

## Annual Report 2002 – 2003

### 1. *Refugee Watch*

1.1 The new look RW (No. 17 in December 2002, and no. 18 in April 2003) has started being published under the editorship of Paula Banerjee and with the collaboration of South Asia Forum for Human Rights (SAFHR).

1.2 The December (2002) issue was based on the focal theme on "Unrest and Displacement: Rajbangshis in North Bengal". Sujata D. Hazarika wrote on the focal theme. Apart from the regular features, the issue contained articles by Paula Banerjee, Meghna Guhathakurta, Rajesh Kharat.

### 2. *Projects*

2.1 As part of our project on 'Indian best practices on asylum and refugee treatment', CRG organized a Review Workshop in New Delhi on 8 June 2002 in which besides the team of commissioned researchers, Augustine Mahiga – former Chief of Mission, Wei Ming Lim-Ka'aba and Nayana Bose from UNHCR and Mahendra Lama, Pradip Bose and Subhas Ranjan Chakrabarty as evaluators were present.

2.2 CRG has successfully completed the above-mentioned project in collaboration with the UNHCR and you will be glad to hear that the book entitled *Refugees and the State: Practices of Asylum and Care in India, 1947-2000* based on reports submitted for the project has come out from Sage (New Delhi). The book has been edited by Dr. Ranabir Samaddar and contains papers by Paula Banerjee, Samir Kr. Das, Ritu Menon, Subir Bhaumik, K. C. Saha, Sabyasachi Basu Ray Chaudhury, Rajesh Kharat, V. Suryanarayan, Asha Hans, Sarbani Sen and B. S. Chimni. Muchkund Dubey -- the former Foreign Secretary at the India International Centre, New Delhi on 14 June 2003, launched the book.. Amongst many others, the book launching function was attended by Lennart Kotsalainen -- Chief of Mission, J. N. Dixit – former Foreign Secretary, Justice Sujata Manohar, Rajeev Dhawan, Pamela Philipose, Mahendra Lama and some members of our team of researchers. Ranabir Samaddar, Paula Banerjee and Samir Kr. Das – coordinator and joint coordinators respectively of the project, represented CRG side.

2.3 CRG has just completed the project on studies on 'Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in South Asia'. The Review Workshop organized by the Brookings Institution, Washington DC in which the team of researchers drawn from all over the South Asian countries was held in Colombo on 6-7 March 2003. Dr. Sabyasachi Basu Ray Chaudhury coordinated the project. The team of researchers included Joe William, Subir Bhaumik, Samir Kr. Das, Manesh Shrestha, Paula Banerjee, Mossarat Quadeem, Meghna Guhathakurata, Suraiya Begum and Atta-ur Rehman. The reports presented at the Workshop were extensively commented upon by Roberta Cohen, Jeevan Thiagarajah, Mario Gomez, Jehan Perera, Ranabir Samaddar, Asha Hans, Pradip Kumar Bose. Roberta Cohen in her Introductory Comments congratulated CRG on successfully completing such a mammoth project within a reasonable time frame and looked forward to more of such collaboration in future. Discussions are presently underway for bringing out the reports in the form of a book without any further delay. The book is likely to be edited by Paula Banerjee, Sabyasachi Basu Ray Chaudhury and Samir Kr. Das.

2.4 The Second Civil Society Dialogue on Peace was held at Santiniketan on 13-16 July 2002. Participants and resource persons from the northeast as well as other parts of India took part in it. Paul Gentot delivered the keynote address. This time the focus was on a somewhat deeper interaction between the relatively younger

participants and resource persons. The focus was on cultural democracy and gender justice. Ritu Menon spoke on how publishing can lead to marginalisation of women and how women publishers work as a necessary corrective to that situation. The President of Naga Mothers' Association attended the sessions and spoke on women's role in armed conflict. There were students from Manipur, Nagaland and Mizoram who participated in the discussions. The dialogue ended with participants urging MCRG to continue its Civil Society Dialogue Programme in future. The report of this meeting has been prepared by Dr. Paula Banerjee and has already received accolades.

2.5 CRG has decided to organize the Winter Course on Forced Migration in collaboration with UNHCR, the Govt. of Finland and Brookings Institution from 1 to 15 December and the work for the Course is currently in progress. Participants and resource persons from all over the world are expected to join the Course. The list of participants has already been finalized. The Consultative Meeting was held in Kolkata on 28 April 2003 and the selection committee composed of Priyanka Upadhyay, Asha Hans, Paula Banerjee, and Ranabir Samaddar met in Kathmandu between 2 and 4 August 2003.

2.6 CRG is planning to organize a Creative Writers' Workshop on Forced Displacement of Population at Darjeeling from 6 to 10 November 2003. The Consultative Meeting for the purpose was held in Kolkata on 28 June 2003. The response to CRG's advertisement for the Workshop has been overwhelming and finalizing the selection list for both the course and the workshop was a very difficult job. The selection committee met in Kolkata on 25 August 2003.

2.7 CRG organized its first ever popular lecture in collaboration with the Department of History, Presidency College on 21 February. Rada Ivekovic delivered the lecture on the Balkan situation at the end of the year 2000. It generated deep interest in the minds of the students and others present at it. Looking at the overwhelmingly positive response CRG is planning to organise a lecture series in 2003-2004.

2.8 The first volume of South Asian Peace Studies Reader to be brought out under the editorship of Ranabir Samaddar is already in press and is expected to be out sometime in late 2003.

2.9 Members of the Group presented papers, participated in, chaired various sessions of national and international seminars and workshops on migration, refugee rights, conflict and peace in the northeast, partition, displaced women, and new forms of justice; they also took part in various research programmes and planning committees. CRG became more known through these activities of its members.

2.10 The process of launching a website in pursuance of our earlier decision has been progressing in right earnest. This has become essential in view of the forthcoming Winter Course.

### **3. Office Affairs**

3.1 I have always underlined the importance of an office infrastructure in carrying out the projects. In view of this, a Committee on the Byelaws was formed and it submitted its report to the EC meeting held on 27 January 2003. The report is basically intended to streamline the office administration of CRG. The report is under the active consideration of EC.

3.2 We have always felt the necessity of appointing full-time employees so that a full-fledged office set-up can function properly. We have tried it out within the constraints by way of expanding the office hours of the already employed persons. However, much needs to be done in near future.

3.3 As per report, in 2003-2004 CRG plans to invite a senior scholar to take up the challenging job of the Director of Programmes.

#### **4. Plan for 2003-2004**

4.1 CRG has plans of continuing all its 2002-2003 programmes. Issue 18 of Refugee Watch has already been published in April 2003. It focused on the situation in Indo – Bangladesh Border. For the first time CRG sponsored an investigative report. This report by Krishna Banerjee commented on increasing displacement in the border. Bhumitra Chakma of Dhaka University commented on the situation of Chakmas on the other side of the Border. Apart from these articles, all regular features such as news, reprints, feature reviews etc. were continued. In 2003-2004 two more issues have been planned. The next issue will focus on the situation on IDPs in South Asia and the third will be on Legal Instruments for victims of forced migration, which will be edited by Sabyasachi Basu Ray Chowdhury.

4.2 CRG hopes to continue its Civil Society Dialogues. In fact the Third Civil Society dialogue took place in Shillong in 10-12 April 2003. This dialogue focused on issues of autonomy and the sixth schedule. Participants from Assam, Tripura, Nagaland and Mizoram attended the programme and presented short papers on themes of autonomy. Participants ranging from scholars such as Udayan Mishra, Bhupen Sarmah, Guatam Chakma to activists representing the Boro Women's Justice Forum, the NSF and the MASS actively took part in the deliberations. The report edited by Sanjay Barboria is in the process of being published. CRG is planning to hold one more dialogue in 2004.

4.3 CRG is planning to begin an extensive research on Indian provisions on autonomy. It is expected to cover a lot of ground on the issue of autonomy and will have its focus on the whole of India. We have already started discussing it with some of the possible collaborators of the project.

4.4 CRG is planning to widen the scope of the next winter course. It is hoped that the second Winter Course will not only focus on issues of Forced Displacement but also on the situation of minorities and racism in South Asia. Members of CRG have had preliminary discussions with the Government of Finland in August 2003 and are hoping to finalise the programme by the end of 2003.

Samir Kumar Das  
Secretary  
MCRG