

The report is divided into seven major sections:

- Three major changes in the year under review
- Programmes
- Publications
- Network, partners, and collaboration
- Membership
- Tasks for 2004-2005

1. At the outset three major changes have to be taken note of:

- a. Due to a request by the landowner of the previous premises of the office of the CRG, the premise (5B, Mahanirban Road, 2nd Floor, Mahanirban Road, Kolkata 70029) was vacated, and from February 1, 2004, CRG has been functioning from FE 390, Sector 3, Salt Lake City, Kolkata 700106, on the basis of an emergency decision of the Governing Body. CRG has applied for registration of the new address.
- b. By the previous year's AGM decision, Ranabir Samaddar was appointed as the first Director of CRG; he is now the Director of the CRG.
- c. The office of the CRG has been reorganised; part time system in the work of administration and accounts has in the main ended.

2. CRG in the year 2003-2004 was engaged in the following programmes:

- a. Winter Course on Forced Migration;
- b. Research on Autonomy;
- c. Dialogue Programme,
- d. Media and human rights, particularly of the forcibly displaced, and a creative media workshop;
- e. Programme on the IDPs and the UN Guiding Principles
- f. Publication of REFUGEE WATCH;
- g. Other Publications: *Refugees and the State* and *South Asian Peace Studies I*
- h. Dialogue Programme

2.1 *Winter Course on Forced Migration*: The programme of CRG annual winter course on forced migration developed out of CRG's past work in the field of forced displacement. The first course was held on 1-15 December 2003 in Kolkata. The course was preceded by a two-month long distance education programme. 20 participants from all over South Asia and beyond attended the course. The faculty members were also from various countries. The course was publicised as much as possible, and being the first of its kind generated enthusiasm. The UNHCR, the Government of Finland, and the Brookings Institution supported it. A broad based advisory committee was formed, which helped in framing the perspective of the programme, the structure of the course, proposed modules, plan of field visit, preparation of the syllabus and course material, the evaluation procedure and follow up measures. On the inaugural occasion were present the Chief of the UNHCR Mission in India, Lennart Kotsalainen, His Excellency the Ambassador of Finland to India, Glen Lindholm, and the Brookings Institution Joint Director of the Programme on IDPs, Roberta Cohen. The well-known peace researcher and campaigner of Israel, Lev Grinberg gave the inaugural address. The valedictory address was delivered by the famous social theorist of nationalism, Benedict Anderson, and certificates of appreciation were awarded by UNHCR Deputy Chief of Mission, Wei Meng Lim Kaaba. The course resulted in a strong network of the participants of the course. The course was remarkable for three features, which CRG thinks should remain as characteristics of the winter programme – (a) emphasis on gender, (b) stress on

experiences and studying law in the mirror of experiences, and (c) wide perspective of justice, rights, and citizenship in which the issue of forced migration is placed.

A copy of the report is enclosed (enclosure 1)

2.2 Research and dialogue on autonomy: The first dialogue on autonomy was held in Shillong on 10-11 April. For the first time, a group of academics, human rights and peace thinkers and activists, particularly from the East and the Northeast, assembled to discuss frankly and closely the issue of autonomy in the context of conflicts, minority rights, right of self-determination, politics of homeland, and the governmental policy of ethnic accords to grant limited autonomy to resolve conflicts – in short in the wider context of justice, peace, and democracy. The report on the dialogue came out subsequently (enclosure 2), and was widely distributed and appreciated from various quarters. The International Centre for Ethnic Studies, Colombo supported the initiative.

The Shillong dialogue led to the initiation of a two year long detailed research and dialogue programme on autonomy, the programme being supported by the Ford Foundation. The programme as has been mentioned has two components – (a) a ten-section strong research work to be completed within one year and to be followed by the publication of a volume and a compendium of relevant documents and keywords, (b) three rounds of dialogues in the entire programme period. The programme was drawn on the basis of the discussions in Shillong. The research segment has commenced duly, and the first of the three dialogues was held in Varanasi on 29-30 March 2004. It was observed in course of the dialogue that researches on democratic experiments in this country had been largely insensitive to the theory of (national) sovereignty and the actual reality of a democracy that in practice was pushing forward the notion of shared sovereignty and autonomy.

Briefly the questions raised were: (a) Given that there have been irreversible shared experiences, can the Indian and Western societies be so neatly divided so as to obtain two qualitatively distinct notions of autonomy? (b) Can the ethnic accords on grant of autonomy be regarded as 'moment of recognition' of diverse ethnic identities, or are they not rather the moments of denial, hiding the asymmetries of power between the signatories? (c) Is local governance necessarily to be understood from within the purview of state institutions? (d) Even though it might be useful to make a cross-state (within India) comparison of experiences of fiscal autonomy, yet even after such comparison has been done, and found out as to who gains fiscal autonomy by what route and to what end, the significant question will be – autonomy for local self government or for governing the local? (e) If, as is possibly true that, any demand for autonomy shows some degree of negotiability, is it possible to exhaust the meaning and definition of autonomy within the formal-legal senses? (f) What are the ways in which the idea of citizenship in India can be re-imagined in the context of the politics of autonomy? (g) How do we judge the autonomy-enhancing capacity of an institution in relation to its capacity to advance democracy within the group? (h) Autonomy in the borderlands is a critical theme in national governmental politics; thus, question is important: a centralized disposition of autonomy or autonomy of autonomies? Interacting autonomies? There are of course various kinds of autonomies – horizontal, vertical, interacting. (i) How can one map the various provisions of international law on autonomy, given its highly fragmented nature, and the deep impact of globalisation on autonomy seeking politics throughout the world? (j) Above all, what is the final test of autonomy in a gender unjust polity and society? How should one judge in this respect the issue of

women's autonomy? What is at the heart of the question of women's autonomy: representation / justice / rights – all these in relation to the existing patriarchal politics and the State, in relation to the movement?

The deliberations also discussed the modalities of preparing the Compendium of documents and keywords relevant to the theme of autonomy. The dialogue report has been sent to all participants and will be hopefully of help to the research collective.

Samir K. Das and Sabyasachi Basu Ray Chaudhury have been helping the Director in this programme in their capacity as joint coordinators. The full report of the dialogue is enclosed (enclosure 2).

2.3 Dialogue Programme: As part of CRG's dialogue programme (two dialogues had already been held previously in Kolkata and Shantiniketan, Bolpur) two more dialogues were held in the year under review – in Shillong and Varanasi, the details of which have been given in the preceding section dealing with research programme on autonomy.

2.4 Media and human rights and Creative Media Workshop: CRG's media programme began with the kind support and encouragement of WACC, London under the banner of the rights to communication – in this case the rights of the victims of forced displacement to communicate. Such a programme goes beyond the right to information. In the year under review the CRG programme on media had two components – (a) a media audit on the issue of forced displacement, (b) and, a creative media workshop on the issue. These two parts formed an integral whole.

While the first part of the project made an attempt at auditing mainly the mainstream media and its coverage on forced displacement of population from the perspective of human rights, justice and democracy, the second part aimed to bring out a source book on the creative writings of any particular community of victims. As the essential first step, three cases of Jammu and Kashmir, India's northeast and West Bengal were selected and audit reports based on these three case studies were prepared. A careful comparison of these three case studies enriched the activists' knowledge of the victims and helped them evolve diverse media strategies in order to cope with the problem of forced migration. These reports have now been published – the first is a report of the workshop, the second is a collection of the three media audits, and the third a collection of creative writings – primarily non-fictional - by the Bhutanese refugees now exiled in Nepal for more than ten years. The Creative Writers' Workshop on Forced Displacement of Population - was held in Darjeeling from 6 to 10 November 2003.

The Workshop was organized with a few key objectives in mind: Its first and perhaps the most fundamental objective was to bring the victims of forced displacement into the centre-stage of public discourse and make them an integral part of the civil society. The Workshop also deliberated on how the entry of the victim unsettled the given flow of communication, given the fact that the issue of refugee rights always crosses administrative and mainstream media boundaries. The workshop also aimed to see how the very act of reporting and writing pushed the victims aside and how appropriate writing and reporting strategies could be evolved with a view to enhance their dialogic and communicative skill. As the workshop noted, creativity in writing therefore marks a *departure* and creates a transcendence of their victim-hood. The workshop did not look upon the victims merely as victims, but as potentially

conscious, rights-bearing agents who continuously communicate in diverse and hitherto imponderable ways and thereby remade many of the established forms of communication, notwithstanding their handicaps, subjection and victim-hood.

WACC appreciated the three reports. The media audits were particularly significant for bringing out trends in the perspective of three different case studies, the pronounced gender factor, the media behaviour, the nature of victims' profiles in the media, and the ways in which we can deepen our understanding of the world of communication on the issue of forced displacement. Ms. Paula Banerjee visited the WACC office in London, explained our work, and discussed with WACC colleagues further ideas about our plans for the media programme that include the basis of three segments – research, reporting, and media workshop. In the list of researchers and resource persons among others were Anuradha Bhasin Jamsawal, Krishna Banerjee, Bhupen Sarmah, A.G. Kannabiran, Pamela Philipose, and Urbasi Butalia.

The three reports are now available (enclosure 3). Subhas Chakraborty and Samir K. Das primarily, were in charge of the programme.

2.5 Research and Training Programme on UN Guiding Principles: On the completion of the collective research on the state of the UN Guiding Principles in South Asia in the perspective of massive internal displacement in the region, CRG discussed with the Brookings Institution the possibility of a follow up programme in the form of a South Asian training programme on the Guiding Principles. A plan was concretised, and will be implemented in the following year, 2004-2005. Meanwhile the research papers were revised, an editorial board consisting of Paula Banerjee, Sabyasachi Basu Ray Chaudhury was formed, and an understanding was arrived with Sage Publications for the publication of the volume in the next year. The Brookings Institution has again helped CRG in publication of the volume in terms of editorial advice and publication subsidy. CRG is in particular thankful to Roberta Cohen and Marianne Makar of the Brookings Institution their encouragement and assistance.

2.6 Refugee Watch: With issue 18, REFUGEE WATCH entered the sixth year of its publication. In the year under review three issues were published, nos. 18, 19, and 20. An index of all articles till date published in REFUGEE WATCH was also published (enclosure 4). The plan for publishing Selections from Refugee Watch could not be materialised. It is hoped that the work would be completed within 2004.

Issue no 18 (April 2003) had as focal theme, "Delimited by Barbed Wires: Refugees from the East". Issue 19 (August 2003) had as focal theme the "Internally Displaced Persons of South Asia". The focal theme of issue 20 (December 2003) was "The Displaced Persons Right to Communicate". Details of these three publications are enclosed (enclosure 5).

While the publication ventured into some new themes and published writings of several new contributors, and earned praise from many quarters for consistency and high quality, there are some problems with the publication. It needs more reportage; circulation needs to be widened; the mailing list needs to be vastly updated and improved, and more contribution is needed to cover spiralling mailing expenses. South Asian board meetings have been still not realised, though electronic communication among editorial board members has helped the consultation. Overall planning will also need improvement.

Paula Banerjee continues to be the editor; the editorial board was reorganised, and an editorial advisory board was formed. The South Asia Forum for Human Rights, EZE, and ECCO continue to support the publication.

2.7 Other Publications (Refugees and the State and South Asian Peace Studies I): The collective research on the fifty year history of state practices of asylum, relief, protection, settlement and resettlement in India with regard to refugees was published by Sage on behalf of the CRG in June 2003 under the title, "Refugees and the State". Ranabir Samaddar edited the volume. The volume was released at a well-attended and well-deliberated book release ceremony at the India International Centre, New Delhi, on the occasion of the World Refugee Day. Several eminent personalities, NHRC member, jurists, academics, journalists, and human rights activists attended the function. On behalf of CRG present were Paula Banerjee, Samir Kr. Das, and Ranabir Samaddar. Ranabir Samaddar and Paula Banerjee addressed the gathering.. The book has come in for appreciation from several quarters for its rigorous research, wide scope, and the light that it throws on the "politics of care". The volume includes several case studies, has strong gender implications in terms of analysis that it presents, and ties a vast history of trans-border population flow and practices of care into a coherent narrative and an analytical frame of care and power.

With this publication CRG has made a distinct mark on the Indian world of policy studies on refugee flows. UNHCR supported the publication as it had earlier supported the research.

CRG also finalised in this period another volume for publication - the first in the four-volume series titled, *South Asian Peace Studies*, which Sage will be publishing. CRG has an editorial board for this. Ranabir Samaddar is the series editor, also the editor of the first volume. Samir Kr. Das is designated as the editor of the second volume, Paula Banerjee is the editor of the third volume, and Ujjwal Kr. Singh will edit the fourth volume. The volumes will be on four themes - perspectives, peace process, gender, and human rights. The volumes will follow a uniform format to the extent possible, and an editorial team particularly meant for a volume will guide each volume.

With this series, CRG hopes to make its mark on the field of peace studies with its own distinct approach. To say the least, the series has potential.

3. In short, CRG came out with the following publications in the year under review:

- *Refugees and the State*
- *Refugee Watch*
- *Third Civil Society Dialogue on Human Rights and Peace*
- *Media and Displacement I*
- *Media and Displacement II*
- *Media and Displacement III*
- *Report of the First CRG Winter Course on Forced Migration*

Besides these listed above, work continued on the preparation of the publication of *South Asian Peace Studies I and II*, the volume on the IDPs in South Asia and the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, and Selections from *Refugee Watch*.

4. Network of partnership and collaboration:

In the year under review CRG's network of collaboration and partnership expanded. The most notable was the achievement of a consortium of three supporters and sponsors for the First CRG Winter Course on Forced Migration – the UNHCR, the Brookings Institution, and the Government of Finland. The Course was also a product of the network that CRG meanwhile had developed through the dialogues and previous research and publication activities of the continuing publication of *Refugee Watch* with the help of a South Asian advisory board and a South Asian editorial board. CRG also established a distinct style of running its programmes by forming advisory groups consisting of non-CRG members also who are experts in the relevant field.

Equally important is the partnership with WACC (London), which has opened up the possibility of working on media and building up a network of media activists and creative writers in related fields.

The strong network of collaboration has been an asset and one of the strong reasons for different institutions, agencies, and persons in supporting CRG. Because, this is such a vital human resource, two tasks are in order:

- Finding out ways in which this can be translated into other forms of support
- Maintaining by various ways the links, cooperation, spirit of mutual assistance, developing shared goals through continuous exchange of views that form the core of a network

Presently the institutions that CRG has been privileged to work with:

- Ain o Salish Kendra (Dhaka)
- Aurat Foundation (Lahore)
- Brookings Institution (Washington D.C.)
- Centre for the Study of Geopolitics, Panjab University (Chandigarh)
- Consortium of Humanitarian Agencies (Colombo)
- Department of Communications, United Theological College (Bangalore)
- Department of International Relations and Centre for Refugee Studies, University of Jadavpur (Kolkata)
- Department of International Relations, Karachi University (Karachi)
- Department of Political Science, University of Rabindra Bharati (Kolkata)
- Department of South and South East Asian Studies, University of Calcutta (Kolkata)
- Ford Foundation (New Delhi)
- Friedrich Naumann Stiftung (New Delhi)
- Government of Finland
- Indian Council of Social Science Research (Northeast Centre, Shillong)
- International Centre for Ethnic Studies (Colombo)
- Konrad Adaneuer Foundation (New Delhi)
- Malaviya Peace Research Centre, at the Benaras Hindu University (Varanasi)
- National Peace Council of Sri Lanka (Colombo)
- Nepal Institute of Peace (Kathmandu)
- Other Media (New Delhi)
- Pakistan-India People's Forum for Peace and Democracy (West Bengal Chapter, Calcutta)
- South Asia Forum for Human Rights (Kathmandu) and through it EZE-ECCO
- The Naga Mothers' Association (Kohima)
- UNHCR (New Delhi)
- Women in Security, Conflict Management and Peace (WISCOMP, New Delhi)

- Women's Studies Centre, Utkal University (Bhubaneswar)

Besides, it is the centre of a network of peace and cultural activists of east and northeast, whose third meeting was held by CRG in Shillong in 2003.

5. Tasks:

The tasks that CRG faces in view are in the following areas:

- a. Securing long-term grant and commitment,
- b. Following a well-considered research and publication policy that is not necessarily tied or initiated by fund considerations
- c. Engaging new and young talented researchers;
- d. Sustaining the combination of intellectual and advocacy activities;
- e. Developing a comprehensive and informative website,
- f. Sustaining the four major present fields of activities, namely research work on democracy, winter course on forced migration, research and advocacy work on the IDPs, media, human rights and peace, and the civil society dialogue programme
- g. Building up a good resource centre;
- h. Initiating a Bengali publications programme
- i. Running a public lecture programme consistently to widen our network
- j. Securing government funding;
- k. And an appropriate organisation policy, such as reorganising the various sub-committees, inducting new members, attracting young talents, etc..

In brief, in terms of research programme, the primary task is to maintain and sharpen the critical edge of our research work while maintaining our thrust areas (themes and region). In terms of organising and mobilising our resources the task is to engage, as much as possible, our members and partners in our work, and distribute the burdens and responsibilities among the members, and giving everybody a chance to acquire skill and bear responsibility for the collective work.