, CRG’s work with teaching pedagogy was in line for publication for the upcoming issue of Refugee Watch journal, together with urban and online course outcomes or assignments.

Samir Kumar Das stressed on the consequences of panic and shudder, created by Covid-19 that unnerved all, while people were waiting for appropriate responses. Three anchoring points were highlighted that of (i) justice, (ii) ethics, solidarities and responses to solidarities as an inkling of democracy, and (iii) the sanitised definition of democracy, that have been explored in the nuances of the research studies conducted by CRG. He also drew attention to the declining number of library visitors and dwindling reading habits as a result of the dominance of reading materials available online, and the resultant effects calling for attention. Also, systems may be considered and introduced for recordkeeping of the number of CRG books and research studies, articles cited as reference sources by other scholars.

Bharat Bhushan pointed out that goals may be set for (i) enhancing South Asian scholarships, (ii) proposal for setting-up of a Europe-South Asia research platform and evaluation of the Europe-Asia platform, (iii) cross continental visits, (iv) exchange of ideas and research and findings coming out through publications, (v) comparatives on making-unmaking and urban futures, (vi) transference of knowledge to migrants and victims of vulnerability through dialogues with caregivers, youth activists, etc. Reeling in journalists into mainstream research and academia into the collegium of scholars created by CRG as a growing network of institutions and universities and media partners, could be an attribute for consideration through facilitation of fellowships, community workers, caregivers, youth activists. There is a rising need of expanding and exploring into lesser chartered areas such as misinformation on migrants as the processes of migration and forced migration are dynamic and ever-changing and going into unexplored areas that require reconning with. Misinformation about migrants can be taken up as a topic of research, and how to look into facts that shape attributes of migration and policies.

It was discussed that, from managerial point of view along with intellectual outputs and organisational dimensions, encouraging young scholars in partial leadership, for taking-up innovative and creative assignments, in addition to academic endeavours would be important. Looking beyond climate issues and displacement, to workers in Israel and Russia and media coverage of migration to the gulf countries could shape an important area of focus. Sensitising media and encouraging media-academic partnerships for more collaborations, by bringing in academic rigor through joint fellowships for academics and media persons would be important. Inclusion of television media, social media, internet archives, and independent work done through social media, concentrating on more substantive work were discussed.



*Session 2: Discussion on the Collaboration [2020–2025]*

### **Session 3: Planning for Research and Publication**

Mouleshri Vyas expounded that funding for research organisations are at a toss and how to charter ahead and make use of the work done frames the larger context of planning for research programmes. The crisis or question is significant for the field-based organisation, the agenda for the way forward and consolidation and making the most of what has already been done so far may be explored for taking ahead the upcoming segments of the research programme. Resource mobilisation and networking will be present and requirement for organisational restructuring, to rebuild upon the institutional capital available with CRG will be crucial, as the dynamics of students in the field and classroom has been changing rapidly and grasping the opportunities for greater capitalisation for thinking, ideating and publishing without

substantive content makes it difficult to reach the targeted audience and in bridging the gap and addressing the incoherence.

Sabyasachi Basu Ray Chaudhury highlighted the significant additions that research themes from the segment in 2024 brought to the fore, in terms of aspects of refugees, justice and urban migrants. A number of issues have been investigated and consolidation of the outcomes could help take forward research on urban marginalities and urban place-making. Urban knowledge-making is also an area that has not been much explored by CRG and would provide ideas for exploring global cities and smart cities. Analysing the relationships between refugees and migrants in a South Asian context (apart from partition refugees), for those residing in camps, the problems faced by migrants in different parts of cities and connecting urban marginalities for migrants moving in from rural areas and contestations opens up a whole gamut of complexities that can be looked into. Urban knowledge making here helps to look at cities from different perspectives in terms of production processes and engagements of people from different strata of society. CRG's work on urban justice can be translated from English and published into other languages so that it also contributes to widening of the network. Exploration of new networks and expanding studies on laws on refugees and new migration in South Asia; comparison of this with new migration law in Europe and other parts of the world would be a significant contribution that CRG can make to migration studies.

Shatabdi Das discussed the constraints that come with multiple programmes and segments, activities as envisaged by the programme goals/objectives within a short period of time. She drew attention to the need for consolidation and narrowing down of focus more than expanding at times as too many programmes to be organised and coordinated by a hand-counted individuals becomes a challenge and demands for separating responsibilities/positions for research studies and programme management, that would help deliver the outputs more efficiently. Or else, an annual programme that takes note of the year-long activities and culminates into reflections and discussion on research and related programmes, otherwise with too many events the essence of the goals envisaged with each programme and objectives, attainment of the planned outcomes and effective execution become limited.

Interactions and hands-on-training experience sharing of training, work, challenges and outcomes of professionals such as engineers, policy makers, decisionmakers, individuals and groups working with environmental monitoring, assessment, and remedial measures, nature and life form conservation, and other specialised forums, if such interactions and dialogues additionally could be facilitated so that researchers come to terms with the widening gaps between planning on blue-print, and execution and implementation on the ground and multiplying repercussions. If researchers can be guided to be able to traverse and navigate such intricately related processes, it would help bring out greater nuances, lesser known, ignored or overlooked. Take up research on comparisons between cities, rural and urban, countries, and so on.

Regarding publications, again instead of number of publications if more focus is laid on intensive content while working on the development of publication volumes and research paper submissions for journal issues, it would be possible to tap into available resources more rigorously. Data mining and its wider application can be made possible through the engagement of longer duration of research engagement rather than deadlines for submissions for the consideration of publication and article series over a short period of time. Possibilities of collaborating on journal issues outside CRG and book volumes (authored or edited), as well as co-authored, will provide wider scope of learning, exploration and engagement.



Organisational reforms were suggested to an extent, along with collaboration across the country and institutional partnerships; revisiting past research and expanding into other streams; larger scope of rethinking on the dissemination part, were important points raised. Translation works are important and CRG should be confident in reaching out to network partners and a wider audience. A few lesser addressed themes of study came up, such as urban land planning, land redevelopment, reimagination as a way of accumulation by dispossession, slum and resettlement of land, rehabilitation, State policy towards informal settlements, razing to the ground and then redesigning, urban knowledge production. Census Towns' emergence and growth, demographic dividend, marginality and urban agglomeration, new landlordism and capitalism, in the production of the new urban with agricultural roots; how the rural-urban connection takes up a new seminal theme and the significance of urban and rural from a comparative perspective. The significance of urban and rural from a comparative perspective. were also mentioned as potential topics for study. Urban space is polarised between the 'bhadroloks', the upper class educated population and the underground population. How knowledge is produced through the urban lens? Are there alternative ways of looking at urban?

Samata Biswas discussed the syllabus, curriculum, compiled by CRG on teaching pedagogy in migration studies, and suggested that the materials, tools and resources should be put up for larger circulation. Climate refugees in the present ecosystem of Sundarban mostly in the Bangladesh part and in 40% of Indian part are affected by frequent disasters, droughts, river bank erosion, heatwaves, loss of islands - these are some of the issues that with collaboration of institutes from Bangladesh may be worked on. Sreetapa Chakraborty spoke about the scope of widening the network within and outside the country, through programmes such as Global Minds Fund at Ghent University.



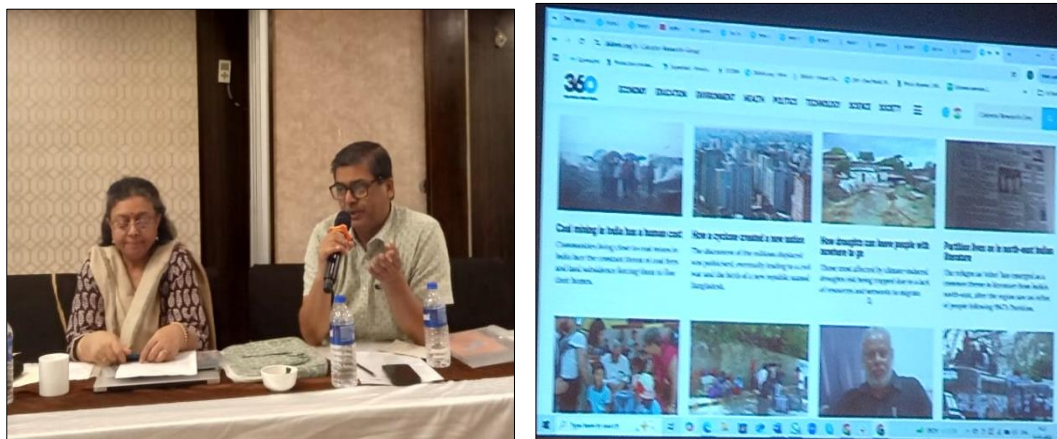
*Session 3: Planning for Research and Publication*

#### **Session 4: Planning for Films, Media, and Dialogue with Youth Activists and Caregivers**

Jayanta Roy Choudhury opened the session and mentioned the ways in which BRICS countries work on sustainable migration with changing global political regimes. Regulations, caregiving industry, and the way policies work across countries are to be taken into consideration. Sharing with TV channels the finished products so that documentary makers can take out excerpts from longer stories and broadcast them for popularising important stories that can have longer watch hours. Social media has to be included as an important instrument of dissemination. Publicity for dissemination and extensive outreach are important. Bharat Bhushan spoke about the effectiveness of human stories, refugees, migrants. Traditional and social media have played crucial role in publicising precarious situations. Media can shape policy and public opinion, contrary to public belief. Media can lead to prejudices and polarise opinions on migration related issues. Social media acts as a platform for media advocacy, performing important role for fostering larger work. Universities can run programmes on migration studies and implement them, universities can also establish policy centres and collaborate with community centres. Policy advocacy can help enable disabilities of people foster issues. 360info earlier based in Monash University, and now in Australian National University has been commissioning packages of special issue articles these are disseminated throughout its networks, and act as knowledge partners, through Press Trust of India, ABC, Australia Press Bureau, and are able to share, media reporting and tasks with universities and academic institutes. The media collaboration between Australian National University, and 360info can be extended to CRG and IWM, with commissioning of articles and working joint papers. In the next stage may be the universities and institutes can plan and introduce courses on migration studies and media training. Part of the research or the content of research can be added to the course curriculum or readings and resource material. To tell stories in more than one way, other than text, through graphics, audio, video, interviews. Bharat Bhushan pointed out with examples how the format of communication, helps reach out to larger audience instead of just one.

Rajat Kanti Sur spoke about the details of the media segments in collaboration with IWM and other partner institutes. Collaboration with Commonwealth Journalists' Association of India (CJA-I), other than RLS, IWM, SAWM, DW, SAN-CDM, along with online conversations, dialogues, and media reader were reflected upon. RWO blog also carries large number of entries from CRG researchers. Journalists keep locating the stories that are relevant, for which online consultations are significant. Youth Meets have been joined by journalists and media activists, and the proactive roles they have played may be expanded. Award ceremonies, reporting, lectures and the annual programmes with urban caregivers and activists can also be opened up for discussion and if workshops with media persons are not possible physically, then may be online sessions can be planned. Rajat Roy stated that media network expansion in vernacular languages like Bengali, Assamese, Tamil, Marathi – both resource persons, researchers, translators, and funders. Traditional media has given way to multiscale dimensions of social and digital media and with that the shifts in analysis of policy issues, the lack of protection for media persons in sharing, documenting and reporting comes with risks and this limits the possible avenues of consultation, collaboration with media and journalistic organisations. Short pieces in vernacular may be considered. Media and academia partnerships are also important. Ranabir Samaddar pointed out the limitations with which CRG's social media platforms and broadcast channels run. He underlined the gaps that need to be improved in preservation of CRG's media resources and its publication in vernacular media. IWM holds regular public lectures and publishes short articles of 1000-1200 words in *IWMpost* circulated widely. It was discussed that CRG can work towards a similar blog collective and more prominence in social media through quick responses to publications would be helpful.

Combining Refugee Watch and Refugee Watch Online, into a model that hosts current issues and older issues with subscription/membership/restricted access could be considered.



*Session 4: Planning for Films, Media, and Dialogue with Youth Activists and Caregivers*

## Session 5: Concluding Session

Paula Banerjee shared her observations, comments, and elaborated upon the progress of the research programme over the years through several phases. The outcome of the research culminating in the edited volume *Sites of Statelessness: Laws, Cities, Seas (2024)* and the forthcoming volume *City as the Southern Question* will remain as promising additions to the enriching repository of CRG work. The success of the Youth Meets came as part of a rich relation and network building that extended beyond South Asia. The collaboration was transformed into a relationship. A number of new issues were introduced, as part of the discussion and deliberations. The keyword conference that was held in Vienna brought together global experts and was much appreciated. The keywords compendium was published with the initiation of the IWM collaboration which now AIT, IDRC wanting to take forward further related work. CRG brought back the importance of concepts and keywords through its compendium, along with the scope of more translation work. In addition to deliberations for research and programme outputs, the reflections and observations of the participants, experts, chairpersons, discussants and speakers were much appreciated as was the long association and collaborative efforts of CRG and IWM over the years. The success of the extensive outreach and multifaceted segments of the research platform continues in CRG's enduring endeavours. The advisory meeting came to a close with the formal vote of thanks by Shatabdi Das.



*Session 5: Concluding Session*