

## **Year 2008-2009**

### **Alina Pathan**

*BBA, M.Sc. Undergraduate Alina Pathan is a development studies student from the University of Helsinki and an environmental consultant at Gaia Consulting Ltd.*

### **Her Visiting Report**

My Research Fellowship was part of the Indo-Finnish exchange segment in the Sixth Winter Course on Forced Migration. I would like to thank Mahanirban Calcutta Research Group (CRG) and the Finnish Government for enabling me an opportunity to gather information for my Master Thesis in Kolkata. I would like to thank Dr Ranabir Samaddar for providing me some good contacts, Mrs. Chatterji for arranging my flights and accommodation, Ishita and Geetisha for their good company, Samaresh for helping me with IT and library issues and my friend and CRG alumni Ksenia for providing me with the relevant information before my visit.

During my visit in Kolkata, I did research for my master thesis on impacts of climate change to human displacement in India. My first week consisted mainly of literature review and writing and the second week of conducting interviews. At the end of the research fellowship, I gave a presentation at CRG about information I had gathered during my stay and common themes which arose in the interviews I conducted.

I interviewed altogether 11 people from seven organisations. I interviewed Saswati Sen and Subhro Sen from WWF India, Bodhisattva Gupta and Sonali Bhattacharya from Greenpeace India, Dr. Abhijit Mitra and Dr. Kakoli Banerjee from the University of Calcutta (Marine Science), Prof. Sugata Hazra (Oceanographic studies) and Prof. Joyashree Roy (Economics) from Jadavpur University, Prof. Kalyan Rudra from the West Bengal Pollution Control Board, Mr. Debal Ray from the Government of West Bengal and Mr. Subir Bhaumik from BBC World Service.

Climate change will indeed be a severe question for India in the future. Poor people on coastal regions will above all be the ones suffering the most. Land and housing will be a problem in the future but the main problem will be finding a livelihood in changing circumstances. Extreme weather events, rising sea level, among others, will diminish agricultural potentials and threaten livelihoods. Thus, especially farmers and fishermen will face severe challenges. Poorest people will also have the least means to migrate and will keep trying to cope with climate change impacts in their habitat areas. According to the interviews, actions from different actors are needed. Climate change is too big of an issue to be placed only in the government's hands. Grassroots level as well as NGOs and corporate and governmental actions are needed to tackle some of the worst climate impacts in India. Interviewees emphasized especially the vulnerable situation of the Sundarbans, where some islands have already submerged and people have had to migrate to nearby islands.

In Finland my multitasking between studies and work will continue. I will return to my hectic work of never ending deadlines and projects and start my master thesis to which my research fellow in Kolkata gave a good start and laid out many important questions to continue working on. Also professionally-wise

the interviews I conducted in Kolkata touched many subjects I have worked on such as climate change, water and other natural resources, and therefore deepened my knowledge on these topics.