

# **North Eastern Social Research Centre Guwahati**

## **Annual Report April 2017 to March 2018**

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# North Eastern Social Research Centre, Guwahati

## Annual Report

### April 2017-March 2018

#### INTRODUCTION

It is with great delight that we present to you the Annual Report of North Eastern Social Research Centre (NESRC), Guwahati, for 2017-18. During the year, NESRC organised two national level seminars, one peace activists' meeting and a state level youth convention. As usual, these exercises brought together scholars, students, activists, government officials and civil society leaders on a common platform to engage with issues especially concerning those sections of society who are at the margins. All these events were organised in collaboration with some academic institutions or civil society organisations.

NESRC published six books during the year. Three books were published on the theme of gender implications of tribal customary law in Northeast India, one book on peace initiatives and conflict resolution, one book on development-induced-displacement and one book on folktales of PoumaiNagas of Manipur. The books on customary law examined the status of women against the backdrop of the introduction of modern inputs in the form of modern education, monetisation of economy, embracing of mainstream religions and availability of health facilities and other irreversible changes taking place in Northeast India

The two national seminars that focused on movement of people deserve a special mention: the first was on *Human Trafficking from Northeast* and the second was on *Migration from the Northeast to South India States*. These seminars were organised in the context of forced migration of people of Northeast India to other parts of the country and world. The reasons at the source and plight at the destination was the primary focus. While the former strove to better understand the scenario on human trafficking that is organised by international networks and the measures to be undertaken to address the plight of innocent lives, the latter reflected on the factors leading to migration of people to South India and their living conditions at the destination.

The pages below provide more information on the various activities organised by NESRC during 2017-18. It is with great joy that we present this Annual Report for your perusal. We want to assure you that NESRC remains committed to the building of an inclusive society where everyone feels counted, included, and wanted, and provided with a voice in shaping their own destiny.

## STUDIES

### A. STUDIES COMPLETED

**Melvil Pereira, Meenal Tula and Jyotikona Chetia.** Gender Implications of Tribal Customary Law: The Bodos of Assam

**Walter Fernandes, et al.** Development-Induced- Displacement in Nagaland 1947-2010.

**Melvil Pereira, Meenal Tula and Jyotikona Chetia.** Gender Implications of Tribal Customary Law: The Karbis of Assam

**Melvil Pereira, Meenal Tula and Sunumi Changmi.** Gender Implications of Tribal Customary Law: The Khampis of Arunachal Pradesh

**Walter Fernandes, Asojiini Rachel Kashena and Anindita Datta.** Living with Conflicts: Possibilities of Peacemaking in the Northeast.

### B. ONGOING STUDIES

**Melvil Pereira, Meenal Tula and Jyotikona Chetia.** Gender Implications of Tribal Customary Law: The Lyngngams of Meghalaya

**Melvil Pereria, Meenal Tula and Jyotikona Chetia.** Gender Implications of Tribal Customary Law: The Jaintias of Meghalaya

**Walter Fernandes, Annesha Bora and Augustin Millik.** *Traditional Land Management, Recent Changes and Types of Alienation among the North Eastern Tribes.*

**Walter Fernandes and Asojiini Rachel Kashena.** The Role of Women in Peace Processes in North Eastern India.

## SEMINARS, WORKSHOPS AND COLLOQUIUMS

1. **National Seminar on “Human Trafficking from the North East”** was organised by the North Eastern Social Research Centre (NESRC) on the 9th and 10th of November 2017 at Jagriti, Christian Basti, Guwahati. The seminar focused on the factors contributing to the rise in domestic work and commercial sex work induced human trafficking and tried to identify anti-trafficking practices and strategies implemented across the country and the Northeast. Scholars, activists and journalists working on this issue in different parts of the country presented their papers at the seminar.

- 2. National seminar-cum-workshop** on *Migration from Northeast India to South Indian States* was jointly organised by Indian Social Institute (ISI), Bangalore and North Eastern Social Research Centre (NESRC), Guwahati on 23-24 February in Guwahati. The participants consisted of academics, social activists, students and members of civil society organisations. The seminar focussed on the global economy that is impacting the local issues leading to increasing in-migration to Northeast India and out-migration from Northeast India to metropolitan cities of India. It drew attention to 'migration as a cause of new forms of social inequalities in metropolitan cities'. The presentations and sharing during the seminar-cum-workshop focussed on the issues at the source and destination of migration. Reflecting on causes of migration from Northeast India, some papers examined how globalisation, neo-liberalism and corporate expansionism has led to agrarian crisis, land acquisition and ethnic conflict in the Northeast thus triggering migration especially to South Indian States.
- 3. Youth Convention in Manipur:** The Annual Youth Convention organised jointly by NESRC in collaboration with DSSS, Imphal, took place on the occasion of International Peace Day on 21 September 2016. It was a follow up of two such youth conventions held in 2015 and 2016 in the same venue. It was an attempt to help some young persons from different communities to know each other and find ways of addressing common problems that affect society. They spent two nights and a day together, listening to each other and also to some talks on peace by elders. The most important part was to know about the problems that each community faced, and their aspirations for the future of Manipur. At the end of the day the young persons from each community made plans for follow up in their own district.
- 4. Peace Activist Meet:** North Eastern Social Research Centre (NESRC), Guwahati, and Bongaigaon Gana Seva Society (BGSS), Bongaigaon, organised Peace Activists' Meet on 19 March, 2018, at the premises of BGSS. Over 50 participants that included peace activists, social workers, advocates, youth leaders, women leaders and academicians attended this meeting. The meeting was held to bring about understanding and amity between the Bodo and the Adivasi communities living in Bodoland Territorial Autonomous District (BTAD). It provided a platform for peace activists in BTAD to share the success stories as well as challenges in peacemaking. Bongaigaon Gana Seva Society, Bongaigaon. Peace activists and academician and Bodo A

#### PUBLICATION: BOOKS

For effective advocacy in support of the marginalized, the findings of the studies and deliberations of the seminars/workshops must be circulated and made available in the form of professional and popular publications. NESRC published following books/booklets during the year:

1. **Walter Fernandes, BokaliChishiMughavi, MedonuoPienyu, K. AliboAchumi, Mhonthung Yanthan and Thejanuon Fidelia. 2017:** The Challenges of Development: Displacement in Nagaland 1947-2010. North Eastern Social Research Centre, Guwahati. ISBN: 978-81-933761-5-7.
2. **Melvil Pereira, Dharamsing Teron Jyotikona Chetia and Maggie Katharpi. 2017:** *Exploring Differences, Recording Change: The Karbis of Assam*. North Eastern Social Research Centre, Guwahati. ISBN: 978-81-933761-4-0.
3. **Melvil Pereira, Junmani Basumatary, Jyotikona Chetia and Ramtanu Brahma. 2017.** *Understanding Pluralities, Negotiating Change: The Bodos of Assam*. North Eastern Social Research Centre, Guwahati. ISBN: 978-81-933761-7-1.
4. **Paul Punu. 2017:** *Poumai Naga Folktales*. North Eastern Social Research Centre, Guwahati. ISBN: 978-81-933761-6-4.
5. **Walter Fernandes, Asojiini Rachel Kashena, Anindita Datta, Grace Kamei, Jasmine Mushahary and Ratna Misha Reang. 2018.** *Living with Conflicts: Possibilities of Peacemaking in the Northeast*.
6. **Melvil Pereira, Sunumi Changmi, RazinaMannow and Chow ChantakongNamchoom. 2018.** *Grounded in Tradition, Seeking Change: The Khamptis of Arunachal Pradesh*. North eastern Social Research Centre, Guwahati.

## PROFESSIONAL ARTICLES

Apart from our own publications, the faculty of NESRC share their findings also through professional journals, edited books and newspapers. They published the following articles this year:

### **Melvil Pereira**

“A Spirituality of Justice: Crossing the Samaritan Lines”, in Isaac Padinjarekuttu and R. R. G. Augustine. (Eds), *Re-Visioning Pastoral Care* (pp. 154-167). Shillong: Oriens Publications.

“From the Castle to the Cave and to all Creation”, *IGNIS*, Vol. XLVII (III), 7-20

“Uniform Civil Code: The Constitution of India and the Ground Realities in Northeast India”, *Journal of Law Research Institute*. Published by: Gauhati High Court, Guwahati.

### **Walter Fernandes**

2017. Land Alienation and Rural Development in Northeast India. *e-journal of the Indian Sociological Society*, Vol. 1 (1), April, pp. 31-47

2017. Land Laws, Development and Globalisation in Northeast India. in Deepak K, Mishra and Vandana Upadhyay (ed). *Rethinking Economic Development in Northeast India: The Emerging Dynamics*. Routledge India Ltd. Pp. 212-227

2017. “Internally Displaced Persons and Northeast India,” *International Studies*. 50 (n. 4), pp. 287-305

2018. “Conflicts and Displacement in the Northeast: Land, Identity and Immigrants” in S. Irudaya Rajan (ed). *India Migration Report 2017: Forced Migration*. London & New York: Routledge, Taylor and Francis, pp.147-161

2018. “Look (Act) East Policy: With or Through the Northeast?” in Atul Sarma and Saswati Choudhury (ed). *Mainstreaming the Northeast in India’s Look and Act East Policy*. Singapore: Palgrave, Macmillan, pp. 233-252

### **Meenal Tula**

“The Modern-National Language Debate and *Tawaifs* of Late Colonial India”, in *Gender and History*, (Ed.) Rekha Pande. Jaipur: Rawat Publications.

### **Meenal Tula and Jyotikona Chetia**

*Enduring Inequalities: Women, Inheritance and Empowerment*. *Journal of Law Research Institute*. Published by: Gauhati High Court, Guwahati.

## **NEWSPAPER ARTICLES**

### **Walter Fernandes**

“What Type of Development for the Northeast?” *Business Northeast* (E-paper of The Sentinel), May 27, 2017.

“Celebrating Murder,” *The Sentinel*, September 8, 2017.

Locking the Stable After the Horses Escape. *Northeast News*, January 22, 2018.

## **PRESENTED PAPERS**

### **Melvil Pereira**

“*Labour Legislation and Social Security*”, paper presented during a workshop of the Northeast Regional Commission in Guwahati on 26-27 August 2017.

“*Climate Change, Environmental Degradation and Conflict over Resources in Northeast India: Is it a new normal?*” paper presented at the seminar on *Conflict and Environment in North-East: Forging a Green Lens* organised by Dept of Humanities and Social Sciences, IIIT, Guwahati on 4-5 November, 2017.

“Challenges for the Freedom of Religion or Belief in Northeast India” paper presented in a consultation on *Nurturing Solidarity and Prophetic Secularism* organised by CBCNEI, Guwahati, on 19-20 November 2017 in Guwahati.

“Secular State and Religious Society: The Indian Scenario” paper presented in a seminar on *Indian Secularism: Problem and Prospects* organised by John Roberts Theological Seminary, Shillong, on 20-21 December 2017 in Shillong.

“Tribal Customary Laws and Women’s Rights in Northeast India” paper presented in a seminar on *Gender, Sexuality and Society in Tribal Northeast India* organised by Martin Luther Christian University, Shillong, on 21-22 November 2017 in Shillong.

### **Walter Fernandes**

“Traditional and Social Research,” at the Research Methodology Course, Omeo Kumar Das Institute of Social and Economic Development, Guwahati, 20<sup>th</sup> May 2017.

“Doing Research in the Northeast” Inauguration of M. Phil and PhD Session, Guwahati, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, July 18, 2017.

“Land in the Northeast and the Liberalisation Scenario” at the *National Conference Land Question in Neo-Liberal India*. Shimla: National Institute of Advanced Study, October 9-11, 2017.

“Land Issues and Contemporary Struggles in the Tribal Areas,” at the International Conference *Contemporary Struggles Towards Realisation of Socio-Economic Rights* Hyderabad: NALSAR University, November 2-5, 2017.

“Northeast India and Border Studies,” at the Dialogue on *Socio-Economic Interactions of India’s Border Populations*, New Delhi: Institute of Social Studies, November 23-24, 2017.

“Dissent and Contestation as a Social Process in India,” *Foundation Day Lecture*, Centre for Culture and Development, Vadodara, February 27, 2018.

“The Law and Threat to Natural Resources in Northeast India,” at the *Conference Rethinking Property Rights and Natural Resources: Changing Norms of Justice*, New Delhi: Max Weber Stiftung, March 9, 2018.

### **Walter Fernandes and Melvil Pereira**

“Tribal Land and Land Laws in Northeast India,” Guwahati: *Conference on Research Issues*, Omeo Kumar Das Institute of Social and Economic Development, June 23-24, 2017.

“Swept Away? Response to Shift in Land and Livelihood Patterns in Northeast India,” *International Northeast Seminar*, Tezpur: Department of Sociology, Tezpur University, January 10-12, 2018.

## RESOURCE PERSON

### **Melvil Pereira**

Made a presentation on *Socio-economic situation in Northeast India* during a consultation held at Peace Centre, Ambari, held on 11 July 2017.

Chaired a session during the state level consultation on *Implementation of the Plantation Labour Act of 1951 in Assam with reference to the Assam Human Development Report 2014* held at Blue Moon hotel, Uzan Bazar, Guwahati, on 27 July 2017.

Gave a talk to youth coordinators of Salesians of Don Bosco on 6<sup>th</sup> September on the challenges faced by the youth in India with special reference to the Northeast.

Was a panellist and an expert during a seminar on *Customary Law and North East India: Practice and Prevalence* organised by the University of Science and Technology, Meghalaya, on the 21<sup>st</sup> & 22<sup>nd</sup> of October 2017-10-23.

Chaired a session during the seminar on *Conflict and Environment in North-East: Forging a Green Lens* organised by Dept of Humanities and Social Sciences, IIIT, Guwahati on 4-5 November, 2017.

### **Walter Fernandes**

Three-day training programme on “Professional Writing Skill Development” for the faculty members of five Salesian Colleges, May 29-31, 2017.

“Fundamentalism: How does the Church Respond to It?” *One day session for college staff from Eastern and North Eastern India.* Sonada: Salesian College, November 28, 2017.

Course on Conflicts and Peace, Guwahati: Tata Institute of Social Sciences, October 24-26, 2017.

As discussant at the Launching of the report *Land Laws, Land Acquisition and the Scheduled Areas in India*. New Delhi: Centre for Policy Research, March 15, 2018.

## PARTICIPATED IN SEMINARS AND CONFERENCES

### **Melvil Pereira**

Workshop on *Research Agenda for the North East* organised by OKD Institute of Social Change and Development, Guwahati, on 23-24 June, 2017.

### **Walter Fernandes**

Seminar on Ecology, Vadodara: Centre for Culture and Development, February 26-27, 2018.

### **Meenal Tula and Jyotikona Chetia**

North East Consultation on Women and Customary laws on 8th April, 2017 at Don Bosco Institute (DBI) Kharguli, Guwahati, Assam organised by WING (Women in Governance).



## **Jyotikona Chetia**

Workshop on Climate Change Resilience for Children and Urban Governance, Guwahati, Assam, 31st October 2017, organized by WING (Women in Governance) and Gorakhpur Environmental Action Group.

### **CONCLUSION**

As we wrap up this annual report, we cannot but remember men and women of good will who made some of our dreams come true. Among those who have supported us financially and with solidarity are DKA/KFO - Austria, Jesuitenmission - Switzerland, Misereor – Germany, Missio Aachen and Munich – Germany, Referrat - Germany, Jesuitenmission-Germany, IWGIA - Denmark, NED Social Forum - Guwahati, LCHR – Guwahati, Peace Channel – Dimapur, JUST - Agartala, DSSS – Imphal, BGSS – Bongaigaon and many others. I also wish to appreciate the generosity of individual donors who have helped build the corpus fund of NESRC. We place on record our immense gratitude to all of them. If NESRC has made some contribution to the people of the Northeast thanks also to the commitment of the members of its staff and faculty.

Guwahati

Melvil Pereira