

FOOD, LIVELIHOOD SECURITY & LIFE CLAIMS: INDIGENOUS PEOPLE OF INDIA

**Organised by MAHANIRBAN CALCUTTA
RESEARCH GROUP (CRG), West Bengal, Kolkata
&
CENTRE FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE & EQUITY
(CSJE), MADRAS SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK
(MSSW), Tamil Nadu, Chennai.**

**A
Workshop
Report**

**21 SEPTEMBER 2024
Venue: MSSW, Chennai**

Food, livelihood Security and Life Claims: Indigenous People of India

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Mahanirban Calcutta Research Group (CRG), Kolkata, West Bengal

in collaboration with

Centre for Social Justice and Equity (CSJE), Madras School of Social Work (MSSW), Chennai, Tamil Nadu.

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1. Concept Note

Background: Parables and Caricatures

There was a momentous scene in the Tamil novel *Solagar Doddi* where a matriarch of the Solaga tribe with her fistful of ragi seeds started looking frantically upon the sky and prayed with these words: “whatever the guarding deity eats away; whatever the trespassers taken way; whatever the thieves stolen away; oh Madeshwara! Let the harvest be abundant”. The bounty of the harvest blessed upon the Bargur hills of Sholagas could only be matched with the bounty of the goddess gifted upon the Palamu hills of Oraons in every “kojagar” full-moon night. What made such abundance washed torrentially down and instead hunger claimed stealthily up the hills? Precisely these sorts of questions were the backdrops of fictional canvas of both Buddhadev Guha in Bengali and S. Balamurugan in Tamil.

“We are all asset managers”, proclaimed Partha Dasgupta in his famous review. He then proceeded to claim that “whether as farmers or fishers, foresters or miners, [.], we manage the assets to which we have access, in line with our motivations as best as we can” (Dasgupta, 2021:11). If so, then the tragic transition from abundance to hunger that Guha and Balamurugan vividly portrayed in their novels is perhaps attributable to what Dasgupta claims to be “a massive collective failure” on the part of tribal people in managing their god given assets. Blaming the tribal people for their abject poverty is to flaunt once again the rusted tactics of underclass theory and its associated slogan of “culture of poverty”.

Tribal people are endowed with their natural capital by their gods or goddesses; and precisely this divine endowment makes forest as their “spiritual home” (Dasgupta, 2021:13). As the custodians of the forests, they were once so confident of feeding not only their gods and goddesses but even feeding the frequent trespassers and thieves. What made such a lordly confidence fizzle out and trapped instead in a web of vulnerabilities? An abode of security turned into a den of pestilence?

Context: From National Security to Human Security

The archaeology of the concept of security has a curious history. Settled deep in the sedimentary layer of the disciplinary boundaries of International Relation, the discourse of security was once intertwined with the Kantian ethical principle of perpetual peace. With the arrival of the realist paradigm that prioritised national interest rather than peace, the concept of security got entangled with the much malleable yet fashionable idea of nation. Thus, hyphenated either with peace or with nation, the discourse of security was largely circumferential to the geopolitical insecurities of a Modern State.

However, the contours of the security discourse got expanded when it was hyphenated with yet another concept called development. “The search for human security lies in development, not in arms” (UNDP, 1994:1), the Mahboubian turn as witnessed in the first Human Development Report 1994 made the notion of security free from the burden of Morgenthau Nian territoriality. The paradigmatic shift from national security to human security as articulated in the pages of Ogata and Sen Commission on Human Security and the UNDP’s special report on Human Security 2022 are the perfect props for the proposed workshop.

Scope: Food Security and Life Claims of Indigenous People

“Amid a vast sea of human insecurity” advancing human development with less insecurity “may appear far less puzzling” “because the patterns of development” witnessed over the centuries “inflict many of the drivers of insecurity we are confronting” now (UNDP, 2022:14). One such inflicted insecurity is food insecurity. Hunger is on the rise, reaching around 800 million people in 2020, and about 2.4 billion people now suffer food insecurity (UNDP, 2022: 5). India “continues to bear a huge burden of food and nutrition insecurity, ranking 107 out of 121 countries on the 2022 Global Hunger Index” (World Food Programme, 2024: 1). The World Food Programme claims that India is home to a quarter of all undernourished people worldwide, making the country a key focus for tackling hunger on a global scale.

Within India, it seems that sixty percent of the burden of malnutrition occurs in densely tribal populated states (SAFANSI, 2014:1) and NFHS-IV reports that more than 40% of tribal

children in India are stunted and underweight and about 30% wasted (Grover, 2023). The decades of development induced displacements and migrations made the indigenous people of India vulnerable to food and nutrition insecurity. The proposed workshop intends to explore the risks of food and its associated livelihood insecurities among the indigenous people of India and their struggle for life claims.

The concept of food security is multi-dimensional and covers six main domains of engagements: availability, access, utilisation, stability, agency, and sustainability (McKay., et.al. 2023: 349).

The workshop aimed at engaging with the entitlements of availability and accessibility of food and the agency of tribal people in securing these entitlements. The questions of availability, accessibility and agency were addressed in the workshop through its three thematic panels:

- a) Law, Vulnerability, and Justice in South Asia**
- b) Environmental, Human and other forms of Protection**
- c) Tribal Migration & Food Insecurity in Tamil Nadu**

- **Objectives of the Workshop**

The proposed workshop would aim at:

1. Advocate the food security of tribal people by organizing public lecture;
2. Critically reflect upon the factors of food and nutrition insecurities among tribal population in the backdrop of increased volume of tribal displacement and migration;
3. Bring policy-makers, academics, legal experts and members of other civil society organisation across a table and initiate a policy debate on tribal food and nutrition insecurities.

- **Collaborators of the Workshop**

The Directorate of Tribal Welfare hosted the one-day workshop Madras School of Social Work, Chennai, in collaboration with Centre for Social Justice and Equity at Madras School of Social Work, Chennai and the Mahanirban Calcutta Research Group, Kolkata on 21 September 2024. The workshop was preceded by a Public Lecture by Professor Virginous Xaxa on the evening of 20 September 2024.

- **Participants of the Workshop**

Around 100 participants—public policy-makers, academics, activists, journalists, lawyers, students and people from walks of life—attended the public lecture organised on 20th September 2024 evening at MSSW campus. Around 30 invited participants both local and from around the country attended the Workshop panels at MSSW campus on 21st September 2024 from 10.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m.

- **Workshop Outcome**

- i) Advocacy on tribal food and nutrition insecurities and vulnerabilities;
- ii) Networking of scholars and institutions;
- iii) Publication of books and policy briefs;

References

Dasgupta, P. (2021). *The Economics of Biodiversity: The Dasgupta Review. Abridged Version*. (London: HM Treasury).

Grover, Aakriti, Anju Singh, and R. B. Singh. (2023). *Sustainable Health Through Food, Nutrition, and Lifestyle* (Springer)

McKay, Fiona H., Alice Sims and Paige van der Pligt. (2023). “Measuring Food Insecurity in India: A Systematic Review of the Current Evidence”, *Current Nutrition Reports* 12:349–358.

The South Asia Food and Nutrition Security Initiative (SAFANSI). “Food and Nutrition Security in Tribal Areas in India”, October 2014: 1.

UNDP. (1994). Human Development Report 1994. (New York N.Y.: Oxford University Press).

2. Proceedings of the Workshop

The workshop on “**Food, Livelihood Security, and Life Claims**” brought together experts and stakeholders to address critical issues related to food security, livelihoods, and the associated risks individuals and communities face. The discussions were divided into multiple panels, each focusing on various aspects of these interconnected topics.

The workshop commenced with welcoming remarks from **Raja J Samuel**, *Principal, MSSW*. He underscored the significance of food security in today’s world. He said food is an important aspect of culture. He also emphasised on the interconnectedness of food systems, livelihoods, and economic stability. His comments were followed up by Mouleshri Vyas who called for a concerted effort among policy-makers, communities, and institutions to engage with these issues critically and practically. She also introduced some of the works done by the Calcutta Research Group over the last many years on food security, issues of informal labour, justice and so on and so forth. The **honourable Director** of the *Directorate of Tribal Welfare* gave the Presidential Address and talked about the approach of the government of Tamil Nadu in education and sustainable development for the Tribal population of the state. There has also been allocation of more fund towards achieving the goals and to empower local NGOs. After his comments, **Stephen Anthony**, MSSW summed up the session, which was followed up by a round of self-introduction round of all participants. The session concluded with vote of thanks from **Pavananthi Vembulu**, *Centre for Social Justice and Equity, MSSW*.



1. Picture: Inaugural Session.



2. Picture: Introduction of Participants.

Panel I: Law, Vulnerability, and Justice in South Asia

The first panel discussion, chaired by **S. Deendalayam**, *Madras School of Social Work, Chennai*, brought together experts from various fields to discuss the intricate link between food security and livelihood. The first panel mapped out the vulnerabilities of indigenous people particularly their vulnerability to displacement from their own land and make them susceptible to food and nutrition insecurities. Further, the panel would evaluate the existing legal regimes like National Food Security Act, 2013 and Forest Rights Act 2006 and other International Conventions on Right to Food in mitigating the vulnerability of food insecurity among the tribal population of India.

The panelists shared compelling case studies from rural and agrarian communities that have been heavily impacted by food insecurity. Practical instances of livelihood programs that successfully alleviated food-related challenges were discussed, providing attendees with

actionable ideas for their own contexts.

Sucharita Sengupta, *Mahanirban Calcutta Research Group, Kolkata*, discussed some of the challenges and vulnerabilities faced by migrant workers and whether securitisation efforts through policies like the Global Compact makes a difference in macro and micro cases in South Asia. She argued, South Asia is important in the discussion for several reasons. The entire region is known to be a core source of intra and inter-state migration. Migration both within and from the region is a constant however there is an acute deficit in protection rendered to migrant workers and their families. Most policies do not address how to include irregular migrants whose percentage is quite high. During the pandemic, figures escalated and in mid-year 2020, an estimated 13.9 million international migrants resided in the sub-region of which 10.9 million were from within the region. ‘Irregular migration’ in the sub-continent is common, often facilitated by trafficking and smuggling networks. Against this background, although the GCM seeks to make migration human rights centric, gender responsive and child sensitive, how much that is getting implemented on ground in the region is still debatable. She concluded by suggesting, five years since its inception, it thus becomes necessary to assess the merits of the compacts, while the positive aspect is to empower migrants and refugees, there are multiple problems like the muting of politics in the compacts. The compacts are silent so far as politics surrounding migration among states is concerned.

This was followed by the presentation of **Tania Sebastian**, *School of Law VIT, Chennai*, who flagged a few pertinent questions in her presentation like—How does one state implement one law? What are the gaps? She also spoke of the Article 21, Right to Life and personal liberty in this context along with mentioning how the Directive Principles for instance Article 47—Right to Food is not enforceable by law yet it has been read along with Article 21 since 1980, which is a fundamental right.

The final panelist of the session was **Mouleshri Vyas**, *Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai & CRG, Kolkata*, who through the case study of sanitation workers showed their quest

for a foothold, a life and a better life. All cities have migrant workers doing the cleaning and work of sanitation—both relatively old and new migrants. Therefore, she inquired into what has changed and here she gave the example of the city of Mumbai, issues of work and life in cities - of collection and transportation of waste, street sweeping, nature of waste dumping, more contract workers under strict supervision and so on and so forth. People who do this work do not have any other choices because they are the marginalised - either Scheduled Castes or Dalits or Migrants- who are easy to be hired as contract labour. Cities are also undergoing changes, there are expansions taking place giving way to new challenges. Therefore, the most pressing issues are increased contractualisation of “dirty work” coupled with inadequacy in protection equipments, or social schemes and exposure to hazards. Another issue is waste management which is still better in urban pockets and cities but not in peri urban or rural areas for lack of awareness and all these works are done by contract migrant labour.

The Chair summed up the session by suggesting civil society too has an important role to play in cleaning up. There were a few comments and questions too from the floor for each speaker.



3. Picture: Panel I.



4. Picture: Panel I.

Panel II: Environmental, Human, and other Forms of Protection

The second panel explored how livelihood security can be enhanced through a range of risk mitigation strategies, especially for marginalized and vulnerable communities. Issues surrounding food and nutritional insecurity of tribal people within the theoretical framework of ecological democracy and environmental justice was also explored.

Samata Biswas, *Sanskrit College and University, Kolkata*, chaired the session, emphasizing the need for inclusive policies that address the vulnerabilities of marginalised populations, particularly in the context of health and nutrition.

The first speaker **Rajat Roy**, *Mahanirban Calcutta Research Group, Kolkata*, presented reports detailing the displacement of tribal populations due to Public Works Department (PWD) projects. He cited incidents like the construction of the Pachet Dam in Jharkhand and land acquisitions in Special Economic Zones (SEZs) in states like Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, Uttar Pradesh, and West Bengal. Roy emphasized that the Rehabilitation and Resettlement

(R&R) Act is inadequate in addressing forced displacement issues, highlighting cases where land was acquired at unfairly low prices. He also discussed resistance movements, such as those in West Bengal and Maharashtra, that have pushed back against land acquisitions. Despite some progress in recent years, Roy concluded that over 40% of the tribal population has been displaced over decades. Roy's presentation emphasized that the Rehabilitation and Resettlement (R&R) Act is insufficient in addressing the forced displacement issues faced by these communities. He highlighted cases such as the 33 acres of land acquired in Andhra Pradesh, where people had to sell their land to the government at lower prices. Roy underscored the failure of current frameworks to provide adequate compensation and protection for displaced populations.

The second speaker **Oliver King**, Director, *MS Swaminathan Research Foundation, Chennai*, focused on the food and nutritional security of tribal communities from an ecological and environmental perspective. King emphasized the critical role of tribal populations in conserving forests and biodiversity across India. He advocated for co-development methods that could uplift both the conservation of biodiversity and the livelihoods of these communities. King's presentation also touched upon the extinction of certain crops that were once farmed by indigenous communities, stressing the importance of preserving traditional agricultural practices to enhance food security. He discussed the Food Security Act and the Biodiversity Act, outlining their importance while pointing out gaps in their implementation, especially in remote areas.

The third speaker **Sohini Sengupta**, *Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai*, discussed the impact of climate change, drought knowledge, migration, and social protection on food security. Her presentation emphasised the importance of addressing food security challenges by leveraging community knowledge about drought management. Sengupta cited examples from Uttar Pradesh, where unseasonal rainfall negatively impacted farmers' sowing and harvesting periods, and from Uttarakhand, where farmers stopped cultivating walnuts due to inadequate rainfall. She also discussed broader food security strategies, referring to the elephant poaching decisions in Zimbabwe and Namibia, where government policies aimed to

address hunger and food security concerns by allowing controlled poaching. Closer to home, Dr. Sohini highlighted social issues, such as the high dropout rates of schoolgirls from Paroja district in Odisha due to low BMI indexes, which resulted from the displacement of families after the construction of the Kolab Dam. She stressed the need for better engagement between grassroots knowledge communities and scientific authorities, asserting that effective communication between these groups is essential for improving food security and climate resilience outcomes.



5. Picture: Panel II.



6. Picture: Panel II.

Panel III: Policies and Frameworks for Food and Livelihood Security

The third panel focused on the policy environment and frameworks necessary to ensure food and livelihood security for tribal communities. The session was chaired by **Francis Adaikalam**, *Loyola College, Chennai*. The panel flagged Migration as one of the major coping mechanisms of tribals to escape from the livelihood insecurities. Tribal migration has a peculiar pattern and migration corridors of its own. The National Tribal Migration Support Portal of the Ministry of Tribal Affairs is one of the recent mechanisms to understand the dynamics of tribal migration in India. According to Census 2011, the population of the Scheduled Tribe is 7.95 lakhs which comes around 1.10% of the total population of Tamil Nadu. Out of 7.95 lakhs people, around 2.51 lakh people (31.60 percent) migrate to different places for various reasons. Again, out of these 32 percent of tribal migrants, 13 percent moved with their household en masse and 7 percent migrated individually for some work and employment reason. This panel explored the nature and scope of food insecurity induced tribal migration in Tamil Nadu; and how migration creates

in turn nutritional insecurities among tribal migrants. The panel also examined various aspects of tribal health and nutrition, providing insights into the challenges faced by these communities and the policy interventions needed to address them.

The first speaker, **Malaisamy Muniyandi**, *Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), Chennai*, presented the nutritional and health status of tribal communities in Tamil Nadu. His presentation was primarily based on surveys from NFHS-4 and NFHS-5, which highlighted the health and nutritional challenges faced by tribes such as the Malayali and Irular communities, which together account for almost two-thirds of the tribal population in Tamil Nadu. Malaisamy discussed the findings of 26 Tribal Research Institutes (TRIs) supported by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, which focused on various health indicators among tribal children and women. His presentation revealed several concerning trends

-High rates of underweight children and children with low BMI, a decline in the number of children who have access to breastfeeding and a significant prevalence of anemia among reproductive-age women. He noted that more than 40% of the tribal population in Tamil Nadu faces these health challenges. Among his key observations was the urgent need to improve health literacy within these communities. He argued that awareness programs targeting the causes of malnutrition, anemia, and low BMI should be designed and implemented at the grassroots level.

The second speaker was **Thangoullen Kipgen**, *Indian Institute of Technology, Madras*. His presentation focused on food security for northeastern migrants. Kipgen discussed the disruption of food chain structures across the country, which disproportionately affects northeastern migrants who rely on ethnic food supplies. He pointed out that the cultural obligations of these communities toward their traditional foods make them especially vulnerable to food insecurity when living in cities far from their home regions. The lack of availability of familiar food products, coupled with the high cost of ethnic food items, exacerbates their challenges. Migrants often have to rely on expensive imported ingredients or substitute their traditional diets with less nutritious options,

which negatively impacts their health and well-being. In addition to discussing the economic barriers northeastern migrants face, Kipgen also touched on cultural discrimination in food preferences. In some cases, the institutional policies of cities or even workplaces can create barriers to food security, with limited options for ethnic foods in canteens, hostels, and public facilities, which reinforces the cultural isolation of these migrant communities. His presentation highlighted that securing access to culturally appropriate food is not just about addressing economic needs but also about recognizing the cultural identity and dignity of northeastern migrants. To this end, he emphasized the need for community-based approaches and institutional reforms to ensure equitable access to food security for all migrants, regardless of their ethnic background.

The third speaker of Panel III was **S. Pandiraj**, *Saveeta School of Law, SIMTS, Chennai*, delivered a presentation on "Right to Food as a Human Right: An International Perspective." His focus was on the fundamental human right to food, emphasizing that individuals should have the freedom to choose their food culture and habits without interference, as long as food is available and accessible. He approached the issue of food security not only from an economic perspective but also from a human rights standpoint.

Pandiraj argued that governments and states bear the responsibility of ensuring that food is accessible to all people, particularly in terms of availability, accessibility, adequacy, and sustainability. His presentation outlined several key principles:

1. **Right to Health and Food Accessibility:** Pandiraj connected the right to food with the broader right to health, arguing that without adequate access to nutritious food, the right to health is compromised. He stressed that food must be physically and economically accessible to everyone, particularly marginalised communities such as migrants, tribal populations, and the poor.
2. **Adequacy of Food:** He emphasised that food adequacy goes beyond simple availability. It also includes the cultural suitability and nutritional value of food. For food to be considered a human right, it must meet the dietary needs and cultural preferences of

different communities, ensuring that people can maintain their traditional food habits and customs.

3. **Availability and Sustainability:** Pandiraj also focused on the availability of food resources and the sustainability of food systems. He discussed how the state must ensure that food production systems are sustainable in the long term, emphasising the importance of preserving local food sources and agricultural practices that are critical to maintaining a secure and adequate food supply. This includes policies that protect agricultural land, promote sustainable farming practices, and prevent over-exploitation of natural resources.
4. **Obligations of the State:** Pandiraj highlighted the state's obligations to respect, protect, and fulfil the right to food. He referenced international human rights treaties that mandate governments to provide adequate food to their populations, focusing on how governments must ensure that food is not only available but also affordable and acceptable. He stressed the importance of non-discriminatory food policies, ensuring that no group, whether based on ethnicity, gender, or economic status, is denied access to sufficient food.

Pandiraj also drew from international frameworks such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), both of which recognize the right to food as an integral part of the right to an adequate standard of living. He referenced General Comment 12 of the UN Committee on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, which clarifies that food must be available, accessible, and adequate. Pandiraj concluded by calling for legal frameworks that guarantee the right to food and institutional reforms to ensure that food security is prioritized in national development strategies. He advocated for a multi-stakeholder approach, involving the government, civil society, and international organisations in creating sustainable food systems that respect the cultural and dietary needs of all populations.



7. Picture: Panel III.



8. Picture: Panel III.

To prioritise food security at the community level for migrants, several actions were recommended as policies:

1. **Community-Based Food Security Networks:** Establish ethnic food cooperatives or community food hubs where northeastern migrants can access affordable, culturally appropriate food. These hubs would source food products directly from northeastern India, thereby bypassing the usual supply chain disruptions.
2. **Food Access Laws:** Implement policies prohibiting food discrimination in public and private institutions. This would ensure that northeastern ethnic food options are available in schools, hostels, workplaces, and government facilities, giving migrants equal access to food that meets their cultural needs.
3. **Subsidizing Ethnic Food Stores:** Provide government subsidies or financial incentives to ethnic food stores catering to northeastern communities. This would help reduce the high cost of culturally significant food items, making them more accessible to migrant populations in cities.
4. **Supporting Small-Scale Farmers and Food Suppliers:** Strengthen ties between northeastern farmers and food suppliers with urban ethnic food stores, allowing for a smoother flow of traditional food products from the region to cities. This could involve financial support and logistical assistance to improve supply chains and ensure that northeastern migrants have access to their traditional foods.
5. **Awareness Campaigns Against Food Discrimination:** Raise awareness about the cultural importance of food for migrant communities and combat food-related discrimination through public education campaigns. These campaigns would emphasise the need for respect and inclusion of diverse food cultures, particularly in institutional settings.
6. **Collaborating with Local Governments and NGOs:** Foster partnerships between local governments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that focus on migrant welfare to create support systems for food security. These collaborations could provide nutritional support, food subsidies, and legal protections for migrants facing food insecurity due to cultural or economic factors.

□ Way Forward Initiatives:

The third panel was followed by a round of discussion on the possible outcome of the workshop. The following were decided:

- To request all paper presenters to submit their full papers by the end of the year.
- Approach publishers to come out with a special issue on Tribal Food Security in India with the selected papers.
- To form a network of Tribal Food Security Alliance in Tamil Nadu with Civil Society Organisations who are working with Tribal communities on Food Security issues.

The day concluded with Vote of Thanks from **Anthony Stephen**, and another Staff member of CSJE.



9. Picture: Vote of Thanks



10. Picture: Workshop Participants



11. Picture: Workshop Participants



Picture 12: Group Photo of Workshop Participants at MSSW, Chennai.

Abstracts of Speakers

1. On the (Shifting) Margins of Mumbai City: Sanitation Workers and their Quest for a Foothold, a Life, and a Better Life

Mouleshri Vyas

Across cities in India, privatisation of Solid Waste Management in the past two decades has led to increased contractualisation of various jobs related to city cleaning that fall within the purview of Urban Local Bodies (ULBs). In Mumbai too, such work is undertaken by standard, or permanent workers, as well as non-standard or informal i.e. contractual workers. City cleaning jobs, because of the nature of work, and stigma associated with it, are most often taken up by those who do not have better alternatives. Yet, in the recent past, it has been evident that there is competition for these jobs - even for those that are insecure, precarious, and contractual, particularly among migrants.

Based on my association with workers' collectives in the SWM sector for more than two decades, I examine certain aspects of sanitation work: The transitory nature of jobs, death and impacts on families, work during the pandemic, and experiences of solidarity building and claim making by workers' collectives. These indicate that in the fragmented workforce in the sector, workers are at different junctures of security/insecurity: some seeking any work, on any terms; others aiming for a shift into better terms of employment; while yet others, now in secure employment, moving towards a better life, and visibly so. With these mobilities, significantly mediated by the worker collectives, the margins of the city - in terms of work and living spaces - are occupied by newer populations. But the concerns regarding their social protection and justice remain, and continue to need the attention of policy makers and practitioners.

1. Migrants' Security: Assessing the Global Compact of Migration (GCM) for "Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration"

Sucharita Sengupta

Adopted in Morocco on 10 December 2018, the United Nations Global Compacts on Migration and Refugees was adopted by 164 countries. In a first in specificity, it spoke explicitly of *human security* while addressing complexities surrounding migration and displacement. *Thus, at the heart of the global compacts is the question of security for migrants and refugees.* The important question to ask here is whether security of migrants can be assured through the Compacts- what do contemporary instances in South Asia show? This note thus argues there is a need to examine international conventions like the global compacts, that vow to "securitise" lives of migrants, either corroborating or in discordance of ground realities in the context of South Asia. The GCM states it aims for sustainable development of migrants by 2030. Taking a cue from the 'Kolkata Declaration' adopted in 2018 by the Calcutta Research Group after a conference on "the State of the Global Protection System for Refugees and Migrants" in November 2018, this research ruminates on the global realities and global migration governance of the day in ensuring safety, dignity, and protection of migrants in South Asia, inviting more dialogues at multiple levels- state, regional, civil society and within cities.¹ In this note and presentation, I wish to reflect first on a few key points of what the compacts constitute mentioning South Asia in the context, then highlight a few points that shed light on the murkiness that is embedded there, and, in the end, I will come back to the meaning and implications of human security and whether an institutional paradigm of security like the global compacts that also talk of state-border security can crystallize into human security? Can they provide security to Migrants?

Coming to India, according to the Migration in India Report 2020-21 (which is also the latest report on the issue) the all-India migration rate was 28.9% for July 2020-June 2021, with a

1

26.5% migration rate in rural areas and 34.9% in urban areas. Female migration recorded a higher share of migration rate of 47.9%, 48% in rural and 47.8% in urban areas. Although there are a few national initiatives for migrants like the Niti Aayog scheme (2021) and recommendations as enshrined in the draft National Migrant Labour Policy or the introduction of One Ration Card project, and so on still overall the story of migrants in India however portrays a tale of distress which was exposed like none other during the pandemic². The schemes mentioned are devised to facilitate the lives of migrant labourers for better, but much remains within the ambit of discussions while implementation is still scratchy on ground. According to reports published in the media, in recent times NITI Aayog along with a subgroup of officials and civil society members have prepared a draft National Migrant Labour Policy³. As for the way forward for migrants in India, the report among many others suggests a rights-based approach based on welfare and social security schemes can work only if the migrant workers have their own agency, networks, and mobilisation. The presentation will address some of these issues as well.

Notes:

“Kolkata Declaration 2018, Protection of Refugees and Migrants.” (Calcutta Research Group, Kolkata., November 30, 2018).

2. Legal Dimensions of Food Security Issues Surrounding the Tribal Communities and the Tribal Areas

Tania Sebastian

My talk will cover the many legal dimensions of food security issues surrounding the tribal communities and the tribal areas. The National Food Security, 2013 will be examined, along with developments around the Act, and its critical analysis nearly a decade after its fruition. Other relevant laws and international instruments that address issues relating to food vulnerabilities specific to tribals are also part of the talk. Court cases revolving around food

² For details of these schemes please refer to links provided here -

<https://www.drishtiiias.com/daily-updates/daily-news-analysis/india-s-internal-migration>.

³ ‘Draft National Migrant Labour Policy’, *Indian Economy*,

<https://www.drishtiiias.com/daily-news-analysis/draft-national-migrant-labour-policy>, 24 February 2021.

security will be analysed specifically in the context of the Constitution of India including the Right to food and the Directive Principles of State Policies writ food vulnerabilities. These legal dimensions are examined in the context of malnutrition as India's most serious and persistent problem, aggravated by the positioning of tribal communities as a vulnerable people that comes with its own unique sets of challenges. The talk will also discuss various initiatives that act as food and nutrition security interventions in tribal areas. Lastly, the disruptions caused by COVID19 in relation to food supplies and the responses of the courts and the governments, and case-based studies will form part of the talk.

3. Food and Nutritional Security of the Tribal Communities from Ecological Democracy and Environmental Perspective

E.D.Israel Oliver King and Girigan Gopi

Tribal communities worldwide face significant challenges to food and nutritional security due to environmental degradation, land dispossession, and socio-political marginalization. The concept of ecological democracy offers a solution by advocating for participatory governance in natural resource management. It ensures that tribal communities, who have sustainably managed forests, lands, and ecosystems for generations, are included in decision-making processes. These communities' traditional knowledge, like the use of sacred groves and wild foods, plays a crucial role in maintaining biodiversity and food security. Recognizing and integrating this indigenous knowledge into broader policies strengthens sustainable development and ensures equitable resource distribution.

Environmental justice further complements ecological democracy by emphasising the fair distribution of environmental goods and reducing the burden of environmental hazards on marginalized groups. Tribal communities rely on forests, land, and water for their livelihoods, making secure land rights essential for food security. The exploitation of natural resources, often driven by industrial activities like mining and deforestation, disproportionately impacts these communities, leading to environmental degradation and food insecurity. Addressing these issues involves ensuring equitable access to resources, protecting ecosystems, and reducing environmental hazards that undermine tribal food systems.

The synergy of ecological democracy and environmental justice can restore and protect traditional food systems that are resilient to climate change. By promoting participatory governance and integrating indigenous agricultural practices into policy, tribal communities can manage their resources while enhancing food and nutritional security. Agroecological practices rooted in traditional knowledge ensure sustainability, protect biodiversity, and help combat climate-related risks. Addressing structural inequalities that result in land dispossession and environmental degradation also strengthens tribal food systems, ensuring both food security and environmental sustainability for these vulnerable communities.

Policy interventions should focus on securing **land and resource rights**, ensuring that tribal communities participate in all levels of decision-making, from local to national. Incorporating **agroecological practices** based on indigenous knowledge can enhance the resilience of tribal food systems. Additionally, promoting **climate-adaptive crops** and restoring degraded ecosystems are key to building food security and resilience to environmental challenges. By addressing structural inequities, protecting traditional food systems, and involving tribal communities in resource governance, both **ecological democracy** and **environmental justice** provide pathways to achieving sustainable food security for tribal populations.

4. Land Question

Rajat Roy

Land question, or the right to land by the common people had always remained as the core issue of conflict. From colonial days to the present era, the land question had always remained as the root cause of their further precarity, marginalisation and deprivation. The problem persisted as instead of initiating an informed dialogue between the stakeholders to resolve the crisis, the State, in colonial days and even after that, has assumed the role of the sole arbitrator in the case of land acquisition. Here an attempt would be made to examine the land issue as it stands now. Immediately after the initiation of the neo-liberalisation in the '90s, the corporate-government nexus went for a huge land grab movement in the name of forming Special Economic Zones (SEZ). The farmers started resisting that and violent conflicts took place in Nandigram, Singur and Bhangar (all in West Bengal), Kalinga Nagar

and POSCO (both in Orissa), Khammam (A.P.) Vidarbha (Maharashtra) and many other places in the country. The farmers' protest forced the political establishment to come up with a new legislation that substituted the archaic land acquisition act. The new act is called Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act 2013. Popularly known as R & R Act, the new law was expected to work as a practical solution to the ongoing agitation among the farmers. However, there are reports that a number of cases of land-disputes are locked in various courts, and some fresh agitations are being reported from U.P., Punjab and elsewhere. For example, in July, 2024, Sangrur (Punjab) farmers are up in arms against a plan to set up a cement plant there and raise an environmental issue. In U.P., in Prayag Raj district a protracted resistance by the landowners demanding higher compensation took place in 2016 when a mega power plant started operating there. Last year in Maharashtra's Ratnagiri, state police had to resort to force the people out of the site for a proposed oil refinery. All these indicate to one thing: the new R & R Act could not be the panacea for the land (acquisition) issue.

So, a different approach would be needed. For that, some of the experiments that have begun in some states should be examined. Take the case of Andhra's proposed new state capital Amaravati. Here, 33,000 acres of land are to be acquired. The government realised that it would be difficult to buy off the entire land mass at the ongoing market price. So, they devised the land pooling system, whereby people were asked to donate their land at a relatively low price. But to compensate them, the government offered them a portion of the land after developing that for commercial use. The Andhra Pradesh Capital Region Development Authority (CRDA)—Amaravati's urban planning agency—recognised that the scheme's success would depend on whether it was inclusive and fair to those being asked to give up their land. A draft of the scheme was made widely available to the public, with 30 days given for public feedback and objections. Government officials visited various villages to consult residents on the design, size and location of their returnable plots. Landowners could see for themselves the plot subdivision plans for their villages and address their queries to the officials directly. The CRDA took the landowners' feedback seriously, incorporating their suggestions into the revised scheme. As a result, out of the 24 villages approached to

give up their land, 22 agreed within four months of the scheme's announcement. Following this, the returnable land plots were allocated through electronic lotteries for fairness. These lotteries were held at the villages, with landowners receiving confirmation of their plot allocation via mobile message. Their plot allotment letters were also printed and handed out to them immediately, with softcopies made available online. Thus, while some people have resisted and did not join this land pooling approach, their land are being acquired by following the guideline of R& R Act.

One must not forget that Gujarat has started this land pooling system with some success. But one must concede that in both these states it is very sparsely populated compared to states like West Bengal and Kerala.

In nutshell, it can be seen that already some alternative models are being tried in various parts of the country in regard to the use of farm land for commercial, industrial and urbanisation purposes. There could be other models too. But, the success of any model is necessarily based upon one fact: the landowners must also be made stakeholders to the developmental projects.

5. Climate Change, Drought Knowledge, Migration and Social Protection

Sohini Sengupta

Anthropogenic climate change, environmental transformation and forced migration are a humanitarian challenge. As policy makers view climate induced droughts and migration as inevitable and governments reframe development policies as 'climate action plans', empirical contexts of local communities that experience drought are reshaped in the language of vulnerability or adaptation. Drawing on the concept of 'social nature' (Castree) and going beyond visions of tribal people as victims or adaptation experts, this contribution aims to understand the experiences of drought and migration from local narratives of environmental crisis from the tribal farmers in the Central Indian upland regions. Regulating both environment and human conduct (Mahoney and Endfield 2018) has been justified through production and protection narratives that emphasize stability of food, water and environmental stocks and management of scarcity by creating surplus and addressing

insecurity by enhancing entitlements. Tribal drought memories on the other hand contain narratives of loss that highlight irreversible, life-threatening adjustments that include displacement, flight, migration and mobility for self-protection. Together, these sources provide valuable insights about how complex inter-relationships between climate anomalies and human adjustments may be understood to shape future modes of environmental justice and policies of human security.

6. Migration, Food Security and Identity: Ethnic Food Consumption and the Role of Northeast Ethnic Food Stores in Migrant Food Security in Cities

Thanggoulen Kipgen

This paper explores the intersection of migration, food security, and identity taking experiences of ethnic food consumption among Northeast Indian migrants in major Indian cities. There has been large scale migration of people from Northeast India to urban centers like Delhi, Bangalore, Chennai etc. since the last few decades. However, migrants often face challenges in terms of food violence and discrimination and also in maintaining food security. Northeast ethnic food stores, which cater specifically to these migrant communities, play a critical role in providing access to familiar foods, contributing not only to nutritional sustenance but also to the preservation of cultural identity. Through in-depth interviews and participant observation with store owners and migrant customers, the paper examines how these ethnic food stores act as a support system for migrants by ensuring food security, offering a sense of community, and facilitating cultural continuity. The study also highlights the significance of ethnic food consumption in fostering both physical and emotional well-being among migrants. By emphasizing the cultural and nutritional importance of these stores, this research aims to provide insights into the broader implications of food accessibility and cultural preservation for migrant populations in urban settings.

7. Nutritional and health status of tribal population in Tamil Nadu: Evidence from National Family Health Survey 4 and 5 Objective:

To estimate the nutritional and health status of tribal population in Tamil Nadu and to understand the trend by comparing the National Family Health Survey (NFHS) fourth and fifth round data.

Methods: NFHS data, conducted during 2014–15 (NFHS-4) and 2019-21 (NFHS-5), is used for the current study to estimate district wise nutritional and health status of tribal population in Tamil Nadu. It will be analysed anthropometric indices for children and prevalence of anaemia for adult females. It will be compared between tribal populations with non-tribal populations. Comparison will be also done between NFHS-4 and NFHS-5 to study the trend.

Results: Nutritional status of the tribal children will be presented in terms of percentage of children stunted, wasted and overweight in NFHS-4 and NFHS-5 respectively. This will be compared with the parent's background characteristics such as education and wealth quantile. For adult females, prevalence of anemia will be compared. Proportions will be tested for significance by chi square test and p value <0.05 will be considered as statistically significant.

Conclusion: This study will highlight the geographical areas particularly tribal, with high rates of stunted, wasted and overweight in children and prevalence of anaemia in adult females. This information would be useful for the state and district programme managers to identify areas where intervention can be focused.

Keywords: Nutritional status, health status, stunted, wasted and overweight, anaemia tribal population, Tamil Nadu

8. Right to Food as a Human Right: An International Law Perspective

S. Pandiara

Food is no longer a matter of charity. It is one of the fundamental human rights legally protected under a range of international human rights instruments, the most prominent being the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural rights (ICESCR). The right to food protects the right of all human beings to live in dignity, free from hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition. It is all about ensuring that all people have the capacity to feed themselves in dignity. Against this background, the central objectives of this paper are

two-fold: First, to articulate the normative content of the right to food; and, Second, to examine the obligations of States in regard to the right to food.

In doing so, it will argue that a rights-based approach to food would necessarily involve: each and every individual laying claim to basic rights and basic services; States holding the primary obligation to realise the right on the ground and establishing remedial mechanisms for its violations (among others).

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Centre for Social Justice and Equity
Madras School of Social Work
and
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Public Lecture on

“Food, Livelihood Security and Life Claims of the Indigenous
People of India: An Introspection”

Registration

Venue: TAG Auditorium

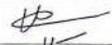
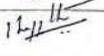
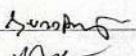
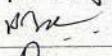
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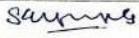
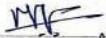
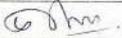
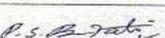
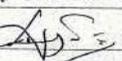
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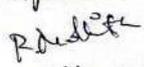
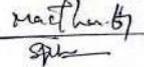
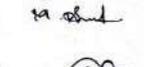
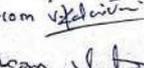
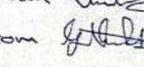
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