

MAHANIRBAN CALCUTTA RESEARCH GROUP

Annual Report for 2008-2009

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1. Action Taken Report

(Agenda Item Nos. here refer to previous AGM minutes)

1.1 The Governing Body decided to set up a Research Advisory Committee in place of International Advisory Committee. A tentative list has been drawn for finalization by the Governing Body.

1.2 To add to the research strength of the institution four new Research Associates have been appointed; one of them however has left job for higher education.

1.3 Research collaboration with ICSSR has started. It is also to be noted that a memorandum of understanding has been signed with the IGNOU. However, financial uncertainty in implementing the MoU remains, therefore the programme schedule (of a combined M.Phil. and Ph. D. course on Globalization and Post-Colonialism and beginning a Resource Centre on globalization studies) is still uncertain.

1.7 A Vision Statement has been prepared giving future plans of the CRG. This topic is itemized in the agenda and will be discussed accordingly.

1.8 Based on the discussion in the International Association for Studies in Forced Migration CRG has agreed to host the 14th Conference of IASFM in 2013.

1.9 Now two areas of research have been identified - Globalization and Governance. Economists are being involved in these areas. However the number should increase.

4 (a) Sarbani Sen's membership has not been restored as she did not contact CRG any more.

4.(b) As per resolution of the AGM - Dipankar Dasgupta, Madhuresh Kumar, Nasreen Chowdhory, V. Ramaswamy, Ruchira Goswami and Sibaji Pratim Basu were invited to be members of CRG. They accepted CRG's invitation. In addition the Governing Body decided to invite Bharat Bhusan and Ritu Menon to become members of the CRG. Both of them accepted the invitation.

2. Programmes of the CRG

2.1 Programme on Forced Migration:

The sixth Winter Course on Forced Migration completed satisfactorily notwithstanding the uncertainty created in the wake of Mumbai blast in late November 2008. Participants came from various countries of South Asia except Pakistan from where participants could not come due to political uncertainty and tension. From outside the region of South Asia participants came from Italy, Canada, Brazil and Argentina. Likewise faculty members came from different countries of South Asia and from outside the region as well, such as, Burma, Finland, and France. The recently introduced modules such as media and forced migration improved considerably. The creative assignments proved to be an attractive feature of the course. Another important thing this year was the improved organization of the field visit. The field visit took the participants to places of displacement due to river erosion in the district of Malda in West Bengal. Interacting sessions also increased in number. The Governor of West Bengal was the Chief Guest in the Valedictory Session. He addressed the participants and in course of his address he discussed the possibilities of the CRG's work in this field. He suggested a more pre-active approach by the CRG in creating impact on policy making processes. Like other years the course was followed by a follow-up programme held in collaboration with the Loyola College at Chennai on the theme - "Ethics of Care and Protection of the Rights of the Displaced".

This year three fellowships were given under this segment. Alina Pathan from Finland spent fifteen days in Kolkata working on the theme on impact of climate change on displacement patterns in India. She has submitted the report and it will be published shortly. Two Indian participants, Geetisha Dasgupta and Sahana Basavaptna were hosted by Tampere Peace Research Institute, Tampere for a week. They are yet to submit their reports.

The main highlight of the course last year was a special Conference on the "Need for New Strategies for the Protection of the Rights of the Victims in Situations of Displacement", held with the association of UNHCR on 14-15 December 2008. Delegates from all over South Asia including important functionaries of the UNHCR attended the meeting. The Conference produced a resolution and a work plan on the basis of that. CRG will start working on that basis.

The research output of the programme was published in form of research articles in the journal REFUGEE WATCH and in the CRG research paper series, 'Policies and Practices'. In this connection it is important to note that CRG has published writings on climate change and its impact on displacement patterns, international norms and camps, growing IDP crisis and situations of protracted displacement as in the case of Sri Lankan Tamils. The details the publications are given below:

A) Refugee Watch Issue No. 31 June 2008

- The Growing IDP Crisis in the Southern World- Tasks from a Rights and Development Perspective by Jeevan Thiagarajah
- The Protracted Refugee Life of the Sri Lankan Tamils in India by Gladston Xavier
- Relief to Rehabilitation: Towards Policy on Development Planning, Displacement and Rehabilitation by Madhuresh Kumar
- Making Sense of Climate Change, Natural Disasters, and Displacement: A Work in Progress by Elizabeth G. Ferris
- Build Back Better: Hurricane Katrina in Socio-Gender Context by Elizabeth Snyder

B) Refugee Watch Issue No 32

- On Governing Population Flows by Ranabir Samaddar
- Gender, camps and international Norms by Asha Hans

C) The book *The Fleeing people of South Asia: Selections from Refugee Watch* Edited by Sibaji Pratim Basu, Anthem Critical Studies: 2009 was released during the Sixth Winter Course on Forced Migration.

D) *Policies and Practices 22 : Tales of Two Cities*

Essays by Ishita Dey, Sanam Roohi and Tiina Kanninen

Policies and Practices 21: Citizens, Non-Citizens and the Stories of Camps

Essays by Anasua Basu Ray Chaudhury and Ishita Dey

The entire programme was held in collaboration with the UNHCR, Government of Finland, and the Brookings Institution. PANOS South Asia collaborated in holding the Media segment. Sabyasachi Basu Ray Chaudhury and Ishita Dey coordinated the programme. The reports of the programme, the follow up workshop and the Conference have been published. These were sent to all Society members. They are also on CRG's website (<http://www.mcrq.ac.in/WC2008/home.html> and <http://www.mcrq.ac.in/UNHCRconference/home.html>) ((Copies of the Reports of the Sixth Winter Course and Conference are placed on the table - **Annexures 1-2**) The course strengthened our links with various institutions and organizations in India and abroad.

2.2. Programme on Social Justice:

The three year programme on Social Justice supported by the Ford Foundation ended in the year under consideration. CRG took up this three-year research and dialogue programme on social justice in the process of exploring some of the critical questions facing post-colonial democracies. The programme began in early 2006. The challenges in terms of research were three-fold: (a) Given the nebulous philosophical and experiential understanding of the word, to make concrete and practical sense of the word, "justice"; (b) Likewise how to make a collective sense of the social context of justice, social content of justice, and the social sites of justice; and (c) And finally the challenge of holding dialogues between not only many persons and groups, but many senses also around the idea and reality of *social justice*.

The four segments of the programme were: (a) Research, (b) dialogues, (c) Public lectures, and (d) Publications. The Research segment contained three types of research: historical, ethnographic and analytic. Some research papers were published under the research paper series of the CRG, and now the entire work has come out as a set of 4 comprehensive volumes titled as 'The State of Justice in India' (Sage, 2009). Three dialogues were also conducted. Last year's annual report (2007-08) reported in details the activities under this programme.

The issue of right to food came up repeatedly in these dialogues and discussions, particularly in Bhuvanesar and Kolkata, which emboldened CRG to undertake a small pilot study on the right to food, especially on the role of rights bearing institutions in ensuring food security in West Bengal. An interesting part of the programme in its concluding phase was two-day film screening of feature films and documentaries on social justice at St. Xaviers College, inaugurated by noted documentary filmmaker Anand Patwardhan with participation of students from different colleges of Kolkata in the screening and post-screening discussion. In course of the three years of the programme several public lectures were held. Professor Ratna Kapur and Professor Vinay Lal visited Kolkata under this programme and spoke to wider audiences in the city on the issue of justice. The list of the lectures is there on CRG website (<http://mcrq.ac.in/pl.htm>). Apart from the publication of the distinguished lecture of Etienne Balibar, *Justice and Equality: A Political Dilemma? Pascal, Plato, Marx*, there have been several other published research papers (under the Policies and Practices series) and reports.

The last year of the programme was spent in revising the research papers, arranging for their publication and bringing out the report. This programme was coordinated by Ranabir Samaddar, Paula Banerjee and Samir Kumar Das. The report has been published and is on CRG website. (Copies of the report are placed on the table. - **Annexure -3**)

Some of the important results came out of this programme were:

- (a) The inquiry enriched the ideas of responsibility, rights, entitlements and claims;
- (b) The role of popular politics and extent of participation of people's organizations in welfare schemes for ensuring social justice was examined through select studies;
- (c) The debate between rights versus welfare based approaches to development found place in the study;
- (d) This was also an investigation into two forms of social justice - justice as a function of government, that is to say, governmental form of justice, and justice as a product of dialogues in contested and differential situations, that is to say, dialogic justice.

2.3 Right to Food:

On the basis of the discussion with and help from the Asia Pacific Forum of National Human Rights Institutions, the research programme on Right to Food started in August 2008. The idea was to enquire into the prevailing conditions of right to food in West Bengal in view of starvation deaths, suicide of farmers, and widespread joblessness. This research programme has acquired special significance. The programme is based on the awareness that the right to food is one of the most critical rights to be claimed in post-colonial democracy such as India, and is one of the gains of the rights movement. The programme involves focused research and advocacy work for one year. This is a pilot programme which should lead to a greater study and campaign with the NHRC. The programme has two components: (a) A small research on West Bengal with respect to food entitlement, food availability, the state of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGA), Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS), Mid-day Meals Scheme (MDS) and the Public Distribution System (PDS); and (b) the role of the NHRC and the SHRC in ensuring the right to food.

The proposed programme will end in September 2009. The consultative meeting on research design was held in September 2008. The report is available on CRG website - http://www.mcrg.ac.in/first_rfc.doc; Research on the study of West Bengal and of NHRC's role is continuing and the final meeting to discuss the research findings will be held in Kolkata on 21 September 2009.

Geetisha Dasgupta is coordinating the programme. Besides support of the Asia Pacific Forum of National Human Rights, this programme has received some support from Ford Foundation's project on Social Justice.

2.4. EURASIA-Net Project on Regional Instruments for Protection of Minority Rights

CRG has renewed its research and advocacy work on minority rights in South Asia - this time with other European and South Asian partners. Human rights, and especially minority rights, have a clear supranational dimension both in Europe and in South Asia. Europe has made wide use of the mechanisms and soft law approaches developed and implemented at regional level by the OSCE, the Council of Europe and the European Union. In South Asia there is a long tradition of study and robust experience in the field of cultural, religious, linguistic and ethnic management, including the gender dimension, within national boundaries (India in particular). The process of including human rights, and particularly minority rights, in the regional South Asian agenda deserves the attention of the research community. The overall objective of this joint programme undertaken by European and South Asian partners with EU assistance, known as the EURASIA-Net programme is designed to enhance the requisite knowledge- base for new policies and instruments towards the reduction of ethnic-religious conflicts. The institutions involved in the Programme are EURAC - Bolzano/Bozen (Italy), Brunel University - West London (UK), Johann Wolfgang Goethe-Universität - Frankfurt am Main (Germany), Mahanirban Calcutta Research Group (India), South Asian Forum for Human Rights (Nepal), Democratic Commission of Human Development (Pakistan) and University of Dhaka (Bangladesh).

The MCRG is responsible for coordinating the Trans Regional Platform for policies and instruments relating to the promotion of Human Rights and management of Minority Issues. Its mandate is to organise a series of study visits as part of the programme of sensitisation on the promotion of minority rights. MCRG will also author a book on human rights with emphasis on

protection of minorities and a comparison involving South Asia and Europe. There is also an Internet platform for diffusion of all the material on website. Besides, MCRG will organize in early 2010 a final conference. Its aim will be to bring together the outcome of different activities under the programme. It will also formalise a final set of recommendations. In the year under consideration, MCRG organised a set of material to be used as study material in the two summer schools to be organised under this programme. MCRG also prepared a report of research so far done on minority rights in South Asia and the directions the research can take. It has coordinated also study visits to Europe and has hosted visitors from Europe under this programme. It has published under its research paper series a joint research article by Samir Das and Ranabir Samaddar. Samir Das coordinates this programme. Members will be happy to know that CRG's work has been appreciated by the members of the network, particularly its organisation of the study visits held under the programme.

2.5 ICSSR Project on Globalisation, Democracy, Gender and Citizenship

The collaboration with ICSSR in conducting a two year research and workshop programme on *Globalisation, Democracy, Gender and Citizenship* was finalized in January 2009 and formalized in March 2009. Work began in the last week of March. The general theme has two components - (a) Globalisation and sustainability of rights; and (b) women and borders. We shall be able to report on the programme next year.

Ranabir Samaddar, Paula Banerjee, Sabyasachi Basu Ray Chaudhury, Ishita Dey and Anasua Basu Ray Chaudhury are looking after the programme.

2.6 Work on IDPs in Nepal

With the collaboration of the Forced Migration Information Network, Refugee Study Centre, Oxford University, a year long programme of dissemination of information on the IDPs in Nepal began in the year under review. The Nepal Institute of Peace (NIP) is CRG's partner in Nepal in this work. The work consists of doing a small scale study towards preparing a factsheet, recording voices of the IDPs, holding a workshop, producing electronic and published material, and updating the NIP website. Paula Banerjee and Ishita Dey are entrusted with supervising the work.

2.7 Visiting scholars

In the year under review CRG hosted three visiting scholars - Professor Eva Pfostl from University of Rome, Italy, Dr. Thomas Benedikter, from European Academy at Bolzano, Italy, and Professor Anna Marie Autissier, from Paris University VIII, Paris, France.

CRG also hosted two research scholars - Alina Pathan from Helsinki University and Pascale McLean from Montreal University.

3. Publications, Seminars, and Public Lectures

3.1 Books

- *Human Rights and Peace: Ideas, Laws, Institutions and Movements* (Volume 4 of South Asian Peace Studies Series) - ed. Ujjwal Kumar Singh (Sage Publications, Delhi, 2008)
- *Women in Peace Politics* ((Volume 3 of South Asian Peace Studies Series) - Ed. by Paula Banerjee (Sage Publications, Delhi, 2008)
- *Fleeing People of South Asia: Selections from Refugee Watch* - Ed. by Sibaji Pratim Basu (Anthem Press, Delhi, 2008)

3.2. Research Paper Series (Policies and Practices)

- *Prescribed, Tolerated and Forbidden Forms of Claim Making* / by Ranabir Samaddar (PP18)
- *Three Studies on Law and The Shifting Spaces of Justice* / by R. Niruphama, Saptarshi Mandal and Shritha K. Vasudevan (PP19)
- *Primitive Accumulation and Some Aspects of Work and Life in India in the Early Part of the Twenty First Century* / by Ranabir Samaddar (PP 20)
- *Citizens, Non-Citizens and the Stories of Camps* / by Anasua Basu Ray Chaudhury and Ishita Dey (PP 21)
- *Tales of Two Cities* / by Ishita Dey, Sanam Roohi and Tiina Kanninen (PP 22)

3.3. Reports

- *Social Justice in India - A report*
- *Dialogue on Protection Strategies for People in Situations of Forced Migration - A report*
- *Sixth Annual Orientation Course on Forced Migration - A report*
- *Need for New Strategies for Protection of People in Situations of Forced Displacement - Report of a Dialogue*

3.4. Refugee Watch

- No. 31, June 2008 (Annexure 4)
- No. 32, December 2008 (Annexure 5)

3.5. Public Lectures and Staff Seminars

Alina Pathan, *Visiting Scholar from Helsinki University, Finland*, "Impact of Climate Change on Migration in India", 12 January 2009

Mireille Fanon France, *Eminent Human Right Activist, Paris*, "Racism, Immigration and Xenophobia in the World today", 15 December 2008

Ranabir Samaddar, *Director, CRG*, "Governing Unruly Population Flows", 1 December 2008

Samir Kumar Das, *Senior Researcher, CRG and Professor of Political Science, Calcutta University*, "Trends in Researches on the Issues of Minorities in India", 11 November 2008.

Ishita Dey, *Research Associate, CRG*, "On the Margins of Citizenship: Cooper's Camp in Nadia", 11 November 2008.

Geetisha Dasgupta, *Research Associate, CRG*, "The Right to Food: Popular Interface with the Rights Institution", 11 November 2008.

Ratna Kapur, *Director, Centre for Feminist Legal Research, New Delhi*, "Citizen and Migrant: The Politics of Justice and (Non) Belongingness", 30 September 2008.

Sanjay Chaturvedi, *Centre for the Study of Geopolitics, Department of Political Science, Punjab University*, "Climate Change, Globalisation and Environmental Justice", 22 August 2008.

Ranabir Samaddar, *Director of CRG*, "Sociological Imagination: Situating Charles Tilly", 18 August 2008.

Eva Pförtl, *Director, Istituto di Studi Politici S. Pio V, Department of Law and Economics*, "Tolerance Established by Law: The Autonomy of South Tyrol in Italy", 14 August 2008.

Vinay Lal, *Professor of California, Los Angeles*, "Dialogues on Justice", 14 July 2008.

Jean Louis Halperin, *Professor of Law, Ecole Normale Superieure, Paris*, "The Impact of Globalization on French Law: An Example of Relations between Democracy and Internationalization", 28 April 2008.

4. Website

The CRG website - www.mcrg.ac.in - has proved significant as an information site of the CRG. It also serves as an interactive site in the distance education phase of the Winter Course. It has been essential also for organizing conferences, dialogues, online registration, notifications and announcing our publications. It has now besides other regular sections a photo archives section, and has audio material. It has a search engine to search books, documents, cds in our Library. It contains the complete archives of issues of Refugee Watch and has a special section called "Refugee Watch Online". Ishita Dey and Geetisha Dasgupta have put in efforts towards improving "Refugee Watch Online". Their efforts have met with some success. Entries are posted each month under four headings - news, comments, perspective and review.

The website now needs to be expanded in view of CRG's growing work. Particularly it needs to function in an increasing degree as an interactive site. The number of hits should reach one hundred thousand at the end of this year. The development of the website should be a priority area. In it again the archives section has to develop significantly.

Samaresh Guchhait looks after the design, development, and regular update of the website. He also works as a system administrator.

We have taken 200 MB hosting space and 100 MB mailing space from e-ICON ONLINE SERVICES PVT LTD, Hyderabad. Our domain mcrg.ac.in was registered from ERNET India, New Delhi.

5. Academic and Office Staff

5.1. CRG has a core group of senior researchers, research associates and a small administrative unit. During the period under report CRG three senior researchers - all in advisory capacity. They were Paula Banerjee, Samir Kumar Das and Sabyaschi Basu Ray Chaudury. Among the three Research Associates Ishita Dey, Sanam Roohi and Debdatta Chowdhury, Debdatta left in July 2008 and Sanam Roohi in April 2008. Geetisha Dasgupta joined in August 2008. Their services were retained after the contract period of one year with 10 per cent increase of salary or more. Subsequently four research associates joined CRG though again one left soon after joining.

The individual accomplishments of some of the members of the core group and some other members of the CRG are enclosed here separately as **Annexure - 6.**

5.2. Office Members: The services of Ratan Chakraborty, M. Chatterji, Ashok Kumar Giri and Samaresh Guchhait were reconfirmed with a revision of their salary (10 per cent increase or more). The part time service of R. K. Mahato as Typist was also retained. Together they combine the work of administration, accounts, library, internet, website, assets and computer management.

5.3 The Director heads all academic and administrative activities. His term is for three years (2006-09). This is his second term as Director.

5.4 CRG has introduced for its staff a scheme of Contributory Provident Fund and Annual Medical allowance in the form of health Insurance.

6. Assets

6.1 Asset register

An Asset Register is maintained by the office. During this period two computers went out of order and beyond any repair. Three desk top computers, two steel book shelves (for the library), one filing cabinet (with four drawers - for the administration) and two Lenova Lap Top

computers (for researchers and visiting faculty) were purchased during the period under report. The Asset Register is updated regularly and members can visit the Register with prior intimation.

6.2. Library

(a) Books

The CRG library is now developing as a reference library, equipped with books, documents, journals, manuscripts, research papers, and CDs. The library has been a source of support to various research activities of this institution. Also it has supported various research scholars, students, faculty members of colleges, universities, research institutes and NGOs. During this year 249 books were added increasing the library holdings to 1406 books. CRG book holdings mainly relate to law, gender studies, forced migration, environment, justice, autonomy, displacement, literary works, minority rights, media, advocacy material, child right, and in general human rights. Some of the books are gifts from institutions and individuals.

(b) Journal

In the documents section, besides documents CRG has journals and magazines also. The documents are in the following ten categories, namely, Northeast, gender, child right, minority rights, human rights, forced migration, law, advocacy series, media, and miscellaneous. We have an exclusive collection of newspaper clippings on northeast India. We have various reports of The Brooking Institution, and copies of the *Forced Migration Review*.

(c) CDs

The CD section contains 100 CDs on human trafficking, gender, violence, migration, displacement, ethnic conflicts, and human rights. Some of the notable CDs are on Educational Material on Sustaining Rights, Burma Human Rights Yearbook 2006, World Investment Report 2005, Ensuring Food Secure Future, Right to Land, and Report on Human Trafficking etc.

(d) Subscription to Online Services:

CRG is now a regular subscriber of the online editor of EPW and JSTOR archives in order to reinforce the research work. Books, documents, journals, manuscripts, research papers, and CDs are regularly catalogued and coded.

7. Membership

The CRG's current roll of Members (25) is as follows :

- Pradip Kumar Bose
- Samir Kumar Das (President)
- Jayanta Dasgupta
- Paula Banerjee (Secretary)
- Sabyasachi Basu Ray Chaudhury (Treasurer)
- Subir Bhaumik
- Krishna Banerjee (Vice-President)
- Subhas Ranjan Chakraborty
- Anita Sengupta
- Mushirul Hasan
- Prasanta Ray

- Sanjay Chaturvedi
- Asha Hans
- Soumitra Dastidar
- Kalpana Kannabiran
- Keya Dasgupta
- Pallav Goswami
- V. Ramaswamy
- Shibaji Pratim Basu
- Nasreen Chodhory
- Madhuresh Kumar
- Ruchira Goswami
- Dipankar Dasgupta
- Ranabir Samaddar (invitee)
- Krishna Bhattacharya

In July 2009 the Governing Body resolved to invite two well-wishers of CRG, Ritu Menon, publisher, *Women Unlimited*, and Bharat Bhusan, Editor of *Mail Today*, to join MCRG as members, and they have happily accepted the invitation. CRG welcomes all new members of CRG (enrolled in 2008-09 / V. Ramaswamy, Shibaji Pratim Basu, Nasreen Chodhory, Madhuresh Kumar, Ruchira Goswami, Dipankar Dasgupta, Bharat Bhushan, and Ritu Menon) on this occasion.

The members may give any suggestion about initiating a new member.

8. Tasks for 2009-2010:

- 8.1. In 2009-2010 CRG will have to restructure the publication of REFUGEE WATCH.
- 8.2. The Research Advisory Committee to be finalized and it has to start functioning.
- 8.3. In view of increased research activities the research aspects of the institute will have to be strengthened.
- 8.4. Research capacity at senior level will have to be now increased.
- 8.5. The website has to develop as an interactive and informative site.
- 8.6. CRG's reorientation has to start in course with the Vision Statement.

9. Vision Statement

The Vision statement is kept as annexure (**Annexure - 7**). Members will have to kindly discuss and adopt it.