

## North Eastern Social Research Centre at Ten, April 2009-March 2010

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**NESRC began on March 1, 2000 and turned ten on March 1, 2010. Its mandate is to combine serious research with involvement in the field and encourage other organisations and individuals to do research on issues of relevance to the Northeast. During this decade NESRC had tried to live up to this mandate through, research, library, documentation and networking with peace activists, civil society groups and others who are active among the marginalised or are involved in processes aimed at policy changes in favour of the poor. Its publications and professional and newspaper articles have been other tools of supporting the marginalised.**

### **Research and Library**

The library is meant for scholars, social activists, students and others who want to meet and consult each other on issues of relevance to the region. With around 500 new titles added to it every year today the library has around 5,300 volumes, some 40 percent of them on the Northeast. The books are supplemented by documentation that includes paper cuttings from daily newspapers from Assam and other states, conference papers and other material, organised by state and theme. NESRC also subscribes to around 40 journals, some of them not easily available in the Northeast. The system is being computerised in order to make the library more accessible to its users. Paper cuttings are planned to be replaced by material downloaded from the internet.

*From its foundation NESRC identified tribal, gender and livelihood issues as its priority areas of study and action. The impact of the customary laws on tribal women, gender implications of modernisation are among the studies its scholars have done from the gender perspective. Development-induced displacement 1947-2000 and education of the marginalised are some of its studies on livelihood issues. In recent years peace initiatives have attained importance in this region of ethnic conflicts. To this list NESRC has added climate change and justice as a crucial livelihood issue since it has important implications for the Northeast.*

Research on issues concerning the marginalised and social change is the mainstay of NESRC. Some studies were completed during the year and others are in progress. Their themes are chosen according to the NESRC priority areas of livelihood, tribal and gender issues. These three variables become the foundation of data analysis. The following studies were completed.

1. Alphonsus D'Souza and Gita Bharali. *The Value System of School Children in the Northeast.*

The effort of this 17-country study coordinated by Metadignm USA, was to understand the response of adolescents to the changing social and economic situation. In the Northeast, NESRC interviewed 4,000 adolescents from 20 schools in Assam, Meghalaya and Nagaland and analysed the data. Metadigm has completed the report of the region. NESRC too will use the data.

2. Alphonsus D'Souza. *An Assessment of the Educational Needs in Meghalaya: Educational Needs of Primary and Upper Primary Schools.*

3. Alphonsus D'Souza. *An Assessment of Educational Needs in Meghalaya: Educational Needs of Secondary and Higher Secondary Schools.*

These studies were done at the request of the Development and Educational Communication Unit (DECU) of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO). DECU has established satellite links for most schools in Meghalaya but the study showed that but for exceptions, the link is of no use because of the non-existent or poor infrastructure of the schools. After analysing the situation the study made suggestions to DECU on modes of improving and monitoring its implementation.

4. Walter Fernandes and Pranab Jyothi Neog. *Bonded Labour in Assam: New Direction of Old Unjust Systems.*

It is assumed that bondage in the form seen in the rest of India does not exist in the Northeast. It was true to a great extent in the past. But with greater impoverishment, it is beginning in Assam in a new form. The situation is expected to deteriorate with globalisation. This study is one of many being done in different states of India in order to deal with the phenomenon of bondage.

5. Daisy Nath and Paromita Shastri. *Share of Children in the Assam Budget and Sarva Shikshya Abhiyan.*

A look at the Assam budget shows that the share of children in it is very small. Most of it goes to education. *Sarva Shikshya Abhiyan* (universal literacy mission) is a major component of the plan to universalise primary education. Most funds for it come from the Union Government but are routed through the state and the development block. So the study was on the flow of funds from the Centre to the village. It is done jointly with HAQ, Centre for Child Rights, New Delhi.

6. *Conflicts and peace in the Northeast.*

Under "Peace initiatives" peace activists most of whom have themselves experienced ethnic conflicts did the studies under the direction of the NESRC staff. In Nagaland they studied the traditional conflict resolution mechanisms of the Lotha and in Assam of the Karbi and Dimasa. They studied the Chakma of Mizoram whom a conflict had driven to refugee camps in Tripura. In Manipur it was on the presentation of conflicts and peace in text books. The objective of getting them to do the studies is to upgrade their analytical skills in order to better deal with conflicts.

### **Studies in Progress**

1. Gita Bharali. *Development-Induced Displacement in Manipur 1947-2007.*

2. Gita Bharali. *Development-Induced Displacement in Arunachal Pradesh 1947-2007.*

3. Walter Fernandes. *Development-Induced Displacement, Sikkim 1975-2007 and in ,Nagaland 1947-2007.*

4. Walter Fernandes and Gita Bharali. *Development-Induced Displacement in Meghalaya, Mizoram, Tripura 1947-2000.*

Globalisation and 48 major hydro-power dams planned in the region during this decade and more later have made displacement a major issue. It can impoverish people and destroy biodiversity. The shortages that result from it can cause ethnic conflicts. The studies to be completed by March 2011 are meant to support efforts of a search for non-destructive development alternatives.

## Publications

**Research cannot remain hidden. It has to be put in the public domain for the use of persons and organisations that can use its findings. NESRC does it through books, booklets, professional and newspaper articles and through discussion in the media on relevant issues.**

NESRC published a few studies by itself and its staff members wrote professional and newspaper articles based on studies done by them. The following is a list of some of them.

### A. NESRC Publications

1. Z. K. Pahru. 2010. *Viable Education for the Tribals: A Poumai Naga Perspective*. Pp. xvi+174. Rs 120. USD 10.00, Euro 8.00

In an effort to provide an alternative that is within the reach of the tribal communities, the author has tried demythologise formal education as the source of all upward mobility. In his search for alternatives the author has discussed Ivan Illich, Mahatma Gandhi and others and has analysed the field level experiments in the Narmada Basin and in the tribal areas of Kerala.

2. Gita Bharali, Daisy Nath, Ankur Tamuli Phukan, Paromita Shastry, Madhumita Puryakastha. Indralin Dwakor. 2010. *Ahomor Sarboshikshyar Rupayan*. Guwahati: North Eastern Social Research Centre and New Delhi: HAQ – Centre for Child Rights. Pp. 38, Rs 35. This booklet is based on studies on the share of children in the Assam budget. It is on the flow of funds from the Central Government to the village. Two more booklets will be published in September 2010.

### B. Professional Articles

#### *Gita Bharali.*

2009. "Tribals Rise against Displacement in North-Eastern India," in Renu Modi (ed) *Beyond Relocation*. New Delhi: Sage Publications, pp 218- 239

2009. "Development-Induced Displacement and Human Security in Assam" in Akhil Ranjan Dutta (ed) *Human Security in North East India: Issues and Policies*. Guwahati: Anwasha. Pp. 203-218.

2009. "Uttar-Pub Bharotot Thanantaran Srista Doidrotar Birudhe Jonojatia Sangram" in Ishan, Volume II. Guwahati: Panos South Asia. Pp. 57-78.

#### *Walter Fernandes*

2009. "Land Relations and Conflicts in Northeast India: A Look at Modernisation, Immigration and Livelihood Loss," in D. Narasimha Reddy (ed). *Agrarian Reforms, Land Markets and Rural Poor*. Mussoorie: Centre for Rural Studies, Lal bahadur National Academy of Administration, pp. 350-363.

2009. "Elections 2009: Development Issues, Secularism and Religion." *Bharatiya Samajik Chintan*, Vol. 8, No 1 (New Series) April-June 2009, pp. 33-39

2009. "Tribal Identity, Customary Law and Modernisation in North-East India," in Birichi K. Medhi, R. P. Athparia and K. Jose (ed). *Tribes of North-East India: Issues and Challenges*. New Delhi: Omsons Publications, pp. 367-382.

2009. "India's Half-Century Search for a Resettlement Policy and the Right to Livelihood," in Renu Modi (ed). *Beyond Relocation*. New Delhi: Sage Publications, pp 102- 128.

2009. "The Indigenous Issue and Human Rights," in *Subhrom Rajkhowa and Manik Chakraborty (ed). Indigenous Peoples and Human Rights: The Quest for Justice*. Kolkata: R. Cambray & Co Pvt. Ltd. Pp. 230-243.

2009. "Indian Tribals: A Vision for the Third Millennium," in Third Millennium Series No. 3, *Dalits and Tribals: The Plight and Path Ahead*. Rajkot: Deepti Publications, pp. 127-154.

2010. "Caste and Conversion Movements". In T. K. Oommen (ed). *Social Movements 1: Issues and Identity*. Oxford University Press, pp. 95-115.

**Daisy Nath.** 2010. "The Impact of Globalisation on Tribal Women in the Northeast with Special Reference to the Angami of Nagaland: An Overview," in M. C. Behera and Jumyir Basar (ed). *Interventions in Tribal Development: Challenges before the Tribes in the Age of Globalisation*. New Delhi: Serial Publications, pp. 299-309.

**Ankur Tamuli Phukan.** 2010. "Who are the Subalterns? Nationalism, Subalterns and the Politics of Subalternity in Assam," in Gautam Kumar Bera and K. Jose (ed). *Ethno-Social Mobility in Northeast India*. Delhi: Abhijeet Publications, pp. 112-121.

### **C. Newspaper Articles**

#### **Gita Bharali**

1. "Jalanitir Khosora Samparke Kisu Kotha" in *Dainik Janambhumi*, 11<sup>th</sup> June 2009.
2. "Nari Divash" in *Dainik Janambhumi*, 8<sup>th</sup> March, 2010

#### **Walter Fernandes**

1. "The Electoral Message of Development," *The Assam Tribune*, June 4, 2009.
2. "Climate Justice for the Northeast," *The Assam Tribune*, December 5, 2009.

#### **Ankur Tamuli Phukan**

1. "Towards an Alternative Understanding of Ragging: Some Critical Notes," *STRI, Delhi University Journal*, September 2009.
2. "Asomiya Jatiyabadat Jibur Bisoy Eatiaou Upakhita," *Ahomiya Pratidin*, October 1, 2009.
3. "Grinnay Houk Aparadhar Potabhumi" *Ahomiya Pratidin*, October 30, 2009.

### **Seminars and Conferences**

Focus in the seminars organised by NESRC was on conflicts and peace, climate justice and child rights, all of them basic livelihood issues in the region.

**One of the purposes of organising seminars and conferences is to share the knowledge generated through research with scholars and activists interested in the theme. The second is awareness building and mobilisation around an issue. That is the main reason why during 2009-10 NESRC organised seminars on 3 main themes, peace processes, climate change and child rights. Its staff members also participated and took an active part in other seminars.**

## **A. Seminars Organised by NESRC**

**1. Child Rights:** Three local workshops were organised in Jorhat, Nalbari and Barpeta with social activists working on child issues. They culminated in a state level seminar at Guwahati on January 5. The effort in these seminars was to better understand the mid-day meal scheme for poor children and plan joint action for improvement in its implementation.

### **2. Climate Justice**

a. NESRC took an active part in the national event on climate justice organised by a civil society coalition in preparation for the Copenhagen climate change summit (COP15) of December 2009. It was supported by around 180 other groups all over India. NESRC was one of the supporting groups. The preparatory events included public hearings in different regions of India on the impact of climate change on the poor, particularly through floods, dams and other causes or consequences environmental degradation. The marginalised, particularly Dalits and tribals feel its negative impacts more than the middle class does. So the civil society coalition that organised the event concentrated more on the justice issue and less on the technical aspects of climate change.

b. NESRC marked the beginning of COP15 by organising a North East level seminar on “*Climate Change and Climate Justice in the Northeast.*” December 6-7, 2009. It was organised jointly with Foundation for Social Transformation. Its participants included school teachers, university students, environmental activists, researchers and media persons working on climate change and the environment. To most of them it was an awareness building exercise but to others it was an opportunity to share their concerns with like minded persons and plan follow up action.

**3. Conflicts and Peace Processes in the Northeast:** is the third major area of concern. Six regional meetings were organised on this issue.

a. The first was a meeting of peace activists on May 7-8, 2009. The activists came from all over the Northeast but their focus was the Dimasa-Naga ethnic conflict that was in progress in the North Cachar Hills during those weeks. So the participants studied its causes and discussed plans for intervention in favour of peace and reconciliation.

b. The seminar of researchers, October 26-27 was on “The Role of History in Conflicts and Peace Processes in the Northeast.” In a situation of competition or conflict, most communities create a history meant to claim exclusive rights in a given area or to present themselves as victims of the group with which they are in conflict. The papers dealt with the use of history in conflicts and the possibility of a composite history that includes both conflicts and cooperation between groups.

c. Two training programmes were organised for 8 peace activists, 2 each from Assam, Manipur, Nagaland and Tripura. They were to study conflicts and peace in their region in order to generate

new knowledge no doubt. But their main purpose is capacity building among the peace activists in order to help them to better analyse the conflict situation and move towards a solution.

d. Two programmes were organised for media persons on the role of the media in conflicts and peace. The participants studied the overall approach to such processes especially to peace.

## **B. Participation in Seminars Organised by Others**

**Dr Gita Bharali** Led a four-member Northeast delegation to the national event organised by a civil society coalition, in preparation for COP15, New Delhi: November 11-13, 2009.

### ***Was a resource person at:***

1. "Parliament Election 2009" in a People's Forum" organised by Citizens' Rights Forum and Pratidin People's Network, Guwahati: 10<sup>th</sup> April.
2. "Gender and Development" training programme, organised by National Institute of Public Cooperation and Child Development, 5<sup>th</sup> march 2010 at Guwahati.
3. Assam Women's Association annual Conference, March 19, 2010.

### ***Presented the following papers***

1. "Displacement and Children" at an international colloquium organised by HAQ Centre for Child Rights, New Delhi, 20-22 July 2009.
2. "Development of Plantation Labourers," at the *National Seminar on Sustainable Development of the North Bengal Hills*. Sonada, Darjeeling district,: Salesian College, August 6-7, 2009.
3. "The Story of the Displaced Women" *Workshop on the State of Research on Forced Migration in the East and Northeast*. Guwahati: Indian Institute of Advance Study, Shimla, Panos South Asia and Mahanirban Calcutta Research Group, February 12-13, 2010.
4. "Climate Change and the North East," *Seminar on Climate Change and the Poor*, Mumbai: Vikas Adhyayan Kendra, 16-17 February 2010.
5. "Incompatible Equality: Challenges of Tribal Livelihood in the Context of the Present Development Model" *Seminar on the Situation of the Tribes*. Itanagar: Arunachal Institute of Tribal Studies, Rajiv Gandhi University, 27 February, 2010.

### ***Prof. Alphonsus D'Souza was a resource person at***

1. Social Analysis, Shillong: Oriens College, October, 16-17, 2009.
2. Follow up meeting of the study on the use of the satellite in Meghalaya: Ahmedabad: Indian Space Research Organisation, November 17, 2009.

### ***Dr Walter Fernandes Participated in***

1. Preparatory meeting of the National Council for Land Reforms, New Delhi: June 22, 2009.

2. Preparatory meeting for the national event on climate change, July 10-11, 2009.
3. Meeting on Climate Change in the Northeast, Imphal: February 6, 2010.
4. Peace Activists meeting, Guwahati, UNNM, February 15-16, 2010.
5. Climate Change Action. Puri: Indian Network on Ethics & Climate Change, Mar. 18-20, 2010.

***Was a resource person at:***

1. Workshop on Resettlement, New Delhi: Council for Social Development, July 27, 2009.
2. North Eastern Pastoral Conference, Shillong: September 7, 2009.
3. Meeting of Xavier Board college principals, Guwahati: October 2, 2009.
4. Meeting of high school principals, Guwahati: October 6, 2009.
5. MCJ Provincial Chapter, Shillong: January 7, 2010.
6. Climate Change in the NE, Guwahati: Indo-Global Social Service Society, February 8-9, 2010.
7. Workshop on “Governance of Natural and Mineral Resources,” Ranchi: February 13-15, 2010.

***Presented the Following Papers***

1. “What Type of Development in North Bengal?” Keynote address, *National Seminar on Sustainable Development of the North Bengal Hills*. Sonada: Salesian College, August 6-7, 2009.
2. “Modernisation as a Process of Change in Tribal Societies,” Keynote Address, *Seminar on Tribal Societies and the Challenge of Modernisation in Northeast India*. Jakhama: St Joseph’s College, October 9-10, 2009.
3. “Climate Change and Forestry in Northeast India,” *National Preparatory Event for COP15*, New Delhi: November 11-13, 2009.
4. “Environment and Development,” *Footprints Guwahati*, Dialogue organised by SMIC, Pune, November 22, 2009.
5. “Globalisation and the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in India,” *Seminar on Globalisation and Human Rights*. Mumbai: St Xavier’s College, December 10-11, 2009.
6. “Displacement and the Development Paradigm,” Bhubaneshwar: Orissa Development Action Forum, January 18-20, 2010.
7. “Land Laws and Migration,” *Workshop on the State of Research on Forced Migration in the East and Northeast*. Guwahati: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla, Panos South Asia and Mahanirban Calcutta Research Group, February 12-13, 2010.

8. “Displacement and Impoverishment,” Seminar on Poverty, Inequality and Marginalisation: Challenges to Development Practitioners. Mumbai: Tata Inst. of Soc. Sciences, March 8-9, 2010.

9. “Displacement and the Tribes of the Northeast: Social and Cultural Impact,” *National Seminar on Tribal Development*, Department of Anthropology: Dibrugarh University, March 15, 2010.

**Ankur Tamuli Phukan,**

Presented a paper “Subalterns in Assam,” *National Conference on Peace and conflicts in the Northeast*, Guwahati: Sanskriti, November 20-22, 2009.

### **Television Appearances**

Discussion as TV panellists is a way of influencing public opinion on issues affecting the marginalised. Two staff members of NESRC have been active in this field.

**Dr Gita Bharali** was one of the panellists on NE TV,

1. On Independence-eve August 14, 2009 “The meaning of Indian Independence for NE”
2. “Women’s Status in Assam,” March 8, 2010.

**Dr Gita Bharali and Ankur Tamuli Phukan** were among the panellists in a discussion on DY365 on “ULFA and the Peace Process,” December 15, 2009.

**Ankur Tamuli Phukan:** Gave a talk on NETV, “The Peace Process, ULFA & Centre-State Relations,” December 5, 2009.

Was a panellist on DY365, discussion on Government Policy, Guwahati Book Fair, 9-1-2010.

### **Staff Members and Helpers of NESRC**

**Staff: A small team of six persons has been able to achieve much during the year, thanks to the dedication of each of them. The team consists of the following: Director: Dr Walter Fernandes; Associate Director: Prof. Alphonsus D’Souza, Director of Research: Dr Gita Bharali, Administrator & Research Associate: Dr Melville Pereira, Research Associates: Daisy Nath and Ankur Tamuli Phukan., Library, Secretarial, Accounts Assistant: Dulu Moni Gogoi; ICSSR Fellow as Associate: Dr Debotpal Goswami.**

NESRC has made some contribution to the Northeast thanks to a dedicated team of its staff members and others who have provided financial and other assistance for our work. Among those who have supported us financially and solidarity are Prokur, Switzerland, DKA-KFO, Austria, Misereor and Prokur, Germany, CordAid, Holland, IWGIA, Denmark, IGSSS, NED Social Forum, Panos South Asia and Foundation for Social Transformation, Guwahati, Laya, Vishakapatnam, VAK, Mumbai, Alliance of Unorganised Labourers, Delhi and Chennai, Jirsong Asong, Diphu, Peace Channel, Nagaland, JUST and ASHA, Agartala and many others. We place on record our immense gratitude to all of them.

Guwahati  
September 2010

Dr Walter Fernandes  
Director